

www.selwoodhousing.com

Summer 2017

working together



The magazine for tenants and residents

23 NEW make a difference awards

Nominate now

8 Universal Credit

Make sure you're ready

9 WIN a week's free rent

Pay by direct debit

28 Anti-social behaviour

Tackling it together





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Welcome to

Grab your sunglasses and slap on the sunscreen - summer is here at last!

Tenant involvement is one of our top priorities at the Selwood Housing Group - it helps us improve our homes and shape our services. So we've listened to your feedback and this issue of **working together** is hot off the press and bursting at the seams with all your favourite features. Read more about the results of our readership survey on page 5.

Our **make a difference** section also focuses on how you can play your part - read one customer's journey from new tenant, to being a driving force behind change for the better. And now's your chance to nominate friends, neighbours and local community groups that have gone above and beyond in our **NEW make a difference** awards.

Looking for a change or to add to your skill set? Silcoa has six apprenticeship roles to fill this summer (p4) and there's lots of exciting, free courses coming up from The Learning Curve, read more in our four page centre pull-out. And no need to worry about Universal Credit. We answer all your questions in our FAQs in **money advice** (p8).

Whatever catches your eye this issue, from fire safety advice (p25), to beating antisocial behaviour (p28), making your own bunting (**get crafty**) to barbecue recipes (**chef's kitchen**), keep smiling and enjoy the sunshine!

Georgina

Georgina Crawshaw

Editor

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Competition time

End of an era

After nine years at the top, we're very sorry to see Alison Christy step down from her role as chair of the board in October.



After becoming a Selwood tenant in 2005, she got involved with a local community group because she wanted to make a difference where she lived. One thing led to another and Selwood Housing got under Alison's skin. By 2008 she'd been elected to the board, was appointed vice chair in 2011 and two months later took over as chair. Since then she's been a driving force in growing the Selwood Housing Group and brand - from launching Silcoa, to supporting our development programme which has doubled in size since she became chair.

Barry Hughes, group chief executive, told **working together** "There are very few housing association chairs who are tenants, and even fewer who are women, Alison is both. She's brought a huge amount of energy, passion and commitment to her role, whilst also juggling a busy family life as a single parent."

Thank you for all your hard work Alison and congratulations on being a finalist in the tenant lifetime contribution category at the 2017 Housing Heroes Awards - we've all got our fingers crossed for you! ■

Would you like to **make a difference** like Alison? Turn to page 22 to find out more.

Could you be our next apprentice?

Ever read **a day in the life** (see page 20) and wondered what it would be like to work for the Selwood Housing Group? Well now's your chance to find out!

On the job training

Silcoa has seven apprenticeship roles up for grabs - three electricians, one carpenter, one business administrator and two heating engineer - all starting this autumn.

"Apprentices make a real difference to our business," group chief executive, Barry Hughes, told **working together**. "They bring in energy and new ideas - it's great to be able to help them at the start of their careers."

"Unlike university where you pay to learn. An apprenticeship also puts me in the workplace, so I know how companies work in the real world."



Silcoa have a range of apprenticeships available

And there are plenty of benefits for you too! Apprenticeships offer on-the-job training, with the academic part of the course taking place at a local college. And you'll be paid for your work, as well as gaining a nationally recognised qualification which increases your chances of future employment.

Success stories

Since our apprenticeship scheme started in 2013 we've welcomed a total of 23 apprentices across the group. And some of them have even been offered permanent roles with us thanks to the skills they've learnt! Nathan Singer, who is now a full time property administrator, told **working together** the best thing about being an apprentice is being paid while learning: "Unlike university where you pay to learn. An apprenticeship also puts me in the workplace, so I know how companies work in the real world."

Max Walker-Wiltshire, who shadowed Barry Hughes in the last issue of the magazine, also passed his apprenticeship with flying colours. Not only is he now a fully fledged member of our customer support team, but he was named as the Customer Service Apprentice of the Year 2017 at the Wiltshire College annual awards in March. ■

If you're interested in learning while you earn, keep an eye on the current vacancies section of our website:
www.selwoodhousing.com/jobs

Onwards and upwards

A big thank you to everyone who filled out our online readership survey. We sent it to almost half our customers (just under 3000 email addresses!) and also printed the link in the new year issue. Nearly 500 of you answered our questions and we'll be using your responses to make YOUR magazine even better.

Love is in the air

The good news is nearly 95% of you like **working together** and over 90% prefer the new, smaller sized version of the magazine. Not only is this more handbag (and man satchel) friendly but lower printing and postage costs mean better value for your rent money. We also asked if you'd prefer to receive an online version of the magazine by email (which would help keep production costs down) and nearly a third of you said yes so we're looking at how we can do this in the future.

Read all about it

Most of you find **working together** clear and easy to read and think it's interesting and informative. We try hard to make the magazine appeal to all our readers and more than 9 out of 10 of you agree we're doing a good job and it covers a broad range of subjects. The topics you told us you most enjoy are news and info, local events and things to do, competitions, real life stories, computers and technology, and managing your finances - so we're planning lots of great features over the next few months. In fact, this summer issue is packed full of them so grab a cuppa, put your feet up and enjoy!



Remember the **working together** team always loves to hear from you! Drop us a line and tell us what you think of the magazine and if you have an idea for a real life feature, or would like to contribute a recipe, please get in touch.

T: 01225 715 913

E: workingtogether@selwoodhousing.com ■



Selwood Housing is running lots of customer consultations and surveys online - so if you missed out this time, but want to take part in the future, send your email address to makeadifference@selwoodhousing.com or call 01225 715 709. ■

Single and struggling?

We're always looking for innovative ways to provide affordable housing to help people in need. Especially with the recent benefits shakeup.

"From April 2018 single people under 35 will only be entitled to a single room allowance to pay their rent - in Wiltshire this is approximately £67 per week," explains neighbourhood lettings manager, Kerri Hargreaves. "This means most young people won't be able to afford one of our self contained properties."

So we're currently trialing a shared housing pilot where two single people live together to make their home more affordable. "This project includes the opportunity to work with our partner, The Learning Curve, to access training and education opportunities to increase skills and employability," adds Kerri. "We also offer tenancy support, to give them the best possible start, and help them keep to their tenancy agreement."

19 year old Shane Haines is one of four people taking part in the 12 month trial. He told **working together** he's really happy in his two bedroom flat in Trowbridge: "I was sleeping on a camp bed in my brother's bedroom! Not only have I made a new friend, but sharing means I've finally been able to afford my first home." If the trial continues to go well we hope to offer more shared flats in the future. ■

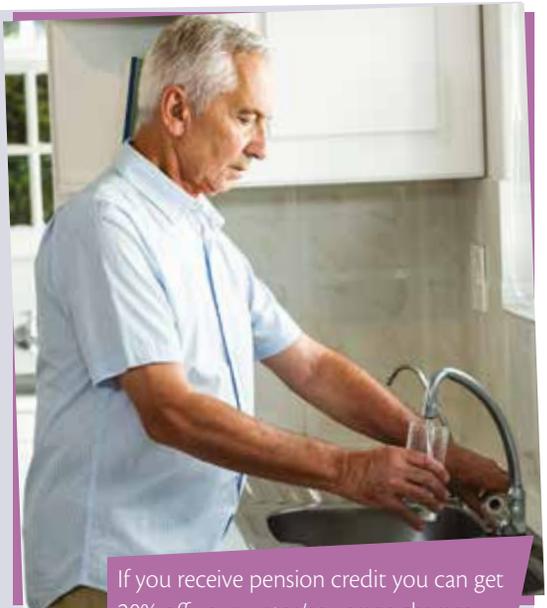


Shared housing makes homes more affordable for single people living on low incomes

Every little helps

Did you know Wessex Water offer a discount of 20% to water and/or sewerage service customers who receive pension credit?

Apply online at www.wessexwater.co.uk/pensioncredit or call 0345 600 3600. Make sure you have your National Insurance number, date of birth and evidence of your entitlement to pension credit to hand. ■



If you receive pension credit you can get 20% off your water/sewerage charges



Development update time

Did you know Selwood Housing now have over 6,150 affordable homes for rent? Here are some interesting development facts and figures for the 2016/17 financial year:

- We built 142 new homes housing 516 people
- 32 were shared ownership homes helping people get on the property ladder
- 2 were Cottsbury Homes for market sale
- We started building on site/entered contracts with developers for 310 more homes.

“Last year’s development programme was part funded by the sale of two Cottsbury properties, and 18 shared ownership homes - a reinvestment of over £2 million,” says development director, Paul Walsh. “We’re on track to reach our target of handing over the keys to 200 more homes in 2017/18.” Read more about how we fund our development programme in the next issue of **working together**. Selwood also plans to set up our own home ownership sales team later this year so watch this space! “Bringing the team in house will give us better control over our customer service and sales,” adds Paul. ■

Clean it up

Selwood Housing is rolling out a clear corridors policy across our general needs flats. At the moment these rules don’t apply to our sheltered schemes.

“Personal items like pushchairs, bikes and shoe racks left in communal areas pose a fire risk and could be a trip hazard,” explains project manager Joanne Doyle. “From now on these will be marked with a warning sticker, and if they’re not moved within a week our caretakers will take them to a secure lock up.” Selwood will charge a £30 fee for their return.



Personal items, like pushchairs, left in communal areas could become a trip hazard

Q Do I need to get rid of my door mat?

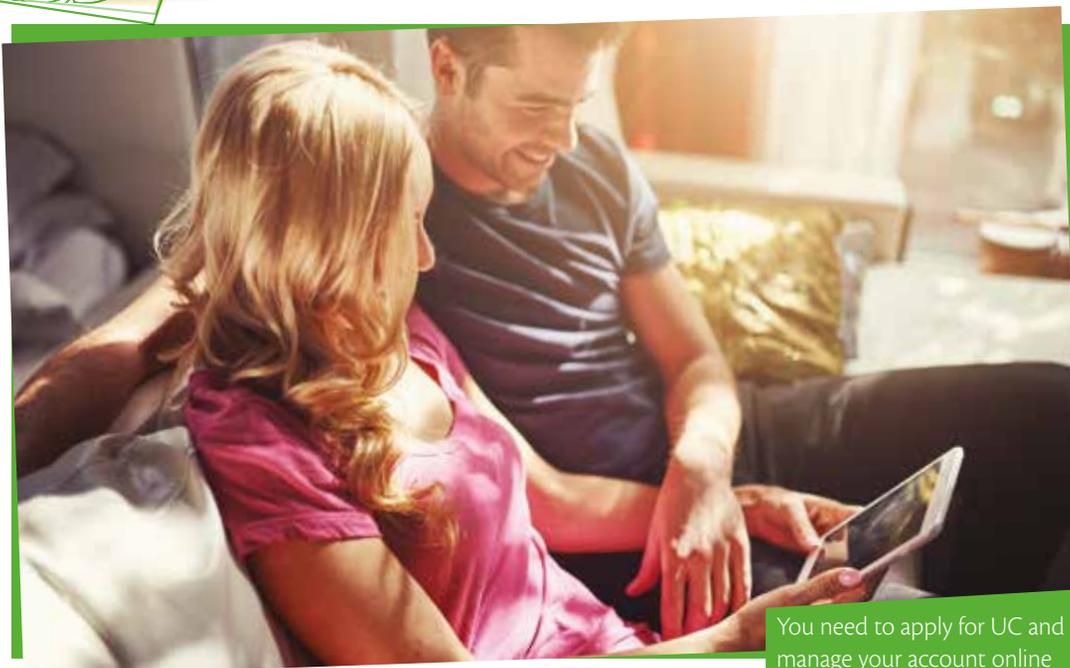
A Yes. These are flammable and can also be a trip hazard.

Q We have plants on the communal windowsills - do we need to remove them?

A Yes. In a smoke filled environment these could be knocked over and become a trip hazard.

Q I live on the top floor with children - do I need to keep my buggy in my flat?

A Yes. Any personal belongings must be stored inside your property. Contact your neighbourhood manager on **01225 715 715 option 3** to discuss your options if this is a problem. ■



You need to apply for UC and manage your account online

Universal Credit is HERE

Universal Credit (UC) is the new government benefit system being rolled out across the country. It's a big change that may affect over 2,000 of our customers. Read our FAQs from income and money advice manager, Darren Bird, to find out more:

Q What is UC?

A A new type of benefit replacing existing benefits and tax credits including housing benefit, income support (IS), income-based jobseekers allowance (JSA), income-related employment and support allowance (ESA), child tax credit and working tax credit.

Q How is UC different?

A UC makes things simpler for claimants by rolling multiple benefits into one application and one payment. However you'll need to pay your rent directly to us. UC is paid directly to you, once a month into your bank, building society or post office account. If you live with a partner you'll get a single payment for both of you so you might want to think about opening a joint account.

Q What if I don't have a bank account?

A We're working with local banks and building societies to make it easier to open an account.

Q When is UC coming?

A According to the Department for Work and Pensions, customers in Salisbury will begin to move across from 7 June, with Trowbridge customers affected from 12 July.

Q Will UC affect me?

A Only if you're working age and looking for work or on a low income. Pensioners won't be affected.

Q When will my benefits change?

A You'll move to UC when there's a change in your circumstances that affects your existing benefit claim, such as a new job or a new baby.

Q I've been told UC won't affect me as I have children?

A • **2 children or less** - You'll move across to UC following a change in circumstances

• **3 children, youngest born on or after 6 April 2017** - You'll move across to UC following a change in circumstances

• **3 children, youngest born on or before 5 April 2017** - You'll continue to claim your existing benefits. The government hasn't set a date to move you across

• **More than 3 children** - You'll also continue to claim existing benefits for now.

Q How do I apply for UC?

A You need to apply for UC and manage your account online so make sure you have access to the internet. If you don't have an email address turn to page 19 to find out how to set one up.

Q How long does it take to claim?

A The average time to complete the online application form is about an hour.

Q When will I get my first payment?

A This can take up to 8 weeks so make sure you budget to cover this period.

Q I don't have a computer - how do I apply?

A You can make a claim at your local library or using the computer in reception at the Selwood Housing office in Trowbridge. We're also looking at other locations to provide computer access for customers, including the People's Place in Studley Green and our drop in centre in Warminster.

Q How can I find out more about UC?

A Visit www.gov.uk/universal-credit or watch the 'Understanding UC' video online at www.selwoodhousing.com/universal-credit. You can also pop along to one of our **Quick Start to Universal Credit** courses. These are being run by The Learning Curve and cover everything from getting online to helping you use the UC service. To find out more, check out our four page insert, to book on one of our short 2-3 hour courses, call **01225 792 500** or email info@learningcurve.org.uk ■

Worried about falling into arrears?
We're here to help - call us on **01225 715 715 option 2** today.

WIN a week's FREE RENT!

UC means that you will need to pay your rent directly to us.

Direct debit is the quickest, safest and most convenient way to make sure your rent is paid to Selwood Housing on time.

We also hold a prize draw every month and three lucky customers from each draw will **WIN a week's free rent!** Entry is automatic* so call us on **01225 715 715 option 2** or visit www.selwoodhousing.com/directdebit and set up your direct debit today! ■

* Conditions apply. Not eligible if you owe over £500 in rent.



Start preparing for UC - set up a direct debit for your rent today

New job journey



Since The Learning Curve (TLC) joined the Selwood Housing Group in 2015 we've helped hundreds of people improve their lives with training, education and employment opportunities. And now we've partnered up with nearly 40 other local organisations, including Nationwide Building Society and Wiltshire College, to support even more!

Together we're stronger

The Building Bridges programme aims to help people overcome barriers to develop skills, access education or move towards the world of work.



Building Bridges - a stepping stone in to work

"The idea is simple," explains Brenda Harrison, TLC's quality manager. "All the organisations work together, sharing their expertise and resources, to give participants specialist advice, support, and access to training and volunteering or work placements."

Helping hand

The programme is jointly funded by the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund so all support is offered free of charge. "Participants are assigned an experienced mentor from one of the partners," adds Brenda. "Since the project started six months ago we've received over 33 referrals. One-to-one personalised support is given to help participants achieve their goals at a pace they're comfortable with."

If you're interested in taking part in the programme you can register online at www.buildingbridgeswv.org.uk/take-part or contact TLC on 01225 792 500. ■

Pay the easy peasy way!

Chair's chat



"This issue's money advice pages are all about helping you prepare for Universal Credit. The biggest change is your benefits will be lumped into one monthly payment into your bank account. This includes your housing benefit (if you get it) so you'll need to start paying this straight to Selwood Housing.

"One of the ways I make sure I have enough money to pay my important bills every month (like my rent, council tax and service charges such as water and gas) is using direct debit (DD). It really helps me to budget.

"And it saves me time and the worry of falling into rent arrears or having my electricity cut off!

"Once you've set up a DD for your rent you'll automatically be entered in a monthly prize draw to win a week's free rent (read more on page 9). So that's peace of mind and a possible windfall!"

Alison

Alison Christy
Selwood Housing tenant and chair of our board of directors



Walk on the wild side

The sun has finally got his hat on! But did you know only 1 in 5 children spend a healthy amount of time outside?



"Join the Wild Challenge this summer and not only will you make amazing outdoor adventure memories with your friends and families," says **working together's** kids' columnist Sarah Rendell. "But you can also collect bronze, silver and gold awards!"

Nature conservation charity, RSPB, and supermarket Aldi have teamed up to encourage families to take a step closer to nature. "Because fresh air isn't just important for your physical health - research suggests children who connect with nature are also likely to do better at school!"

So what are you waiting for? From minibeast safaris to making a compost heap, bird watching to having a wild sleep out, there's something to do at all times of year - whatever the weather! Just sign up at ww2.rspb.org.uk/wildchallenge to log your achievements and go for gold! "Here's a couple of my favourite Wild Challenges for starters," adds Sarah:

Look online for easy step-by-step instructions for each Wild Challenge and send the **working together** team a photo/drawing of your outdoor adventures! Find our contact details on page 2.



Flower power

Reach for the sky and challenge your friends to the tallest sunflower competition! They're easy to grow, look great and bees and insects love them. And don't worry if you don't have a garden - sunflowers can be grown in pots if you have a bright, sunny indoor space to put them.



Feed the birds

From hanging nut dispensers to fat balls - there's lots of delicious treats you can buy from your local garden centre or superstore to tempt flying friends into your garden or onto your windowsill! Or be the host with the most with the RSPB's homemade bird cakes recipe. ■

Out and about

From litter picks to youth clubs... here's a roundup of what's going on in your local area!

Spring clean

Volunteers across our neighbourhoods donned their high-vis jackets and grabbed their bin bags for the biggest community-led clean-up the country has ever seen!

Groups of litter pickers joined Selwood Housing staff, including group chief executive Barry Hughes, for the Great British Spring Clean; tidying up their local streets in Forest (Melksham), Studley Green, Seymour and Longmeadow in Trowbridge.

"It was fantastic so many people came out and joined us," said Barry, who helped clear the streets of Studley Green in March, along with 200 children from the local Primary School.

"It was a real team effort with everyone rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck-in..."



Account manager, Kim Martin, and group chief executive Barry Hughes join children from Studley Green Primary School for the big spring clean

"It was a real team effort with everyone rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck-in. Seeing so many children and other members of the locality here shows people really care about the environment they live in."

Head Teacher, Mrs Garbutt, said they were delighted to take part in the event alongside Selwood Housing. "It's really important for the children to have a sense of pride in where they live."

Across the UK, litter heroes removed an amazing 513,060 bags of rubbish from our streets, parks, beaches and countryside - that's enough to fill 70,000 wheelie bins! A big well done to everyone for taking part and taking such pride in our communities. ■



Selwood Housing's community litter heroes

Teen time

Trowbridge teenagers - are you at a loose end on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening?

If you're aged 13-19 get yourself down to one of our free Youth Clubs! Not only are there trained youth support workers on hand to offer help and advice, but you'll meet new friends and have fun playing everything from music to games, cookery to arts and crafts.

Selwood has joined forces with the Trowbridge Community Area Future's (TCAF) Brighter Aspirations programme to put on two youth clubs:

- **Studley Youth Club** - Tuesday 6.30-9pm
- **Seymour Youth Club** - Wednesday 6.30-9pm

The idea is to inspire youngsters to try new activities and achieve big things.



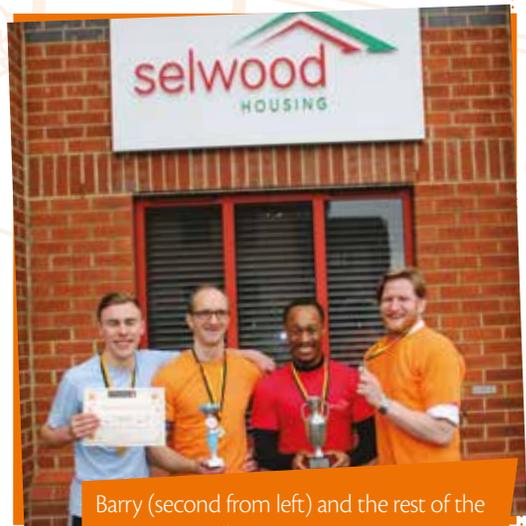
"It's friendly and relaxed," said one 15-year-old who goes to the club every week. "I really like having somewhere to go, someone to listen to me, learning new things and making a difference in our neighbourhood." ■

We are the champions!

A team of athletes from Selwood Housing have written themselves into the local history books by 'battering' the competition and winning the 2017 Trowbridge annual pancake race!

The team 'shroved' true grit and determination to 'beat' off a stiff 'mix' of competition from teams including Anytime Fitness and Castle Place Gym.

In addition to the overall relay trophy, our group chief executive, Barry Hughes, won the men's race. "Considering most of my opponents were half my age and work at nearby gyms I didn't think I stood a chance!" he told **working together**. "It was nice to see such a good turnout from the community. I'm proud of the team for such a great effort and winning the individual trophy was the icing on the...pancake!" What a 'flipping' fantastic effort - well done team! ■



Barry (second from left) and the rest of the team show off their medals and trophies

Beautiful bunting

Having a birthday party?
Throwing a baby shower?
Organising a family BBQ? This reversible fabric bunting, from The Learning Curve (TLC) tutor Bev Borrill, is exactly what you need to create the wow factor - whatever the occasion!

You will need:

- Scissors • Pins • Pencil • Iron
- Sewing machine, or needle and thread
- Bias binding (a strip of fabric with pre-folded edges)
- Fabric off cuts.

"Our off cuts came from environmental charity www.wiltshirescrapstore.co.uk in Lacock," reveals Bev. "They sell waste craft materials at a fraction of the cost you'd pay in other shops!"

Step 1 Cut out squares of fabric to whatever size you'd like your bunting. "If you have long thin strips of fabric, a neat trick is to fold one corner to meet the opposite edge to make a square," says Bev.

Step 2 Fold into a triangle (pattern side facing inwards) and pin along one edge making sure the pins point towards the top. "This makes them easy to remove as you sew."

Step 3 Carefully sew along the pinned edge removing the pins as you go.

Step 4 Turn the triangle inside out and gently ease the fabric into the point using a pencil.

Step 5 Press the triangle flat and cut the extra fabric from the top.

Step 6 Repeat steps 1-5 to make as many triangles as you'd like. Then open out the bias binding and space them equally along its length. "Remember to leave enough binding at each end to tie the bunting up!"

Step 7 Pin the bias back over the triangles making sure the pins go through all four thicknesses of fabric.

Step 8 Sew carefully along the edge of the binding to finish your bunting! ■



TLC offer a range of courses from cookery and crafts, to computer skills and maths. Call 01225 792 500 or visit www.learningcurve.org.uk to find out more.

YOUR LIFE YOUR FUTURE

WWW.LEARNINGCURVE.ORG.UK



FREE
COURSES
ON YOUR
DOORSTEP

**NEW
COURSES**

AVAILABLE FROM
JULY TO SEPTEMBER



Charity number: 1090735

INTRODUCTION

The Learning Curve

We're here to help you realise your potential. Whether that's with education, employment or learning new skills.

The Learning Curve is based in Wiltshire and is part of the Selwood Housing Group. The Learning Curve provides courses, and support designed to help you achieve your goals.

No matter the past, set your course to a positive future.

Your Life, Your Future.



97%

of adults who complete a course achieve their **learning aims**



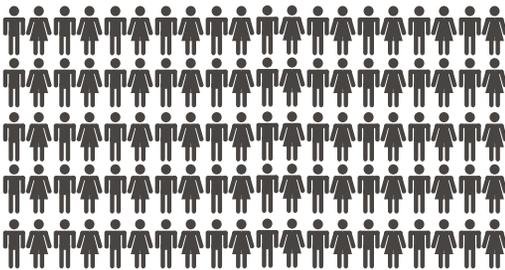
88%

of learners said that they were now able to make **positive changes** to their life



83%

of learners said their **confidence** had improved as a result of the course



100%

of learners said their course **met their expectations**



Ofsted judged The Learning Curve's provision of free and subsidised courses as 'Good' and commented that "The Learning Curve continues to ensure that a high proportion of learners successfully complete their qualifications and develop their social and personal skills. Learners increase their ability to gain employment, develop their career or progress to further education as a result of their course".

FREE COURSES

A snapshot of some of our courses on offer from July to September 2017.

EMPLOYABILITY

Functional Skills English

Date: Thursday 6 July

Time: 1pm-3pm

Location: The Learning Curve, Melksham, SN12 8BU

Duration: 12 weeks.

Every Thursday

Free*

➤ Develop your skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening

Functional Skills Maths

Date: Friday 3 July

Time: 12.30pm-2.30pm

Location: The Learning Curve Bryer Ash Business Park, Trowbridge BA14 8RT

Duration: 12 weeks

Every Monday

Free*

➤ Develop your skills in numeracy and practical maths

Traineeships

Work Preparation for Business Administration

Date: Tuesday 12 September

Time: 10am-3pm

Location: The Learning Curve Bryer Ash Business Park, Trowbridge BA14 8RT

Duration: 12 weeks

Free*

➤ Build confidence in the workplace

IT user skills (ECDL)

Date: Various July to September

Time: Various times Monday - Thursday

Location: Melksham, Salisbury, Swindon and Trowbridge

Duration: The training is tailored to your needs so is open ended

Free*

➤ ECDL is the world's leading computer skills certification

➤ It offers a wide range of modules including word processing and IT security

Prince's Trust Team Programme (18-24yrs)

Date: Monday 17 September

Time: 9.30am-3pm

Location: Abingdon Conference Centre, St Thomas' House Salisbury, SP1 1BA

Duration: 12 weeks

Date: Monday 17 September

Time: 9.30am - 3pm

Location: Trowbridge Town Hall, BA14 8EQ

Duration: 12 weeks

Free*

➤ Build your confidence, motivation and self esteem

➤ Improve skills in communication and problem solving

WELLBEING

Learning new skills is a great way to improve feelings of wellbeing and wellbeing.

Build Confidence with Circus Skills

Date: Monday 10 July

Time: 1pm - 4pm

Location: The Learning Curve, Melksham, SN12 8BU

Duration: Four weeks

Free*

➤ Learn new skills such as juggling, balance and Diablo

➤ One to one and group support

➤ Share skills with friends and family

MANAGING MONEY

Quick Start to Universal Credit

Date: Monday 17 July

Time: 9.30am-12.30pm

Location: The Learning Curve Bryer Ash Business Park, Trowbridge BA14 8RT

Duration: Three hours

Date: Monday 24 July

Time: 9.30am - 12.30pm

Location: City Hall, Malthouse Lane, Salisbury SP2 7TU

Duration: Three hours

Free*

➤ Helping you use the Universal Credit service

Take the first step and contact us to book your course:

🌐 www.learningcurve.org.uk 📞 01225 792 500 📧 info@learningcurve.org.uk

📘 facebook.com/LearningCurve4U 🐦 [@LearningCurve2](https://twitter.com/LearningCurve2)

*Eligibility conditions apply



CASE STUDY

Building a bright future

The Learning Curve works in partnership with The Prince's Trust to deliver the Team programme.

Penny, one of our course participants, shares her experience.



Penny busy fundraising for a Three Peaks Challenge

In 2015 Penny found herself stuck; she felt low and had lost all confidence. As a young mum, with two small children to support, Penny's own interests were on hold. Deciding to take action, she signed up to The Prince's Trust Team programme, excited to be doing something to support her future.

As part of the course, Penny undertook two weeks work experience with Trowbridge Town Council; a great opportunity to build her confidence. She

"It's such a confidence boost in knowing that you're capable of achieving anything you put your mind to."
Penny

supported with ticket sales at the Information Centre, supporting volunteers and members of the public.

Penny loved this experience and two years on, she's still working for the Council, being described as 'indispensable'. Penny now

manages the Information Centre's social media, organises events and works to promote Trowbridge.

Recently, Penny completed the Three Peaks Challenge, planning all activities and fundraising for charity; all skills she developed on The Prince's Trust Team programme.

Life is full – but Penny's enjoying every moment. She can now support her children financially and provide a better quality of life for them.

If you are unemployed and aged 16-25, you can train on our Team programme.

Team is 12 weeks of fun! You'll spend a week away on a residential, taking part in adventurous outdoor activities and team building, complete a community project, a work experience placement and finish a community challenge before ending with a celebration of your achievements.

Throughout Team you will gain new skills, confidence and be supported to find a route into employment, education or training.

Call 01225 792 500 to book your place now.

You've got mail

Applying for benefits? Job seeking? Want to keep in touch with friends and family? Email makes it easy, says The Learning Curve IT tutor, Jan Rose.



"Email is such a great way to communicate - it doesn't require postage and can be sent anywhere in the world," explains Jan. "You can even attach documents and photographs too!"

There are lots of free email providers on the internet (e.g. AOL, Gmail, Outlook and Yahoo) who all offer a similar service. "It only takes a few minutes to fill out the online application form," says Jan. "Here's how to set up an email account with Gmail (email from Google):"

"Email is such a great way to communicate - it doesn't require postage and can be sent anywhere in the world,"



1. Open your internet browser. Go to google.co.uk and click on **Gmail** in the top right hand corner.
2. Click **CREATE AN ACCOUNT** and fill out the application form with your personal details (name, birth date, gender and mobile phone number).
3. The **username** field is used to create a unique email just for you with **@gmail.com** at the end. If you choose a name that's already taken Google will suggest an alternative.
4. You'll also need to create a **password** so you can log in securely to your account. It must be at least 8 characters long and needs to include upper and lower case letters and numbers. "Don't use personal info or common words in your password," Jan advises.
5. Click **Next step**, read and accept Google's privacy terms and hey presto - you have an email account!
6. Follow the step-by-step "Learn how to use Gmail" tutorial for more info on how to personalise your account and use it. ■

Jan teaches the **Get Online** course - five free sessions explaining how to get started on the internet. For more info on this or other IT courses and qualifications offered by The Learning Curve call **01225 792 500**.

Safe and sound

Compliance manager, Alice Vincent, talks fires and ferrets!

As your landlord, there are certain things we must do to make sure your home is safe and running economically - such as servicing your gas boiler and inspecting your electrics. "This is called compliance," explains Alice who has worked in social housing for 12 years. "We also look after the contracts for communal facilities such as lifts, not to mention asbestos, water and fire management for all of Selwood Housing's homes."

"Keeping your systems running efficiently is one way to make sure you save money on your bills"

Team work

Alice manages a compliance team of ten, who work closely with our colleagues in Silcoa and external consultants and contractors to keep on top of the projects. "We have surveyors to manage contractors and provide technical advice, coordinators to produce reports and manage the admin teams, and administrators who schedule works, book appointments and pay invoices."



Alice works closely with the team at Silcoa



Alice's dog Rupert likes to join her on bike rides!"

It's fast paced and the pressure is rarely off - but the team pull together and support one another with workloads. "No two days are ever the same in compliance. No sooner do you pat yourself on the back for a job well done than another issue pops up, so I often spend my time doing something totally different to what I planned. On the plus side every day's a school day - I'm a geek so I love to learn new stuff about legislation and regulations!"

Looking after the pennies

All servicing is free for customers and we'll contact you to arrange a convenient appointment when it's due. "We do it to keep your systems running efficiently - which is one way to make sure you save money on your bills," explains Alice. Of course, things don't always go to plan: "I had a ferret crawl up my leg once when I was doing a kitchen survey - it scared the life out of me!"

Sounds like work definitely keeps Alice on her toes. So how does she unwind after a hard week in the office? "I spend as much of my time as possible outside - walking my little doggy Rupert. He even rides with me in the shopping basket on my bike!" ■

A big thumbs up

Our recent **working together** survey (read more on page 5) asked customers to “describe how you feel about Selwood in three words.” This word cloud shows the most important words and phrases you used - the larger the font size, the more significant the word.



We're really pleased to see that the majority of your answers were positive and, most importantly, you think Selwood is friendly, reliable and efficient. We're keen to hear how we can continue to make our services better so please do drop us a line! Compliments and complaints can be made in person, by email or letter, via Facebook or over the phone.

T: 01225 715 715 option 4

E: info@selwoodhousing.com ■

Cutting remark

Q When you mow the grass outside my flat why don't you take away the cuttings?

Frustrated of Frome

a We leave the cuttings so the nutrients can seep back into the soil. It also keeps your service charge down and means we can spend your rent money on other essential services.

Our communal grass cutting service is monitored monthly, via survey, during the cutting season by tenants in the online Cutting Edge team.

If you'd like to take part in the surveys call 01225 715 709 or send your email address to makeadifference@selwoodhousing.com. All feedback is passed to our contractors to make sure their work continues to meet our high standards.

No email address? Turn to our **get surfing** feature on page 19 to find out how to set one up so you can take part in our future online consultations! ■

Heartfelt thanks

I write this on behalf of Mrs Millie Jordan who sadly passed away earlier this year. She lived in Thornbank Melksham for 12 years, where she was very happy and made some good friends. Despite being very disabled, she took part in everything from coffee mornings to fish and chip dinners, bingo to summer days out.

Thank you Selwood for making the last years of her life happy ones. Her flat was warm and cosy and she had no worries about repairs.

Mr and Mrs Law

We are so sorry to hear of your loss but pleased that Millie enjoyed her Selwood home so much. ■



Make a difference

The pluses of taking part

Tenant, Andrew Halliday, tells **working together** how and why he's giving up his time to help shape Selwood's services.

Making a difference

"My father always said: 'Don't moan about stuff unless you're prepared to do something about it.' So, rather than complaining to my neighbours about the things I wasn't happy with, I decided to get involved to try and change them."

"Focus groups only take up a couple of hours at a time..."

Andrew has only been a Selwood tenant for just over two years, but he's certainly hit the ground running! "I joined the newly formed Sheltered Housing Forum last year. We meet monthly and the very first thing we addressed was the confusion around service charges." Thanks to the hard work of Andrew and his fellow involved tenants, many sheltered schemes have now had their charges reduced. "It's a great feeling to really make a difference, and I love meeting other residents from the area."

Good vibes

Andrew continues, "Before I knew it I was attending other groups such as the repairs forum, the **working together** focus group and helping to redesign the Selwood website! I even went to the Tpas (Tenants participation advisory service) regional forum in February, where I met residents from all over the South West. I came away with lots of good ideas and realised what Selwood is doing to involve their tenants is quite exceptional."

Take the plunge

"You can do as much or as little as you want," adds Andrew. "Focus groups only take up a couple of hours at a time. So come on - get INVOLVED. If Selwood doesn't know something is broken they can't fix it, and you may be surprised how much you get from it too." ■

We need you!

From short online surveys, to getting really hands on as a member of one of our focus groups or the scrutiny panel, there are lots of ways you can take part and make your voice heard. We cover travel and childcare costs for meetings, and even offer some training for volunteers.

For more information:

T: 01225 715 708

E: makeadifference@selwoodhousing.com ■



Final call for your community superstars!

Do you know someone who brings the community together, or goes above and beyond to help their neighbours?

If so there's still time to nominate them for one of our brand new awards, which celebrate some of the fantastic people and organisations in our community.



The make a difference awards are a way to say thank you to the friends and neighbours who go the extra mile

Selwood Housing's first **Make a Difference** awards are being held on 12 July 2017 at St John's Conference Hall in Trowbridge. So why not nominate that neighbour or friend who goes the extra mile? We all love a pat on the back now and again and the **Make a Difference** awards are the perfect way to show how much you appreciate what they do!

Nomination deadline
9am Monday 19 June 2017

Nominate online at www.selwoodhousing.com/makeadifferenceawards or call the involvement team on 01225 715 708.

The categories



Good neighbour award

Someone in your community who's gone the extra mile - from helping with heavy shopping, to being a shoulder to lean on.

Community together award

An individual/group committed to improving the local area and encouraging pride in your neighbourhood. This could be anything from organising events to fundraising, cleaning up the environment to campaigning for safer communities.

Young person's award

A young person/youth group (aged between 13-25) who has made a difference in their local community, inspired others or who deserves recognition for overcoming personal obstacles to achieve success.

Inspiring involvement award

An individual/focus group that goes the extra mile to help Selwood Housing shape and improve our services through their hard work and commitment.

Five winners will be chosen for the good neighbour award, one from each of our market towns and surrounding villages (Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham, Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury). All other categories will have one winner, selected by our judging panel. ■

Best made plans

It's been a busy few months for Selwood Housing's scrutiny team. **working together** spoke to chair, Julianne Colbran, to find out what our group of volunteer tenants have been up to.

"Silcoa took over the planned maintenance programme just over a year ago, so they asked us to review how they are doing from a tenant's point of view," explains Julianne. "Our overall impression is that things like replacement kitchens and bathrooms cause major disruption for customers for a couple of weeks or so; Thank goodness they only happen once every 20-25 years!" She says Silcoa are aware of this and are doing everything they can to make the process smoother and quicker: "In fact, some major fixes were put into place before we even finished the review - which is available online at www.selwoodhousing.com/scrutinyteam".

The scrutiny team also suggested Silcoa find a facility to store new parts while the old kitchen/bathroom is being removed. "We saw some tenants keeping fridges and dishwashers in their bedrooms!"



Silcoa now do all our kitchen and bathroom replacements

The team are now reviewing our antisocial behaviour policies, but they will be returning to Silcoa for a mini review next year. "If you have any problems in the meantime, we found the customer liaison officer at Silcoa to be friendly and knowledgeable and if she can't give you an answer - she knows a man who can!" ■

Silcoa SOS

Silcoa are still on the look out for local DIY SOS projects that need their skills and expertise! "Not only do we have a pot of money from loyalty points and recycling," explains Carl Jackson, head of operations for Silcoa, "But we also have a team of volunteers keen to lend a hand and help bring our communities together. Our operatives know everything from plumbing to electrics, plastering to painting and decorating." ■

... Our operatives know everything from plumbing to electrics, plastering to painting and decorating."

Do you have a DIY SOS project you'd like to nominate? Give the Silcoa DIY SOS team a call today on **01225 715 715 option 4** or send them an email at info@selwoodhousing.com

Fire! Fire!

This issue our local bobby on the beat steps aside for some home safety tips from another emergency service.



Beat blog



"Every year over 200 people in England lose their lives in house fires," says Paul Pieri, safe and well advisor for Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. He's responsible for carrying out home fire safety checks for people most at risk - including families with small children, the elderly and disabled residents. "This includes everything from a risk assessment of your home, to help making an escape plan," he explains.

Call **0800 389 7849** (Wiltshire) or **0800 05 02 999** (Somerset) for more info about free home fire safety checks. If you're not eligible for a home visit they'll send you a pack to help carry out your own inspection.

Stub it out

Every five days someone dies from a fire caused by a cigarette*. "So make sure you stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully," says Paul. He also recommends following these simple steps:

- Never smoke in bed
- Use a proper ashtray - never a wastepaper basket
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach
- Take extra care if you smoke when tired, taking prescription drugs or if you've been drinking. You might fall asleep and set your bed or sofa on fire.

Call the Smokefree National Helpline on **0300 123 1044** if you need support to quit smoking.



Time to test

"You're four times more likely to die in a fire in the home if there's no working smoke alarm," reveals Paul. As your landlord, Selwood is responsible for installing at least one smoke alarm on every floor of your home and replacing them every 10 years (or as required). We check smoke alarms at least every two years when we service your heating system, but Paul recommends testing them monthly. "It only takes a moment, and a working smoke alarm saves lives by providing vital extra seconds needed to escape a fire so never take out the batteries." ■

Problem with your smoke detector? Call Selwood on **01225 715 715 option 1**.

Boy zone

working together editor, Georgina Crawshaw, meets a family whose lives have been turned around by our floating support service

They say anyone can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad. Selwood tenant, Richard Tadhunter, is the first to admit he's made mistakes in his time, but when push came to shove he turned his life upside down to put his boys first.

Life changing

"Their mother and I separated about 11 years ago," he told **working together**. The couple had three children, Tommy now 17, Lewie 15 and Ben 12. "I met someone else; we got married, signed up to a joint mortgage - all the usual stuff. But I still saw the boys every Sunday."

Then he got a call from social services. "They wanted to put the boys into care." Their mother's drug addiction and alcoholism was out of control and things had gone from bad to worse - there was no food in the house and the gas and electricity had been cut off. "I didn't have a choice. I had to step up and take them on." Unfortunately his wife didn't feel the same. "She asked me to choose between the kids and her. So I gave up everything - my marriage, my home and my job to care for them."

"Tommy was failing his exams - now he's passed all his GCSE's and is studying to be a mechanic at Chippenham College"

Helping hand

First things first - Richard needed somewhere to live. "I went to the council and was put on the bidding list." The case was made high priority and within a month Selwood had found the family a home. Then the floating support team stepped in to help.

"I gave up everything - my marriage, my home and my job to care for them."

"I had no experience of running a household, or bringing up children on my own," the 42 year old head landscape gardener reveals. He says his supported living adviser, Sophie Knight, has been an absolute godsend though. "I struggle with things like form filling - she comes to the house and helps with everything from my divorce paperwork, to claiming benefits; including a backdated tax credit which meant I could give the boys a proper family Christmas. Without her I'd be in an absolute mess." Not just any Christmas either: "The best Christmas I've ever had," according to Lewie.

Like father, like sons

The boys are full of praise for their father. "He does everything for us - I think he's pretty special," adds Lewie. It's been a steep learning curve for Richard becoming a full-time single parent, not to mention teaching himself to cook and being responsible for all the household chores.



Richard and his sons (from left)
Ben, Lewie and Tommy

“He’s really good in the kitchen now,” chirps up Ben from the Xbox. “I like his spaghetti Bolognese best.” Sophie also thinks he’s doing an amazing job. “Richard has taken on a huge amount of responsibility because it’s the right thing to do. And with a small amount of support from us he’s outshone all our expectations. I’m just glad we were there to help him through those first few difficult months.”

The future’s bright

Richard says it was a massive commitment dropping everything to gain custody of his boys: “But they’re worth it - I wouldn’t change a thing.”

And he’s incredibly proud of what they’ve achieved in the last few months since they came to live with him. “Tommy was failing his exams - now he’s passed all his GCSE’s and is studying to be a mechanic at Chippenham College,” he says proudly. Tommy’s younger brothers are also doing better at school, and they are all much happier and healthier and have lots of new friends.

“I’m not perfect, but I do my best,” Richard concludes. “Every night at bedtime I tell the boys how much I love them.” Thanks to our floating support team the family now has a future they can look forward to - starting with a camping trip this summer. “I want to take the boys to St-Just in Cornwall where I went as a kid,” says Richard. “Lots of beaches, walking, fresh air and time together.” Sounds like the perfect first family holiday.

Lend a hand

Selwood Housing’s floating support service has done a fantastic job helping Richard get back on track. The service is fully funded by Wiltshire Council and helps people with learning disabilities to live independently and maintain their tenancy - from support managing finances and budgeting, to practical help with personal goals. To find out more about the amazing work they do, call our floating support team on **01225 715 794**. ■



We always suggest trying to resolve issues with neighbours in a friendly way first before contacting Selwood or the police

Summer bugs

We all love a bit of sunshine and spending time outdoors - but warmer weather can bring its own set of problems.

“Selwood Housing opens over 200 new cases of antisocial behaviour (ASB) every year,” says Selwood’s neighbourhood services team manager Marc Robins. “These range from drug use and vandalism to racial harassment - but over half of the complaints are noise related. Especially as the weather gets better and people leave windows open and are out in their gardens more.”

What can Selwood do?

ASB can seriously affect the quality of a victims life. “So we take all reports of ASB very seriously,” continues Marc. “Our neighbourhood managers have to complete a BTEC in Neighbourhood Nuisance and ASB Case Working. This means our teams know the best course of action to take to resolve ASB issues as quickly as possible”.

“And if it’s a situation we can’t deal with, we will direct you to agencies who can help. If necessary, we will take offenders to court,” says Marc. “And you may lose your home.”

Since Christmas we’ve evicted three customers for ASB, including:

- After multiple reports of ASB, Mr. M was convicted of racially aggravated harassment and served time in jail. We took him to court and a judge gave us a mandatory order for possession.
- Mrs. P was convicted for possession and use of class A drugs. The court said she could stay in her home as long as it didn’t happen again. After another conviction and custodial sentence for dealing drugs the judge awarded Selwood Housing outright possession of her home.

What can I do?

We now have mobile CCTV cameras, funded by Wiltshire Antisocial Behaviour Group, which can be temporarily installed to deter ASB or to help us investigate reports. "And we're trialling a free smart phone noise recording app which could also be used to gather evidence," adds Marc.

Many of the complaints our neighbourhoods team have to deal with are neighbour disputes. Common ones include:

- Dogs barking
- DIY
- Noise disturbance from washing machines/vacuum cleaners/lawn mowers
- Special occasions/one-off celebrations
- Upstairs neighbours walking across floors.

"Most of these wouldn't be classed as ASB - unless they're repeatedly happening during anti-social hours which are after 11pm and before 7am," adds Marc. "We always suggest you try talking to your neighbour first before calling us. They might not realise how their behaviour is affecting you and most issues can be dealt with in a friendly way over a cup of tea!"



We now have mobile CCTV cameras to help us investigate reports of ASB

If the problem persists call Selwood Housing on **01225 715 715** or contact Wiltshire Council (**0300 456 0100**), Mendip Council (**0300 303 8588**) or BANES Council (**01225 394 041**).

"Of course, if you witness a crime you should report it immediately to the police on their non-emergency number **101** - or **999** if the crime is in progress or there is a threat." ■



Love thy neighbour

Please be considerate - think about your behaviour and the effect it might have on your neighbours:

- **Parties** - If you're planning a celebration warn your neighbours in advance. If they know what's going on they're less likely to complain. Remember, if you're playing music with the windows open the sound will carry
- **Children** - Don't let kids ride bikes on pavements, use other people's homes as goal posts, or allow them to trample on neighbours gardens
- **Animals** - Barking is normal for dogs, but if it happens a lot it can be annoying for neighbours. Don't play with pets late at night, and a tired dog barks less, so exercise him before you go out
- **Bonfires** - Check your neighbours don't have washing out, or open windows, before lighting a bonfire/barbecue. ■



Grill and chill

Crack open the sunscreen and break out the barbecue! These sizzling recipes from Tesco are sure to tickle the taste buds. For more alfresco inspired ideas visit realfood.tesco.com ■

Smoky barbecue mushroom buns

This might be a vegan treat but the smoky bbq sauce works just as well on everything from ribs to chicken, hot dogs to hamburgers!

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Ingredients: (serves 4)

- 3 tbsp tomato ketchup
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp maple syrup or golden syrup
- 1 tsp hot smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 4 large flat mushrooms, stalk removed
- 4 soft white buns, halved
- Shredded crisp lettuce, to serve

For the carrot and cabbage slaw

- 100g red cabbage, shredded
- 2 carrots, grated
- 3 spring onions, finely chopped
- 100ml plain soya yogurt
- 2 tsp wholegrain mustard
- 1 small lemon, juiced



What to do

- 1** Mix together the ketchup, vinegar, soy sauce, maple syrup, paprika and olive oil. Brush over the mushrooms and leave to marinate for 30 minutes.
- 2** Make the slaw by mixing the cabbage, carrots, spring onions, yogurt, mustard and lemon juice and season to taste.
- 3** Barbecue the mushrooms for 2-3 minutes on a medium/high heat. Turn every 30-40 seconds.
- 4** Serve in a bun with lettuce and slaw.

Barbecued banana split

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 - 25 minutes

Ingredients: (serves 4)

- 4 bananas, in their skins
- 20 giant milk chocolate buttons
- 8 pieces butter fudge, halved
- Vanilla ice cream/whipping cream, to serve
- 4 glacé cherries, to serve
- 2 tbsp chopped mixed nuts

What to do

- 1** Cut a slit down the middle of the bananas, stuff with buttons and fudge. Wrap in foil keeping cut side upright.
- 2** Cook for 20-25 minutes in the hot embers of the bbq until chocolate and fudge have softened.
- 3** Serve with a scoop of ice cream/whipped cream and a cherry. Sprinkle with nuts.





Perfect picnic

“Eating outdoors at a picnic or barbecue is one of the perks of summer,” says our group head of health and safety, Fee Nunn. “But as the temperature rises, so does your chance of illness from contaminated food.”



It's one thing keeping ants and other unwanted guests away from your lunch - but here are some top tips to stop food bugs spoiling your fun!

- **Clean it:** Wash hands, surfaces, utensils and the food itself before, during and after preparation. “If you're outside without a sink use antibacterial hand sanitiser to wash your hands instead,” suggests Fee
- **Pack it:** Traditional picnic baskets are pretty, but they don't keep your food cold. Use an insulated cooler with ice packs and only take the food you think you'll need
- **Separate it:** Make sure raw and pre-cooked meat, seafood and poultry are wrapped separately. “When barbecuing, don't put cooked food back on the plate you took it on - unless it's been washed,” adds Fee
- **Cook it:** Don't rely on the colour of meat/seafood to see if it's cooked properly. “Most food is safe to eat if the internal cooking temperature has reached 76°C or 170°F,” she explains. “If you don't have a food thermometer use a clean knife to make sure the juice of the meats runs clear”

- **Serve it:** Keep the cooler in the shade, serve small portions and don't leave food out in the sun

- **Reuse it:** Put leftovers back into the cooler. If there's still ice in the box when you get home, and the food didn't sit out at the picnic, it'll be safe to store in the fridge.



“Use antibacterial hand sanitiser to wash your hands.”

And one last piece of advice from Fee if you're barbecuing this season. “Remember - the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning is significantly increased in confined spaces. So, no matter how bad the weather, never bring a lit or hot barbecue into your home or tent!” ■

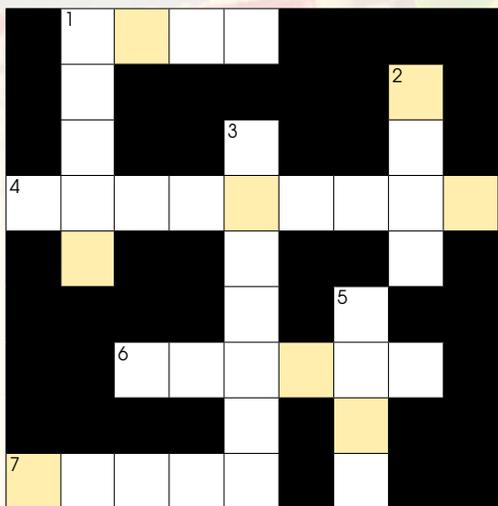


Coffee break

WIN a £20 shopping voucher!

Garden crossword

Flower power! Complete the green fingered crossword puzzle below and the highlighted letters will reveal something you might find growing in your garden!



ACROSS

1. What plants grow in
4. Flower container that sits on a ledge
6. Gardening hand protectors
7. Food that grows on trees

DOWN

1. Slow moving mollusc
2. Mary, Mary, quite contrary.
How does your garden _ _ _ _
3. Decayed organic matter used as a fertilizer
5. Stinging honey makers

Answer:

Competition champs!

Congratulations to **Miss Davis** of Trowbridge who won the Valentine anagrams and **Ms McBryde** of Bradford-on-Avon who won the St Patrick's Day wordsearch in our last issue! They each receive a £20 shopping voucher to use in a variety of shops of their choice.

Beach word search

The sun has got his hat on! Can you find the sandy words hidden in the grid? They may read across, down or diagonally in any direction.

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

- | | | |
|--------|------------|------------|
| Ball | Ocean | Spade |
| Bikini | Sandals | Sunscreen |
| Boat | Sandcastle | Sunglasses |
| Bucket | Seagull | Umbrella |
| Crab | Shell | Waves |

TWO £20 shopping vouchers to WIN!

Return your completed entry and reply slip by **31 July 2017**. Two lucky entrants (one for each competition) will be pulled out of a hat to **WIN a £20 shopping voucher**.

Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Telephone	<input type="text"/>