



Opendoor

The magazine for Magna Housing customers



A winning home!

Find out who designed this house and won our Lego competition!

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Plus...

**Enter our
gardening
competition!**

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activity day with
the National Trust**

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project funding
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Welcome

Spring is on its way...

The days are starting to get lighter, feel warmer and spring is very much on its way as we enter March. We've been sent some lovely photos of daffodils at one of our sheltered schemes (take a look at [page 24](#)) and we're all starting to think about when we should start cutting the grass. With that in mind, we've shared some information on grass cutting on [pages 10 and 11](#).

Spring is also a great time to launch our annual garden competition! Everyone who enters will receive a voucher, whether you win or not, so make sure you get your entry in! Go to [page 6](#) for full details. We can't wait to see your gardens, hanging baskets or veg plots!

Talking of competitions, we ran a competition last month for your children to enter. We asked for photos of homes built out of lego, or other toy bricks, and a lucky winner would feature on the cover of this magazine. Take a look at the cover - what do you think? Go to [page 26](#) to find out who built it.

We've got lots of other ways you can get involved with us too. On [pages 18 and 19](#) we've included some information about all of the groups we have that you could get involved in. There's something for everyone. One of the groups is our repairs panel. On [pages 20 and 21](#) we've shared details from the last meeting they had in December - have a read and see if it's something you'd like to be involved with next time.

Finally, if you need to get in touch with us about anything, there are lots of ways you can do this. We've listed all of the options on [pages 4 and 5](#).

Enjoy spring, and get those garden competition entries in!



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Want to learn something new?



Our help centre has lots of easy-to-follow videos where our expert colleagues can help you learn how to do things around your home to keep it in tip top shape.

We've got videos for things like how to repressurise your boiler, wire a plug top, unblock your toilet or sink, or top tips for painting your home.

You can also find answers to our most commonly asked questions by browsing the categories or typing your question into the search box, such as how to change your appointment time, where to find information about your tenancy, how to find out who your housing officer is, and much more.

Take a look here:

www.magna.org.uk/help-centre



Getting in touch

There are lots of ways to get in touch with us...



Our website

You can find the information you need on our website - report a repair, get support with your finances, find answers to our most frequently asked questions, watch our easy to follow how-to videos and much more.

There are forms you can submit, at your convenience, to request permission for pets, book community rooms, ask for money matters help, report ASB and apply for community funding, to name just a few.

We have an online help centre that is a great place to start searching for what you need. [Click here to visit the help centre.](#)

Live Chat with us instantly

Also on our website, you can now talk to us instantly by using our new Live Chat service. Click on the icon in the bottom right corner of any page on our website, www.magna.org.uk, to talk to our customer care team. They are available between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Friday.

Email

You can also email us at contactus@magna.org.uk.

Social media

You can send us a direct message through Facebook. We also have a Customer Facebook Group - take a look at [page 24](#) for more information.

You can also keep up-to-date with our latest information, news and vacancies on our Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X and Threads accounts!

Phone

If you have an emergency to report, you can call us on **0800 3586025**.

There can be long wait times on the phone sometimes, so if you can use the internet to get in touch please do, as this frees up the phone line for those that have no other way of reaching us, or have an emergency.

Complaints

We want to give you the best service that we can and to make sure everyone is treated fairly and efficiently.

Sometimes things go wrong and when that happens, the way we manage, resolve and learn from complaints is key to helping us improve.

[You can make a formal complaint by completing the form on our website here.](#)

Offices

Our offices remain closed to the public, with our teams working in our local communities to help our customers.

Grow for it!

Enter our annual garden competition
for a chance to win up to £100!

[Click here to enter](#)

Entries must be received by
24 May 2024.



Grab your gloves and trowel and get ready to enter our annual garden competition. There are prizes for everyone who enters, so give it a try this spring!

There's a category for everyone:



Steve Sully, last year's winner

Large gardens



Gillian Hurley, last year's winner

Small gardens



Andrew Hodder, last year's winner

**Containers / windows boxes /
hanging baskets / indoor pots**



Helen Mandy, last year's winner

Wildlife garden



Rebecca Brake, last year's winner

**Vegetable / fruit
garden**



Arya & Edyson Boyland, last year's winner

**Children's creative
gardening**

The judging will take place week commencing 10 June 2024. We'll contact you in advance to arrange a suitable time to visit.

Our judges are looking for:

- Use of colour, space, and design.
- Variety and quality of plants, fruit and veg.
- Overall impact.

Prizes:

There will be one winner in each category and they'll receive gardening vouchers and a certificate.

1st place £100 gardening voucher

2nd place £50 gardening voucher

3rd place £25 gardening voucher

**Everyone who enters will receive a £10
gardening voucher for taking part.**

Winners will be announced on our customer Facebook group and on our website at the end of June.

Good luck!



Your rent and how we set it

We set our rents following strict guidelines set by the government and the Regulator for Social Housing.

Every year each housing association's Board makes its own decision about what rent they charge, following the guidelines.

You will have received a letter at the end of February about the exact amount of your rent and any service charges that you will need to pay from April. If you haven't received a letter, please get in touch.

When deciding this year's rent increase, our Board took into consideration that, for many of our customers, other costs have increased. They had to balance this with Magna's rising costs and our commitments to our customers, their homes and communities.

We know this extra cost will be difficult for some customers and we want to try to help you as much as possible. We have an income team and a money matters team who are available to provide help and advice, and support you with budgeting, claiming benefits and managing your rent payments.

If you're worried about the rent increase that will take effect from April 2024, please get in touch. We have a dedicated form for you to get in touch with us to raise your concerns - [click here to complete it](#).

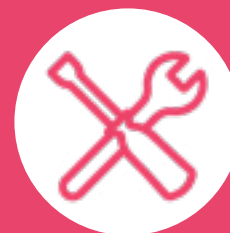
More info about rent setting, how our rents compare and ways to pay, is available by [clicking here](#)

What your rent covers

We maintain over 8,500 homes across Dorset and Somerset and have over 200 colleagues who are out and about on a daily basis, working in your homes and in your communities.

Your rent mainly covers the use and occupation of your home and some of the communal areas near your home. However, there are lots of services we offer which are also funded by your rent which may benefit you directly or indirectly.

Here's a bit of a breakdown about some of the services your rent covers. If you are a shared owner, the services marked * are not covered by your rent.



Delivering repairs*



Servicing gas, electrical and oil heating systems*



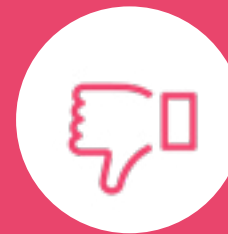
Delivering fire safe homes*



Managing asbestos*



Running our contact centre



Managing and dealing with complaints



Tenancy management and support



Providing money advice



Managing anti-social behaviour



Co-ordinating home aids and adaptations*



Processing permissions for changes



Managing mutual exchanges*

More information on these services can be found on our website [here](#).

Grass cutting

We often get asked about when we start and finish grass cutting, and why, so we caught up with Rupert Harrison, Contracts Manager, to find out more.



When is grass cutting season?

Grass cutting usually starts towards the end of March each year, and carries on until mid-November. The actual start and finish time is dictated by the firmness of the ground, and to a lesser extent, the rate of the grass growth. Our grounds maintenance teams check the firmness of the ground on their regular visits, to decide when it can support the heavy machinery.

What can we expect?

On some sites, the first cut may be a 'cut and collect'. The grass clippings are collected to reduce the clumps of

damp grass that are left after early cuts. Alternatively, an area may receive an initial 'high cut'. The cutting blades will then be gradually lowered on the following cuts to bring the grass down to the desired depth. As a result of this, it takes a few weeks for the grass to get to an agreeable standard. The decision on which method best suits which area is based on the long-standing experience of the grounds maintenance teams and contractors.

Throughout the year, the vast majority of the cutting will be done using mulch cutters.



What is mulching?

'Mulching' is now considered the industry standard for grass cutting rather than cutting and collecting the grass. We've tried and reviewed both options and there's no doubt that the benefits of mulch mowing outweigh the negatives, particularly as far as the environment and costs are concerned.

Tipping grass waste is expensive! Grass waste is classified as an environmentally hazardous industrial waste as it rots down into silage. It can only be disposed of at specialised tips. These are expensive to use and few and far between, so that all adds to the overall cost of disposal, as well as increasing the carbon footprint.

Mulching also saves on fuel, as fewer trips to the tip are required and reduces air pollution by reducing our travelling.

Mulching is good for the grass and the soil too. When we have very warm, dry weather for long periods, the grass dies-back and browns-off. Mulching slows this process down, and keeps the grass greener and healthier for longer. It also saves time for our teams to do other essential tasks such as pruning, weed-spraying etc.

What else does the grounds maintenance team do?

Our grounds maintenance operatives are part of our bigger estates services team, that looks after window cleaning, caretaking and much more. For more information, [click here](#).

Money matters: We're here to help



In this edition, we're talking about savings schemes. Whilst we know budgets may be tight, with many costs increasing, trying to put a little money aside each month will make Christmas, or any unexpected expenses, a little easier to manage.

The earlier you start saving, the less you need to put aside each month. Even a small amount over a few months can make a big difference.

Treat saving in the same way as you would a bill. Committing to saving a regular amount each month or week is more effective than simply saying you'll save whatever you have left over, which might be nothing.

Try to be realistic – it's better to commit to a manageable amount than to aim too high and give up.

Not sure how much you can afford to save? Start small – put your spare pennies, £1 or £2 coins into a jar each week. If that works, try setting aside a bit more on a regular basis.

[Try this online calculator to see how much you could put aside.](#)

Supermarket Savings Schemes

Many supermarkets run their own savings schemes, such as the ones we've listed below. Take a look at their websites for more information.

Iceland's Bonus Card – pays a bonus of up to 20%. You get a flat £1 bonus per £20 saved.

ASDA Christmas Savings Card – you get rewarded up to £15 for saving with them.

Tesco Christmas Saver Scheme – you need to join their clubcard scheme to collect points and save vouchers to spend.

Sainsburys Christmas Club Card – Can also be used at Argos. Save from January to the 1st November each year, and receive a cash bonus of up to £25 on your Christmas Club Card.

Help to Save Scheme

Help to Save is a savings scheme for people who are working, on low incomes, and who are claiming certain benefits.

Help to Save gives you a bonus payment from the government of up to 50% on savings paid into the account.

You can apply for a Help to Save account if any of the following apply:

- You are receiving Working Tax Credit.
- You are entitled to Working Tax Credit, and receiving Child Tax Credit.
- You are claiming Universal Credit and (with your partner if it's a joint claim) earned a minimum of £658.64 from paid work in your last assessment period.

[To apply, click here.](#)

Switch your current savings account

If you already have a savings account, check what your current interest rate is. Banks are offering higher interest rates so it might be worth looking around to switch your savings to a different bank, to get the best interest on your savings.

More money matters tips and advice online

We have a whole section on our website dedicated to proving money saving tips and advice. [Take a look here.](#)

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.



In January, we donated to Age UK. £500 was given to the Dorset branch, and £500 to the Somerset branch.

We gave £500 to Life Education Wessex so they can continue to deliver life skills education to children in Dorset and Somerset schools.

We've donated £550 to Minehead Eye to help replace lighting in the main skate hall as many of our customers use the facility.



In December, we gave seven local foodbanks £500 each in time for Christmas:

- Lyme Regis
- Sherborne
- Dorchester
- Dorchester Community Kitchen
- Weymouth
- West Somerset Food Cupboard (Minehead)
- Quantock foodbank (Watchet & Williton).

[Click here to apply for funding](#)



Do you have a stair lift, through-floor lift or bath hoist?

If you've got a stair lift, through-floor lift, bath hoist or something similar, it's really important that it's regularly checked and maintained to minimise the risk of an accident happening.

If you've had any extra equipment like this installed in your home, please let us know so we can start to maintain it for you. Please email contactus@magna.org.uk or call 0800 3586025.



We're looking for qualified, creative and talented people to join **#TeamMagna**

Carpenters

Heating Engineers

Electricians



If you've got trades skills, we'd love to hear from you.

Interested?

[Click here to look at our current vacancies.](#)

Get involved!



Would you like to help shape our services, provide valuable feedback and make suggestions for improvements? Here are some of the ways you can do this.

Editorial group

This group supports and influences our communications. This could include looking at our printed leaflets, policies and procedures, service standards, letters, our website and this magazine.

If you're a great proofreader, and you'd like to make suggestions for improvements, this could be the group for you. We'd like a broad range of customers of all ages to make up the group and you can do everything from the comfort of your home.

Repairs panel

Our repairs panel is a group of customers who help us make sure our repairs service is working efficiently. We want to work together to improve the service and our approach to repairs.

We'd like a broad range of customers to make up the group. Whatever type of home you're in, where you live or what

your background is; we'd like to hear from you.

Take a look at the article on [pages 20 and 21](#) for more information about this group.

Building safety group

One of our key aims is to ensure that going forward, a culture of trust, co-operation and information sharing is forged with customers so that we can work together to increase performance and ensure we are keeping people safe in their homes.

The law is changing with the new fire safety and building safety bills and we need to meet the new requirements of this legislation and introduce best practice in respect of safety.

This group will influence the way we shape our safety services and make sure customers are aware of new legislation.

Scrutiny group

We'd like your help to continue to improve our services, so we can give all our customers an excellent customer experience.

We're looking for people to be part of our scrutiny group to work with us to help check and challenge our work. This is a great opportunity to make our services better for all our customers, using your existing skills and knowledge.

You'll also learn some new skills and be a key part of helping us to move forward.

You'll be working as part of a team made up of customers and colleagues at Magna, to bring your unique perspective to our work. This will involve:

- Taking an in-depth look at how we can improve services
- Working with us to collect 'evidence' about how our services work and talk with other customers about their experiences
- Use what you learn to recommend changes that will improve our services in the future to give a better customer experience.

What do you need to get involved?

- Think of the wider picture and how things affect all customers
- Have time to attend virtual or face-to-face meetings when needed
- Have time to read documents and provide feedback
- Ideally, you'll need some IT knowledge, access to the internet and an email address.

Interested in joining one of these groups?

[If you'd like to get involved, complete our online form here.](#)

Or, if you'd like to discuss this further, you can contact Neil Bliss, Customer and Community Involvement Officer, on 01984 635134.

From 1 April 2024, we will be offering incentives for you to get involved. After every meeting or review, the names of everyone who got involved will be entered into a prize draw for a chance to win £50 in vouchers.

Repairs panel meeting

You said... we will...



We're keen to gather feedback and work with customers to improve our repairs service. On Tuesday 12 December, we hosted an online meeting with our Repairs Panel.

Alice Bagg, Head of Customer Experience and Home Services, Neil Bliss, Customer and Community Involvement Officer, and Abi Rivers, Customer Care Support Manager, were in the meeting with our repairs panel of customers. They gathered some really useful feedback which will help us to make changes and improvements.

Below is a summary of some of the main things our customers in the Repairs Panel told us, and our responses.

You said:

We will:

We need better communication.

We agree! We want to be sure that you know what's happening when waiting for a repair appointment. We're reviewing how we communicate with our customers to improve this.

When raising jobs for guttering, why not raise it for the full block?

From April, our planned gutter programme will be back up and running and will improve how this work is done.

Customers need to be informed when a job has been completed in communal areas.

We agree! We'll be working on the best way to do this, so you know what repairs are happening in communal areas.

You said:

We will:

When the operative is in our home completing a repair, and another repair is needed to be done for the same trade, get it done there and then to save coming out again.

We'll always try to do this, if there is time to, and they are able to with the tools and parts they have with them. We will also try to group jobs together where possible to reduce our visits.

Make it clearer what you're doing, what team is dealing with our query and who will be in touch.

If our customer care team can't deal with your query first time, we'll make it clear what the next steps are to get your query resolved.

There's long wait times on the phone and we also get cut off sometimes.

We're upgrading our phone lines in the next few months. We'll make sure we regularly let you know when phone demand is high too. Don't forget you can get in touch in many other ways, including live chat on our website.

We'll be having another meeting soon to continue to review the service. If this is something you'd like to be involved with, let us know. See [page 19](#) for details.



We're offering a **FREE ACTIVITY DAY** at the **National Trust Fontmell Down Forest School!**

In 2022, we teamed up with the National Trust to help build a much-needed woodman's hut at the Fontmell Down Forest School.

The hut will help to store visitors' belongings safely and provide protection from the weather during the forest school activities, improving the overall experience.

Would you like to learn some forestry skills and interesting geological facts about the natural woodland and its preservation?

We can now offer a **FREE day out at the school on Wednesday 10 April** for any of our customers.

You'll have some great fun learning in the forest school, whilst being provided with refreshments and snacks throughout the day. Best of all you'll be in the beautiful Fontmell Down with lots of fresh air!

Spaces are limited, so book early!

If you would like to express an interest in joining us for the day, please [complete this form](#) by Wednesday 27 March.

We will contact you at the beginning of April to confirm your place.



You can learn more about the forest school on their website [here](#).



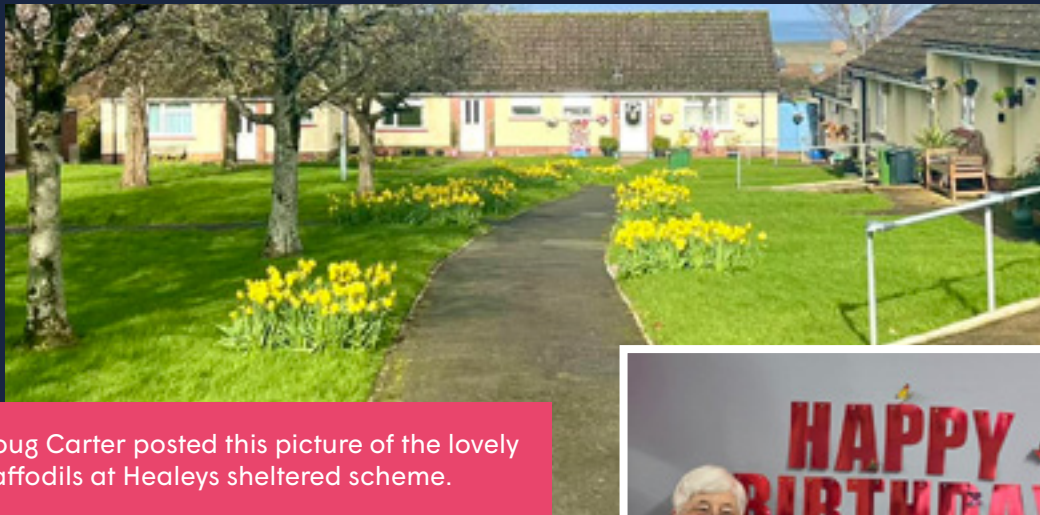
Have you joined our Customer Facebook group?

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

We have competitions just for our customers to enter, up-to-date information about our services, a chance for you to comment and give your views and chat to other customers. Join the conversation and share your stories and pictures with us!

If you've not joined the group yet, [sign up today by clicking here.](#)

Thank you to everyone who shared photos with us recently - we love to see them!



Doug Carter posted this picture of the lovely daffodils at Healeys sheltered scheme.



Happy birthday to Pat, who celebrated with an afternoon tea party recently!



XL Bully dogs

You will have heard in the news that the XL Bully dog breed has now been added to the Dangerous Dog Act 1991, as of 31 January 2024.

If you own an XL Bully dog, you should now have a Certificate of Exemption. Anyone who doesn't have this certificate will be committing an offence and will be in breach of their tenancy agreement.

We encourage responsible pet ownership and it's important we make you aware of your legal responsibilities as a pet owner.

[To find out the most up-to-date information and how to apply for the Certificate of Exemption, please visit the government website.](#)



Lego competition results!

We recently ran a fun competition for children to build their best looking house out of Lego or any other make of toy building bricks.

Our judging panel of colleagues were: Ailsa Exley, Sustainability Business Partner; Stephanie Lloyd-Foxe, Head of Building Safety and Compliance; and Megan Charles, Trainee Project Manager. They loved seeing the entries and the creativity of designs, and chose the following winners for each category:

Ages 5 to 7 years old: Arya Boyland, Lyme Regis

Ages 8 to 10 years old: Miles Lucas, Chideock

Ages 11 to 13 years old: Oscar Broome, Bridport

Overall winner:
Arya Boyland, Lyme Regis.

Well done to the lucky winners and thanks to all of our entrants for their creativity and hard work!

Miles and Oscar will receive £25 in Lego Vouchers and Arya will receive £40 for being the overall winner.

Congratulations!

Well done to everyone who entered, we loved seeing your creative homes! Every child who entered, but didn't win, will get a £5 Amazon voucher for taking part.

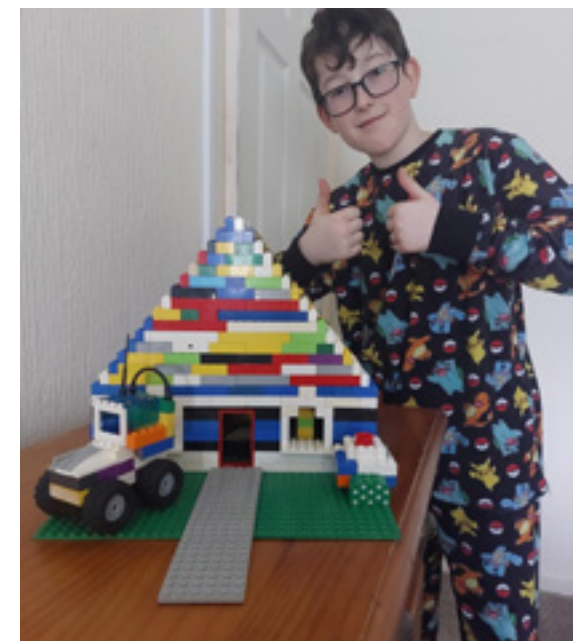
[Keep an eye out for more competitions on our website.](#)



Arya Boyland, overall winner and winner of the ages 5 to 7 category.



Miles Lucas, winner of the ages 8 to 10 category.



Oscar Broome, winner of the ages 11 to 13 category.

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!

Get in touch with us

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[**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)
or [**complete our form online.**](#)

Get #social!

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

