

Good Neighbourhood Awards

Do you have a good neighbour?

Do you have a good neighbour who is always there for you?

Do they go that extra mile to help?

Swan Housing needs names from you for the 'Good Neighbour' competition for the following categories:

Most helpful neighbour – vote for someone who helps you and your family with your day to day needs

Most helpful young person – vote for a young person who helps you and your family with day to day needs

Community Group – vote for a community group that you feel has made a difference in your neighbourhood

Best Kept Garden – vote for a neighbour's best kept garden

If you have a good neighbour who deserves recognition and a reward then let us know.

£100 prize for each winning category.

Please fill in the nomination form on the back page.



For easy reference in this edition we have colour coded the pages as follows:

information

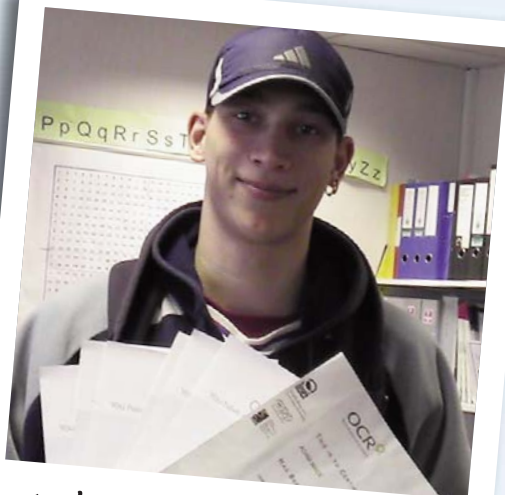
celebrating diversity

housing management

resident involvement

development

changing your future...



Adam Mace
Age 21



I was out of work without any qualifications and was feeling a bit dejected with no prospects for the future. My mum, who was herself doing learn direct courses at our local Bisi centre talked me into visiting the centre to have a chat with the tutor there.

After speaking to the tutor – Colleen, I sat an assessment test to see what level I needed to study.

I was then enrolled onto a literacy level 2 course and arranged with Colleen the time and day each week that I would be able to attend the course.

I enjoyed my learning at the centre as I didn't feel under any pressure to meet deadlines, I was able to learn at my own pace and with the help and support I received and relaxed atmosphere I felt more optimistic about my future. After completing the course I sat an exam, which I passed.

Doing the course gave me more confidence and rebuilt my self esteem which enabled me to apply for a job at Tesco. I have now been working at Tesco for 1 year and have done instore training for multi skills and to become a team leader, I now hope to be able to do more training to further my career.



How safe is your child on the internet?



The All About Centre, Leinster Road, Laindon worked in partnership with the Police, Basildon Council, Essex Fire Service and Swan Housing to hold a Safety Awareness fun day.

Swan Housing's popular community based Bisi Centres offered over 200 local residents in Laindon advice on how to keep their children safe on the Internet. The information and training session was open to everyone who attended the event. Children enjoyed safe surfing whilst the Bisi team provided parents with information and advice about Internet safety. The team gave out information packs about language and code used in chat rooms; a guide to software and how to prevent children accessing restricted/unsafe sites; informed parents of an Internet safety contract and gave out a copy of ten top tips to staying safe on the Internet.

Project Leader for the Bisi Centres said "It's been fantastic to see so many residents and parents from the community coming into the training suite and finding out more about Internet safety. The Internet is a powerful source of information which can be lots of fun for people of all ages; however parents in particular, need to be aware of the dangers involved in children freely accessing the Internet and chat rooms. It is important parents have some form of basic training so they are able to understand the Internet and recognise unsafe websites children may be accessing. We had the opportunity today to share this information with local residents and encourage everyone to take Internet safety seriously".

The Bisi Centres offer a range of courses in Basildon and Leigh on Sea.

If you want to find out more about Internet safety, the Internet or other computer courses available, please contact us on **01277 844700** or via email bisi@swan.org.uk

You have the power

Swan gets green light for phase three of Five Links regeneration



“This is a very important step forward. It means that tenants can finally get a real sense of what is on offer.”



Swan Housing Group has received outline planning permission from Basildon Council to press on with the continued regeneration of the Five Links Estate.

The new design will create natural surveillance and lighting and this will help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime. Swan’s outline commitments for phase three of the regeneration of the estate include: new homes to excellent design standards; reduced crime and anti-social behaviour; a high quality environment; the creation of a diverse and vibrant community; and a better quality of life for residents.

An important aspect of Swan’s plans will be the re-provision of play and football areas for young people.

This phase of our plans for Five Links isn’t simply about the development and regeneration of the built environment, it’s about creating a long-term economic and environmentally sustainable neighbourhood.

As part of this we are committed to providing local employment and training initiatives, better infrastructure and services and the creation of a truly mixed community that is home to anyone regardless of income or employment.’



“Tenants hold the power and will decide whether or not the transfer goes ahead. We will make sure they hold the full information on both

Castle Point Borough Council is consulting tenants over proposals to transfer the ownership and management of its housing to a not-for profit registered social landlord.

An evaluation panel including representatives of tenants and council staff members spent more than two months investigating detailed bids from three-short-listed housing organisations - who had expressed an interest in becoming the council’s partner.

We are delighted that councillors approved the panel’s recommendation to select Swan Housing Association as the preferred partner to develop the future of Castle Point’s housing service .

Cllr Mark Howard, member champion for housing, said:

alternatives so they can make an informed decision.”

John Synnuck, Chief Executive of Swan Housing Association, commented:

“we are delighted to have been selected as the preferred partner for the proposed stock transfer.”

“We are looking forward to meeting with residents and the wider community to discuss how by working together we can deliver a better future for all in Castle Point.”

Partnership working at it's best

By working in partnership with Mid Essex Hospitals NHS Trust, Chelmsford Borough Council, and Homewood Housing Association, Swan has been able to deliver the first new homes on Mid Essex Hospital Services Trust's staff residential accommodation on the Broomfield Hospital site.

This scheme is going to provide over 350 homes for keyworkers and their families built to a very high standard which is something we are very proud of. Not only that, but these first few homes have been completed ahead of schedule which is another achievement.

As part of the development of this scheme we had to comply with the British Medical Association standards for the living and working conditions for hospital doctors and we are delighted to say that on the star rating system we are over achieving the brief!

This scheme is proof of how successful this partnership has been and how by working together we can provide affordable homes for people who work so hard for the community.



Building for community needs

Cllr Mark Howard, Castle Point Housing Member, officially started work on a new development on Little Gypps, Canvey Island recently.

The new scheme is set to provide affordable housing for people in the community with homes for rent and part-buy part-rent. This will include one and two bedroom flats and two and three bedroom houses.

Cllr Howard said: "I am very pleased that the Partnership between Castle Point, Swan Housing Group and the Housing Corporation is giving people on the Island a chance to get on to the property ladder and buy their own homes through part-buy

part-rent.

It is also great that all the families who will be renting these homes will be nominated from the waiting list for housing.

This is a great achievement and I hope we can continue to provide homes for those who need them."

Swan is thrilled to be providing these much needed homes on Canvey Island. They are all being built to meet eco homes which provides the benefits of high environmental standards and energy efficiency for residents.



Our photo shows Cllr Howard cutting the first turf with the partners of the development.

Local MP opens new Swan Housing extra care scheme for elderly



A new state of the art extra care scheme provided for the elderly by Swan Housing Group was officially opened by Rayleigh MP Mark Francois.

Residents were given a house-warming gift of £100 from Swan Housing to kick-start their resident fund.

Swan, in partnership with Rochford District Council, Essex Social Services and Outlook Care have provided 30 new luxury homes for elderly residents in the community.

Ian Nelthorpe, Swan Director of Central Services said: "This is a fantastic scheme and something Swan is very proud to have been involved in. This is a unique scheme within the area as it bridges the gap for

people requiring more care than would be provided in sheltered accommodation where previously the next step would have had to have been into residential care.

"It is clear that our residents are very happy in their new homes and we hope to continue to provide this standard of housing in the future."

All the wheel-chair accessible properties are self contained and offer the residents a greater degree of independent living. The scheme features a communal lounge, hairdressing facilities and guest rooms for visiting friends or relatives and a courtyard garden which provides a secure outside space for residents.

VIP visit to new housing development in Rochford

Work on a development of affordable homes for rent in Rochford District started recently with an official VIP site visit.

The scheme being developed by Swan Housing in partnership with Rochford District Council will provide homes on a redundant site in Tylney Avenue, Rochford. The development will consist of six one-bedroom flats, two two-bedroom flats and two wheelchair accessible bungalows. All properties are being built to achieve the EcoHomes Excellent Rating, an industry standard that ensures that homes are built using the best possible environmental standard.

As the project got underway, the Chairman of Rochford District Council, Cllr Mavis Webster, took the opportunity to visit the site and see building work begin in earnest.

The scheme is linked with a development at Twyford Avenue, Great Wakering which will provide two wheelchair accessible bungalows.

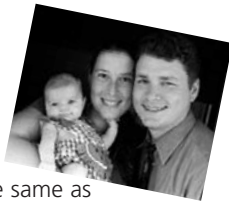
On her visit to Tylney Avenue, Cllr Webster said: "This is a wonderful example of partnership working to benefit our residents. The development will make use of a 'recycled' space to offer homes at affordable rents for people in our community with the greatest need.

"I was particularly pleased that we are providing the bungalows for people with disabilities. Meeting the workers on site, I was struck by the commitment to the high standard of workmanship of everyone working on the development. "

Celebrating diversity

The Modern Family

With over 16 million families in Britain that are often held responsible when things go wrong in society it is important that we understand the modern family.



Although today's families may not be the same as the one our parents grew up in, the family is still alive and thriving in a variety of ways. As well as the old, there are new patterns, and we must learn to make room for them and to value them.

The common models of family have moved from the traditional nuclear family (husband, wife and children) or extended family (husband, wife and children plus wider family relatives eg grandparents) to include lone parent, step, same sex, divorced or co-habiting parent families. Studies show the family structure has always changed in response to social and economic changes – the extended family where everyone worked together was necessary in the age of agricultural production whereas after industrialisation the nuclear family was more suited to the age of consumerism.

Marriage and Civil Unions

Whilst most people still choose to marry the number of marriages has been in decline for over 50 years. In England and Wales in 1950 there were 358,490 marriages, by 1991, this number had fallen to 306,800 and it continued to reduce in 1999 when there were only 263,500 marriages. The average age at first marriage in England and Wales has also increased to 28 years for women and 30 years for men, compared to 24 years for women and 26 years for men in 1986.

Civil Unions or partnerships allow same sex couples to make formal, legal commitments to each other including the responsibility of providing maintenance to their partner and children and the rights to social security, life assurance and pension

benefits and the ability to gain parental responsibility for their civil partners children.

There is also a formal, court-based process for dissolution of a civil partnership.

Cohabitation

Social views have changed since the 1950's and cohabitation is no longer regarded as "living in sin". The decline in marriage has been accompanied by a growth in co-habitation, both before and instead of marriage. In the 1950s, the percentage of women co-habiting before their first marriage was very small – less than 2%. By the mid-1990s, about 75% of women embarking on their first marriages reported that they had first lived with their future husbands.

However, experts have yet to discover whether co-habitation is replacing marriage. Statistics show that co-habiting relationships last, on average, two to three years before the partners split or opt for a wedding. Overall, less than 10% of people in Britain are co-habiting.

Parenthood

Our families are getting smaller as women choose to have fewer children and others choose to have none at all. This has resulted in the overall birth rate reducing from only 10% of women born in 1943 being childless at the age of 45 compared with indications that 25% of women born in 1973 will be childless at the same age.

Women are also older when they first give birth – the average age is 29 compared to 26 in the early 1970s.

Breaking up

Once perceived as being for life some claim this no longer appears to be the case. It is predicted that just over 40% of marriages will end in divorce although some argue that this may be due to divorce being more accessible than fifty years ago.

Co-habitation doesn't seem to be the

step family

Lone Parent

same sex

Divorce

answer some have claimed as unmarried couples are at greater risk of break-up than married ones. The most recent figures show that they are three to four times more likely to split up than their married counterparts

Step Families

Stepfamilies consist of married or co-habiting ('living together') couples who, between them, have at least one child from a previous relationship who either visits or lives with them. Stepfamilies have been saddled with a less than flattering image through classic fairy tales such as 'Cinderella' and 'Snow White' presenting wicked stepmothers and unpleasant stepsisters. The stepfamilies that feature prominently in television soap operas are usually characterised by arguments, fist fights and family breakdown. Perhaps this is why, in North America, the term 'blended family' instead of



'stepfamily' is gaining currency.

The charity Parentline Plus estimates that over 2.5 million children live in stepfamilies, that's 6-8% of all families with children and 10% of all children live with one birth parent and one step-parent. . 41% of all marriages are remarriages for one or both partners with remarriage rates twice as high for men as for women and each year 11% of lone parents marry or start a co-habiting relationship.

Lone Parenting

In the past 25 years statistics indicate that the number of families headed by lone parents has more than trebled. This model now accounts for 20% of all families with children (although this category also includes those who are divorced or separated but share parenting) . Some families are divided for reasons other than divorce for example parents may be working in another part of the country or overseas or one parent may be in institutional care eg mental health units, hospice or prison. Sometimes families are divided because of immigration regulations or because they are refugees.

Many argue that politicians and

commentators have unfairly blamed lone mothers for everything from youth crime to welfare spending. J K Rowling, famous single parent and author of the Harry Potter children's books, has spoken angrily about the treatment of lone parents and has taken on the role of ambassador for the National Council for

One Parent Families.

She says that it is time to 'explode the popular myth that most lone parents are feckless teenagers trying to get a council flat. Only 3% of us

are teenagers; 60% of us have been married and are now separated, divorced or bereaved. I'd like to see widespread acceptance of the fact that families simply come in many shapes and sizes.'

By recognising and valuing all these family diversities and doing the best we can in supporting our family members can we work towards a strong yet compassionate community for the future.

National Council for One Parent Families

Helpline: 0800 018 5026
(Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)
Tel: 020 7428 5400

www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk

National Family and Parenting Institute

Tel: 020 7428 5400

Website: www.nfpi.org

Families online

www.familiesonline.co.uk

Step Family Matters

www.step-family-matters.com

Families Need Fathers (FNF)

Helpline: 0870 760 7496
(Mon-Fri 6pm-10pm)
Tel: 020 7613 5060

www.fnf.org.uk

Gingerbread

Tel: 020 7488 9300
Advice Line: 0800 018 4318
(Mon-Fri 10am-4pm)

www.gingerbread.org.uk

Parentline Plus

Helpline: 0808 800 2222 (24 hours)
Textphone: 0800 783 6783
Tel: 020 7284 5500

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Change of Reception

Reception at Swan's Head Office at Pilgrim House, High Street, Billericay, is now closed due to undergoing refurbishment works. However, there is a Swan Housing reception at Zurich House, 127-129 High Street, Billericay should you need to visit the office.

Please note that all telephone numbers and email addresses remain the same.

Tips for the Garden.....

- dissolve simple washing soda crystals (often found in any supermarket) in hot water and brush over paths and patios to remove green algae. It is cheaper than chemicals off the garden centre shelf, and safer than many of them
- like using peat pots for cuttings and seedlings, but are worried about the impact on peat reserves?
Try using cut down inserts from toilet or kitchen towel rolls, they are biodegradable (and a lot cheaper)
- the top half of drinks bottles with the top removed, make great mini cloches and can allow your newly planted seedlings a plug plants to get established without attack from slugs and snails, it will also help protect them from unexpected late frosts
- if your Hostas are being attacked by slugs and snails try surrounding them with a layer of coarse grit and crushed up eggshells. These slimy plant eaters don't like crawling over the rough surface. You can also try Vaseline around the rims of any you have in pots, but make sure you have removed any that are lurking in there first
- before cutting your lawn try raking it with a wire or Tyne rake, any runners from buttercups and clovers will be raised and cut helping to reduce their rate of spread

If it looks too good to be true...



There is an old saying that if it looks too good to be true, then it probably is.

There are lots of advertisements in the press and on TV offering to halve your debt repayments, get your balances written off, "repair" your credit references, and so on. All of these need to be taken with a pinch of salt, or at least looked at very carefully. Here are some of the pitfalls:

"We can cut your debt repayments in half" by selling you another loan to cover existing debts. It may be true that repayments will be reduced, but check how long you will be making them for, and the rate of interest you will be paying. Unless the annual percentage rate is considerably lower than on your existing loans, the total amount you will have to repay will be a lot more, and you could be paying for a very long time.

"Debt free within 5 years, and the balance written off" – This is offered by an Insolvency Practitioner, who is able to organise for you an Individual Voluntary Arrangement. This is an alternative to bankruptcy, and is useful if you need to avoid the restrictions placed on a bankrupt. In order to use this procedure, you will need to have £100 - £200 per month available to pay on your credit debts, after you have

covered your usual outgoings. The Insolvency Practitioner will supervise the arrangement, collecting the money from you and paying it out. Naturally, they will take out their fees first, so it pays to shop around. There are some companies such as Payplan (tel:0800 085 4298), which are funded

by the credit industry, who can provide this service with no up front fees to clients. For many people, bankruptcy will be a cheaper option, and the balance of your debts would be written off in a year.

"Pay all your debts in one affordable monthly payment" – Debt management companies generally take about 17.5% out of each of your payments as their charges before they pass anything on to your creditors, so it will take you longer to repay your other debts. Payplan also offer this as a free service, so it makes sense to try them first. Most companies require minimum monthly payments of £100 to make this worthwhile.

"0% interest on your old balance when you transfer your existing Credit Card to ours" – but watch what percentage they will charge on any new purchases you make. It might be considerably more than you have been paying on your old card.

"Refused a loan because of a bad credit record? We can repair it for you" – Credit repair companies generally charge a fee of at least £50 to get hold of your credit record – something you could do for yourself for just £2 with information from Trading Standards Department. (www.ukcreditrepair.co.uk). **These are just a few things to watch out for - so don't forget that wise old saying!**

If you would like further information from our money advise officer please contact Beth Cornish on 01277 844258 or bcornish@swan.org.uk

Swan 'kicks off' football Project



Swan Housing Association has funded Tower Hamlets Youth League UTD football team (consisting of youngsters aged 16 and under) as part of its community grant programme. The funding given from Swan has helped develop the team, providing football facilities and football training.

This funding has been allocated with an agreement to involve as many children as possible from Swans' properties in London. Currently around 40 young people from Swans estates are engaged with the football project. So far the money has been used to

facilitate training sessions for the players, in which two qualified coaches have been hired, and a new team kit has also been arranged for the team to take part in the forthcoming summer league. Raziul Islam, Team Manager said

"We are really grateful for the support that Swan has given us and the players love their new football kit"

For further information about the football sessions please contact Abdullah Hossain on:

0207 510 9963



Resident Board Member Recruitment Come on Board...

Ever thought what it would be like to run a major business?

Are you interested in housing issues?

Are you looking to develop your career prospects?

Do you have business skills that would benefit your community?

Swan is looking for residents to join the Swan (Essex) Board. At Swan we believe that having residents on the Board helps us to make better decisions and keeps us focussed on what is important to you.

What is the Board of Management?

Although the day to day work of the Association is carried out by the staff, the Boards of Management govern the Association. They are made up of 12 members, four of which are residents. Everyone is a volunteer and brings a wide range of skills and experience to help make the best decisions for the Association and its residents.

What Board Members do, what they don't do?

Board Members provide leadership, direction and control. Collectively the Board Members agree all the major decisions for the Association. Such as agreeing the budgets for repairs, agreeing major new building projects and ensuring that we meet the requirements of the law and the Housing Corporation. The Boards take their responsibilities very seriously and as a Board Member you need to act in the best interest of the Association. You do not need to 'represent' the views of residents, but bring your experience of being a resident to help with decision making.

We will be holding an open evening for those interested at our Head Office in Zurich House, Billericay on the 7th June 2007, 5 - 8pm when you will have an opportunity to meet staff and other Board Members.

For more information please contact Kari-Ann Waldon on 01277 844 744 or email kwaldon@swan.org.uk



Nasreen Golamnohee

Our experience of being a Board Member for Swan Housing

"Being a board member is challenging and rewarding experience. I am working with a team with a wide range of expertise who feels equally committed to making a difference to the development and delivery of

social housing. The training and professional development being a Board member are useful to me and will help me in my career and personal development.

It is hard work juggling priorities, getting a good understanding of the group's business and making sure that I set aside time for Swan Housing meetings and other events.

But it is worth the time and the effort as I am enjoying every minute of it..."

"Learning how Swan works and applying that to planning for the future is a new angle for me. Like other residents I've only ever had to contact Swan when I had a problem to resolve but now I can use my experiences to help residents have a real constructive influence over Swans services, both present and future. I deal with some very committed officers and residents that help me achieve this, it's very rewarding and I would certainly recommended it to other residents."



Tyson Bunby

Let us introduce ourselves

Basildon RCC Members



Each month we would like to introduce a regional Resident Consultative Committee (RCC) and we are launching this feature with the Basildon RCC.

Monthly meetings are held at Swan Head Office in Billericay where policies and procedures of Swan's business, environmental, neighbourhood and community issues are discussed.

would you like to make a difference ?

Are you are interested in attending the meetings?

....if so, please contact Kari-Ann Waldon on 01277 844 744 or email kwaldon@swan.org.uk



If you have no home contents insurance you could be in for a shock!

Your housing provider does not insure your furniture and personal possessions, however, the National Housing Federation My Home Contents Insurance scheme offers you an affordable insurance policy where premiums can be paid fortnightly by cash as well as by direct debit.

For more information contact your Housing Office or telephone

0845 337 2463

'Chance for a Change'



The following is a brief reflection of one Swan Housing Residents' time on a ten day Venture Trust 'chance for a change' course, which took place from 21-30 March 2007. The course was held in Scotland and was specifically held for Foyer Residents all over Britain. Swan's Community Investment Team provided Nicole with funds for her return train fare to Inverness. Nicola was grateful to have been given this opportunity to attend this course and her comments were as follows:

"As well as helping me with the personal reasons I went for, Venture Trust has helped with a lot more. The skills I've learnt are skills I can use in everyday life, now and in the future. A few of these things were problem solving, how to make decisions and how to communicate effectively.

Whilst on a four day expedition in the beautiful Scottish Highlands, I felt there was a message...'at times things can get hard but you should never give up. If you can dream, you can do it..."

Nicole was helped with a grant from the Community Investment Teams 'Go For It' programme. There is £5000 set aside to support Swan's residents achieve their personal development or educational and training goals. If you would like to know more then please contact Kari-ann Waldon on 01277 844744.

Report by Nicole Adams of Basildon Foyer

Do you understand the information provided?

We hope that this newsletter is clear and concise but should you require any further clarification please contact your local housing office.

Our offices are open from 9am to 5.15pm, Monday to Thursday and 9am to 5pm on Fridays.

Head Office:

Pilgrim House, High Street, Billericay, Essex. CM12 9XY (this office is temporarily closed and post is forwarded to Zurich House Office Billericay) Phone 01277 844700

Freepost address

Swan Housing Group, FREEPOST ANG10361, Billericay, CM12 9ZZ

Laindon Area Office:

Phil Morris House, Laindon High Road, Laindon, Basildon, Essex. SS15 6BN Phone 0800 515533

Freepost address:

Swan Housing Group, FREEPOST RM1033 Basildon SS15 6GD

London Regional Office:

Cygnets House South, 10 Chriss Street, Poplar London. E14 6LL Phone 020 7510 9960

Freepost address:

Swan Housing Group, FREEPOST NAT20891, London. E14 6BR

Basildon Foyer

1 Cranes Court, Cranes Farm Road, Basildon, Essex. SS14 2HP Phone 01268 885300

EMERGENCIES -

OUT OF OFFICE HOURS:

Phone 0800 7832768

If you would like a copy of this newsletter in large print, braille, tape or in your language please contact your nearest office

আপনার ভাষায়

Afka aad ku hadasho

採用你的語言

theo ngôn ngữ của bạn

Entry form for the Good Neighbourhood Award

I would really like to nominate the following person

Name:.....

Address:

For the category of:

Because: (give a brief reason – we may contact you for further information later or attached a separate sheet)

£100 prize
for each winning category

My name is:

Address:

Tel:.....

Please return to: Kari Ann Waldon, Swan Housing Group, FREEPOST (no stamp required) ANG 10361, Billericay, Essex CM12 9ZZ by the 6 July

Knowing Me, Knowing You

Enclosed with this newsletter is the Residents Profile Questionnaire with a stamped addressed envelope for ease of return. Your responses will be kept private and confidential and will only be used by Swan to plan for the future in order that we provide homes and services that are what our customers want. We can also understand our customers better and deliver the services that you want.

For example once we know the age profile of our customers we can ensure that we provide homes of the right bedroom size and layout to meet these changing needs. Your contact details will assist us with maintaining and repairing your home as we can confirm appointments and check details. We may find estates where our letters need to be in other languages or customers needing letters in Braille or large print. We can also ensure that none of our customers are disadvantaged because of our policies.

This questionnaire asks a range of questions and we realise that some of these are sensitive but they will help us to plan for the future and we would ask you to complete and return this as soon as possible. All responses will be entered into a draw and the prizes will be an iPod nano, digital camera and 3 x £25 shopping vouchers.

If you have any queries please contact your Housing Officer at your Housing Office.