



# streets ahead

Spring 2017

[www.housingsolutions.co.uk](http://www.housingsolutions.co.uk)



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# WEBSITE ROADSHOW

During the Easter Holidays we were out and about showing off our new website and customer portal to our customers. The Housing Solutions Website Roadshow stopped off in various locations in Maidenhead, High Wycombe and Wokingham between the 11th and 13th April.

Armed with loads of Easter goodies and over 400 chocolate eggs, the Website Roadshow first stopped off at Beechlands Court, High Wycombe to visit some of our supported customers. Over the afternoon of the 11th April everyone had lots of fun learning all about the features of the new website and signing up to our new customer portal.



Over the next few days of our Website Roadshow we made visits to our customers in Maidenhead and Wokingham. Everyone who came and signed up to our Customer Portal received an Easter treat. It was great to see so many of you come and join us in the sunshine! To sign up to the new portal all you will need is your date of birth, postcode and tenancy reference number which can be found on correspondence letters from us. Alternatively, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 876 6060 and we will be able to provide you with your tenancy reference number.

## Easter Colouring Competition Winners!

Congratulations to the 5 winners of our Easter Colouring Competition; Megan, Emmy, Ryan, Mckenzie and Millie-Jade. Thank you for creating such 'egg-cellent' artwork, we hope you enjoyed your prizes! For more information on our competitions head over to our Facebook page.



## We're on Social Media!

Join us over on our social media pages and keep up to date with everything we get up to. We regularly post photos of our events, host competitions, share events happening in your area, advertise local employment and volunteering opportunities, and much more! You can like us on Facebook @Housing.Solutions.UK and follow us on Twitter @HSL\_Homes. We'll see you there!

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY BLANDFORD HOUSE!

Back on the 10th March Blandford House turned 30 years old. Staff and residents of the sheltered scheme celebrated the occasion with a champagne afternoon tea. The afternoon was a great success; everyone enjoyed delicious sandwiches, cakes and a little bit of bubbly.

Our CEO, Orla Gallagher, and Councillor David Coppinger came along for a cup of tea, to say a few words and cut a very special birthday cake. Anne Tarn, resident of Blandford House, received a bouquet and special thanks from Orla for her community involvement at Blandford House.



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## GAS SAFETY

Badly maintained appliances can cause serious injury. Housing Solutions are required by law to undertake annual Gas Safety Inspections of all gas pipes and appliances that are installed in the home.

Gas Safety Inspections are quick and vital for safety of customers and their family. In the interests of health and safety we would ask for your co-operation and allow us access to carry out the safety checks as soon as possible. While the majority of customers allow us access to carry out our Gas Safety Inspections, there have been occasions where it has been necessary to take court action. Inspections should not take longer than 60 minutes.

If your Gas Safety Inspection is due please, call our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 876 6060 to arrange your appointment.

# CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

Earlier in April we invited Lizzie, a customer member of our Service Improvement Team, to come into our offices to fire some questions at our Customer Service Manager, Debbie White. Here are some of the highlights of the interview.

In answer to what her role as Customer Service Manager entails, Debbie said, “My role is all about working with every department in the organisation to deliver better customer service. I do a lot of work towards bringing different elements of the business together and making sure we have action plans in place that means everyone is working together to improve the services we give our customers. Also, I work closely with our customers to find out what they feel is important so that we can focus our efforts on what really matters to them and try to move to being more proactive to customers issues, rather than reactive.”



Lizzie asked what the short term focuses for the customer service team were and how will the new website enhance customer experience? Debbie replied, “Customers have told us very clearly that we need to improve our customer service. Getting the basics right so that we can provide a seamless and consistency service to all customers is what is really important to us; it’s what our customers want and what we want to provide. We are really focused on learning from complaints, taking the comments made, finding out what is happening and creating innovative ways of resolving and preventing the same issues. Online services are another way we are looking to improve customer service. Customers can book appointments at their leisure. If you want to wake up at 2am and book your repairs, you can!”

To read the full interview please visit the news page on our website, [www.housingsolutions.co.uk](http://www.housingsolutions.co.uk).

## Do you want to make a difference to the services you receive from Housing Solutions?

Housing Solutions have a number of different volunteering opportunities you can get involved in, requiring different amounts of time. Whatever your passion, skill set and availability we can find a volunteering opportunity for you. We’ll offer you training and support along the way as well as ‘thank you’ gifts for giving your time and energy.

For more information about what you could be involved with as an involved customer please contact Lyndsey Storey on:

[Lyndsey.storey@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:Lyndsey.storey@housingsolutions.co.uk)



# POTENTIAL MERGER

Housing Solutions and Bracknell Forest Homes have confirmed they are in early merger discussions. The merger, if it proceeds, would create a new, larger association with over 13,000 homes in ownership and management predominantly in Berkshire. The merger would build on both organisations strong commitment to addressing the housing shortage in the region, enabling the new organisation to provide more affordable homes for local people in need.

Orla Gallagher, Chief Executive of Housing Solutions Ltd said “We’re really excited about the opportunities for our customers and the increasing impact we will have across Berkshire. The sector is changing and a merger of our two organisations will make us stronger and more resilient.”

Discussions will continue until July 2017 when the Boards from both organisations will formally consider the business case for the merger. If approved, the merger could be completed in the autumn of 2017. In the meantime, both organisations remain focused on continuing to deliver high quality services to their tenants and leaseholders.

We really want to hear your views and thoughts and answer any questions you may have. Please send us your feedback by **Wednesday 14th June** either by:

- E-mailing us on [questions@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:questions@housingsolutions.co.uk)
- Messaging us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/housing.solutions.uk](http://www.facebook.com/housing.solutions.uk)
- Tweeting us using @HSL\_Homes
- Phoning us on 0800 876 6060
- Writing to us at Housing Solutions, Crown House, Crown Square, Waldeck Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 8BY

There will also be additional opportunities for customers living in our sheltered and supported housing to give their views.

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## TRADES TEAM AT THAMES HOSPICE

On Thursday 23rd March some of our Trades team took some time out of their busy schedule to carry out some work over at our corporate charity; Thames Hospice.

Throughout the day the nine strong team cleared and renovated the children’s play area, trimmed back trees and bushes, cleaned garden furniture and stained the feature pergola. A Sister on the In-Patient Unit at Thames Hospice, Windsor said “[it’s] great, the children love playing in there.”



# TOPPING OUT AT THE BIRCHES



Housing Solutions and CALA Homes moved one step closer to the completion of The Birches when the building was officially topped-out on the 30th March 2017. The topping-out ceremony attended by, Nigel Cook, Board Member at Housing Solutions, Jill Caress, Business Development Director at Housing Solutions and James Goldring, Commercial Director of CALA Homes marks the completion of the external fabric of the building at The Birches.

Jill Caress of Housing Solutions said: “We are delighted that through our partnership with CALA Homes, we are able to bring much needed new affordable extra care accommodation to Woodley. We’re looking forward to welcoming our first residents later this year.”

James Goldring of CALA Homes said: “We are creating a new community in Woodley with homes for every type of buyer at our Parklands development, and The Birches will play an integral part of that offering, providing 60 purpose built apartments and extra care facilities specifically for the over 55s. It will allow older generations to live with independence, privacy and security but with peace of mind that help is on hand if needed. As we near the completion of this stylish new facility, we look forward to welcoming its first residents to the Parklands community.”

## Introducing Philip!

We are pleased to introduce Philip Atkinson as our new Extra Care Scheme Manager over at The Birches. In his new role Philip will be managing The Birches Housing Management team. The team will be customer’s first point of contact from the initial sign up to dealing with any tenancy issues, benefit queries or repairs.



## NO SMOKING

As you may be aware, a law in relation to smoking came into force on 1st July 2007. The main aim is to protect individuals from second hand smoke. We would therefore be grateful if, whilst our tradesmen or staff are in your home, you refrain from smoking in the property.

## STRUGGLING TO SEE?

Did you know that we can provide the content of this edition of Streets Ahead in an email format so that it can be read screen reader?

If you or any customers you know would struggle to read this publication because of a visual impairment please get in touch with Emily on [emily.rogers@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:emily.rogers@housingsolutions.co.uk).

# NEW WEBSITE & CUSTOMER PORTAL

Our brand new website and Customer Portal are now live! The new website has been designed for use on both mobiles and computers to make it quick and easy to:

- Report repairs and book repair appointments;
- Pay your rent and set up re-occurring payments;
- Report ASB;
- Web chat;
- View your tenancy details and more!

## Competition time!

When we hit 500 sign ups to our Customer Portal we will choose 2 customers at random who will receive a £25 shopping voucher each.

All you need to do to be in with a chance to win is register to our Customer Portal. Go to our website and find the Customer Portal tab. To register you will need your email address, date of birth and tenancy reference number. If you do not know your tenancy reference number please contact our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 876 6060. For full T&Cs please see our website. Good luck!

## FOOTPRINT

Footprint is a small device that you can wear at all times. Whether you're at home, at the shops or on a weekend away around the United Kingdom, the Footprint will give you the security and peace of mind that help is at hand when ever you may need it.



The device has GPS tracking, fall detection feature and 24 hour linked telecare support ensuring that you can always get help wherever you may be.

For more information about The Footprint Alarm and our price plans, please contact us on:

01628 545000 or Email: [homeassistance@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:homeassistance@housingsolutions.co.uk)

## CONTACT DETAILS

Streets Ahead is the newsletter for customers of Housing Solutions.

Don't forget that this is your newsletter, so if you have any suggestions for improvements or ideas for stories or local news, please let us know by dropping an email to: [pr@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:pr@housingsolutions.co.uk) or by calling Holly Burgess on 01628 543126.

## OPENING TIMES

Our offices are open Monday to Thursday from 8.45 am to 5.15 pm and on a Friday from 8.45 am to 4.45 pm.

## CASH OFFICE OPENING TIMES

For the payment of rent, our cash office is open: Monday to Thursday 8.45 am to 4.45 pm; Friday 8.45 am to 4.15 pm.

Or call 080087 6060 to use are automated telephone rent payment line.

## CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE OPENING TIMES

Monday	8.45 am to 5.15 pm
Tuesday	8.45 am to 5.15 pm
Wednesday	10 am to 5.15 pm
Thursday	8.45 am to 5.15 pm
Friday	8.45 am to 4.45 pm

## EMERGENCY REPAIRS

For emergency repairs outside our normal office hours, at weekends or on bank holidays please call:

**0800 876 6060**

## CONTACT NUMBERS

Freephone - 0800 876 6060

Email - [contact@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:contact@housingsolutions.co.uk)

Website - [www.housingsolutions.co.uk](http://www.housingsolutions.co.uk)

Facebook - [facebook.com/Housing.Solutions.UK](https://facebook.com/Housing.Solutions.UK)

Twitter - @HSL\_Homes