



Opendoor

The magazine for magna housing customers

Christmas is nearly here!

**Win a £40
shopping
voucher and
a Christmas
pudding to
arrive in time
for Christmas!**

Plus...

**Season's
greetings from
our Chief Exec**

Page 4

**Festive ideas that
won't cost a lot**

Page 10

**Fire safety at
Christmas**

Page 18

Welcome

Christmas is nearly here!

I'm a big fan of Christmas, and although we're all feeling the pinch this year, it's still possible to have a lovely time with friends and family at Christmas. Have a look at [pages 10 and 11](#) for some free or cheap festive things to do in the lead up to the big day.

If you fancy something festive to do for five minutes, check out our competition on the opposite page - spot the Christmas pudding for a chance to win £40 in shopping vouchers and a Christmas pudding to arrive in time for Christmas!

We're also 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 27](#) for info on joining the group.

Continuing with the Christmas theme, on [page 18](#) 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. We've also got tips on how to look after your home through the winter weather on [pages 24 and 25](#).

The cost of living will have impacted many people this year, and Christmas can put extra pressure on our finances. We're continuing to provide help and advice on as many money matters as possible on [pages 8 and 9](#).

Our offices will be closing on Friday 23 December for Christmas and New Year, reopening on Tuesday 3 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

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Can we email you?

We'd like to contact you by email rather than letters in the post. It means we can get information to you quicker and it's better for the environment. Email us with your name and home address to update your contact details:

contactus@magna.org.uk



Spot the christmas pudding!

Win a £40 shopping voucher and a Christmas pudding to arrive in time for Christmas!

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

Hiding somewhere within this magazine is the pudding shown below. If you can find it, let us know and you could win £40 in shopping vouchers and a Christmas pudding to arrive in time for Christmas!

To enter, email engage@magna.org.uk or call 01984 635134 and tell us your name, contact details and the page number it's hiding on.

Entries close on Sunday 11 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, so if you've not yet joined the group, [click here to join now!](#)

Good luck!



Season's greetings from Selina and the Board

On behalf of everyone at Magna, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you season's greetings in what has been another challenging year for many of us.

2022 has flown by, but we are proud to have achieved a number of important things this year.

In the first quarter of the year, we welcomed two new directors, Jo Martin and Paul Satchwell, and they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to Magna. Together with the rest of the Executive Team, they are totally committed to delivering the best possible customer experience and making sure that living in a Magna home is an enjoyable and rewarding experience. You can read more about them on our website [here](#).

2022 is the second year of our three-year Brilliant Basics Strategy and we have continued to deliver against our strategic priorities and key objectives; you can find out more on these online [here](#).

Our number one priority is the safety of our customers, our colleagues, and our homes. We have created a new Building Safety Team, which has been incredibly busy developing a range of new safety standards, carrying out more detailed

fire risk assessments and more frequent safety checks to ensure our customers and homes are always safe.

We have continued to invest and build our Customer Contact Centre, improving our processes, increasing the size of the team, and developing their skills and knowledge to meet demand. We now receive real time customer feedback through surveys and TrustPilot, so we can identify problems quickly and use this data to help us to help you and resolve issues faster and more efficiently.

We are also really proud to have delivered the first of our new modular homes this year, built in a local specialist factory and using modern methods of construction. This is only the beginning of an exciting journey building new homes in this way. If you're interested to learn more about this, take a look on our website [here](#).

The cost-of-living crisis has impacted many people this year and is predicted to continue for some time to come. In recent months, our money matters team has experienced unprecedented demand for their service, and they are working hard to help as many people in need as possible. We recently sent you a survey to find out how you've

been affected and to understand the best way to support you in these very difficult times. We were pleased to receive so many responses, as it gives us the widest view across our operating areas. We will use everything at our disposal to try to support you through this - we appreciate that many people are struggling financially, and we are here to help.

I also want to take this time to thank you all for your support and patience over the past year. We have been working hard behind the scenes to improve our repairs and maintenance service this year, with a key focus on ensuring our trades teams are supported with effective processes and the right technology. We know we still have some way to go, and we apologise for the frustration it has caused at times. Working with our customers, through our newly created Repairs Panel, we'll ensure we continually review and improve our services going forward. We continue to work at pace to meet the very high demand for our services and we really do appreciate your patience and understanding.

As we look to 2023, our ambitions for excellent customer service continues.

We will focus on increasing the ways in which you can have your say on our services and share your views on how they can be improved. We also want to understand what is important to you and how we can work together to improve your home and your community. Look out for these opportunities next year and I hope you will be able to get involved.

We will also continue to invest in our properties, both existing and new, to deliver safe, warm, and affordable homes for local people. We'll continue to focus on sustainability both in the way we run our business and how we invest in your homes. We'll be looking to reduce waste, carbon, and our overall impact on the environment, whilst increasing the opportunities to change how we work, the materials and processes we use, to be greener and more sustainable for the future.

On behalf of everyone here at Magna, I wish you all a happy and healthy Christmas and best wishes for 2023,

Selina White

Chief Executive



Services available over Christmas and New Year

We'll be closing at 4:30pm on Friday 23 December for the holiday period and re-opening at 8:30am on Tuesday 3 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 operates as normal throughout this time. If you have an emergency, please contact Apello on 0300 777 1053 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's 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)



Money matters: We're here to help



Thank you to everyone who recently completed our survey on the cost of living. We had over 1,000 responses, which really helps us to understand how you have been affected by the recent cost of living increases.

To help support you, we've put together some useful information below.

Water bills

Your local water supplier may have financial help and support available. We've listed some of the schemes on offer below, and they can usually be tailored to your individual circumstances.

Reduced bill - If you're in financial difficulty, you may be able to get a reduction on your bill based on your ability to pay.

Bill cap scheme (WaterSure) - This scheme puts a limit on the amount you pay if you receive one of the main means-tested benefits or tax credits and:

- you receive child benefit for three or more children under the age of 19 living in your household; or
- you have someone in your household with a medical condition that causes them to use more water

Debt support scheme - If you're falling behind on your water bills and are in debt,

there's support available through this scheme.

Flexible payment plan - If you only need short-term help, a flexible payment plan might be suitable.

Payment break - If you've had a change of circumstances, such as waiting to hear about a Universal Credit application, you should be able to take a payment break.

To find out more, or to apply for support, contact your water company:

South West Water: 0344 346 1010
or [South West Water website](#)

Wessex Water: 0345 600 3600
or [Wessex Water website](#)

Energy bills

Energy Bills Support Scheme - This will be a £400 rebate on your energy bills

and should be applied directly to your energy account by your utility supplier. The scheme will be rolled out to all households with domestic electricity across the country automatically. Households will never be asked for their bank details.

Payments started in October, and will be rolled out to everyone who is eligible over the following six months as a monthly payment regardless of whether you normally pay on a monthly basis or not. Households will see a discount of £66 applied to their energy bills in October and November, rising to £67 each month from December through to March 2023.

Electricity bill payers should enquire with their supplier if they've not received their first instalment by the end of October.

If you pay by top up meter, the money may be added to your meter, or you may receive vouchers.

You can find more information about the [Energy Bills Support Scheme online](#).

Local food banks

Food banks offer support for people who are struggling financially and can provide you with free food to take home, as well as

other household essentials such as toilet paper and soap.

On our website, we've put together a list of some of the food banks available in our local communities below. [Click here for more information.](#)

In debt?

For help with debt, any one of the organisations below can help. Their websites will guide you through the process of understanding your money, budgeting and debt solutions including dealing with energy debt:

[StepChange Debt Charity](#) - Free Expert Debt Advice.

[Christians Against Poverty](#) - Debt Counselling Charity

[National Debtline](#) - Free debt advice

[Citizens Advice](#)

Free or cheap festive fun!

Money is tight for many families this year, so we've put together some ideas for you to have a lovely, festive family Christmas, without spending too much money.

Watch your local Christmas lights being switched on

A great way to start feeling festive is to see the local lights being switched on in your community.

Make your own Christmas decorations

When's the last time you made paper chains, paper snowflakes or an angel out of a toilet roll tube? Have a craft afternoon to make some memorable decorations to hang on your tree or around your home.

Make your own wreath

Wrap up warm and forage for pine cones to do some Christmas crafts or use as

decorations, and collect winter foliage to create your own Christmas wreath. The [Hobbycraft website](#) has easy step-by-step instructions on how to make them.

Go to your local carol service

Find out where your local carol services are being held and take the kids along for a festive sing-song!

Letters to Santa

Write letters to Santa to leave out on Christmas Eve – believers and non-believers included!

Make a festive photo booth

Why not set up a festive photo booth and make your own props?

Make your own Christmas cards

Save money by making your own Christmas cards this year – friends and family will appreciate the time and effort that's gone into them. If you do decide to buy cards, many charities have their own for sale where the money goes towards the charity.

Make a Christmas play list

Get rocking around the tree with all your Christmas favourites. You could even turn it into a Christmas themed game of musical statues with the kids!

Got your own ideas? Why not share them with us on our [Customer Facebook Group](#).





Supporting local students

At Magna, we're keen to support the talent of tomorrow. One of the ways we do this is by working with local schools.

Colleagues from our building safety and compliance team recently visited Bridgwater & Taunton College to deliver a presentation to students who are studying for their construction, electrotechnical, plumbing, heating, and carpentry courses.

The team gave an insight into their careers and an overview of the work that we do, as well as sharing the range of opportunities that we provide for people to join #TeamMagna.

Stephanie Lloyd-Foxe, Head of Building Safety and Compliance at Magna, said "I'm passionate about young people and careers, and it's fantastic to work for such a forward-looking employer where talented people enjoy rewarding and fulfilling careers.

"The housing and construction sectors are currently facing a significant skills

shortage, so it's vital that we engage with young people to support their learning and development and promote the many opportunities available."

"It was a pleasure to be able to meet the students and present to them, sharing our personal journeys, and it feels great to be able to provide support wherever possible to students starting out on their studies and their careers."

In the first two years of the students' studies, they're required to spend 315 hours working with local employers to gain practical skills and experience.

Stephanie added: "We're delighted to be able to offer placements for some of the students, enabling them to complete their courses and inspire them to build a career in the housing sector."

We're proud to be able to offer opportunities to join us in #CreatingGreatHomesTogether. Whether you're just starting your career, or you're an experienced professional, we've got a role for you.

Come and join #TeamMagna!



Ever thought about joining us? We've got lots of fantastic opportunities for you to join our team and we'd love to have you on board!

Whether you're an experienced electrician, passionate about supporting our sheltered housing customers, or you're just starting your career and want to join us as an apprentice, there's lots of different roles here at Magna.

We offer great benefits to all of our colleagues too, including a comprehensive cashback scheme for things like dental treatments and prescriptions costs, discounts on your favourite brands, generous pension contributions, and much more.



Interested?

Take a look on our website to see what opportunities we have right now by visiting magna.org.uk/careers

Blocked drains and pipes

We carry out regular maintenance of all our sewage treatment plants. This includes the emptying and servicing of the mechanical pumps.

This is to help make sure that they're kept in good working order and don't have any issues in between regular maintenance.

However, these systems can get clogged up when people flush things down the toilet or wash things down the sink they're not supposed to.

From April to August this year, we responded to over 200 reports of blocked drains and toilets from our customers across Dorset and Somerset, costing us just over £28,000.

We understand and accept that sometimes you might flush the wrong thing down the toilet or wash the wrong thing down the sink by accident, but we've put together a few tips to help you understand what sort of things you shouldn't be flushing away or putting down the sink so that it doesn't become a regular occurrence.

Don't flush wet wipes, cotton balls or buds, feminine hygiene products, nappies, or paper towels down the toilet

Some of these products are advertised as being flushable, biodegradable, or eco-friendly but they don't dissolve straight away and are designed to be absorbent.

They can cause pipes in your home to clog up and can get tangled up in equipment at the sewage plant which stops it from working properly.

Even if a product is advertised as being flushable, it's best to bin it just to make sure you're not clogging your pipes up.

Don't wash grease, fat, or oils down the sink

These can stick together with other things in your pipes to create thick, sticky globs that can coat your pipes until nothing passes through them.

Instead, try putting any leftover grease, fat or oils into a small container which can be thrown away once they cool down and solidify.



Don't wash medicine, chemicals, paint, or garden products down the sink

These substances can damage the biological treatment processing in the sewage plant. Garden products include things like weed killer or fertiliser.

It's best to put these in a general waste bin.

Don't flush condoms down the toilet

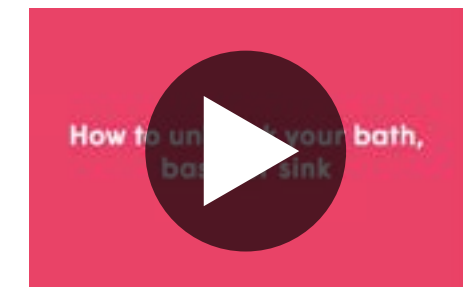
These are made of rubber which isn't biodegradable and will get stuck in your pipes.

It's best to put these in a general waste bin too.

Our colleagues often run into blocked drains and pipes that have been clogged up with things that shouldn't have been flushed or washed away. Here's some of the things they've found!



If you have a blockage, you can try to clear it yourself by watching our helpful how-to videos which explain how to clear blockages in your toilet, bath, basin, or sink.



[Click here to watch them.](#)



Our new repairs panel

We've created a new repairs panel, made up of engaged customers, who will help to shape the way we deliver our repairs services going forward.

The first meeting with some of our new repairs panel took place in October. There was lots of great discussion and ideas were also put forward by customers by email, phone and Facebook as well.

The main points raised are listed below, along with the actions we plan to take to improve the service.

Delays in outstanding repairs that have been started but not finished.

Going forwards, any jobs that can't be completed on the day will now be re-booked by the operative who will give you a date before they leave your home.

Waiting for a reply on the phones for up to 40 minutes.

Currently, due to the volume of contacts coming in, wait times are higher than we'd like. We urge any customers who are able to, to self-serve via our website or send us an email. You'll get a response to your email in 2 working days, if not before.

Having to wait in all day for an appointment eg 8.00am-6.00pm

We also offer half day appointment slots, and slots to accommodate the school run. However, an all-day slot will always be the most efficient way to work as it allows us to complete more jobs during the day and reduced wait times. We do send a text message when we are on our way to give some notice.

No feedback on reported repairs.

If you've contacted us to report a repair but still haven't received an appointment, get in touch by email so we can look into this for you. If you're still waiting for fencing



work to be carried out, this is taking longer than usual due to the volume of requests for fencing, but we do have a team in place who are working on this.

Poor communication between who books orders and the trades team - we've had trades turning up when a job has been cancelled.

If you need to cancel your repair, we need at least 24 hours notice so the system can be updated in time for our operatives to change their routes.

Make it clear if a customer complains they WON'T be penalised or evicted.

Customer complaints are really important to Magna as they allow us to address issues and review problem areas. Complaining does not in any way affect your tenancy, and we would urge you to contact our complaints team if you've had an issue that hasn't been resolved. You can also review our complaints policy on our website.

Use 'zones' for repairs.

We've made some changes to our scheduling tool that allows us to be really

efficient with where our operatives are working, making sure the repairs they are carrying out are close to where they live and that the travelling route is planned in a logical order. This has helped us increase the number of slots available and also reduces driving so it's better for the environment!

Future topics that we'll be discussing with the repairs panel are:

- the proposed doorstep standard for visiting colleagues
- the repairs service standard
- how easy it is to report a repair online.

Sound interesting? There's lots of ways you can get involved as part of the panel and you can choose the way that suits you best. You can give your views by email, phone, text message, WhatsApp, our Facebook customer group or attending virtual or face-to-face meetings.

Contact Neil Bliss, Customer and Community Involvement Officer, on 01984 635134 or email engage@magna.org.uk if you'd like to get involved.

[Click here to watch a video from our first repairs panel meeting and to find out more about the group.](#)

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's some tips to help you keep safe from fires this Christmas.



Keep candles away from your Christmas tree

And other things that can easily catch fire. Never leave candles unattended.

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.



Check on your elderly relatives and neighbours

Wish them a Merry Christmas and make sure they're fire safe as well.



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.

Take care when using fireworks

If you plan on celebrating with fireworks, make sure you read the instructions first.

Never return to a lit firework, and keep a bucket of water nearby.

Our customers' safety is our number one priority, and we take fire safety very seriously. You can learn more about our approach to fire safety [on our website](#).

Working together to improve fire door safety



Click here to watch a video showing what's involved in a fire door survey.

Your safety is our top priority and we carry out a range of measures to keep you safe including:

- Annual gas / oil and solid fuel checks
- Electrical inspections, and we are reducing the time between these from 8 to 5 years.

We've also appointed a specialist fire risk assessment company called Savills, who will be conducting risk assessments on our blocks of flats to advise whether there are any other safety measures we need to put in place.

If you live in a flat, you'll have a fire door.

We're introducing yearly fire door inspections. Fire doors help to prevent flames and smoke spreading to other areas in the event of a fire, and it's therefore really important that they are in good condition and working as they should.

Things you can do to keep yourself and your family safe:

- Test your smoke alarms weekly - smoke alarms save lives.

- Make sure you know what to do in the event of a fire and plan how you would escape from your home - make sure everyone in your household is aware, including children.

If you have any additional needs, please contact us so we can see whether there are any extra safety measures we can put in place. This includes strobe alarms if you have a hearing impairment, vibrating alarms if you have any loss of sight, or in the case of mobility issues we may be able to install additional features that help to keep you safer or help you evacuate in the event of fire.

We're committed to customer safety and customer engagement. We've sent out a detailed letter to customers with fire doors, which was reviewed by some of our engaged customers before it was sent. Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide feedback.

You can find more fire safety advice on our website and you can request free advice from the fire service and check your eligibility for a 'safe and well' visit by calling 0800 038 2323 or emailing the fire service at safeandwell@dwfire.org.uk

Check out our help centre



Our help centre makes it easier than ever to find what you're looking for on our website.



We've got lots of helpful support articles on a variety of topics, answers to our most commonly asked questions, and easy-to-follow how-to videos where you can follow along while our colleagues explain how to do things like bleed your radiators or perform a trip test.

You can also use the search box on our help centre page and type in your question if you're not sure what you're looking for.

There's lots to see and do, so take a look and discover our help centre at magna.org.uk/help-centre



Read all about it!

Keep up-to-date with our latest news
online at www.magna.org.uk/news

A photograph of a person with long blonde hair, seen from the back, packing a cardboard box. The box has the word 'CLOTH' written on it in black marker. The background is a plain wall.

Looking to downsize?

**You may be entitled to
financial support to help
you move**

A red line-art icon of two houses, one larger than the other, representing housing or moving.

Have your children flown the nest?

Do you find yourself living in a big home that costs a lot to heat or run?

Have you thought of downsizing to a smaller home?

We can help - [visit our website](#) for more information.

Looking after your home through winter

Cold, wet and windy weather can cause problems for your home. Here's some handy info to help look after your home through winter.



Roofing

You may get issues with your roof, like a tile which has blown off or dropped following strong winds. If you start to see water coming through your roof then please notify us ASAP. Before we attend, there are a few things you can do to help:

- Put a bucket or container under the leak to catch the water. This will reduce damage to your home.
- If you're able, move any furniture or contents away from where the leak is. This will help keep your belongings undamaged and allow us to easily access the affected areas.
- Have a look outside at the roof to see what has caused the issue. Is there anything that looks out of place? This info will help us when you report the repair to us.

Fencing

When we have strong winds and constant rain making the ground wet, these create perfect conditions for fences to be blown over.

If the fence has blown over onto a public right of way, then contact us straight away.

If your fence has blown over in your garden, report it to us and if possible, stay away from the affected area until we are able to attend.

When we attend, we will make the fence safe. This might mean that we will remove the damaged fence and you may be left with a gap where this once was. Where possible, we will mark the boundary with temporary orange mesh.

If you have pets that need access to the garden, we advise you put them on a lead to avoid them escaping.

For more tips and advice, including how-to videos on basic DIY tasks, [visit our Help Centre](#)

Lease extensions

If you own a leasehold flat, or shared ownership home, you'll own the lease of your property.



This lease was granted when it was first sold, and any subsequent owner would benefit from the years remaining on the lease. The length of the lease will vary however, many were granted for 99 or 125 years.

If you're considering selling or re-mortgaging your home, the potential new buyer or lender may want to know how many years are left on the lease.



Different lenders have different requirements regarding the remaining terms of the lease, however, many of them require there to be at least 80 years left. If you want to re-mortgage or sell your home and your lease has fewer than the number of years required, they may ask you to extend the term.

Even if you aren't planning to sell or re-mortgage any time soon, if you know your remaining term is less than 80 years, you may want to consider extending the term anyway.

If this is something you're considering, or you'd like to know more, please contact Caren Welsh, Home Ownership Manager, on **0800 358 6025** or send an email to **contactus@magna.org.uk**.

You can also take a look at the leasehold advisory website (www.lease-advice.org) or seek your own legal advice.

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 unique stories and competitions.

If you're not a member of our customer Facebook group yet, [click here to join today](#).

Contact us

We have lots of useful information on our website:

magna.org.uk

Email:

contactus@magna.org.uk

Our phone line is open Monday to Thursday, 8:30am to 5pm and 8:30am to 4:00pm on Friday. We will be closing at 4:30pm on 23 December and re-opening at 8:30am on 3 January.

0800 3586025

Get #social!

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

