

## RESIDENTS TAKE LEAD TO IMPROVE MAINTENANCE SERVICES

The first Solon Maintenance Forum was held in March to work towards a better service and addressing concerns raised by residents.

Residents addressed four key questions and worked in three groups to discuss the issues raised. Below are just a few of the comments made – you can read the minutes on the Solon website.

### What's good about Solon's maintenance service?

- > Straightforward jobs are OK, large or tricky ones can be a problem
- > Contractors are polite and tidy up after themselves
- > Operatives can now phone Solon while on site to agree changes to work order

### What's not so good about the service?

- > Contractors unsure of job details on attending
- > Not enough post-inspection of work
- > Not enough knowledge of acceptable standards

### What has improved since the new contractor took over?

- > Easier to talk to
- > Contractors attend quickly
- > They will work on Saturdays to get the job done

### What ideas do you have to improve the overall service?

- > Give contractors a chance to improve performance
- > Review Solon out-of-hours message (it frightens tenants out of placing call-outs)
- > Being able to phone up and find out where your home is in the planned programme

Residents said they would like to meet again to help get the service working the way you would like – to give quality and best value for money.



*Residents attending the first Maintenance Forum in March to discuss key questions for moving the maintenance service forward.*

Using all the information and comments from the Forum, Solon Asset Management team will now meet and create a maintenance action plan. This will be posted to all attendees and taken to the next Maintenance Forum (planned for the end of May) for resident discussion and comment.

Solon would then like to form a Maintenance Panel – a core group of residents who could get to know how the Asset Management team works and would provide regular resident feedback and become part of our structure.

To read the minutes of the Maintenance Forum contact Julie Sneddon Greaves on **0117 916 7768** or visit the website: [www.solonswha.co.uk](http://www.solonswha.co.uk)

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## HOW'S OUR SERVICE DOING?

We thought it would be helpful to include in each newsletter a general update about how our maintenance services are performing for residents who are unable or do not wish to attend our forums.

Since August 2006 MD Building Services has been carrying out the day-to-day repairs to Solon properties with a contract for one year. Since then we have received some very positive comments from residents about MD and their performance. Our costs have also reduced. This means we have been able to deal with some of the longer-standing maintenance problems.

We thought it would be helpful to explain how we measure our contractor's performance. We give the contractor a deadline for each type of job. There are three main types of job:

**Emergency - must be completed within 24 hours**  
**Urgent - must be completed within 5 days**  
**Normal - must be completed within 20 days**

When a resident receives a copy of the works order there will be a date for completing the job. This is the date Solon uses to see if the job has been finished on time.

For December performance from MD was:

Emergency 95% on time  
Urgent 96% on time  
Normal 91% on time

Because the contract with MD is going well, we have agreed to extend it for a further 6 months so we have time to think carefully about how we carry out your day-to-day repairs in future. If you would like to get involved in helping us plan for the future and have not already attended the Maintenance Forum please contact Julie Sneddon Greaves on **0117 916 7768**.

### Free internet access to Solon website at your local library

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

Click on 'Resident Involvement' to find out what's going on – meetings, events, training

Bristol Central Library	0117 903 7200
Mendip District Library	01749 342 354
Forest of Dean Coleford	01594 833 351
South Gloucestershire	01454 868 009

## MEET THE SOLON MAINTENANCE TEAM

**Ruth Berry** is the Managing Surveyor at Solon and has been with Solon for more than 3 years now. Ruth is responsible for managing the team that deals with day-to-day repairs, cyclical re-decoration of properties and the planned maintenance and improvement programmes.

**Andy Creak** is the Building and Asset Management Surveyor and has been with Solon for 18 months. Andy manages larger-scale planned works, external re-decoration, planned maintenance and improve-

ments such as kitchen and bathroom replacements and damp treatment works to some older properties.

**Steve Ward** is the Maintenance Co-ordinator and has been with Solon for a year. He looks after day-to-day repairs and the gas and fire alarm servicing programme. Steve is out and about one day a week for post inspections of response work.

**Mike Delderfield** is Solon's temporary Maintenance Surveyor. Many residents will have met Mike over the

years as he has returned to help keep the service running smoothly.

**Paula Seward** is our longest serving member – she started at Solon in March 92! The maintenance direct line now rings on Paula's desk. She raises works orders and emails them to MD Building who arrange the appointment. Solon is working hard to improve the service and wants all feedback – good and bad. It is Paula who reads the 'satisfaction slip' from residents and you can be sure she makes your comments count.

# Residents Forum

..update... update... up

12 February 2007

Here are a few of the issues discussed at your last Forum. We look forward to seeing residents at the next meeting. Solon pays childcare and reasonable travel costs. Hot food provided!

- > Reviewed Tenancy Agreement.
- > Use of Bristol City Council Recourse Centre for Solon residents – now with the council legal department. (The next Forum meeting will be held at this venue with a presentation from their volunteers.)
- > Home contents insurance. Solon is now researching other companies – to review at next forum meeting.
- > Resident newsletter – agreed an editorial panel would be set up. Residents felt that a morning meeting would be good to make involvement accessible to people who could not attend evening meetings. If anybody is interested please contact RICO Julie – see details below.
- > The board members have been on a tour of Solon properties. Forum members felt they themselves would benefit from a similar tour, to get an overview of Solon properties and areas. We plan this to go ahead in summer.
- > We tried a hot meal at the last Forum instead of the usual sandwiches. Everyone agreed we should continue with this so that you don't need to think about cooking before the meeting. Meetings will now start with hot food.

Everyone is welcome to meetings – all Solon Residents are members of the Forum. Contact for more information: **Julie Sneddon Greaves** (RICO)  
Solon South West Housing Association Ltd  
1 Newfoundland Court  
St Paul Street, Off Newfoundland Street  
Bristol BS2 9AP  
Tel: 0117 916 7768  
Email: julie\_sneddongreaves@solonswha.co.uk

## RESIDENTS' FORUM DATES 2007

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Monday 30 April     | Bristol Tenants Resource Centre<br>4 Waring House<br>Redcliffe Hill<br>Redcliffe<br>Bristol BS1 6TB |
| Monday 23 July      | The Kings Arms Inn<br>Garston Street<br>Shepton Mallet<br>Somerset BA4 5LN                          |
| Monday 10 September | Leftbank Centre<br>128 Cheltenham Road<br>Montpelier<br>Bristol BS6 5RW                             |
| Monday 26 November  | The Stackpool Room<br>The Southville Centre<br>Beauley Road<br>Southville<br>Bristol BS3 1QG        |

### Home Contents Insurance

Just a reminder to everyone that all residents are responsible for taking out their own home contents insurance.



Solon holds buildings insurance for all its properties but this does **NOT** cover any accidental loss or damage to residents' possessions. For example, if your things are damaged by an overflowing bath, fire, roof leaks or mould caused by damp or condensation, you need your own contents insurance to cover them.

If you do not have home contents insurance, please contact your Housing Officer for advice.



Support at Solon: Jenny Hair is the new Tenancy Support Officer.

## Your new tenancy support officer

Solon has welcomed Jenny Hair, our permanent Tenancy Support Officer who started in January.

Jenny is here to help any Solon tenants who need advice and support. This can include help with debt management, budgeting, benefits and grants, training, education and employment.

If you feel that you need advice or support please contact Jenny Hair on **0117 924 4071** or your Housing Officer.

## ActionAid Recycling from the office



**Calling all tenants who use computers and mobile phones!**

At Solon we have just set up a connection with ActionAid Recycling which collects **ink and toner cartridges, mobile phones and PDAs** to raise funds for the charity. ActionAid is a unique partnership fighting for a world without poverty.

Bringing the above to the Solon office or visit the ActionAid website ([www.actionaidrecycling.org.uk](http://www.actionaidrecycling.org.uk)) for details of cartridges we can take. **All mobiles can be recycled!**

## Bristol City Council invites Solon residents to discuss racial harassment

Bristol City Council Tenants Participation Team has been working with a group of tenants from a black and minority backgrounds as well as organisations representing communities in Bristol.

The group meets to discuss any service covered by Neighbourhood & Housing Services and chooses its own topics.

Group members felt that housing association residents should be involved. The next meeting is on **12-2 pm** (working lunch - food supplied) on **18 May 2007** at the Black Development Agency, Russelltown Avenue, Bristol BS5. The meeting will discuss racial harassment.

Shobha Das from Support Against Racist Incidents (Sari) will be speaking and housing staff will be available to answer any questions.

Solon will cover reasonable transport and child-care costs. Contact Julie Sneddon Greaves (RICO) on 0117 916 7768

## Beware bogus callers - Solon DOES cover fire alarm services

The Maintenance Team is asking residents not to make any appointments with companies to check fire alarms or other safety equipment without first checking with Solon.

We have our own independent Fire Alarm Service Programme, managed by the Maintenance Team.

In the past companies have leafleted homes and made appointments that were not necessary but left Solon with a big bill!

If you have any queries about the fire alarm services please contact the Maintenance Team on **0117 924 4071**

# Solon homes in the heart of Broadmead

The transformation of four Georgian houses alongside the major shopping development in the centre of Bristol has provided homes for tenants who wish to live close to the city centre.

With funding from the Housing Corporation and Bristol City Council Solon refurbished the terrace right on the edge extension to Broadmead. Work was completed in January.

## Before...



## ... and after!



## Step back in time

During a visit to the Broadmead homes following redevelopment of the terrace, Solon staff met former resident Joan Casis who knocked on the door and asked to be shown around.

It turned out that Joan was born there during the 2nd World War and wanted to pause for a while to recapture childhood memories.

If you have a story to share with Solon please contact RICO Julie Sneddon Greaves on 0117 916 7768

## Home improvements

We are pleased to advise that Solon has now started a three-year programme of planned works to improve homes. Some residents will have had work done already. The type of work that we are concentrating on is kitchen and bathroom replacements, boiler replacements, window replacements, improving loft insulation, boundary repairs and re-wiring. Other repairs may be included depending on what is necessary in your home.

The work that we are doing is dictated by the results of the stock condition survey which was carried out a year ago. This shows which parts of homes need improving and when. As we did not manage to gain access to all homes, a surveyor will be spending time in the summer to inspect the properties that were not visited before. This means that we will be able to plan and budget for all work that needs to be done.

When the programme for the three years is finalised we will be writing to those who need work doing to confirm what we will be carrying out and when. We plan to deal with the more serious issues over the three years.

After 2010 a rolling programme of planned repairs and replacements will be implemented, so if your property is in fair condition we probably won't need to deal with anything at your home for a few years.

Our contractors, Steele Davis, have started the programme and are working hard to complete it on time and to work to an excellent standard. We hope that if you have had work carried out recently you will let us know how you think it went.

We have also spent approximately £250,000 on cyclical re-decorating this last year. We had some problems with repairs, particularly with our listed buildings, but we worked together with J&S Seddon to overcome the difficulties. We will soon be starting on the new programme and will let you know nearer the time if your home is included.

## Banding news

### A change to the way that social housing is allocated

With effect from 12 March all applicants on the Common Housing register waiting list will no longer be given points to demonstrate priority. The points system is being replaced with a new banding system. If you are already on the list your existing points will be reassessed and you will be put into the correct band in line with your circumstances.

There will now be five bands. People in bands 1, 2 and 3 are far more likely to be made an offer of accommodation than those in band 4, who may have to wait a considerable amount of time to be made an offer. People who find themselves placed in band 5 may find that they never receive an offer of accommodation. This is because people placed in band 5 will be considered to have a very low priority for rehousing.

### What if I think I am in the wrong band?

You do have the right to appeal. If you wish to appeal please contact the Rehousing Team office, for a form to make this process easier.

**IF YOU NEED A LARGE PRINT VERSION OF THIS NEWSLETTER OR A TRANSLATION PLEASE RING**

**0117 916 7768**