

A message from home

How things have changed since Sandbourne's last newsletter in March! Whoever thought then that society would be so different? Shops, restaurants and tourist sites closed, children being taught by their parents or by video link, roads virtually empty and shortages of vital supplies.

The Sandbourne main office was closed on Monday 23 March 2020 and all staff have been working from home since then. We have had to re-invent the way we work, often several times in the same week, to try to provide you with a reasonable level of service under the difficult circumstances. And we have had to cope with the same uncertainties as you - the fear of the disease, the desire to protect our loved ones, the restrictions of staying at home, the loss of significant events. I am very proud of how my team have performed over the last couple of months and I would also like to thank all of you for your patience and co-operation during this time. We are now starting to plan how we can get things back to normal, whatever that may mean, but this will take time, and some services may look very different in the future.

As the current coronavirus crisis is unlikely to be over for some time yet, please all continue to follow the government guidelines to keep yourself and your neighbours safe. And I look forward to meeting up with many of you again once that is allowed.



Fiona Ferenczy, Chief Executive

Contacting Sandbourne

The only office telephone number is:

01202 671222

(answerphone only until office re-opens after lockdown)

All correspondence should be addressed to:

Sandbourne Housing Association
Beech House, 28-30 Wimborne Road,
Poole, BH15 2BU

Email: info@sandbourne.org.uk
www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk

Repairs: repairs@sandbourne.org.uk

Out of Office Hours Emergencies only:
01202 452795

Some articles inside this issue:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Making contact with Sandbourne | Page 2 |
| 'Did You Have Your Say' survey | Page 3 |
| Letting empty properties | Page 4 |
| Self-isolating/shielding | Page 4 |
| Resident raising funds for charity | Page 5 |
| Enjoying the sunshine | Page 5 |
| Feeding the birds (rats) | Page 6 |
| Recycling and rubbish | Page 6 |
| TV licences | Page 7 |
| Policy consultation | Page 7 |
| Feedback/suggestion/contact form | Page 7 |



Smaller than normal newsletter

We still wanted to keep in touch and produce a Summer 2020 newsletter but this time it is half the size of our usual editions.

The reason for this is that, on this occasion, we need to post this to all our residents, leaseholders and shared owners as opposed to our staff hand delivering them to our larger schemes. To produce a 16-page newsletter, under the current circumstances, just isn't practical or cost effective.

Hopefully, we will be able to go back to our usual size and format in the Autumn but hope you still find this newsletter useful and interesting. Our word search will also hopefully return in the Autumn edition.

Contacting the office during the coronavirus lockdown

We know that it may have been difficult for many of our residents not being able to telephone and speak to us direct during the lockdown, but hopefully we have been giving you the information you need to contact us by other means in both our regular updates and on our answerphone message.

We wanted to re-assure you that we do take communication with you seriously and, because of this, and despite the office being closed due to the lockdown, a member of staff has been visiting the office two to three times a week to collect, open, and distribute post to the relevant staff, all of whom are working from home. Therefore, you can still write to us without too much of a delay in us responding to you.

We were recently able to update our office answerphone message to say that, if you could not write to us via letter, email or our website, you could now leave a voicemail message for us. This is because we can remotely access our telephone system from home, as well as checking messages during our frequent visits to the office.

Our maintenance team have regularly been accessing the repairs@sandbourne.org.uk mailbox to pick up any repair reports made by residents and this seems to be working well.

As well as being able to write to us, we asked everyone with housing or other general enquiries to email info@sandbourne.org.uk or to use the contact form on our website and this has proved popular with not only residents but also housing applicants and other members of the public. We are pleased to say that all emails or contact forms have been acknowledged swiftly and forwarded to the appropriate member of staff that same working morning or afternoon. In almost all cases a full response has then been sent well within our normal customer services response times.

We will continue to follow government guidelines about any return to working from our offices in Poole and will let you know as soon as we are able to open our phone lines again. In the meantime, we would ask you to continue to contact us by the above methods ie; by letter, by using the repairs email address to report repairs, the info email address or website contact form for housing and general enquiries, or by leaving a message on **01202 671222** (our recorded message kicks in after six rings). Please remember that our telephone line may be busy if other people are also leaving messages, so please be patient.

Careline (Bournemouth)

The Careline number for our residents to use is: **01202 452795**

Rented 18+ and 60+ without a Sandbourne provided Careline service - only to be used to report '**emergency**' repairs when the office is closed and it is something that cannot wait to be dealt with until the next working day.

Rented 60+ and extra care (Craigleith) tenants with a Sandbourne provided Careline service - to be used to summon assistance, for example a fall; an '**emergency**' out-of-hours repair; or to notify that you're going away and leaving your flat empty. Remember you can also use your emergency Careline pull cord.

Leaseholders and shared owners - only to be used for communal area '**emergencies**', eg a fire that requires attention or a repair affecting the communal areas or the structure of the building.



Did You Have Your Say?

You will remember that enclosed with the Spring Edition of *Sandbourne News* was a survey that gave you the opportunity to tell us what you think about the services we provide.

The closing date for completed surveys was 27 March and in total we received 109 replies which is a response rate of 20%. 85 of these came from people in our rented 60+ homes and 24 from those in general 18+ housing. Whilst these numbers are lower than we would have expected, we appreciate that everyone would have had other things on their minds at the time, and we would like to thank those who took the time to complete and return the survey to us.

The **prize draw** has been made and the £20 shopping voucher we offered has been sent to the winner, Mrs B from our Stourwood Avenue site in Bournemouth.

What did you say?

So that we can compare Sandbourne to other housing associations the six questions we asked were all from HouseMark, which over 400 housing providers use when surveying residents. The table below compares the levels of satisfaction from our survey against those of the other housing providers who have undertaken similar surveys in 2018/19.

| Question | SHA score (%) | HouseMark 2018/19 (%) |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Sandbourne? | 84 | 87.5 |
| How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home? | 85 | 88.5 |
| Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the repairs service you receive? | 84 | 81.5 |
| How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Sandbourne listens to residents' views and acts on them? | 77 | 72.4 |
| Thinking specifically about the building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Sandbourne provides a home that is safe and secure? | 86 | No data |
| How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Sandbourne is easy to deal with? | 85 | No data |

Whilst to be expected, there is some variation but overall Sandbourne is towards the middle of ratings, which is encouraging but also shows that there is room for us to improve.

We also provided an opportunity for you to comment on each question and also overall, which we are pleased to say many people did. There were a lot of positive replies, together with some where particular issues were identified or some common themes emerged. As and when the current lockdown restrictions are further eased we will be contacting as many of those people as we can to follow up on the specific issues they have raised (where contact details were provided).

So what next?

We think that the most obvious finding is that, as with other housing providers, overall people are less satisfied that Sandbourne listens to their views and acts upon them. The reasons for this and what we can do to address it will therefore be one of the main outcomes from the survey.

Between now and July our intention is to develop our thinking by looking at best practice examples used by other housing associations to support effective resident engagement. These will then be reviewed by a working party comprised of Resident Board Members and staff.

We hope that by the end of July there will be more opportunities to meet people to discuss our thinking and provide an opportunity for residents to have input into the final version of our Action Plan. Details of the Plan will then be provided in a future edition of *Sandbourne News*.



Quarterly draw for 'new tenant' surveys

You will recall that this is something new we started to try and get more feedback from our new tenants about how they found our application process, our services and the standard of their new home.

Our first draw took place in January, which included anyone returning a survey up to 31 December 2019 and we announced the winner in our Spring 2020 newsletter.

With the coronavirus lockdown, we had to put all new lettings on hold from 24 March and we had only sent out a couple of surveys at that point. Therefore, it seems sensible to defer the draw until after we have started letting properties again.

If you are reading this newsletter and have received a survey, why not return it for a chance to win a £20 High Street voucher when the next draw is made. If you have already returned a survey since January, don't worry, we will include you too!



The frustration of not being able to let some of our empty properties

From a housing association perspective, the coronavirus lockdown has been hard as we have had to leave empty properties to stand unoccupied from mid-March following government advice.

Surely, we could have let them with so many people in housing need, you might ask? The answer has been 'no' because we have to follow the government advice at the time it is given and we also have a duty of care for the safety of our residents, staff, contractors and applicants.

Shortly after the announcement of the lockdown, the government set out guidelines for social landlords (Sandbourne) which highlighted exceptional circumstances for letting properties but basically put all general lettings and mutual exchanges on hold for the time being. They also advised that private purchasers should avoid moving during the lockdown. Although this has now been relaxed, being aware that older people and those with underlying health problems are at a higher risk from coronavirus, we have decided to take a phased approach to restarting lettings. We are now actively looking to let empty 'general needs' (18+) properties, but are delaying 60+ and extra care vacancies for the time being.

On the duty of care side, we thought we would highlight how many people might be involved in order for someone to move into a vacant property. The property will need to be cleared and this may be down to the resident, their family or friends, or to Sandbourne and our contractors in the event of a resident passing away without a next-of-kin, or a property being abandoned. Contractors may have to attend to put right any damage or to redecorate. The property may need to be cleaned. Our staff have to show applicants around the empty property and, once let, the new resident may have to move from one area of the country to another. A removal team might be involved as well as contractors to connect cookers and washing machines, lay carpets, etc. There are, therefore, a lot of third party people to consider who may have to go in and out of a property.

Why are we telling you this? Because our priority is and always has been to house people in need and to do this as quickly as possible. The current lockdown has prevented us from housing those people and has reduced our rental income. However, the over-riding consideration throughout all of this has to be the safety of all parties involved and to be sure that we are not inadvertently allowing the spread of the virus.

We are continually updating our plans and procedures for letting our remaining empty properties so that we can do this at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner and already have applicants who have been ready and waiting to move as soon as practicable and safe to do so.

Self-isolation/shielding

In our Coronavirus/Covid-19 Updates, we have asked our residents to let us know if they are self-isolating or shielding, or indeed if they have the virus. This has mainly been so that we have this information on our system to help protect you, our contractors and our staff, in the event of urgent repairs needing to be carried out.

We appreciate that some residents will need to self-isolate/shield for more than 12 weeks and, so that we don't hold incorrect data about you, we would now ask you to let us not only know the above, but also to let us know when you are no longer self-isolating or shielding so that we can remove that information from our records.

Raising funds for charity

We know that many of you will have been doing your bit and raising funds for charity, whether for the NHS or your own favoured charity, many of which are struggling in the current economic climate.

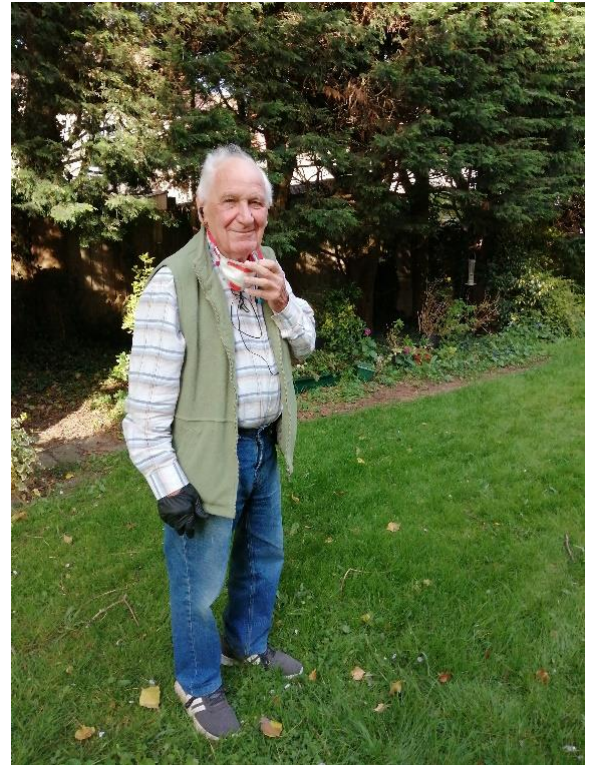
Whether elevated into the limelight like Captain Tom Moore (Honorary Colonel Sir Tom Moore) for his remarkable fund raising for the NHS, or simply helping or donating to your local charity, it's all pretty amazing and we'd love to share your story with the other residents in the next newsletter.

In the meantime, here's one story that has been brought to our attention which one resident has agreed for us to share with you.

John Duffy, an 82-year old resident at our Stourwood Avenue site in Bournemouth, has been 'shielding' due to undergoing cancer treatment, his age, and other underlying health issues. He is, however, allowed to walk in the garden and has been doing so and walking five miles a day around the communal gardens and grounds to raise money for "Reaching The Unreached" (RTU), which he's supported since he was a boy at St Peter's School in Bournemouth. The charity was started by the art teacher there, a De La Salle Teaching Brother who taught John, and the school still raises money for them. John's aim is to walk 350 miles in total.

John was concerned that people might be worried about his perambulations around the Stourwood grounds during the pandemic, but so far has raised an amazing £2,800 from people sponsoring him and says "all contributions welcome". The charity supports an area of South India which has the second highest incidence of Covid-19 in that country. You can find out more on the RTU website.

Well done John - we hope you meet your target of £3,500.



Enjoying the sunshine

Most people have been enjoying the really good weather during April and May and have been lucky enough to go outside during the coronavirus lockdown, but some people have not.

Therefore, we'd like to remind you that, whether you live in a block of flats or a house, everyone has the right to not only peacefully enjoy their garden area but also their home. Please:

- Be aware of where you place garden furniture so that you do not sit under someone's window; noise travels and if, for example, someone is unwell, works unsociable hours or from home, or is watching their favourite drama on the tv, people just talking in a normal voice can be annoying, upsetting or even distressing.
- Likewise, if you enjoy listening to music in the garden, please keep this at a reasonable level and remember that your music may not be to everyone else's taste.
- Try not to cut your lawn at an unsociable hour (early morning/late evening).
- If you like topping up your tan that's fine but please remember that the way you dress (or do not dress) may offend others. Please be considerate about where and how you sunbath if you are likely to be overlooked.

Finally, please follow the government social distancing and gathering guidelines.



Remembering the birds, but at what price?

One of the few upsides to the coronavirus outbreak has been the increase in birds and wildlife visiting our gardens. It has been so nice to sit and watch them and to see how many different species have been visiting.

However, the temptation is to entice them by putting more food and scraps down but, as one of our team found out, this had the downside of encouraging a family of rats to take up residence under their garden shed.

Fearing they may breed, and having tried a few of the gentler natural remedies for getting rid of them, they had to resort to calling in the pest control people. After expressing their guilt at the use of more drastic measures, the pest control contractor told them that they may look quite cute running up the bird feeder but they could also climb walls as he had witnessed first-hand. "That's how they get into lofts" he added. Leaving windows closed in the lovely spell of weather experienced in April/May was no joke, but better safe than sorry! The bird feeder was also put away for a week or so to stop the rats finding easy pickings.

The outcome. The bird feeder is now back in situ and, fingers crossed, the rats have now gone but the paranoia is still there; every night looking to see if they have returned. And, on top of that, it cost £240 for just this one small family of rats to be eradicated from one small garden!

Please, as we always ask, do not throw down left over scraps of food for the birds – the damage caused by bird mess is bad enough but rats are not pleasant and can cause so much damage as well as spreading disease.



Recycling – again!

We know it has been difficult to dispose of unwanted items whilst the council tips were closed during the coronavirus lockdown but we have had several complaints of items just being dumped by the communal bins and also about incorrect general and recyclable waste disposal.

It seems that no matter how hard we try, it is still going to be difficult to get some residents, their families, carers and/or cleaners, to follow our regular requests not to dump small (or large) items by the bins. In addition, it seems that people will always put rubbish in the closest or least full bin, irrespective of where it should go, which ultimately leaves the scheme open to not having bins emptied because the council consider the contents to be contaminated. (Blue recycling bin at 18+ properties in Poole)

Some people just don't think or don't care and simply drop rubbish into the closest bin without looking – something we have witnessed at our office with our recycling bin containing non-recyclable food packaging, light bulbs, paper tissues and even plant foliage.

To help everyone at the largest of our Bournemouth 60+ schemes, we have now put up new signage in our communal bin stores as a reminder about what can or can't be recycled. (Black recycling bins at 60+ properties in Bournemouth)

However, whether you live in a block of flats or a house, please don't carelessly dump your rubbish, please dispose of it responsibly following the council's guidelines for your own council area.

We are conscious that the colour bins you have is different depending on your previous pre-merged council area. In the examples opposite, our Bournemouth residents have black bins for recycling; the opposite to our Poole residents whose are blue.

Council tips in most areas opened back up again recently but if you have a small electrical, or even a large item like a mattress, and don't know what to do with it, you can always contact the registered office for some help and advice.



TV Licences

If you are a new tenant, you will need to notify TV Licensing of your change of address so that your licence can be transferred to your new home.

If you are aged **under 75**, you will need to pay for your own TV Licence when it is due for renewal.

For people aged **75 or over**, the TV Licensing Authority changed its policy on free TV licences with a new scheme becoming effective from 1 August 2020 (date may change and was delayed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic). Their website says they've contacted everyone concerned.

However, you may still be able to apply for a free TV Licence if you, or someone living at your property, are aged 75 or over but you might need to check with the TV Licensing Authority as you will need to meet certain criteria, ie be in receipt of Pension Credit.

We do not have communal TV Licences for our 60+ housing blocks of flats or our extra care flats (except for a very small handful of longstanding Sandbourne tenants). The only TV Licences we hold are for our two communal lounges in Bournemouth (Craigleith and Woodlands).

If in doubt, please look on their website at: www.tvlicensing.co.uk, or ring them on 0300 790 6131 (a minicom facility for the deaf or hard of hearing is available on 0300 790 6050).

New Sandbourne Policies

Apart from our major policy reviews, one of which took place at the end of last year, we continue to amend and write new policies as and when the need is identified and, for some, we are required to consult with you which we do this via the newsletter.

So far this year we have updated the following policies:

- Fraud
- Resident Engagement, Involvement and Participation
- Value for Money

all of which are available on our website or upon request from the registered office.

Our latest new policy is on Fire Safety, on which we are required to consult with both residents and staff. This is an interim policy, pending the long awaited final findings of the Grenfell Tower report.

A copy of the Fire Safety Policy can be found on our website under the Information and Downloads tab (www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk) or is available on request from the registered office.

All feedback must be received by **Monday 29 June**, ready for the Policy to go to the Board for final approval at its July meeting.



FEEDBACK/SUGGESTIONS/CONTACT DETAILS FORM

If you would like to give us some feedback on either this newsletter or any other matter relating to your tenancy/lease, make a suggestion, or let us know your new telephone number, please just return this slip to us.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Name: | |
| 1 st Line of your address: | |

Feedback/suggestions/change of contact details (eg telephone number):

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|---------|--|-------|--|
| Signed: | | Date: | |
|---------|--|-------|--|

Safeguarding/Protection from abuse

If you feel that you are being abused or suspect that another resident is being abused (physical, emotional, sexual, sensory deprivation, neglect, imposed isolation, financial/material, discriminatory), you can contact us for more information about what to do or for a leaflet. [Please note that some other types of abuse have been added to these examples (forced marriage, modern slavery, self-neglect, exploitation or radicalisation, sexual exploitation, internet/cyber bullying)]. Alternatively, you can report this directly by contacting the relevant safeguarding team for your local authority area:

Bournemouth: 01202 454979

Poole: 01202 633902

East or North Dorset: 01305 221016

Ringwood: 0300 555 1386

Please note, if we receive any reports, we are obliged to notify the safeguarding team.

Sandbourne registered office:

Address: Sandbourne Housing Association, Beech House, 28-30 Wimborne Road, Poole, BH15 2BU

Tel: 01202 671222

(Voicemail service only until office re-opens following coronavirus lockdown)

You will always be able to leave a message on the answer phone outside of office hours (which will be dealt with the next working day).

You will also be able to leave a message on the answer phone, after six rings, if staff are away from their desk, or taking another call, or at lunch (they will get back to you as soon as they are free).

Calls are recorded by Sandbourne for information and training purposes.

Occasionally we may need to close our office but we will aim to tell you this in advance.

Email: info@sandbourne.org.uk

Repairs: repairs@sandbourne.org.uk

Website: www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk

Office opening times: Normally **9am to 4pm**, Monday to Friday (excluding the Christmas/New Year closure and other English public/statutory holidays).

Note: To ensure that someone is available, appointments should always be made if wanting to see staff in the registered office.

(No face-to-face appointments available during coronavirus lockdown)

Out-of-hours emergency repairs

For genuine out-of-hours emergency repairs, Careline's number is: **01202 452795**.

All non-emergency repairs should be reported to the office during normal office hours: by ringing 01202 671222 (messages can be left on the answerphone when we're closed); emailing repairs@sandbourne.org.uk, or using the contact form on our website: www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk).

All articles are correct at the time of publishing (June 2020)

Copies of this newsletter are available, on request, in large print, and can also be downloaded from our website: www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk