

Issue No. 48  
Winter 2011

# Interlink

Residents' Newsletter

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Housing  
Society

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Suffolk  
Housing  
Society

# Ho Ho Ho!

# NEWS

## Staff update

Since our last edition we are pleased to announce two new members of staff.

In November Tom Wray was appointed to the new post of Technical Services Trainee and Hannah Cadge has filled the vacancy in Business Support.

## SHS raise money for EACH

Suffolk Housing Society has chosen EAST ANGLIA'S CHILDREN'S HOSPICES (EACH) as our corporate charity this year. The charity was chosen from a number of worthy causes by representatives from Tenants' Voice, staff and Board Members at our conference in May this year.

EACH supports families and cares for children and young people with life-threatening conditions across Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. They provide care and support wherever the family wishes – in families' own homes, in hospital or at one of their hospices in Ipswich, Milton and Quidenham.

Since starting our fundraising in May, staff at SHS have raised a grand total of £1,098 from various initiatives such as the Orwell Walk, a sponsored silence and selling Christmas cards. Most recently, seven staff joined in the Santa Run in Bury St. Edmunds which raised £324.

If you'd like to find out more about EACH or make a donation, please visit [www.each.org.uk](http://www.each.org.uk)



Tom Wray and  
Hannah Cadge

## If you don't ask, you won't get

Residents at Field View, with the help of Alan Dagger, submitted a bid to Fosters for funding from their Community Project Fund. The bid was for funding for two park benches, two planters and a new bookcase for their book lending club. We have recently heard that their bid was successful and that £1,600 has been allocated to them. Well done to you all!

## News from Age UK

Age UK has recently launched a new service to help anyone over 60. The service provides Independence Advisors who will visit you in your own home and will help you with information, advice and support on services available in the area that will help you maintain your independence. If you would like to talk to someone about this service or would like a visit contact them on 01473 288048, email [marsha.janssens@ageuksuffolk.org](mailto:marsha.janssens@ageuksuffolk.org) or write to them at

### Independence Advisors Service

14 Hillview Business Park,  
Old Ipswich Road,  
Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0AJ



# JOIN IN

*"A two way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening." – Definition of Resident Involvement*

## Welcome to the Winter edition of Interlink.

Thanks to all of you who have helped make it a big year for resident involvement for Suffolk Housing Society.

This year we have produced a Resident Involvement Impact Report. This report will explain to you what resident involvement is, how it works and, importantly, what sort of impact it has had on how Suffolk Housing Society delivers its services to you. The report also tells you, where possible, how much it costs for each piece of Resident Involvement we have done throughout the year.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Resident Involvement Impact Report you can download it from our website under the 'Get Involved' section. Alternatively, if you would like to receive a copy in the post, please contact me via the contact details below.

*Jonathan Routledge*

Tenant Liaison Officer

## Have you had a repair in the last 3 months?

Our new Resident Service Inspectors are up and running! They will be looking at our responsive repairs service to see if it is meeting the standards you expect. Part of their inspection process means they may call you if you have had a repair in the last 3 months to see what you think of the service Suffolk Housing Society provides.



### CONTACT ME

**T:** 01284 715391 **E:** jonathan@suffolkhousing.org

**Write to:** Tenant Liaison Officer, Suffolk Housing Society, Old Mission House, St Botolph's Lane, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2AX

## Resident Involvement Impact Report 2011

Suffolk Housing Society



## Would you like to get paid to improve our services?

Next year we will be doing plenty more Mystery Shopping and we need your help.



### What is Mystery Shopping?

Mystery Shopping is where you test a service we provide and report back on how we performed.

### What happens with the information I find out?

Once you have completed the Mystery Shop the information is put into a report and we make changes based on the findings of our Mystery Shoppers.

### What's in it for me?

You can earn 'Love to Shop' vouchers for each shop you complete. These can be spent at a variety of High Street stores. You can also help improve our services for you and other residents and it looks great on your CV!

### Sounds good, how do I get involved?

Contact the Tenant Liaison Officer via the details listed on the left hand side of this page.

## Who lives in a house like this?



Mr and Mrs Walker of Tacon Close, Eye, have built an impressive home from home in their back garden. When Mr and Mrs Walker moved into their new home in Eye they weren't sure what to do with a raised area of land in their back garden, so they decided to build a shed, but not just any old shed. This miniature house comes complete with an electricity supply and heating, insulated roof and floor, double

glazed windows and doors including 35mm thick timber walls.

Mr Walker, now retired, managed to construct the shed in just over a month. The shed has certainly caught the attention of the locals. Mr and Mrs Walker's neighbour Mr Clark described the cabin as "a marvellous and excellent construction" another neighbour, Mr Morris, explained that he has been inspired to build his own summer house.



## Jim's mega cycle ride...

Earlier in the year we mentioned one of our tenants, Jim Wilding, was planning to cycle from Lands' End to John O'Groats. Jim spent 13 days in June cycling a total of 941 miles up and down the beautiful hills and dales of Britain and has raised in excess of £16,000 for cancer research at Addenbrookes.

If anyone would like to contribute to this fantastic achievement please let me know and I will put you in touch with Jim. (hazel@suffolkhousing.org or ring 01284 773446)

**Do you have a shed conversion or a project you are proud of? If so we would love to hear from you, why not contact us so we can feature it here in Interlink by calling 01284 715391.**

## Hidden Talents

We are keen for our residents to get involved in various aspects of our work and our newsletter may be just the thing for you.

We know of tenants who have been on some amazing travels, held intriguing jobs and those who have a talent for making pickles and chutneys.

### So how can you get involved?

- I'm sure many of you have got interesting stories about your experiences and achievements that you could tell us about. Why not consider writing an article and sending it in? If you don't feel confident writing it, we'll come and talk to you to get the story.
- Maybe you fancy your hand at planning the content of the newsletter and would love the opportunity to be a guest editor. If you want more information about this please let me know. We have four editions a year so there is plenty of scope for a number of volunteers.
- Contact the office to air your views about the content / layout of the newsletter or to make a suggestion for a future article.



Susan's

# UPDATE

Again it's time to update you on what has been happening with Tenants' Voice.

## Annual Report

I hope you have all read our Annual Report, I think it is a very informative and interesting document – and gives an insight into the work that tenants have been doing on your behalf, and how the Society manages its affairs.

## November Tenants' Voice Meeting

At our last Tenants' Voice meeting we covered various topics – including looking at the Annual Report to residents – and deciding how to prepare for next year's report. We want to improve on this year, and we would very much like to hear any comments and ideas you may have for next time.

We discussed a new policy on keeping cats and dogs in flats – and whether this should be changed. No firm decision was made, as there were plenty of reasons for and against. The issue will be on the agenda again at the next meeting for us to make a final decision.

We received a report on the Resident Services Inspectors who are now beginning to carry out their first inspection on the Society's responsive repairs service. The Society's Tenant Liaison Officer presented the Resident Involvement Impact Report, which explains what residents have been involved in this year to help influence and shape the services received by Suffolk Housing Society. It is a detailed and well presented document, if you would like to read it just contact Jonathan Routledge on 01284 715391. Alternatively, you can download it from the Suffolk Housing Society website.



## Fun Day

We are considering arranging a Fun Day event next year, to give residents and their families a chance to meet Tenants' Voice members and staff of Suffolk Housing Society in a relaxed atmosphere. We would very much like to know how many of you would be interested in coming along if we decided to go ahead with this idea and also how far you would be prepared to travel so that we can decide on the most suitable location. We would be grateful if you could return the form on the back of this edition of Interlink indicating whether you would attend such an event.

## Observers

Finally, if anyone would like to attend a Tenants' Voice meeting as an observer they will be made most welcome - just let us know and we can tell you the dates for next year.

**Susan Feary, Chairman**

## New Board Member

Congratulations to Andy Balfour who is now the third representative of Tenants' Voice on Suffolk Housing Society's Board of Management. Andy has been an active and valued member of Tenants Voice for the last two years.

Andy replaces Joan Mathewman who has represented residents on the Board of Management for the last five years. Tenants' Voice would like to thank Joan for her input and commitment during her time on the Board. Joan will continue her role as a member of Tenants' Voice.

## Have you got something you would like Tenants' Voice to discuss at the next meeting?

Tenants' Voice are here to represent the voice of our residents. If you have an issue or a topic you would like them to discuss on your behalf, contact Susan Feary on 01638 615413 or email: [tenantsvoice@suffolkhousing.org](mailto:tenantsvoice@suffolkhousing.org)

## Are you prepared for the big freeze?

With the prospect of yet another freezing winter looming, there are various precautionary measures you can take to help avoid the big freeze. Severe weather conditions have the potential to disrupt and delay essential services which you depend on including responsive repairs. So here's three essential tips to make sure you're not caught out this winter:

- **Stay Warm:** Keep the temperature within your home above 18°C at all times, and if you can't heat all the rooms you use, heat the living room throughout the day and your bedrooms just before you go to bed, but remember to close curtains and doors to retain the heat. For more information visit the government's Keep Warm Keep Well campaign at [www.direct.gov.uk/keepwarmkeepwell](http://www.direct.gov.uk/keepwarmkeepwell)
- **Freezing Pipes:** Not only is a continuous background heat the most efficient way of heating your home, it's also a way of avoiding frozen pipes. If you have programmable controls to your heating system make sure your heating is set to a low constant temperature opposed to turning it off for long durations.
- **Stop Taps:** In the event of a burst pipe or leak use the main stop tap to turn off the water supply to your home. It's important that you're aware of the location of your stop tap (usually under the kitchen sink) and test the stop tap on a regular basis, but specifically before winter to make sure it hasn't seized. You should then drain the system by opening all your taps and report the incident to our customer service team who will arrange for a contractor to carry out any repairs.

## Competition: Fancy a trip to the cinema?

Could you find your Stop Tap? Many of our residents can't. In this edition of Interlink we have hidden brass stop taps throughout the magazine. For your chance to win 2 cinema tickets for a film of your choice, can you answer the following:

- A. How many stop taps have been hidden throughout our magazine?
- B. Where is the stop tap in your own home?

To enter the competition you will need to send us your name and address (and your age if you are under 18) along with your answers to:

Email: [hazel@suffolkhousing.org](mailto:hazel@suffolkhousing.org)

Text: 07797 800661

Write to:

Suffolk Housing Society,  
Old Mission House,  
St Botolphs Lane, Bury St  
Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 2AX

Closing date for entries is  
31st January 2012



# Suffolk Housing Society Limited

**FREEPOST NAT 15786,**

**Bury St Edmunds,**

**Suffolk IP33 2ZT**



## Low cost computers available for all!



The ambition of Race Online 2012 is to ensure that everyone in the UK can enjoy the benefits of being online.

There are nine million adults in the UK who've never used the internet. If you're one of them you are missing out on what is now, for most of us in the UK, the primary route to information, education, jobs and customer savings.

Championed by Martha Lane Fox, the UK Digital Champion, Race Online 2012 is building a cross-sector network of partners spanning the public, private and charity sectors. Partners are working together to develop initiatives to inspire, encourage and support everyone in the UK to get online by the end of the Olympic year. More information about Race Online 2012 can be found at <http://raceonline2012.org>.

This includes making low cost computers available to all. These powerful, refurbished computers are loaded up with the latest software and are available from just £95 if you are on certain benefits or £165 if you

are not on benefits. This price covers the computer, software, warranty, telephone helpline, VAT and delivery - but no internet connection. £10 extra gets you one month's pay as you go (PAYG) mobile broadband including 1 gigabyte (GB) (1000 emails worth) of data allowance. You don't need to worry about set up. They will send you a little device (dongle) which plugs straight into your computer and works straight away. It's risk free and gives you time to breathe before you make any big decisions about other internet connection contracts.

### With the internet you can...

#### Stay in touch with friends and family

Email, instant messaging, Facebook and video chat (if you have a webcam) are free. It's an amazing way to communicate with your friends and family, abroad or just around the corner.

#### Education and employment

It's easy to pick up the IT skills necessary for everyday life and almost any job. Learning online is fun and can

be carried out in the comfort of your own home.

#### Save hundreds of £££s a year

Pay your bills, do your shopping and get the best deals and online-only discounts. (Households offline are missing out on savings averaging £560 per year)

#### Search for information and advice

Never leave a question unanswered! Find your nearest curry house, book a weekend away, access online government information.

To find out more or to purchase a computer, telephone:

**03719 100 100.**

**Phone lines are open Mon - Fri 9am till 5pm.**

**If you have access to a computer, you can find out more or purchase online by visiting the website at [www.getonlineathome.org](http://www.getonlineathome.org)**



# Suffolk Housing Fun Day

The Society and Tenants' Voice is considering holding a Fun Day event for residents of Suffolk Housing in the school holidays during August 2012. The event would aim to provide entertainment for children and families as well as older residents. To help us decide whether an event like this would be worthwhile and cost effective, please indicate whether you would attend an event like this by ticking the relevant boxes below:

You can cut this out and send it to us using the Freepost address on the reverse.

Yes, I would attend an event like this       No, I would not attend an event like this

If we held this event, how far would you be prepared to travel to attend it?

Within 5 miles       Within 15 miles  
 Within 10 miles       20 miles +



## Prize Draw improves Survey Returns

Every summer we carry out re-decoration of the exteriors of a number of our properties – the aim being to ensure that every property is re-painted every five years. As we now have approaching 2,000 properties, this breaks down to somewhere between three and four hundred properties a year. As you can imagine, this is not cheap, so a Technical Services Officer always oversees the work to make sure that it is up to standard.

That's not the whole story though. Your opinion of the work that our contractors carry out is very important to us. Not just from a technical/quality point of view – in a sense that's the easy bit. What is equally important is the way in which our contractors conduct themselves – were they polite, did they keep appointments, did they clear up after themselves?

To enable us to gather the opinions of tenants on the work that has been carried out to their home, we supply a brief satisfaction survey with a pre-

paid return envelope to each affected household. Unfortunately we don't always get enough of these returned to give us meaningful statistics. In an effort to address this shortfall, Suffolk Housing Society together with its partners, Mitie Property Services and Dulux Paints decided to put the completed returns into a prize draw.

The prize was the complete re-decoration of three rooms of the winner's choice and the draw took place at the last Tenants' Voice meeting on 31st August. The lucky winner was Mrs Pamela Suri of Weeting who is now, no doubt, consulting her colour charts!

**From the Society's point of view, we got a 100% increase in the number of survey forms returned – so many thanks to all of those who took part.**