

www.selwoodhousing.com

Winter 2019

working together

wt

The magazine for tenants and residents

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selwood
HOUSING GROUP



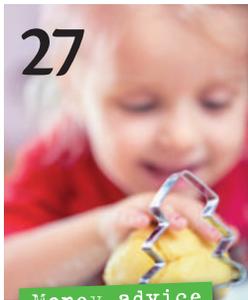
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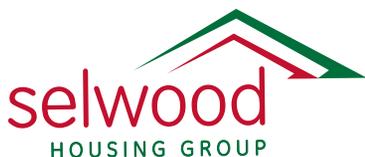
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W: www.selwoodhousing.com

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Office
opening times

8.30am - 5.30pm Mon - Thurs

8.30am - 5pm Fri

Registered Charity No. 1141124

Repairs helpline

T: 01225 715 715 option 1

E: repairs@selwoodhousing.com

W: [www.selwoodhousing.com/
report-a-repair](http://www.selwoodhousing.com/report-a-repair)

Out of hours emergencies

T: 01225 715 715, option 1

Welcome to

I was delighted to be asked to edit this issue of **working together** magazine, even though it's been a busy year for me.

I was nominated for the National Apprenticeship Awards and won the South West regional finals. You can read my story on p.17. By the time you receive this I will have been to the national finals in London. Wish me luck!

Around this time of year, we like to look back, to see how we've been doing and where we can make improvements. You can read the pages of our 2018-2019 annual report spread throughout the magazine.

As it's the holiday period, we will be closed from 2.30pm on Tuesday 24th December, opening again at 8.30am on Thursday 2nd January. If you have an emergency during this time, you can contact our out of hours team on **01225 715 715**.

Finally, we're making some changes to the way we bring you the latest news from Selwood Housing Group and look forward to keeping in touch more often in 2020 - see p.7 for more details.

We wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and a healthy New Year!

Hannah

Hannah Oatley
Trainee plumbing engineer
& guest editor



On the move

Silcoa expands to open new offices in Melksham.

Our new and larger premises on the Bowerhill industrial estate extend to just over 4,700 square feet and act primarily as a base for our repairs and maintenance company, Silcoa.

Chris George, group asset director at Selwood Housing Group said, "The new location is tailored to our needs, enabling better storage, materials delivery and waste management. This means we will be able to build on the efficiency of our operations, providing a better service to customers". ■



Martin Pain, Melksham Town Councillor and Selwood Housing Group board member cut the ribbon and officially opened the building for staff, in August.

Chair's chat

I am pleased to say that 2018-9 has been another positive year for Selwood Housing Group when we have built 190 affordable new homes. We became a signatory of the Chartered Institute of Housing's 'Make a Stand' pledge to support victims of domestic abuse. Working in partnership with Wiltshire Council, we attracted big lottery funding worth £125,000 into our communities. This is being used to increase participation in sport and healthy living initiatives.

The scrutiny team has continued its valuable work and the board welcomed excellent reports on end of tenancy processes and empty properties. The board agreed over 30 improvements as a result.

We have said goodbye to three board members this year, Claudia Bailey, Bridget Wayman and Martin Pain. We thank them

for their valuable contributions. I am pleased to welcome three new board members: Stella Shepherd, Richard Yates and Steve Oldrieve, a Wiltshire Councillor.

Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on delivering excellent value for money services as well as our core purpose of providing more affordable, local homes.



Sheila Lewis
Chair of the board



of customers are **satisfied overall** with Selwood Housing Group's services



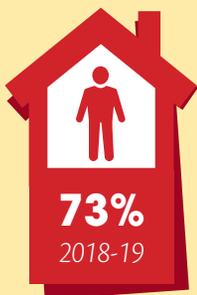
customers have had their say via **one-off meetings** or via **forums, groups** and **surveys**

Some of the topics that were discussed include the grounds maintenance contract, sheltered housing service and how we let our homes



Over **500 customers** told us they would like to **have a say** on some aspects of our service

Satisfied with opportunities to get involved



73%
2018-19



1,000
customers
getting
involved

We had a very good response to our three year tenant conversation survey, with over 1,000 customers getting involved

Customers want to know more about



repairs



investing in homes



keeping their homes safe



of customers say Selwood Housing Group is **good at keeping them informed**

You said – we did

We received over 1,000 responses to our customer survey, so a big thank you to everyone who took the time to have their say and got involved in shaping our future services.

What you told us

- The **three areas** you want to know more about and influence are:
 - Repairing and investing in your homes and neighbourhoods
 - Keeping your home safe
 - Managing anti-social behaviour
- Half of respondents were keen to hear about the work of the **scrutiny team**
- The most popular way to get involved was **from home**, followed by testing services and attending meetings
- You would get more involved if you had more time and more **confidence**
- The topic you would most like training on was **improving your community**

What we're doing as a result

- We'll focus on the **three areas** you told us are most important to you, reporting about them on our website and social media as well as by more traditional means

- We'll work with our **scrutiny team** to promote their work
- There will be more digital involvement opportunities, so it will be quicker and easier to get involved **from home**
- We've arranged free **confidence** building training sessions
- We have online resources about setting up a **community group** and our stronger communities fund is available to support local projects (see below)

We'll also be clear about how your involvement has made a difference. ■

To find out more about how to get involved, visit our website www.selwoodhousing.com/your-community/get-involved/ email Paige at makeadifference@selwoodhousing.com or call 01225 715632.

Building stronger communities

We have funding available through our stronger communities fund for projects that help to deliver at least one of the following outcomes:

- Involves more people in community life and/or community decision making
- Helps people in your community to learn new skills or build their independence
- Supports vulnerable people in your community

- Promotes trust, tolerance and understanding between different groups in your community
- Improves the appearance of your community and/or makes it a better place to live

We welcome applications for funding for projects which benefit our residents and tenants or community initiatives on our estates. ■

Working better together

We take a look at the work going on behind the scenes with our scrutiny team.

The scrutiny team is an independent customer group that makes sure that at Selwood Housing, our services are effective and that our ways of working take into account our customers' perspective.

The scrutiny team is part of something called co-regulation, which is where tenants, rather than the government, make sure that housing associations are doing what they should be doing.

The team produces reports and recommendations for service improvements, for our leadership team and board. Examples of areas they have reported on include: antisocial behaviour, grounds maintenance and empty properties.

"It's hugely satisfying to know that our recommendations are acted upon and that the changes we are implementing are making such a difference for our customers."

The team currently has five members, following the departure of Donna Broomham, who is stepping down after three years of dedicated service as chair.

Donna told **working together**: "Working with other tenants to review and improve services at Selwood has been a fantastic experience and one I've thoroughly enjoyed."



Our new chair Kate Tivney who has previously volunteered with the Citizens Advice Bureau and brings her many life skills to the role

"I am pleased to hand over the reins to Kate Tivney who has several years' experience with the scrutiny team."

We would like to give Donna a huge thank you for all her hard work and wish her the very best for the future.

The scrutiny team are currently reviewing how efficient the delivery is of our responsive repairs service.

All the reports and action plans completed by our scrutiny team are available on the scrutiny team page of our website.

If you're the sort of person who is good at spotting ways things could be improved, we want to hear from you! Email Paige at makeadifference@selwoodhousing.com or call 01225 715632. ■

Moving on

This will be the last printed edition of **working together** in its current form, that will be mailed to all customers.

From next year we will be moving towards shorter and more frequent emailed customer updates to keep you up to date on what matters to you. The updates will also be published on our website.

The benefits of digital updates are:

- You will receive information more often
- We can react more quickly to recent news and events
- Updates can be tailored so you only see what is relevant to you
- The content is accessible from anywhere at any time with a smartphone or other device
- Previous issues are kept online for easy reference
- Reduces the impact of our service on the environment
- Delivers better value for money for our customers as costs are kept down

Our research has shown that the majority of our customers would prefer to interact with us digitally. However, we are aware that there will be a proportion of our customers who are not online so a printed copy will be available.



What do I need to do?

If we have a valid email address for you already, you will start to receive the digital updates in 2020.

If we have no email address for you on file, you will be contacted to see if you can provide one, or find out if you would prefer a printed version.

If you have accessibility requirements that we know of, such as large print, you will continue to receive these. ■

Get in touch

We are always interested to hear your thoughts and comments.

Email communications@selwoodhousing.com

Call Selwood Housing Group on **01225 715909**, or write to us at:

Communications, Bryer Ash Business Park, Bradford Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8RT

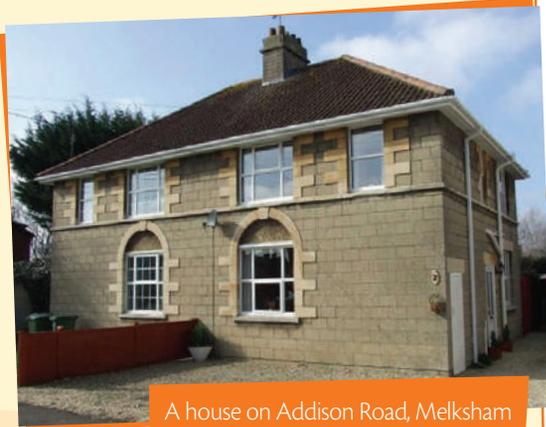
Celebrating 100 years of social housing

This year marks the centenary of the Addison Act, which funded local councils across the country to build social housing for the very first time.

Before 1919, almost all housing in the UK was built by private developers. If you were on a low income that meant cramped and unsanitary conditions, especially in rapidly-expanding cities.

“The post-war introduction of subsidies for councils to improve housing on slum estates was in the words of the prime minister David Lloyd George to provide ‘homes fit for heroes’”

After World War I, it was clear there was an acute shortage of adequate housing for returning soldiers and their families. Dr Christopher Addison, the Minister for Health and Housing, proposed an act which gave government grants to local authorities to build new high quality homes.



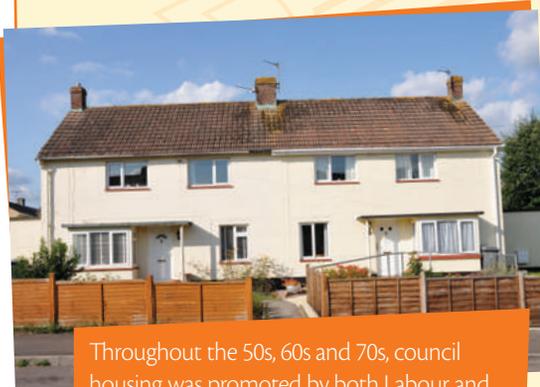
A house on Addison Road, Melksham

It was recommended that the new cottage homes be spacious and airy, with a garden for growing vegetables, an indoor bath and often a front parlour.

Although they never managed to meet the original target of half a million homes within three years, it laid the foundations for further housing acts over the next six decades, so that by the late 1970s around a third of the population lived in council homes.

The number of homes available started to fall in the 1980s, as the Right to Buy scheme allowed many council tenants to buy their homes.

There are many challenges to face when it comes to providing good-quality, genuinely affordable housing for those most in need and housing associations like ours are key to tackling these challenges. ■



Throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s, council housing was promoted by both Labour and Conservative governments.

Lean on us

Our new supported housing team covers care homes, supported living schemes and sheltered housing.

Earlier this year we conducted a major consultation exercise, working with our involvement colleagues, across our 17 sheltered schemes, to discuss a proposal to provide an expanded landlord service.

This followed a recognition that we were not always meeting our customers' expectations with the limited resources available.

We would like to thank everyone who responded by email, letter or phone, or who attended a meeting in person.



Left to right: Ben Gullam, Hannah Perkins, Suz Mallon, Sara Owen, Sandra Simblet, Zoe Quinton and Jan Chivers

"I love working for an organisation that is committed to providing housing to older people and customers with learning difficulties."

The consultation provided extremely useful feedback on our customers' priorities including staff being accountable and taking ownership of issues raised, grounds maintenance and ensuring our service reflects the needs of our older customers.

After considering the feedback and reporting to the board of Selwood Housing Group, they approved the recommendation to proceed with the new service.

We have now recruited a fantastic new team drawing on experience within Selwood Housing and outside the organisation. The sheltered co-ordinators will be the first point of contact for queries and concerns.

Starts at Home campaign

We recently supported the National Housing Federation's Starts At Home campaign.

This is a day when housing associations up and down the country celebrate supported housing, and the positive impact it makes on thousands of lives. The aim is simple, to ensure that people who need extra support always have a safe home that meets their needs.

Hannah Perkins, Supported housing manager said: "I love working for an organisation that is committed to providing housing to older people and customers with learning difficulties. We work in partnership with other agencies, as well as care and support providers, to ensure our customers have a well-managed, safe and secure place to call home." ■

Home improvements

£6.1m spent on planned maintenance and major repairs, an increase on £5.5m in 2017-18 including:



**new windows
in 526 homes**



**80 new
bathrooms**



**232 new
kitchens**



**68 new
boilers**



of customers are **satisfied with their neighbourhood** as a place to live

New cases of ASB



307

2017-18



406

2018-19

The increase is partly because we are now including cases of deteriorating property condition as anti-social behaviour



**7.2
out of 10**

The average score for our service to customers who reported ASB to us

Number of evictions



tenancies ended due to rent arrears, which is comparable to last year, despite Universal Credit being blamed for a significant rise in evictions nationally

Money owed by evicted tenants



We take money owed to us very seriously, as this money is needed to invest in our homes. We use a variety of ways to recover this money, including credit reference agencies, county court judgements and making deductions from wages

MAKE A STAND

We became a signatory of the Chartered Institute of Housing's 'Make a Stand' pledge to support victims of domestic abuse



Working in partnership with Wiltshire Council, we have attracted **big lottery funding worth £125,000 into our communities**. This will be used to increase participation in sport and healthy living initiatives



Taking care of your community

Our customers have scored us an average of 7.2 out of 10 for our response to a complaint of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour means acting in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people in another household. It can include:

- Verbal or physical intimidation or abuse
- Graffiti, vandalism and criminal damage
- Vehicle related nuisance
- Substance misuse
- Severe and persistent noise

Anti-social behaviour is not:

- The use of DIY tools, vacuum cleaners, washing machines and lawn mowers
- The sound of children playing outside or dogs barking
- Cooking smells

We take ASB very seriously and we've done a lot of work on it over the last two years, including a scrutiny review which led to a comprehensive action plan. In 2018-19 we opened 406 ASB cases, compared to 307 in the previous financial year. The increase is partly because we are identifying more issues, including cases of property deterioration, as anti-social behaviour. We have also made it easier for customers to report it to us.

How we work to prevent ASB

- All new tenants are issued with a 12 month starter tenancy. We are able to end a tenancy if its conditions are broken by ASB

"Selwood didn't disbelieve us and were very considerate of how we were feeling. They acted quickly and kept us informed."

- We encourage customers to use The Noise App www.thenoiseapp.com
- We have trialled using technology to prevent ASB such as temporary CCTV cameras
- We partner with other organisations to engage in activities and initiatives that support our communities

Many of our neighbourhood managers have completed a BTEC programme through our membership of Resolve, a centre of excellence focused solely upon community safety and ASB. We are also currently working with a consultant to look at our service standards and satisfaction levels. ■

How to report ASB

To talk to someone about anti-social behaviour, please speak to your local neighbourhood manager. If there has been a serious incident you should contact the police as well as contacting us.

You can find the name of your neighbourhood manager and report ASB online at: www.selwoodhousing.com/tenants-services/your-neighbourhood ■



We have
6,560
homes

3,371 houses

1,262 flats

284 bungalows

1,414 sheltered housing

229 other (care homes etc)

We provided new local affordable homes for up to



These included homes for **social** and **affordable rent** and **shared ownership**, giving more people access to a range of affordable homes on a secure basis



We built **195 new homes** across Wiltshire, Mendip and Bath & North East Somerset



At the end of the financial year we had **390 homes** in our development pipeline to be built by 2022



We have bought the former Margaret Stancomb infant school site in Trowbridge for building **21 new homes** for social rent and shared ownership. We are now looking at more land-led sites



of customers are satisfied with the **overall quality of their new build home**



88% happy with bathroom



91% happy with kitchen



83% happy with communal areas



Our new in-house shared ownership sales team has had great success, **selling our 100th shared ownership home**, with all surpluses reinvested to provide more affordable rented homes



Project gets green light

We are transforming the disused former Margaret Stancomb school site in Trowbridge, into much needed affordable housing.

The town centre site has been derelict for over ten years, since the former school joined with Bellefield primary school.

Barry Hughes, Selwood Housing Group chief executive said, "We had a really positive response to the news we had purchased this site, which holds a lot of memories for many local people. We will regenerate this site sympathetically, retaining and converting the 19th century

school building into three shared ownership homes. We will also build a further 18 affordable homes on the site for both shared ownership and social rent."

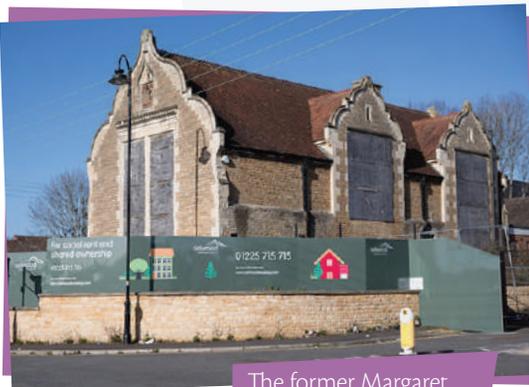
Paul Walsh, Selwood Housing Group development director said, "With over 400 households on the housing register in Trowbridge alone, brownfield sites like this give us the opportunity to deliver high quality, affordable, local homes with a fantastic central location, whilst redeveloping disused land".

Works began in July and the first homes are due to be completed in summer 2020.

Follow our latest news on:

 [facebook.com/selwoodhousing](https://www.facebook.com/selwoodhousing)

 [@selwoodhousing](https://twitter.com/selwoodhousing)



The former Margaret Stancomb school site



481
homes let
last year

127 new builds and 354 re-lets



90%
of customers think our
rent charge is **good**
value for money



97%
of customers are
satisfied with our
allocations and
lettings process

We reduced the **average time**
to re-let a home, including all
works carried out while empty and
signing up a new tenant



85%
of customers are satisfied
with the **quality of their**
new home

The average cost
of preparing an empty home for a new
tenant was



against a target of



Number of **difficult to let properties**
reduced to **4** by the end of the year

Starter tenancy arrears reduced



despite delays due to the way
Universal Credit is paid

Current tenant arrears



Our income team has achieved a rent
arrears level of **1.24%** which ranks as one
of the lowest in the country

High praise indeed

We have retained the highest possible ratings from an in-depth assessment (IDA) by the Regulator of Social Housing.

The IDA is a detailed assessment of an organisation's governance and financial viability and we retained the highest ranking in both areas.

Barry Hughes, Selwood Housing Group's chief executive said, "This is a great result and puts us in a strong position to continue our work

providing affordable homes for people in our local communities, including our plans to build 1,000 much-needed affordable homes in the next five years. This rating also reflects the hard work and commitment of our staff and board to delivering a vital service and value for our customers." ■

175th customer for shared ownership

We have just welcomed our 175th customer into our shared ownership scheme. Paul Walsh, Selwood Housing Group development director said, "We are so pleased to have helped 175 customers get on the property ladder. This includes young people and families who fall between the stools of not being able to afford the large deposits required by the private housing sector, but who are not eligible for social housing either. That's 175 local households who now have a secure, affordable home to call their own. Here's to reaching 200 very soon!"

Shared ownership is a great route to home ownership, without having to find a large deposit up front. You can purchase a share of a home and pay rent on the rest of the property. This provides a great alternative to renting privately or if purchasing a home on the open market is out of reach. You can also increase the share you own over time. You are eligible to buy a shared ownership home if your household income is less than £80,000, you are a first-time buyer or you previously owned a home but can't afford to buy one now.

Customer feedback

"I would just like to give a massive thank you to the sales team for all your help throughout this process, you have made it a nice 'first home move' for us, and I cannot recommend Selwood to others looking to buy their own place enough."

Search 'Shared ownership' on our website to find out more. ■





The scrutiny team completed reviews on the planned installation of kitchens and how we manage the end of tenancy process. During the year, **31 of their recommendations were implemented**

Complaints resolution coordinator



We have created a new role of complaints resolution coordinator, to assist with the investigation of complex **complaints** and identify areas of improvement

We reviewed and updated the **claims, goodwill, statutory and regulatory payments policy and procedures** following customer feedback

5 apprentices

were provided with opportunities to gain job skills alongside a qualification at Selwood Housing



and a further **10** at Silcoa



One of our apprentices was nominated for the **National Apprenticeship Awards 2019**

Investors in People



We received the **Investors in People silver accreditation** in October. Giving our staff the opportunities to develop their full potential will mean we can deliver better services for our customers



You're hired!

Our apprentice Hannah Oatley wins her category at the National Apprenticeship Awards regional finals

Hannah started as a plumbing apprentice with Silcoa in October 2017. She says: "I would recommend it 100% – you get paid whilst learning your trade. I am 27 and have financial commitments and my apprenticeship allowed me to still earn while providing me with challenging, demanding and practical work.

She will be attending the final of the National Apprenticeship Awards in London on 27th November. Check our social media to see how she got on.

"The team I work with made me feel very welcome. I certainly don't get treated differently because I'm a girl."



Hannah receiving her regional winner award at the glitzy ceremony.

Apprenticeships are a great way to earn a wage while you learn on the job. Our apprenticeships give learners industry recognised qualifications and the practical skills they need to become successful employees in the trade. Throughout the two-year apprenticeship, our trainees learn job specific skills while working and also obtain training at college.

In the 2018-19 financial year we welcomed fifteen apprentices to a variety of roles across Selwood Housing Group.

If you are interested in an apprenticeship role with Selwood Housing you can find out more here: www.selwoodhousing.com/work-with-us/apprenticeships/ ■

"The team I work with made me feel very welcome. I certainly don't get treated differently because I'm a girl.

"A typical day started at 8am on site at a customer's house every day apart from Tuesdays when I was at college. The work varied from taking out an old heating system to mending radiators and working on boilers."

Hannah is now qualified and working for us full time in an improver role.

High Flyers

Congratulations to our other young staff members, **Emma Rogers** (Assistant accountant), **Chloe Gee** (Sales adviser) and **Matt James** (Procurement business partner) who have all been recently nominated for 24housing's Young Leaders award.

Average number of calendar days taken to **complete a repair**

25.5
days

(not including emergency jobs)

98.6%

Emergency jobs

completed within 24 hours

18,163

repairs completed by

Silcoa

of which, **5,143** were done
as an emergency



A programme of improvements at some of our sheltered schemes has started, including **communal areas**, **roof** and **boiler replacements**



3.8 jobs completed

per operative in one day

Average repairs cost



Customers satisfied



86% of customers
are **satisfied with**
their last repair



97% of customers
are **satisfied with**
workmanship



94% of customers are
satisfied with quality of
material/parts



of customers think our operatives are **pleasant** and **polite**, and left their home **clean and tidy**



Help is at hand

On our website there are over fifty pages offering tips and advice on the most common household issues, including videos.

To make it easier for you to find the information you need, we have added additional repairs tips and advice pages to our website. These include:

- Handy guides to show you what action to take
- Videos to show you how to do things like stop a leaking tap

You can also request a repair online, if it is our responsibility.

The new system gives you the most relevant option e.g. **'call immediately'** or **'request an appointment'** and allows us to manage your repair more effectively.

Freezing weather

Watch our handy videos on how to take preventative measures to stop pipes freezing and bursting, or how to thaw out a condensate pipe if your heating has stopped working. ■

Visit: www.selwoodhousing.com/repairs/ to find out more.

If you can't get online
you can still call us on
01225 715 715 and
press **option 1**



DIY SOS update

Filming with the social club members

Celebrating success and looking to the future

The first 'DIY SOS' project took place last summer at Dramsdon care home where Silcoa built a new sensory room for residents. Bridget Barnett, Dramsdon's manager said: "The sensory lodge has made a massive positive impact on the guys living here. The residents get great pleasure from the facilities on a daily basis. Thank you again Silcoa."

Socially aware

This year we have undertaken some great work at St. Joseph's Community Centre, in Waterworks Road, Trowbridge. The centre houses the Polish church and social club. The work involved removing the old asbestos roof to the garage and outbuilding of the social club and replacing with a new roof plus some decorative works within the courtyard and garage.

"The sensory lodge has made a massive positive impact on the guys living at Dramsdon."



Jan Chivers with our filming team at Phoenix House

This project was put forward by Lukasz Legut – a Silcoa asbestos operative, who is an active member of the Polish community and has lived in Trowbridge since 2005. He got married in the church on site and often attends the social events. His colleague

“We will build a raised sensory garden for the residents to enjoy from a wheelchair...”

Thomas Baish who is a Silcoa multi-trade operative worked alongside him.

Lukasz said: “It was fantastic to see Silcoa donating its time along with family members and other members of the Polish community all showing such enthusiastic and generous support. The social club is an important part of our community and the new roof and facelift have injected new life into it.”

Rise like a Phoenix

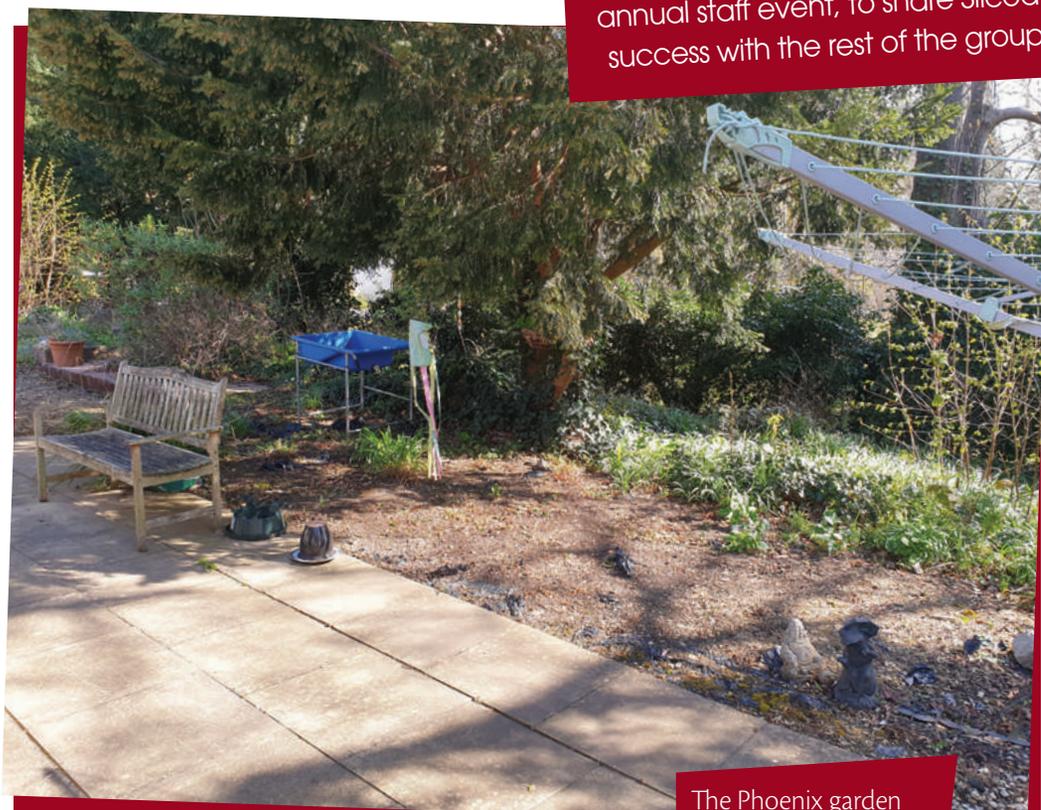
Another project in the offing is for Phoenix House in Holt, a residential care home for

a small number of adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and other associated needs. It was suggested by Jan Chivers, Supported housing adviser, who also put forward the Dramsdon project.

Carl Jackson, Silcoa head of operations said: “We will build a raised sensory garden for the residents to enjoy from a wheelchair. Along with this we will provide an area of artificial grass to allow people with mobility issues to sit in the sunshine on a comfortable surface. We’ll also be supplying some useful garden furniture.”

Keep an eye on our social media pages for updates on this project. ■

While our ‘DIY SOS’ projects will not make it to the big screen, we filmed progress on both of them for our annual staff event, to share Silcoa’s success with the rest of the group.



The Phoenix garden ready for its makeover

A day in the life...



Dominic pictured after installation of the pizza oven at Studley Green Primary School last summer

Safety first

Working together talks to Dominic Walmsley, Silcoa's asbestos and response supervisor about compliments and fire rescue.

So Dom, how did you end up in your role at Silcoa?

"I originally trained as a multi-skilled operative and then specialised as a carpenter. I had a stint as a prison officer before coming to Silcoa. I have been with Silcoa for nearly 4 years and love it."

How do you help our customers in your role?

"Silcoa is the part of the Selwood Housing Group that deals with repairs and maintenance in customers' homes so staff are always prepared for a varied and busy day.

"I am part of the response and repair team, a total of 32 operatives that oversee jobs and deal with both customer complaints and compliments. It's always a satisfying part of my day to be able to pass on the good news to an operative when someone thinks they have done a good job.

"I also manage and organise the day to day removal of asbestos from within Selwood Housing properties. A typical day might involve me liaising with a contractor about the asbestos removal work they are going to be carrying out on site.

“My work tends to be split between being out in customers’ homes and making sure that things run smoothly in the office.

“We also hold monthly ‘toolbox talks’ to keep Silcoa staff informed with the latest news to enable them to do their jobs effectively. Communication is a big part of my role.”

What do you like to do in your spare time?

“I don’t have much at all as I am an on-call firefighter with Dorset and Wiltshire fire service for 90 hours a week. We train throughout the year and have live fire exercises. One week I can be on the pump ladders the next, in open water training, clearing flooding or potential road collision rescue.



Dominic in his role as an on-call firefighter

“It’s always a satisfying part of my day to be able to pass on the good news to an operative when someone thinks they have done a good job.”

“I am on call most nights and over the weekends. I sleep with an alarm under my pillow so I always wake up! It’s hard work both physically and mentally: sadly most of our call outs concern road traffic accidents. You never really get used to those and they are always quite tough to deal with.”

What part of your role with Silcoa do you enjoy most?

“The contribution we make to local communities. I was lucky enough to be involved with building the sensory room at Dramsdon care home and creating the pizza oven at Studley Green Primary School last summer. We are supporting a new project at Phoenix House, a residential care home in Holt, where we will be levelling an area of their garden to allow the residents to tend to their gardening.”

Are there similarities between the fire service and Silcoa?

“We are a friendly bunch of people at Silcoa and are more than willing to help each other out, it’s very similar to working for the fire service in that respect.” ■

Join us at Silcoa

Are you a skilled tradesperson looking for your next opportunity or do you know someone who is?

We offer a competitive salary, a vehicle for business use, a pension and many more employee benefits. We also provide on the job training, helping you to stay at the top of your trade.

To find out how you can join us, visit www.selwoodhousing.com/jobs. ■

To find out more about becoming an on-call firefighter with the Dorset and Wiltshire fire service visit:

www.dwfire.org.uk/working-for-us/on-call-firefighters/



When you call about a repair



feel we are polite



think our staff are knowledgeable



say we explain what will happen next

Compliments received



Key themes from the compliments received were that staff are:



polite and friendly



clean and tidy

when working in our homes and



knowledgeable

and quick at dealing with customers' queries

Number of complaints



We continue to place importance on a first fix approach at the informal stage of the complaints process, which is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction

The main reasons for complaints were:

- 74 about workmanship
- 62 about quality of response
- 62 about timescales
- 60 about staff attitude
- 41 about materials used
- 40 about failure to respond



Just over **81,000** calls were made to the customer support team. We are also seeing a slight increase in email queries, in particular in relation to the online repair request form

We care because they do

There are estimated to be over 47,000 people looking after loved ones in Wiltshire.

2,700 are anticipated to be young adult carers between the ages of 18-25 and approximately 700 are young carers from the age of 5. With many not recognising themselves as carers, these numbers are expected to be much higher.

Carers Support Wiltshire help carers to

access services, information, education and training, respite, and breaks from their caring role. They ensure carers have a voice that is heard and work with health and social care professionals and employers to raise carer awareness and develop best practice.

www.carersupportwiltshire.co.uk ■

Beware of scammers

There has recently been an increase in scammers directly mailing homes.

Trading Standards are warning residents to check the credentials of companies selling energy efficiency products, following an increase in complaints.

Companies claiming to offer government-backed energy-saving grants of up to £8000, is just one of the latest scams. These letters are sent to properties from a company claiming to act on behalf of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), a government energy efficiency scheme. The letter urges the recipient to register their interest by a specific date for new free funding to help improve their home.

Other letters include offers such as free health checks on PV systems, free boiler replacements, solar installation, draught-proofing, doors, double glazing and underfloor installation, and give the impression that they are supported by local authorities.

Older vulnerable people are often targeted by these letters to obtain information to then sell on to a scammers' database.

We are urging our customers to be vigilant against these letters. If you would like to check the authenticity of a letter you believe to be from Selwood Housing, please call us on **01225 715 715** or email us at info@selwoodhousing.com. ■



Don't sign anything before checking an offer is genuine

Last year for every **£1** we spent



Silcoa made a profit of



which will be **re-invested** in Selwood Housing Group



An in-depth assessment carried out every four years by the Regulator of Social Housing **awarded us with the highest possible ratings** for governance and financial viability

Procurement process

By examining our contracts we saved over



with the largest individual saving being **£31,000 on the asbestos removals tender**



At the end of the year we had **1166 Universal Credit claimants**. Due to early intervention and proactively working with customers we have been able to keep **61% of them out of arrears**

We use credit reference agencies to trace debtors and took **16 former tenants to court last year**



Six ways to save this Christmas

Avoid the January bank balance blues with our top tips for enjoying Christmas on a budget.

1. Make a budget ... and stick to it

It may seem obvious, but if you budget properly, you'll be less likely to get into debt over what is essentially just one day. Speak to friends and family members about setting limits on gifts or doing Secret Santa and use offer sites or discount codes to make your money go further.

2. Get crafty

Decorations don't have to cost a fortune. Fill empty glass jars with LED lights from the pound shop and pick greenery from the garden. Get the kids involved in a festive craft session making baubles out of paper or icing biscuits for the tree.

3. Drop the big shop

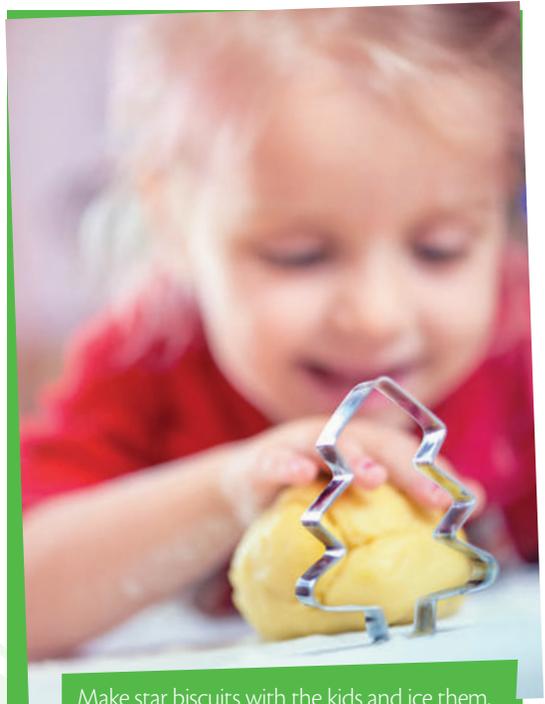
It's tempting to overspend on food at Christmas, buying more than we need and splashing out on fancy brands. Plan the meals you'll be having over the Christmas period so that you can just buy the items you need. Check out independent taste tests online – the 'best' mince pies often come from Lidl and Aldi rather than Waitrose and M&S.

4. Wrap up warm

Fuel bills tend to skyrocket as the temperature drops, so make sure you block draughts and layer up to combat the chill. Kids love to pretend they're camping indoors, so use blankets to create a 'tent' and keep them cosy. Watch out for condensation though, you'll need some ventilation to avoid it.

5. Give time, not money

Homemade gifts are so much nicer than bought ones, so if you have a talent, put it to good use



Make star biscuits with the kids and ice them, use these to help to decorate the tree.

creating baked goodies or knitting a scarf. If you don't have the skills, promise some of your time later with a 'cheque' for a massage for your partner or babysitting for a friend.

6. Make memories

When you were a child, the best Christmases probably had nothing to do with how much money had been spent on toys, but how much time you spent with your family. Going for a winter walk, playing silly games and watching a favourite film are all fun and free. ■

Celebrating our people

Richard Flavin celebrates **40 years** in housing

We recently celebrated Richard's 40 years of service with a presentation, cake in the shape of snooker table and plenty of presents including a personalised Swindon Town FC shirt.

Richard began his career in social housing with West Wiltshire District Council in 1979, before moving across to West Wiltshire Housing Society in 1996 which eventually became Selwood Housing.

Richard said: "I must admit I have been a bit overwhelmed by everyone's kindness and appreciation."

Even more congratulations are in order as Richard has also made the top ten of 24housing's '40 OVER FORTY' awards.

He was nominated by Involvement manager Antony Higgins, who said "He offers clear advice on policy, procedures and housing law that is balanced and up to date. Customer focus permeates his work. Richard's overriding qualities are professionalism, modesty and respect." ■



Richard Flavin, Neighbourhood technical support manager

"I am very lucky to work with such a great bunch of people."

Spirit of success

Selwood Spirit is a group of staff, who organise various events at Selwood Housing Group to raise money for charity each year.

For 2019-2020 our chosen charity is Splitz Support Service. They are based in the South West and deliver support services to adults and young people experiencing the trauma of domestic abuse and sexual violence www.splitz.org

If you, or someone you know, would like to speak to a dedicated support worker, please call Splitz on 01225 775276. ■



A recent cake sale held at our head office at Bryer Ash

A novel approach

Working Together chats with Ian and Lottie Harris, long term Selwood Housing tenants living in Sutton Veny.

Both have written books about their colourful lives, although they couldn't be more different.

Out of Africa

Born in Kent in 1936, Ian moved to East Africa in the late 1950s to become a general commodity broker with Dalgety, an Australian tea and coffee broker. Ian was present during the upheavals that accompanied independence in Uganda and Kenya, where as an agent for the Cunard shipping company he was in charge of the QE2's visit to Mombasa.

Ian combined remarkable business acumen in a challenging environment with great concern and compassion for Africa and its people. During an extraordinary life,

Ian has demonstrated many talents, from sportsman, fireman, bridge-builder, strike-breaker, to friend and enabler of a president, and the saviour of a king.

To save a king

Ian's book 'Work Hard and Play Hard' describes many of his experiences, including being ambushed at night by a gang of men who wanted to steal one of his cargoes. Along the way, Ian played rugby against Idi Amin, later President of Uganda, and knew the exiled King of Toro, Patrick Olimi, whom he hid at his home for a fortnight.

Returning to the UK in 1989, Ian embarked on a variety of occupations, one of which was as a restaurant manager in Bath, where he met his wife Lottie.

Born in Lancashire in 1943, Lottie struggled with mental illnesses which led to her undergoing pioneering brain surgery in 1972. Her own extraordinary story 'An Abandoned Mind' was first published several years ago and is now being re-printed following the success of her husband's.

Ian's book was produced by Life Book, a company that helps ordinary people to create their autobiographies by recording their stories through interviews then using a professional ghost-writer.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy of either book, please contact

communications@selwoodhousing.com. ■



Ian and Lottie Harris outside their home with their published books



Christmas fun for all the family

A few ideas to keep the kids amused during the holidays.



The award-winning market is a magical day out

Bath Christmas market

has over 150 twinkling chalets spread out across the city's pretty Georgian streets. This year's market will take place until Sunday 15th December.

www.bathchristmasmarket.co.uk

Hope Nature Centre

Alpacas, donkeys, chickens, goats, ponies and sheep are grazing in the fields waiting to meet you. There are plenty of outdoor play areas for the family to be let loose on as well as a café. Open every day until 23rd December.

www.hopenaturecentre.org.uk



Meeting the alpacas at Hope Nature Centre

Whitehall Garden Centre, Lacock

Pick up a poinsettia, browse thousands of baubles then have a hot chocolate in the café. If you want to treat the kids, there is also an ice rink, indoor food making sessions and the full Santa's grotto experience, which includes a story, present for each child and mini Christmas tree to take home.

www.whitehallgardencentre.co.uk



Fun for the whole family on the ice rink

Other ideas

Shopping centres often put on free kids' activities over the Christmas holidays and most schools and churches will have a fete. Check out your local newspaper and council websites for up-to-date listings of what's on in your area.



A real crowd pleaser

Bake a batch of vegetarian sausage rolls for a crowd-pleasing snack, whether at a Boxing Day buffet or a last-minute offering at a family gathering.

Spinach and ricotta sausage rolls



Preparation time:

15 mins to prepare and 40 mins to cook
352 calories / serving

Ingredients: (makes 12)

2 tsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
10g fresh thyme, leaves picked
350g frozen spinach

250g ricotta
60g vegetarian Italian style hard cheese, finely grated
Large pinch of ground nutmeg
½ lemon, zested
2 medium eggs
Plain flour, for dusting
2 x 375g ready rolled puff pastry
Poppy seeds, to decorate, with tomato or red onion chutney, to serve (optional)

Method

1. Preheat the oven to gas 6, 200°C, fan 180°C.
2. Line 2 baking sheets with baking paper. Heat the oil in a small pan and add the onion. Cook over a low heat for 10 mins until softened, adding the thyme leaves for the last 2 mins.
3. Cook the frozen spinach according to the packet instructions, then drain well in a colander and press with the back of a spoon to squeeze out any moisture. Roughly chop.
4. Put the onion into a large mixing bowl, then add the cooked spinach, ricotta, cheese, nutmeg, lemon zest and 1 egg. Mix well until combined.
5. Lightly flour a work surface and unroll one pastry sheet. Cut in half lengthways, then take a quarter of the spinach mixture and spoon along the pastry, about 2½ cm from one long edge, to make a long, thick sausage shape. Beat the remaining egg and brush along the edges of the pastry. Fold the pastry over the mixture and press down the edges to seal. Glaze with more beaten egg and sprinkle with poppy seeds. Repeat with the second half and second pastry sheet to create 4 long rolls.
6. Cut each roll into 3 equal pieces and transfer to the lined baking sheets. Bake for 25 mins or until golden. If you need to do this in batches, keep the second batch in the fridge while you cook the first. The rolls can be served hot or cold, perhaps with some tomato or red onion chutney on the side.



Coffee break

WIN a £20 shopping voucher!

Festive fun

Rearrange the letters to find the 8 words associated with the holidays

1. Barren cry

2. Enlist

3. Renowned lawn dirt

4. A chemists rack

5. Pity tiny lava

6. Pod hurl

7. Rat pies

8. Holy navy lid

Seasonal word search

Can you find the 22 words from a seasonal song hidden in the grid? They may be hidden horizontally, vertically, forward or back.

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

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Alaying | Drumming | Piping |
| Aleaping | French hens | Partridge |
| Amilking | Geese | Pear tree |
| Aswimming | Golden rings | Swans |
| Calling birds | Ladies | True love |
| Christmas | Lords | Turtle doves |
| Dancing | Maids | |
| Drummers | Pipers | |

Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone	

TWO £20 shopping vouchers to WIN!

Return your completed entry and reply slip by 3 February 2019 to 'Competitions' at the address on page 2. Two lucky entrants (one for each competition) will be chosen at random to WIN a £20 shopping voucher.*

*Please note that you will not be eligible to win these competitions if in rent arrears.



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