

# good neighbours

Summer 2007 | Issue 35

Putting you in the picture

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**Solar Panel Sisters  
sing eco songs for  
eco radio launch**

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# Are you in Arrears?

Would you prefer payments to be made directly from your benefits to your rent account?

the Income Recovery Department to apply for **Arrears Direct**.

If you are on Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support and more than 8 weeks in arrears, you can request for

Arrears Direct is an easier way to ensure that payments are made towards your arrears on your rent account. To apply, please contact our Income Recovery Team on 0121 766 1116/1110 with your National Insurance Number and Date of Birth.

You can also complete a Deduction from Benefits Form which you can request from your local job centre.



## How to contact us

Family Housing Customer Services  
☎ **0121 766 1100**

Freephone Repairs & Gas Line  
(8am-6pm Monday-Friday)  
☎ **0800 072 6522**

Repairs (out of office hours)  
☎ **07795 301411**

Gas (out of office hours)  
☎ **07702 555419**

Family Housing Association  
Bordesley House, 44/46 Coventry Rd  
Birmingham B10 0RX  
[www.family-housing.co.uk](http://www.family-housing.co.uk)

Office is open 9am-5pm Monday-Friday  
Telephone lines are open 8am-6pm  
Monday-Friday

## Speaking your language



- Bengali** যদি আপনি এই সংকটময় সময় ভাষায় বা যন্ত্রণার কারণে, সাহায্য বা কাজ আনতে চান।
- Gujarati** જે વખતે આવી સમસ્યા અથવા અવગણના, તેથી તેમનો ફાવે તેવી સહાયતા આપવાનો છે.
- Hindi** यदि आपको अपनी किसी अन्य भाषा को अन्य रूप में बोलने या समझने में कठिनाई है।
- Kurdish** ئەگەر زانیاریت بە زمانیکی کە یا بە فۆرمیکی کە بەرێ ئێکە ئێکە ئێکە ئێکە ئێکە ئێکە.
- Punjabi** ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਜਿਹੇ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਜਿਹੇ ਭਾਸ਼ੀ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ੀ ਜਿਹੇ ਭਾਸ਼ੀ.
- Urdu** اگر آپ کو کسی اور زبان میں بات کرنے کی ضرورت ہے تو اسے ہمیں بتائیں۔

☎ **0121 766 1100**

We are members of a translation service called Language Line and therefore we can communicate in over 60 languages. If you have an enquiry, or would like us to translate any of our correspondence to you, please call our customer services on 0121 766 1100 and ask them to translate into the language you understand.

# Eco Songs Launch Eco Radio

Budding recording artists from five primary schools across the Ladywood and Summerfield area promoted their first Eco CD at an official signing session in front of screaming fans at the Centennial Centre on Thursday 24 May.



**Laila (recording artist) with the Lord Mayor and 'Eco Eric'.**

Through song, acts such as Shannon and The Solar Panel Sisters, showcased their talents to The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Randal Brew OBE and Lady Mayoress, Sandra Brew, friends, family and the media.

All the children are on a mission to raise the awareness of energy issues to Birmingham citizens and hope their words will inspire the young generation in particular, to think about their environment and ways of saving energy and the planet.

The Lord Mayor of Birmingham said: "This is a remarkable project. The Housing Education Initiative has been extremely successful in bringing young people together to transmit the energy

efficiency message. What a wonderful way to spread the message – through song."

Working with the City Council's Housing Education Initiative and CAN UK (design, media and communications company) children as young as nine are promoting the benefits of saving energy through the development of an eco educational website and pod casting radio station.

Family Housing sponsored the launch after contributing £20,000 to the set up of the Eco Radio which linked to the Summerfield Eco Neighbourhood project.

On the day, fans also had the opportunity to meet Eco Radio presenters and the cast of Eco Hill, the first radio soap with a green message.

Artists and songs on the CD include:

**The Solar Panel Sisters** – 'Make Our Generation Proud' from St. George's School

**Renaye** - 'Our Planet' from St. John's School

**Shannon** – 'Living In An Eco Neighbourhood' from The Oratory School

**Rowena** – 'Can't Think About Tomorrow' from St. Patrick's School

**Laila** – 'What's Your Legacy to Me?' from Barford School



**Local children launch eco radio station.**



**Recording of eco news.**

## The future's bright for 100 Birmingham homes

The first Eco Neighbourhood project of its kind in Birmingham has seen 100 homes fitted with solar panels, allowing some of the city's most vulnerable citizens to benefit from solar energy.

Family Housing has worked extensively with the local community to inspire their participation and investment in renewable technology, both in their own housing stock and generally in the area.

Tim Sewell, Chief Executive for Family Housing said 'we are extremely pleased that our Eco project has been so well received and it's fantastic to see so many residents installing the solar panels. The project which started in February this year is on schedule, within budget and aims to fit solar panels to another 150 homes by April 2008. This follows on from major regeneration work we have undertaken to Summerfield over the past few years and its very rewarding to see our investment in the area has proved to be so successful.'

# Best Value Review Resident Involvement

Family Housing are continually seeking opportunities to improve services for our customers and a 3 year Continuous Improvement Programme was agreed by the Board of Management in March 2006. As part of this programme, Resident Involvement was identified for a Year 1 Best Value Review.

The Best Value process involved a complete review of Resident Involvement which included:

- Consulting with internal and external customers about Resident Involvement
- Comparing the organisations performance with others to identify where improvements can be made
- Challenging the purpose of Resident Involvement and the way in which we deliver the service
- Competing with others to demonstrate that value for money is being achieved and the best

interests of residents and others are being met

The review team consisted of a cross section of staff from the organisation drawn together for their expertise in the particular areas under consideration. Residents were fully consulted throughout the process through a combination of focus groups, face to face interviews and telephone surveys. The feedback given by customers has been vital to the review and will ensure customers' views are fully implemented. As such we would like to take the opportunity to thank all residents that spared some time to talk to us about Resident Involvement.

The main feedback from the Review is outlined in the table below, along with



a selection of the main action points. The implementation of the recommendations will be phased in over time and reviewed again in 6 months.

## KEY AREAS AND ACTION POINTS

KEY AREAS	ACTION POINT
1. Information, Communication and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up database of residents who want to be involved to include information about areas of interest and availability</li> <li>• Arrange translation of Resident Involvement literature</li> <li>• Explore opportunity for information DVD</li> <li>• Explore opportunity for Resident Involvement magazine</li> <li>• Arrange extensive consultation on Customer Care Charter and Service Standards</li> </ul>
2. Organisation and Staff Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop training and induction programme for all new and existing staff</li> <li>• Develop Resident Involvement Toolkit to assist staff in developing Resident Involvement and improving skills</li> <li>• Where appropriate develop an appropriate framework for involving residents in staff recruitment</li> </ul>
3. Methods of Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop annual programme of events, to be promoted to all residents</li> <li>• Explore opportunity for annual residents conference</li> <li>• Explore opportunity for environmental budgets for local groups and/ or residents associations</li> <li>• Explore opportunity for web based discussion forums</li> </ul>

<b>4. Diversity, Hard to Reach Group and Supported Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop with Social Care Officer a programme for monitoring Resident Involvement in our Supported Housing Schemes</li> <li>• Continue targeted work and develop effective database to monitor involvement by age, ethnicity, gender, disability</li> </ul>
<b>5. Resident Involvement Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop in consultation with residents an appropriate Resident Involvement Structure.</li> <li>• Agree role and remit of the current Resident Participation Group</li> </ul>
<b>6. Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out extensive consultation on training requirements for residents</li> <li>• If appropriate prepare and publicise an annual training programme</li> </ul>
<b>7. Positive Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop impact assessment for Resident Involvement activities, to include cost, method of involvement, aims, outcomes and benefits</li> <li>• Introduce performance targets and indicators to monitor performance in relation to Resident Involvement</li> </ul>

If you have any queries about the Best Value Review of Resident Involvement or would just like some more information please contact Sally Garratt on 0121 766 1158 or email [sgarratt@family-housing.co.uk](mailto:sgarratt@family-housing.co.uk). A copy of the full report is also available on request.

# Customer Care Focus Group

A focus group was held earlier this year between staff and residents to develop a Customer Service Charter. This was to ensure we are delivering an excellent service to our customers.

The information below outlines some of the main points from the feedback:

What is good Customer Care?

- Delivering on promises
- Consistency of service
- Knowledgeable staff
- Getting it right first time
- Apologise when things go wrong
- Effective and efficient complaints procedure
- Proactive in gaining customer feedback through surveys
- Treating people as individuals
- Explaining reasons why decisions have been made

What is poor Customer Care?

- Inflexibility
- Fail to deliver on promises
- Unable to speak to appropriate staff
- Fail to respond to complaints
- Lack of information
- Poor cross departmental co-ordination
- Inconsistent service

Suggested Service Standards to include:

- Respond to voicemail in 24 hours
- Respond to letters in 5 working days
- Telephone response times 5 rings
- Keep appointments
- Courtesy call for cancellations
- ID shown when visiting
- Home visits on request

Staff should be

- Courteous
- Professional
- Respectful
- Patient
- Honest
- Knowledgeable

The information above only forms part of the feedback received and to ensure wider consultation a draft Customer Service Charter will be published in the next edition of Good Neighbour's for wider comment.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who attended the focus group; your feedback will be directly used to inform service delivery.

If you have any queries regarding the issues raised in this article or if you would like information about how to get more involved, please contact Sally Garratt on 0121 766 1158 or email [sgarratt@family-housing.co.uk](mailto:sgarratt@family-housing.co.uk).



# Family sign up to RESPECT



**PC Marj Levy, West Midlands Police with Phil Winfield, Neighbourhood Officer, Family Housing.**

- Empowering and reassuring residents
- Prevention and early intervention
- Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses
- Protecting communities through swift enforcement
- Support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour

Family's Neighbourhood Services Team has carried out an initial self-assessment based on the Respect Standard for Housing Management and identified the action required to meet the six Respect Commitments.

- Investigating abandoned properties and vehicles
- Dealing with non-access to properties for gas servicing
- Partnership working with the local police through Safer Estate Forums

Your Neighbourhood Services Team is; Phil Winfield, Marsha Cooke and Rachel Moore (part-time) who joined the team in June 07. The team is managed by the Team Leader, Surjit Balu. There have recently been some changes to the areas that Officers deal with and this is shown below.



**Phil Winfield**  
0121 766 1179

Aston  
Handsworth  
Perry Barr  
Saltley  
Sandwell  
Small Heath  
Warwickshire

In order to tackle anti-social behaviour effectively and deliver sustainable communities people need to feel safe and secure within their homes and communities. The Respect Standard for Housing Management was launched on 17th August 2006 and sets out the critical steps needed to promote social behaviour and reassure residents that anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated.

The Respect Standard comprises of six commitments which outline core components or building blocks built on good practice and clear foundations which help to ensure a clear and robust set of standards which, when delivered, will provide an effective service in tackling anti-social behaviour and delivering respect.

The commitments are:

- Accountability, leadership and commitment

At Family Housing we strive for excellence and are fully committed to providing the best possible service to our residents, operating a zero tolerance approach towards anti-social behaviour.

With Rachel Moore recently joining the team, we now have 3 Neighbourhood Officers delivering a full range of services to our residents. Each Officer is responsible for an area of the City and is ready to help. In addition to tackling anti-social behaviour, the Officers also deal with issues such as:

- Resident involvement
- Management of the estate and areas owned by Family Housing
- Tenancy matters and breaches
- Transfer requests and mutual exchanges
- New tenant visits

**Marsha Cooke**  
0121 766 1151

Edbaston  
Moseley  
Kings Norton  
Selly Oak  
Sparkbrook  
Winson Green



**Rachel Moore**  
0121 766 1155

Bordesley  
City Centre  
Erdington  
Yardley  
Rubery





# Smokefree England

As you are aware, from July 1st 2007,

virtually all enclosed public places and workplaces in England are smokefree. Smoking in these places will be a thing of the past – and against the law.

The new smokefree law has been introduced to protect everyone from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, which contains over 4,000 chemicals and over 50 of these can cause cancer. Long-term exposure can increase your risk of developing serious illnesses including lung cancer, heart disease or triggering asthma attacks. It also puts the health of children at risk of serious respiratory disease and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

## Help for smokers who want to quit

Around 70% of smokers say they want to stop smoking and if you would like

to quit there is excellent free support from the NHS including:-

**Local NHS Stop Smoking Services** – to find your local service call the NHS Smoking Helpline free on 0800 1690 169, visit [gosmokefree.co.uk](http://gosmokefree.co.uk), text 'GIVEUP' and your full postcode to 88088 or ask at your local doctors, pharmacy or hospital.

**NHS Smoking Helpline** – you can speak to a specialist adviser by calling free on 0800 1690 169 (lines are open daily from 7am to 11pm).

**[gosmokefree.co.uk](http://gosmokefree.co.uk)** – an on-line resource for all the advice, information and support you need to stop and stay stopped.

**Together** – a support programme which is free to join and helps you to stop smoking by using medical research and insights from ex-smokers. For more information call the NHS helpline free on 0800 1690 169 or visit [gosmokefree.co.uk](http://gosmokefree.co.uk).

## How the law affects Family Housing

The smoking ban affects all our residents who live in flats or housing schemes where we have communal rooms, hallways, staircases etc. Smoking is not permitted in these areas and no-smoking signs will be put in place to enforce this.

We would also ask all our residents to take our staff into consideration when they are visiting your home. If you could please refrain from smoking when a member of our staff is in the property we would be most grateful. If you do need to smoke and a staff member is present, please try to smoke in a room where they will not be working or open the window to help clear secondhand smoke. Your co-operation on this matter is greatly appreciated.

## The benefits of Gardening



Gardening is one of the simplest and most fruitful hobbies in the country and you don't need to have a very big garden to enjoy it - in fact you don't need a garden all as pots and window boxes are just as good.

**Relaxation** - Gardening has been known soothe the emotions and have a calming effect.

**Clean air** - When there are plants in the house or surrounding area, they filter the air and make it a healthier environment.

**Eye-appealing** - Provide a cheery and bright atmosphere to any home.

**Food on the table** - Plant vegetables that you and your family can enjoy at the dining table.

## Painting & Decorating



### Vincent Finch and Bernard Buckley, Painting Operatives.

To help us provide a more flexible and cost effective service to our residents we now have our own Painting and Decorating Team. In April we appointed Richard Wootton as Painting Supervisor and Vincent Finch

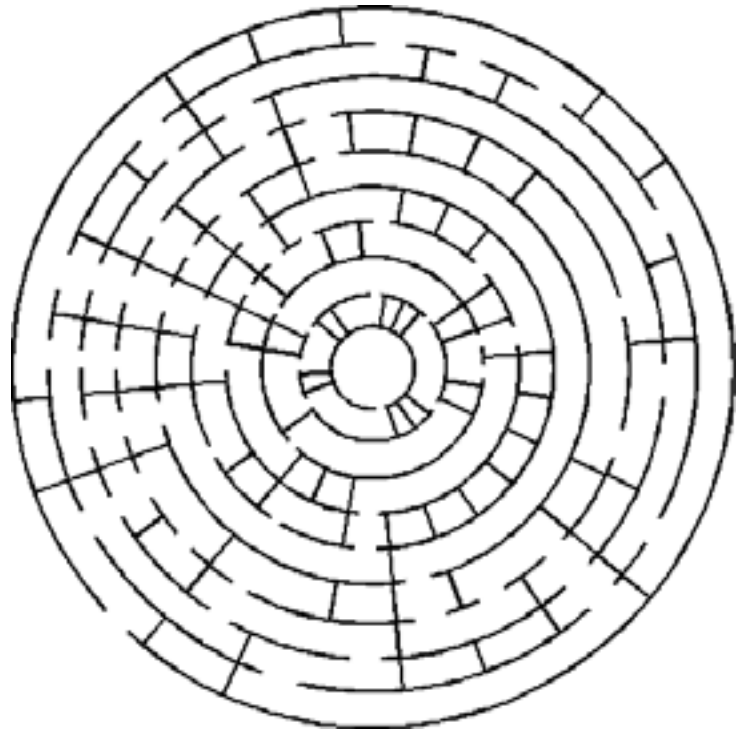
and Bernard Buckley as Painting Operatives.

The new painting team will be beneficial to our cyclical painting programme and they are already receiving a positive response with good customer feedback for their work.

If you have any queries please call David Morrison, Asset Management Surveyor on 0121 766 1130 or e-mail [dmorrison@family-housing.co.uk](mailto:dmorrison@family-housing.co.uk).



Try to find your way through the sun maze ...❖



## Quick Events Guide

**Bullring Beach** - live music every week.  
**5th- 8th July** - Taste of Birmingham, Cannon Hill Park.  
**26th-29th July** - Antiques for Everyone, NEC.  
**29th July** - Eid Mela, Perry Park/ Cannon Hill Park.  
**5th August** - Birmingham Carnival, Perry Park.  
**5th August** - Rathayatra Festival, Victoria Square

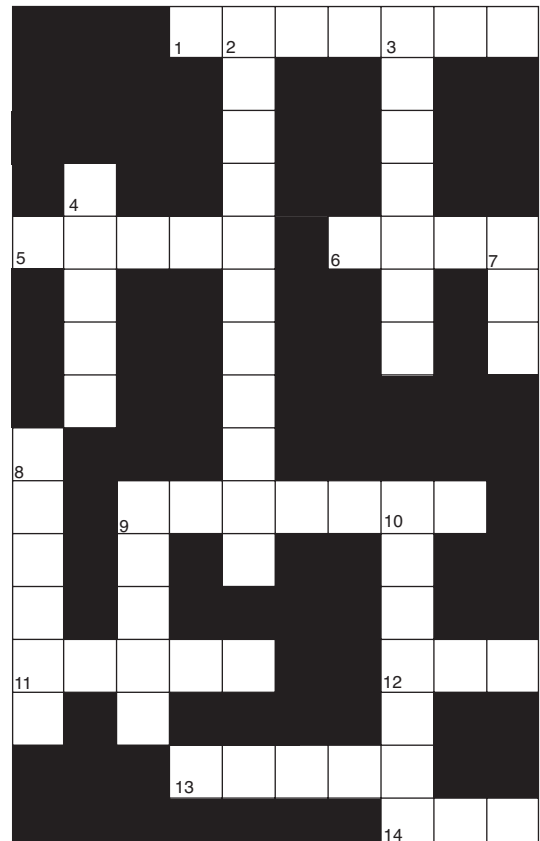
## Environmentally Friendly Crossword

### Across

- 1 To use something again for the same purpose or for a new purpose.
- 5 To cool you down in hot weather.
- 6 You can donate these to needy children instead of throwing them away.
- 9 What you get on your skin if you are in the sun for a long time without sunscreen.
- 11 You can recycle this in bottle banks.
- 12 What you put rubbish into.
- 13 Like to build nests in trees.
- 14 What you should wear on your head in the sun.

### Down

- 2 Your world, surroundings and source of life and health.
- 3 What a pile of decayed food scraps, leaves and grass turn into.
- 4 Recycled material made from trees
- 7 Provides heat and energy from the sky.
- 8 You need a lot of this to run around.
- 9 These panels are fitted to your roof to use energy from the sun to heat up your water tank.
- 10 What you throw away.



**Complete the crossword puzzle and return it FREE to enter our prize draw for £20 Borders Books/CD/DVD gift voucher.**

Please remember to include your full name and address and post to:  
 Family Housing Association (Birmingham) Ltd  
 FREEPOST, Birmingham B10 0BR

All entries must be received by 31st August 2007.

Family Housing Association (Birmingham) Ltd, Bordesley House, 44/46 Coventry Road, Birmingham, B10 0RX  
 Telephone 0121 766 1100 E-mail [post@family-housing.co.uk](mailto:post@family-housing.co.uk) Website [www.family-housing.co.uk](http://www.family-housing.co.uk)

**Please note our telephone lines are now open 8am-6pm**



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