



# Opendoor

The magazine for Magna Housing customers

**Christmas is  
nearly here!**

**Win a £50  
shopping voucher  
to arrive in time  
for Christmas!**

Plus...

**Season's greetings  
from the Chief  
Executive**

[Page 4](#)

**Services over the  
festive period**

[Page 6](#)

**Dealing with damp  
and mould**

[Page 22](#)

# Welcome

Christmas is fast approaching and we've got lots of info to help you spend wisely and also stay safe this festive season.

Christmas can be such a wonderful time of year, making memories with family and friends and treating ourselves to a mince pie or two! But, it can also put pressure on already stretched finances. We've put together lots of information on how to budget and spend wisely, responsible borrowing and ways you may be able to save money. Take a look at the bumper money matters section of the magazine, starting on [page 10](#) and finishing on page 17.

There's also a chance for you to win £50 in shopping vouchers to arrive in time for Christmas. That'll help with some last minute purchases or the Christmas food shop. Check out our competition on the opposite page for details.

We're delighted to organise our Santa's Grotto events again this year for your children to attend and get a free present from Santa. We'll be sharing photos from

the events on our Customer Facebook group - see [page 9](#) for info on joining the group.

Continuing with the Christmas theme, on [page 24](#) we've got some fire safety tips as there are lots of extra hazards at this time of year - candles, fairy lights and overloaded sockets to name a few - so please take a read and make sure you're safe.

Our offices will be closing on Friday 22 December for Christmas and New Year, reopening on Tuesday 2 January. As always, if you have an emergency you can contact our out of hours service. Contact details and what classes as an emergency are listed on [pages 6 and 7](#).

From everyone at Magna, we wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.



**Tanya Churchill**

Marketing Manager and  
Editor of Opendoor

## Get in touch

### General enquiries

[contactus@magna.org.uk](mailto:contactus@magna.org.uk)

### Postal address

Everdene House, Railway Triangle  
Industrial Estate, Poundbury Road  
Dorchester DT1 2PJ

### Online

[magna.org.uk](http://magna.org.uk)



## Our online help centre

Our online help centre has lots of useful information, including answers to the most frequently asked questions, how-to videos for some basic DIY tasks and forms for you to submit at a convenient time for you, such as reporting a repair or ASB, requesting permission for a pet or booking a community room.

Take a look here:

[www.magna.org.uk/help-centre](http://www.magna.org.uk/help-centre)



# Spot the Christmas tree!

## Win a £50 shopping voucher in time for Christmas!

**We thought we'd spread some festive cheer with our spot the Christmas tree competition!**

Hiding somewhere within this magazine is the tree shown on this page. If you can find it, let us know and you could win £50 in shopping vouchers to arrive in time for Christmas!

To enter, email [engage@magna.org.uk](mailto:engage@magna.org.uk) and tell us your name, contact details and the page number it's hiding on.

### Entries close on Thursday 14 December.

Correct entries will be put into a hat and three lucky winners will be drawn at random.

Winners will be announced on our Magna Housing Customer Group on Facebook. If you've not yet joined the group, see [page 9](#) for details.

Good luck!







# Season's greetings from Selina, Chief Executive

On behalf of everyone at Magna, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you season's greetings.

As we're nearing the end of 2023, I want to reflect on what we've done this year, with your continued support.

Jo Martin, our Director of Customer Operations, has been reviewing your feedback and the things that matter most to you, and is using this to improve the way our operational teams work. We have invested in more housing officers and increased the number of colleagues delivering response repairs. In September we launched our new [regional home services teams](#), bringing together our housing officers, response repairs and estates services to form local teams in your community, looking after your home, providing more joined up services, and helping us to build better relationships with you. I'm excited to see this new way of working develop and continue to improve the services we deliver.

I know that getting in touch with us hasn't been as easy as we'd like at times. However, our customer care team have been working hard to improve this. Our response times to emails have improved, we've increased the amount of self-service forms for you to submit your requests online at a time convenient to you, and we're answering social media messages within just two hours during the working day. We've also just launched Live Chat on our website to give you another way of getting in touch with us quickly. Our phone line remains very busy though and I encourage anyone with access to the internet to use [our website](#) as much as possible to get in touch with us, freeing up the phone lines for those customers who have no other way of making contact.

Our money matters team have been doing a fantastic job helping many of you through the continued challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. It's really important to us that we provide this additional support, which is why

we're investing more in the team and increasing the amount of colleagues available to support you. They are here to help so please do [reach out to them](#) if you have any money worries.

This year, the Regulator for Social Housing carried out an in-depth assessment of Magna. They do this for all housing associations over 1,000 homes, every four years. I'm delighted that, following this assessment, the regulator has once again rated Magna as G1 for governance and V1 for viability. These are the highest possible ratings to achieve. They reflect how well social housing providers are managed and governed (G) and their long-term financial viability (V).

We have also completed the final four appointments to our Board this year. The new members bring a wealth of additional knowledge, experience and skills to Magna. You can [read more about them](#) on our website. They, along with our Executive and Leadership Teams, are currently looking to the future, shaping what the next five years

will look like. We'll be asking for your involvement in this in the new year, and we hope many of you will be keen to take the opportunity to give your views and help us to create great homes together.

Customer involvement is really important to us here at Magna, and I encourage you to get involved and give your views through one of the many ways we provide, whether that's surveys, focus groups or joining one of our panels. You can find lots of information about the [options available](#) on our website.

In the meantime, on behalf of myself, the rest of the Board and all Magna colleagues, I wish you and your families a happy and healthy Christmas and best wishes for 2024.

**Selina White**

Chief Executive



## Services available over Christmas and New Year

Our phone lines will be closing at 2:30pm on Friday 22 December for the holiday period and re-opening at 11:00am on Tuesday 2 January. The services we continue to provide during this time include:

### Emergency repairs

Between Christmas and New Year, our repairs team operate on a call-out rota to attend emergencies. These are classed as priority repairs, which are listed on the next page.

If you need to report an emergency repair, please call 0800 3586025.

### Our Careline service

Our Careline service for our sheltered and extra care customers operates as normal throughout this time. If you have an emergency, please contact Apello on 0800 3586025 or press your pendant.

### Our online help centre

Our online help centre is always available. It has lots of useful information and answers to frequently asked questions that may help while our contact centre is closed. There are also useful how-to videos for you to follow should you need to do any tasks like isolating your water supply, how to deal with a suspected gas leak or how to reset your circuit breaker after a power cut. [Take a look here.](#)



## What we class as a priority repair



Also known as emergency repairs, a priority repair is where there is a serious, immediate risk to your health and safety or the security of your home.

These will always be carried out before we arrange other repairs. Our aim is to always make safe, but we may have to come back at a later date to finish the repair.

Examples of priority repairs are:

- Storm, accident or flood damage
- Gas leaks – contact the National Gas Emergency Line on 0800 111 999
- Complete loss of electric supply – contact your electricity supplier first
- Complete loss of water supply – contact your water supplier first
- Heating failure between 1 November and 30 April (unless alternative heating is available)
- Blocked or leaking foul main drain
- Blocked toilet where there is only one in your home (but you may be charged if you or your family have caused the blockage)
- Major pipe bursts
- Major roof leaks
- Broken main entrance door / window posing a security risk
- Blocked flue
- Smoke detector not working (does not include changing batteries)

For any repairs that aren't listed above, you can [report them online](#) and we'll be in touch when we're back on Tuesday 2 January.





# Supporting local community projects

**We work with people in our communities to create great places to live and we know that sometimes local groups or communities need a little extra support.**

Every year we have a pot of money to improve the areas where you live, developing our local communities through funding, donations or sponsorship for a variety of local events, projects, groups, organisations, charities and services.

Anyone in the community can apply for funding, but the application must meet some specific criteria.

We've put together some guidance on our website along with an [application form](#). Take a look and see if we can make a difference to your community, together.



We contributed towards Chickerell Town Council's pumpkin party as we have lots of customers living in the area.



We donated £420 to the Hope Centre Minehead so seven volunteers could complete their Emergency First Aider In The Workplace course.

The Hope Centre supports people in Minehead who are homeless, have problems with drugs and alcohol, or are vulnerable in any way.

Ian McLaren from the Hope Centre said: "Magna's support means more of our staff and volunteers are able to give potentially lifesaving first aid if needed."

[Read the full story here.](#)



We provided new boots to Bridport's Sea Cadets, helping local youngsters attend the group in full regalia.

[Read the full story here.](#)



## Join our Customer Facebook group

As well as our main Facebook page which anyone can follow, we have a closed group which is for members only - you, our customers.

We have live chats, news items, a chance for you to comment and give your views and competitions to enter.

If you're not a customer Facebook member, [sign up today by clicking here](#) or searching for Magna Housing Customer Group on Facebook.



# Spending wisely this Christmas

It's that time of year again to get your Christmas shopping done and dusted. But have you thought about how you're going to pay for it all this year?

With so much to think about and lots of things to buy in the run up to Christmas, it can be easy to get lost in the rush and lose track of your spending. However, planning your spending during the festive season is key to making smart financial decisions and keeping stress levels down.

Creating a budget is a great way to keep track of what you're spending. A budget could be a useful tool in the run up to Christmas to make sure you're happy with what you're spending.

**Here are a few tips on how to budget effectively:**

## Create a list of your monthly expenses

Make sure you're aware of how much you're spending and what you're spending it on every month. This should include your rent, council tax, or mortgage, bearing in mind that these bills are likely to increase in April. It should also include utility bills, food

shopping, insurance payments, phone plans, fuel, and anything else you pay regularly.

## Stick to your budget

Once you've got your list of expenses, compare it to your income and see how much you're left with each month. Does it leave you enough?

## Factoring in Christmas

Any money you have left over each month after your expenses could be saved towards bigger goals or seasonal events like Christmas. It's also a good idea to leave some spare money in your budget in case any unplanned costs come up such as your car breaking down or a school trip to pay for.

[We've got more tips on how to create a budget on our website.](#)



## Thinking of taking out a loan? It's important to borrow responsibly.

Taking out a loan to pay for Christmas may seem tempting, but it's important to remember that Christmas is only one day and you'll be paying it off for a lot longer. Taking out a loan for Christmas should be avoided if possible.

**If you're thinking about taking out a loan, it's important to look at a few key things before you make a decision:**

### Repayments

Take a close look at the monthly repayments for your loan and compare them to how much you earn every month to ensure you can comfortably afford to pay them. Is there enough left in your budget to cover these additional monthly payments?

### Interest rates

Be aware of the interest rates on your loan. Many loans have variable interest rates that can increase over time, leading to higher repayments. Some loans can also apply compound interest, which means the interest is charged on the remaining balance and also any accrued interest, costing you more over time.

### Extended terms

If your loan is being repaid over a longer term, the monthly payments will look cheaper on paper, but it will likely cost you more in the long run. A short term loan may be better value, so make sure to consider how quickly you want to pay off your loan.

### Hidden fees

Check the small print for fees and charges. Some loans may charge late fees if you don't pay on time. There may also be other hidden fees such as application fees or repayment penalties if you pay the loan off early.

## Banks and Credit Unions

There are lots of banks and credit unions to look into if you need a loan. It's important that you look at what's on offer and decide on the one that's right for you.

Money Saving Expert has lots of information on what's on offer and what are considered to be the best options for loans available at the moment.

Many people will go through a bank to get a loan and this is a safe option. Banks are highly regulated and have to follow strict rules and guidelines to make sure that you're treated fairly.

Credit unions are not-for-profit financial providers with a more community-driven focus. They can offer loans and savings accounts with competitive interest rates. They'll let you take out much smaller loans compared to banks, with some offering loans that start from as little as £50.





# Money matters: We're here to help

The latest tips and information from our money matters team

## Mobile Phones

Check your mobile phone contract to see if you can find a better deal or a social tariff if you claim benefits.

[Money Saving Expert](#) Martin Lewis suggests if you're not sure if your contract has run out to text 'INFO' to 85075 and most network providers should respond to let you know.

Social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. Some providers call them 'essential' or 'basic' broadband.

They're delivered in the same way as normal packages, just at a lower price. Amid rising living costs, Ofcom is encouraging companies to offer social tariffs to help customers on low incomes.

Rather than upgrade your phone, consider a SIM only contract which could save you money.



## Broadband

Check if you can get a cheaper deal. A large number of broadband providers now offer discounted social tariff products, with some offering deals from as low as £15 per month. This could represent a saving of more than £180 per year, which is around 50% compared to the average cost of broadband.

Check if your current provider offers a social tariff. You can apply for most tariffs online, or call your provider and ask to switch. If you're out of contract, you're probably paying too much and it's time to speak to your provider. They might be able to match, or even beat, better deals you've seen elsewhere.

## TV Packages

Check your pay-TV packages – do you need them all?

Lots of homes have multiple subscriptions for different pay-TV and streaming services. However, there is often overlap when it comes to the content shown on these services – you might be getting the same films and TV series delivered by more than one service, for example.

Take a look at what film and TV packages you're getting and think about whether you'd be missing out significantly if you were to cancel one or more of them.

Many streaming services can be cancelled straight away without needing to pay any sort of penalty, so even if it's a temporary measure it's worth thinking about.

Phone your provider. By spending as little as five minutes on the phone to your provider you could save hundreds of pounds. If you're unsure what to ask

them, the following questions should help:

- Am I still in my initial contract period?
- How much am I paying?
- What am I getting for that price?
- Can I get a better service, and how much will it cost?
- How long will that contract be for?
- Do I need to pay any fees to sign up to a new deal?
- What happens when that contract ends?

## Energy

The average annual energy bills fell by 7% on 1 October for those on standard tariffs (most households). And with wholesale prices dropping, some companies are offering fixed tariffs that could be worth considering. It might be worth contacting your current energy supplier to see if you can switch to an existing customer fixed deal if your current energy deal is running out.

There is a helpful '[should you fix your energy calculator](#)' on the Money Saving expert website.



# Money matters: We're here to help

The latest tips and information from our money matters team



## Household Support Fund in Dorset

The Household Support Fund (HSF) is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. Every council has different criteria, so please contact your local council.

Citizens Advice in Dorset are managing some of the Fund on our behalf via a voucher scheme. Supermarket vouchers of £150 will be issued to residents who meet the eligibility criteria within 6 to 8 weeks of their application date.

Applications are limited to one per household. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by Citizens Advice.

### Eligibility

Dorset Council households are eligible to apply if they have:

- an annual household net income of less than £30,000 and
- savings of less than £16,000 and
- not applied for a previous HSF payment within the last 6 months.

### When to apply:

Applications can be submitted from 10am on the following dates:  
Tuesday 5 December 2023  
Wednesday 3 January 2024  
Tuesday 6 February 2024  
Tuesday 5 March 2024

You will need to submit ID online.

[Find out more, and apply online, here.](#)



## Household Support Fund in Somerset

The Household Support Fund is designed to provide short-term urgent financial help to Somerset residents who are struggling to afford household essentials such as buying food and paying for prepayment meter energy bills.

### Eligibility

To apply you must:

- Live in the county of Somerset – if you live in North Somerset, help is available from North Somerset Council
- Be over the age of 16 and living independently of parents/carers
- Have a total household income between £0 and £1,484 per month, or £17,809 per annum. Household income includes all benefits, earnings and pensions, except for Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Housing Benefit, and the housing element of Universal Credit.

You can get help regardless of your work situation, provided you show that you are struggling to pay for essentials.

A Household Support Fund will not affect your benefits.

You can apply if you fit certain criteria as deemed by Somerset Council including:

- Are temporarily out of work
- Are unable to work due to illness
- Are long term unemployed and unable to retrain due to multiple reasons such as poor health
- Are in receipt of pension credit
- Currently use a mental health service, or a member of your household does
- Are a carer
- Are pregnant.

You are unable to apply if you have savings over the value of £2000.

The application will be reviewed by the Household Support Fund who will let you know what will be provided and how you will receive this.

[Please contact our Money Matters Team if you need help to apply for this.](#)





# Money matters: We're here to help

The latest tips and information from our money matters team



## Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born before 25 September 1957 you could get between £250 and £600 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a Winter Fuel Payment.

The amount you get includes a 'Pensioner Cost of Living Payment'. This is between £150 and £300. You'll get this extra amount in winter 2023 to 2024. This is in addition to any other cost of living you get with your benefit or tax credits.

Those that are eligible will get these payments automatically in November or December.

## Other help with heating bills

**Cold Weather Payment** - if you receive certain benefits and the temperature drops to zero degrees celsius or below for 7 days in a row you could be eligible.

**The Warm Home Discount** - this is a £150 discount on your bills if you get Pension Credit or live in a low-income household

**The British Gas Energy Trust** - if you're struggling with your energy bills, the British Gas Energy Trust is an independent charity that can help, no matter who supplies your energy. [For more information visit their website.](#)



## Benefits are moving to Universal Credit

### Managed Migration

Managed Migration is where people getting legacy benefits will have their claims transferred to Universal Credit. These are benefits for working-age people. This means your Housing Benefit through the local council will stop and will be replaced by Universal Credit.

Managed migration is expected to be completed by March 2025 for most people.

People who get ESA and do not get tax credits are going to be moved to Universal Credit a bit later, by 2028.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will write to you when they want to move you to Universal Credit telling you what you need to do.

If your Universal Credit entitlement is less than your entitlement to legacy benefits, you'll receive a transitional amount to top up your Universal Credit.

Transitional Protection is only available for some people.

Most people who are getting Universal Credit at the moment are those who were claiming legacy benefits and a change in their circumstances meant they had to make a new benefit claim. These people are called natural migrants.

Transitional Protection is not available to them unless they were getting Severe Disability Premium at the time they claimed Universal Credit.

Transitional Protection is only available to two groups of people:

1. People who are moved over to Universal Credit even though nothing has happened which makes them start a new benefit claim. These people are called managed migrants.
2. People who were getting the Severe Disability Premium at the time they claimed Universal Credit.

**If you receive a letter about Universal Credit migration and you're not sure what to do, please contact our Money Matters Team.**

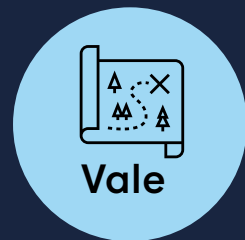
Need help from our money matters team?

[Complete the form online to let us know](#)



# Our Regional Home Services teams

In the last edition of [Opendoor](#) we shared with you the changes we've made to the way we work, creating new regional teams to improve the service we provide to you and to get closer to our communities. We've increased our teams, and in this edition we introduce the managers, surveyors and housing officers in each of our regions.



Our Vale regional team covers Dorchester, Sherborne and rural areas of North Dorset.  
The team includes:



**Tade Olalekan**  
Regional Home  
Services Manager



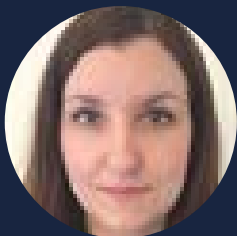
**Lex King**  
Maintenance  
Surveyor



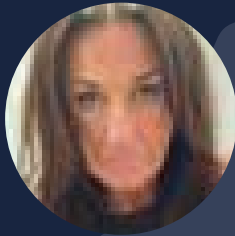
**Steve Blackborough**  
Trade Team  
Manager



**Karl Gilbert**  
Cleaning, Estates  
and Compliance  
Manager



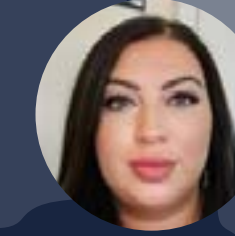
**Lucy Richards**  
Senior Housing  
Officer



**Nicola Barrett**  
Housing Officer



**Nadine Murray**  
Housing Officer



**Lisa Bailey**  
Housing Officer



Our Jurassic regional team covers Bournemouth, Bridport, Weymouth, Portland and the South Dorset and Devon coast.  
The team includes:



**Becky Alford**  
Regional Home  
Services Manager



**Steve Hansford**  
Maintenance  
Surveyor



**William Holland**  
Trade Team  
Manager



**Andy Peoples**  
Trade Team  
Manager



**Jill Brighthouse**  
Senior Housing  
Officer



**Kerrie Brook**  
Housing Officer



**Carly Burgiss**  
Housing Officer



**Bob Roberts**  
Housing Officer



**Kerry Atkinson**  
Housing Officer



**Our Wyvern regional team covers Minehead, Dulverton, Porlock, Alcombe, Watchet, Dunster, Williton, Washford, South Somerset and West Somerset. The team includes:**



**Amanda Shirani-Sarmazeh  
Regional Home Services  
Manager**



**Ade Steel  
Maintenance  
Surveyor**



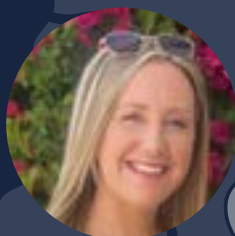
**Mark Rockett  
Trade Team  
Manager**



**Rupert Harrison  
Contracts  
Manager**



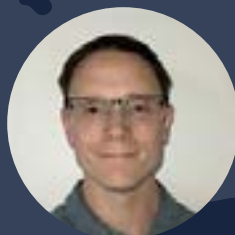
**Annie Cole  
Senior Housing  
Officer**



**Natalie Fouracre  
Housing Officer**



**Bridie Screen  
Housing Officer**



**George Motum  
Housing Officer**

The Regional Home Services Managers are responsible for the day to day running of their region, looking after a repairs team, a regional surveyor and housing officers. They pay close attention to performance and customer satisfaction results and will be looking to continually improve the services we provide.

The Maintenance Surveyors will be visiting you at home when you report things like damp and mould or if you report complex issues that our Customer Care Team aren't able to diagnose.

The Trade Team Managers look after all of the operatives delivering repairs in your home.

Our Housing Officers are here to help you have successful tenancies at Magna. They're available to support you and signpost you to help for anything related to your home. They'll be getting in touch with you in the new year to introduce themselves so you know who they are and how to get in touch with them.

[You can find out more information about each of the team members on our website.](#)





# Dealing with damp, condensation and mould

Having damp, condensation and mould in your home can be a worry – especially at this time of year. And if they're not dealt with properly, they can cause health problems. Thankfully, there are things both Magna and you can do to get rid of damp and mould and stop it coming back.

We want to work with you to spot, report and deal with damp and mould quickly. Any of our colleagues who visit your home can give you advice or help report a case of damp or mould so we can inspect it and get it sorted. There are also some simple things you can do at home to prevent it.

Throughout October and November we held lots of drop in sessions across Dorset and Somerset to raise awareness of how to manage damp and mould in your home.

We were delighted to see so many customers attend and the feedback we've had about holding these sessions in the community have been really positive.

We also gave out free Hygrometers, which are a small gadget which can be moved around your home to measure humidity and temperature and show you if there could be a problem. We still have some of these available, so if you weren't able to attend a session and would like to receive a Hygrometer, please let us know by emailing [contactus@magna.org.uk](mailto:contactus@magna.org.uk)



## What are damp, condensation and mould?

Damp, condensation and mould are all caused by too much moisture in your home. These words are often used together but they mean different things. So, what are they?

- Damp can be caused by problems with the structure of your home, like a leak, blockage, or a damp-proof course not working properly (rising damp). It usually looks like wet patches on walls, may smell musty, and can leave a 'tidemark'.
- Condensation happens when moist air hits cold surfaces, turning into droplets of water. It can be caused by not having enough ventilation or heat. If it's not dealt with, it can cause mould to grow.
- Mould is a type of fungus that grows in damp conditions. It lives everywhere but if there's too much moisture in your home, it can grow on surfaces like walls and furniture.

## How to prevent condensation and mould

There are three main ways you can reduce condensation and make it harder for mould to grow:

- Reducing moisture in your home – caused by everyday activities like boiling the kettle, cooking, washing and drying clothes.
- Ventilating your home – using windows and trickle vents to keep air moving.
- Heating your home – it's best to have a medium level of heat throughout your home, as warmer air holds more moisture.

There are small changes you can make to keep condensation and mould at bay. For example:

- If you need to dry washing indoors, hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open, or the extractor fan on.
- In the morning, open a small window upstairs and one diagonally opposite downstairs for half an hour to clear overnight condensation.
- Have a medium level of heat throughout your home. You don't have to heat every room – open the doors to allow heat to spread.

We have lots more tips on how to prevent condensation and treat mould on our website, along with a form for you to complete if you need to report damp and mould in your home.



# Keeping your home fire safe this Christmas

It's the time of year for fun, family, and friends, but it's important that you stay safe too. Here are some tips to help you keep safe from fires this Christmas.



## Keep candles away from your Christmas tree

Never leave candles unattended and keep them away from anything flammable.

## Never leave your cooking unattended

Most fires start in the kitchen, so keep an eye out while you're making the Christmas dinner.

## Don't hang Christmas decorations on your door

Hanging up decorations on your front door or on communal doors can compromise the effectiveness of the fire shielding.

## Check electric blankets for wear and tear

These can keep you nice and warm, but they can also be a fire risk if they're old and worn. If yours is worn out, it's best to get a new one.

## Be careful where you put flammable decorations

Such as things made of tissue paper or cardboard. Don't attach them to lights or heaters or put them around the fireplace.



## Don't overload your electrical sockets

We all love Christmas lights, but don't plug too many into the same extension lead.

## Make sure any cigarettes are extinguished after use

These can easily start fires on their own if you don't extinguish them properly, so double check that they're fully extinguished.

## Have an escape route planned just in case

If a fire does start, you want to be prepared. Make sure you know the quickest way out of your home, and let any guests know too.



## Don't use diesel heaters in your home

There's been an increase in people trying to use diesel heaters within their homes recently. Diesel fuel is dangerous in itself, but when it burns it releases carbon monoxide which can cause serious health issues.

Please do not use these in your homes.



## Keep electric heaters away from flammable furniture

Such as curtains and blankets. You also shouldn't use them to dry your clothes.



## Test your smoke alarms

It's a good idea to regularly test your smoke alarms to make sure they're working.

If yours are battery-operated, make sure the batteries haven't run out.

[Your safety is our number one priority. To learn more about our approach to safety, visit our website.](#)





# Our new customer research survey

## with Grand Union Housing and Maru Matchbox

We're currently working with Grand Union Housing (another housing association) and a research agency called Maru (Matchbox) to better understand our customers.

### Why we're conducting the research

To make our services and homes better, we need to improve our understanding of what our customers' situations and support needs are. That's why we're working with housing and research experts to gather more information.

### What you can expect

We'll be contacting lots of our customers, to make sure we get views from a wide range of customers. The results as a whole will represent the different types of Magna homes and locations.

You might receive a questionnaire by email from Maru, or you might get a phone call to ask you the

questions. Rest assured this is legitimate - they are carrying out the survey on our behalf, but if you have any concerns you can contact us to check. You'll also be offered an incentive to say thank you for taking part.

### The type of things that will be asked

If you agree to take part, by email or over the phone, you don't have to answer all of the questions – just those you are happy to. The questions cover a wide range of topics including your current and future concerns, caring responsibilities, maintenance of your home, your working situation and income, as well as any long-term health conditions or disabilities you might have.

### How your information will be looked after

You might have concerns about sharing information but please be

assured that your details are safe and won't be directly attributed to you in the reports we produce.

Research agencies are bound by a strict code of conduct and by strict data protection and security practices too. For more information on this, you can visit the Market Research Society website.

We also have our own approach to data protection and security which you can learn more about here.

### Sharing the results

We'll publish the overall results of the survey and explain what we're doing with them to improve our services. This is another really important way to make sure we hear our customers and do something about the issues they raise. The results will also provide us with in-depth information to support improvements to our Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

# Repairs panel meeting

We're holding the next Repairs Panel meeting on Tuesday 12 December at 11.00am.

To try to get a good mix of customers from across Somerset and Dorset, this will be held online using Microsoft Teams.

We know the repairs service isn't working well and we're working to improve things and would like to have your feedback and ideas. So, we'll be talking and asking about:

- The new regional areas of working
- How easy is it to report repairs?
- How would you run a repairs service?

If you'd like to join in, or just watch to see how the panel works, contact Neil Bliss by emailing [neil.bliss@magna.org.uk](mailto:neil.bliss@magna.org.uk) and he'll send you the online link.

Grab a cuppa and give us your views!

[If you'd like to get involved with other areas of our services, take a look at the options and apply here.](#)



# Our Service Standards

## How we're performing against our standards

September & October 2023



We want you to be clear about the service you receive from us. In the last edition of [Opendoor](#) we shared with you our new service standards and commitments. If you missed it, [take a look at our service standards online](#) for more information on what they are.

In this edition, we're sharing how we've performed against our commitments to you since they launched in September.

### WE LISTEN TO YOU AND CARE ABOUT WHAT YOU SAY



During September and October, we sent over 2000 surveys to customers following an interaction with our customer contact team. We received 400 responses. All of this feedback is reviewed and shared with the teams it relates to.



We held a retrofit meeting in September with 10 customers, informing them of upcoming improvements to their homes and to introduce the Magna colleagues and contractors that will be carrying out the work.



We held several workshops in Dorset and Somerset talking to lots of customers about how we can improve the way we deal with damp and mould.

[If you want to get involved, click here for more details](#) or speak to any of our colleagues.

### WE FIX IT

We are sorry its taking longer than usual for us to deal with your routine repairs, however we are working hard to get to you sooner. We've increased the number of people in our repairs delivery teams and have made some changes to the way we work which will reduce our travel time and enables our teams to deliver more repairs. Improving this service is one of our top priorities.



During September and October we completed 2691 repairs.

91% of these repairs were fully completed at the first visit.

76.5% of these repairs were completed within our timescales.



In September, 73% of customers who had a repair were satisfied overall, which increased to 78% in October.



You told us that you'd like us to improve the way we keep you informed about the progress of your repair when you have to wait.



We also carried out planned works in lots of customers' homes.

100% were satisfied with the improvements to their homes when we carried out internal works like kitchen and bathroom replacements.

80% were satisfied with the improvements made when we carried out external works like painting.

You told us that to improve the service you would like more communication about when and how long works will take.

# Our Service Standards (continued)



## WE MAKE IT EASY



During September and October, we received 10,127 phone calls, 4724 emails and 399 contacts through Facebook messenger.



Our average wait time in the queue was 13 minutes and 46 seconds. Our average email answer time is less than 2 working days.



62% of customers who completed a survey rated our email service as good.

85% of customers who completed a survey following a phone call were satisfied with our service.

100% of customers who completed a survey regarding our lettings process were satisfied that Magna were easy to deal with.

72% of customers who received a repair thought we were easy to deal with.



We know that waiting to talk to someone when you call us is taking too long. This is because we continue to have high levels of demand coming in through our phone lines.

[The best way to contact us is through our website.](#) We have an [online help centre](#) where you may be able to find the answer you're looking for without having to speak to someone. You can also get in touch using Live Chat or Facebook Messenger; we've introduced these new ways to contact us because we know many of our customers would prefer to contact us this way.



Did you know we also have a [Customer Portal](#), where there are lots of services you can access including paying your rent, viewing your rent statement, asking permission and reporting ASB? Take a look at [page 32](#) for more info about the portal.

## WE ALWAYS PRIORITISE YOUR SAFETY



During September and October, we continued to carry out weekly fire alarm testing in all of our communal areas.



We carried out 348 electrical safety checks.

We completed 1114 gas safety checks.

We completed 61 oil safety checks.



Our community safety team opened 22 new cases related to anti-social behaviour and are working with other agencies to improve our communities.



When we send you an appointment for servicing, please let us know as soon as possible if the date and time isn't convenient. You don't need to call us, just [send us an email](#), message on Facebook, or on Live Chat on our website.



## Have you registered to use our customer portal?

There are lots of things you can do on our customer portal, such as:

- View your rent balance
- make a payment
- request repairs or see your repair history
- update your own details
- report ASB
- request permission to keep a pet.

Best of all, once you're registered for a customer portal account and logged in, we know who you are so you don't need to enter any of your details like address,

tenancy reference number or your contact details every time, making it quicker and easier for you to do the things you want to.

We'll be continuing to improve the portal over the next year, adding more ways for you to do things at a time that's best for you.

[Register today for your customer portal account.](#)



# BUILD YOUR FUTURE

## Started a business? Already running one? Self-employed?

If you're based in Dorset and aged 18 to 30, Dorset Community Foundation's SWEF enterprise grants of up to £2,000 can help with tools, rent, training and other business costs.

**Find out more about eligibility and how to begin our simple application process at:**

[dorsetcommunityfoundation.co.uk](https://dorsetcommunityfoundation.co.uk)

Or scan this QR code



Dorset  
Community  
Foundation



SWEF

Registered charity no: 1122113







# Customer Complaints

In this article, we explain the key parts of our complaints service.

## What prompted this article?

During a recent consultation with some of our customer policy readers, several of the readers asked us to set out our policy in a simple step by step way.

We also received a request on our Magna Housing Customer Group on Facebook for clear guidelines on complaints to be included in this edition of Opendoor. We listened.

## What is a complaint?

We use the Housing Ombudsman Service's definition of a complaint to decide. This says that a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about:

- The standard of service
- Actions or lack of actions by Magna, its staff or contractors or people acting for Magna Housing
- Which affect an individual resident or a group of residents

You don't have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as a complaint.

## What isn't a complaint?

A 'request for a service', such as reporting a repair or reporting ASB, asking for a rent statement or a housing officer visit are called 'service requests'. These aren't treated as complaints unless you're complaining about the service you have received.

If you contact us about a missed appointment or to chase a contact you were expecting, and we can answer this quickly for you by making just a few enquiries, we will log this, but, we won't put this through the formal complaints process.

Service requests and enquiries such as the above, which can't be answered using our online help centre, can be reported on the Contact Us page of our website, or if you don't have access to the internet, by calling 0800 358 6025.

## Is there anything I can't complain about?

We encourage you to contact us if you aren't satisfied with a service, however, there are some times when we won't investigate a complaint. These include:

- if the issue happened more than 6 months ago
- if you're taking legal action against us for the issue you're complaining about (eg disrepair)
- if we've already dealt with the complaint or if there's another way of resolving the complaint eg complaints about rents and service charges which are generally dealt with by the tribunal service.

If your complaint falls outside of our complaints process, we will tell you why.

## Who can complain?

All current and former tenants, leaseholders and members of the public who are affected by our services can make a complaint to us.

We'll also accept complaints made by advocates (this could be a friend

or a family member, MP, councillor or support worker etc) who you'd like to make a complaint on your behalf or to help you with your complaint. We'll record and respond to these in the same way as we would if you complain directly yourself.

## How can I make a complaint?

If you're sure it's the customer complaints team you need, you can send us details of your complaint using our online form, you can also write to us, or you can call us on 0800 358 6025.

## Who handles complaints at Magna?

We have a small customer complaints team made up of a complaints manager, two complaints advisors - one full time and one part time. This team handles all complaints we receive.

## What happens when I make a complaint?

The customer complaints team will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days. They may contact you



# Customer Complaints (continued)

to check the details of your complaint and how you want the complaint resolved. They'll tell you whether what you have reported can be investigated and they'll also tell you about the Housing Ombudsman Service or other organisations which might be able to help.

Depending on what your complaint is about, they'll sometimes make referrals, for example to our Money Matters or Tenancy Support Service or to your Housing Officer if they feel you need extra help or a home visit. They will talk to you about this before they make a referral.

## How many stages are in Magna's complaints process?

There are two stages in the process. This is in line with good practice and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. We will tell you when we log a complaint and give you a reference number and a date by which you can expect a response.

Stage one involves a thorough

investigation of your complaint and a written response usually within 10 working days of the acknowledgement. If we need longer, we'll let you know in writing and may extend the response time by another 10 working days. If we need a further extension, we will speak to you and ask for your agreement to this. If we can't agree, we, or you, may ask the Housing Ombudsman for advice.

If you're not satisfied with our response at stage one, you can ask for a review. This is called stage two. Your complaint will be looked at again by a more senior colleague and we'll respond within 20 working days. If we need longer, we'll let you know and may extend by up to a further 10 working days.

## What happens if I'm not satisfied at the end of stage two?

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service. They will ask you for details of the complaint and may contact us for more information about your complaint so they can carry out a full investigation. Depending on the

outcome of their investigation, they may order Magna to apologise, make improvements, carry out training and/or pay compensation.

## Can I get help to make a complaint?

At any stage, you or we, can approach the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice or guidance. They won't investigate, however, until your complaint has been through both stages of our complaints process. You can also ask someone to make a complaint on your behalf and as long as we know that you wish them to do this, we'll investigate as if you had made the complaint direct.

## Will Magna pay me compensation?

There are a number of circumstances where we make payments to customers. There are two types of payment: loss and damage payments and compensation payments.

Loss and damage payments cover the cost of putting something right. Compensation payments are paid in

specific circumstances as set out in tenancy agreements or cover things such as inconvenience. If agreed, loss and damage payments will be paid, even if you owe us money. However, if you owe us money, any compensation payments agreed will be used to clear or help clear your debt.

The complaints team will consider what, if any, compensation to offer and will write to you about this in their complaint response.

## Learning from complaints

Just as important as investigating and finding solutions to complaints, is understanding what is causing them and taking steps to prevent this happening in the future.

In the next edition of Opendoor we'll talk about how we learn from complaints and what we have done to improve from previous complaints.

**Need to make a  
complaint?  
Click here.**





# Are you a Carer in Dorset?

A new guide, written by carers for carers, is available to inspire carers to develop new skills, gain confidence in caring for someone, and to look after their own wellbeing.

As a carer, it's easy to forget to do things that reduce stress and make your own lives a little easier. Or, you may feel you haven't got the time, money, or confidence to do something.

The new guide has been produced by carers, in partnership with Dorset Council, and aims to change this. Be inspired to boost your skills. The guide also includes advice on overcoming time, money and other worries, eligibility for courses and how to take the next step with our friends at Carer Support Dorset.

[Explore the new guide now](#) 



# Come and join #TeamMagna!



Ever thought about joining us?  
We've got lots of fantastic opportunities for you to join our team.

Whether you're an experienced trades person, just starting your career and want to join us as an apprentice, or if you'd like to work in finance, IT, our contact centre or become a housing officer, as long as you're passionate about supporting our customers, there could be a role for you.



## Interested?

[Take a look on our website to see what opportunities we have right now.](#)





# Got a question?

Visit our help centre to find the answer, and watch some of our how-to videos and learn something new while you're there!

**[magna.org.uk/help-centre](https://magna.org.uk/help-centre)**

## Get in touch with us



**[contactus@magna.org.uk](mailto:contactus@magna.org.uk)**

**0800 358 6025**



Our phone lines are open Monday to Thursday,  
8:30am to 5pm and 8:30am to 4:00pm on Friday.

### Need to make a complaint?

Email **[customercomplaints@magna.org.uk](mailto:customercomplaints@magna.org.uk)**

## Get #social!

You can also get in touch and keep up to date with the latest news through our social channels!

