



## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2021



### More inside:

- Martyn's Column
- Housing Development Update
- Community News
- Introducing New Team Members



# CONTENTS



Coronavirus .....	3
Martyn's Column .....	4
A warm welcome to Sharon .....	5
Paying your rent and charges .....	6
Service Charges 2021/2022 .....	8
Housing Development .....	11
Community Events .....	13
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion article - Octavia Hill .....	16
Crossword .....	18
Childs Play .....	19

# CORONAVIRUS

*As you are probably aware, the office currently remains closed to visits other than in exceptional, pre-arranged occasions. We will be following the Government's Covid roadmap timescales, so we would hope to have some level of access from July.*

*Similarly, as restrictions are removed, we will be extending our repairs service to cover routine repairs and hopefully, looking to arrange a range of safe and socially distanced community events. We will also hope to be safely out and about and undertaking some of our normal duties such as home visits and estate walkabouts and in the not-too-distant future, please keep a look out on our website and Facebook page for the latest updates.*

*However, it is unlikely that we will completely return to the previous ways of working straight away, so if you are in any doubt, please check our website or social media or phone to check the current position.*

*In the meantime, please continue to contact us on **01983 525985**, or our repairs team can be contacted on **01983 520353**. If you are unable to get through straight away, please bear with us.*

*You can still make rent payments over the phone or online using MyTenancy. We hope that you are all keeping safe and well, please ensure you follow the correct advice and guidance and contact if you need any support.*





# MARTYN'S COLUMN



Little did I know when I wrote to you all a year ago setting out our response to the National lockdown, that we would still be in the same situation a year later. In some ways this has been a year in which not a lot has happened as a result of restrictions, but for many of you a lot may have changed in your life. Furlough, job loss and reductions in income have been widespread and the impact of the virus has been heartbreaking. Unfortunately, we have suffered the loss of 3 tenants to this dreadful disease.

As we come into Spring, there is light at the tunnel as the vaccine rollout seems to be reaching significant numbers of people and there is a promise of lockdown ending. I think we can all be happy about that.

During the last year, safety has been our paramount concern; the safety of you our residents, our staff and our contractors. We have aimed to maintain as many services as possible, sometimes in a slightly different way. During periods of lockdown we have only been able to provide emergency repairs rather than our usual fuller range. You have been very understanding about this and recognized the reasons behind it. As we move out of lockdown in line with the Government's roadmap, we will aim to review our position and re-instate as many of our wider services as possible.

However, we cannot return to pre-covid life immediately. Safety remains our priority and we will only re-introduce activities where we are satisfied that they pose little risk. Please continue to check the website and social media for updates.

However, on the bright side, we have continued to be very productive in terms of new homes. We have already taken over 14 new properties at Ash Lane, we are shortly to receive a further 10 at Alvington Manor View and we have started on site with 42 units at Branstone Farm. In addition, we have taken on a block of 9 flats for supported living in partnership with Leonard Cheshire.



We also have some new faces, with Sharon Harvey starting as Head of Neighbourhoods and Communities, Amanda Collopy as Property Services Manager and Sue Baker as Neighbourhood Housing Officer. No doubt you will meet them all in due course.

We will do our utmost to support you and provide you with the best services possible. Please feel able to contact us either by phone, email, text, through the website or via social media and we will respond as quickly as we are able. Please do not feel that you have to cope with difficulties alone, we are here to help.

*Martyn Pearl*  
Chief Executive, Vectis Housing

## A WARM WELCOME TO SHARON HARVEY

### HEAD OF NEIGHBOURHOODS & COMMUNITIES

Last year we saw the departure of Yasmin Peverley and this year we would like to introduce you to our new Head of Neighbourhoods & Communities, Sharon Harvey. Sharon has extensive experience within the Housing sector having previously worked for East Thames (now L&Q), Family Mosaic (now Peabody) and City YMCA, London - focusing on supported accommodation, resident involvement and community engagement.



Sharon's aim is to provide tenants a sense of belonging and an opportunity to develop support networks within their communities. However, crucially for tenants to feel at ease in speaking with the team so should anything be troubling or bothering them, such as struggling with your bills or feeling lonely.

Working within housing provides us with a wealth of connections, so even if we are unable to help in person, we generally will know who can (and if we do not, we will go the extra mile and find out for you) and ensure you are sign posted or referred to the relevant services that are on hand to help. You are not alone.





# PAYING YOUR RENT AND CHARGES



One of your main responsibilities as a resident is to make sure you are paying your rent in full and on time. We understand that we have all been facing extremely tough times over the past 12 months and this may have impacted you financially. If you find you are struggling to pay your rent, then please contact us as soon as possible so that we can support and advise you.

## WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE IF I AM IN ARREARS?

The sooner we know that you are having difficulties keeping up with your rent the more we can do to help. We can assist you with:

- Getting extra support with welfare benefits
- Getting Universal Credit rent payments made direct to us.
- Referring to CAB to help you with benefit claims and problems with debt.
- Working out an affordable repayment plan to clear your arrears.
- Issuing foodbank vouchers.

## 50 WEEK RENT CHARGE

We are currently looking at implementing a 50 week charge period for rents and you will probably have seen the consultation paperwork sent out with your last quarterly statement.

## HOW DOES A 50 WEEK RENT CHARGE WORK?

We take your yearly rent charge and divide it in to 50 payments instead of 52. This means that you would not be charged rent for 2 weeks over the Christmas period, when we are all feeling the pinch financially. If you have not yet sent your consultation letter back please do so by 7th May 2021.



## CASH PAYMENTS

For obvious reasons we have not taken cash at the office for over a year now. Clearly, those of you who were in the habit of paying this way have made alternative arrangements. We would now like to make this position permanent. Taking cash presents security concerns and is also more expensive for us to bank.

So, our proposal is that in future, we will only be able to collect rent or charges through direct debit, standing order, debit or credit card. You can pay with the latter options through our website, by telephone, or if you still wish to come into the office, we will be delighted to see you.

We aim to continue this after lockdown ends, so if you have any views you would like to make known to us, please get in touch over the next eight weeks. You can email us at [enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk).



# SERVICE CHARGES 2021/2022



## WHAT ARE SERVICE CHARGES?

Service charges cover the cost of managing, maintaining, repairing, insuring and providing services to residents beyond the benefit of occupying their own home. These include items such as cleaning, grounds maintenance, communal repair costs, fire equipment servicing, management costs and any other running expenses to the area in which you live. Services will vary according to where you live.

You will only be charged if your home benefits from that service.

Leaseholders also pay their share of building insurance and the maintenance of the building through the service charge. We aim to:

- Deliver value for money on your services
- Consult you about any significant changes to your services
- Give you clear information about how your services are managed

## HOW ARE SERVICE CHARGES CALCULATED?

The service charge that you pay, are known as 'Variable Service Charges' - this charge can vary each year and is based on an estimate of the service costs provided. If the cost of the service increases or decreases, the charge can be changed accordingly to ensure that you only pay the true cost of the service provided. In these cases, the (surplus) / deficit will be carried forwards into the following year.

## Example of how a service charge is calculated:

	Per Week (£)
April 2019 to March 2020 Estimated Costs	5.00
April 2019 to March 2020 Actual Costs	4.50
Overcharged (Surplus) - actual costs were lower than expected	(0.50) **
** A positive number denotes an undercharged, or deficit	

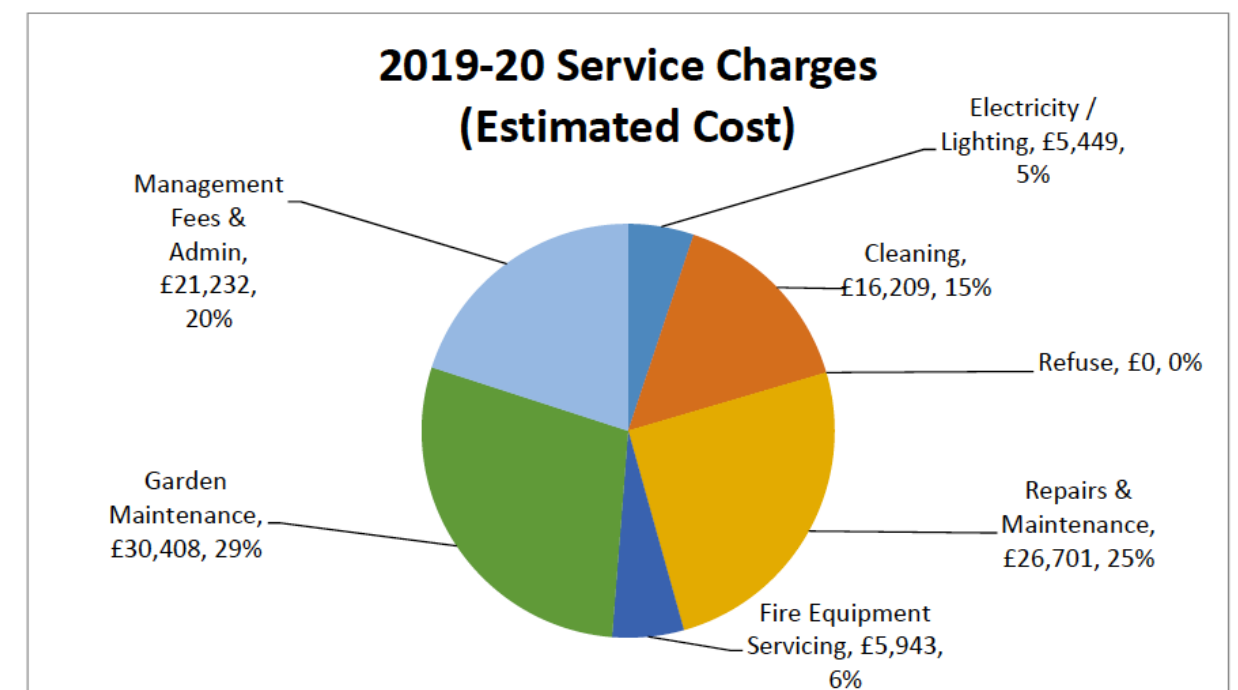
Costs received during the first 6 months of the current financial year (2020/2021) are used to project the cost of your service charge for the following year (2021/2022)

April 2020 to September 2020 Actual Costs	3.00
October 2020 to March 2021 Projected Costs for the remainder of the current financial year	3.25
Estimate of costs for the 2020/2021 financial year	6.25
Inflation applied to uplift the costs for the next financial year	0.06
Estimated Service Charge - 2021/2022	6.31
Adjusted for any (Surplus) / Deficit	(0.50)
<b>This is the amount you will be charged from April 2021</b>	<b>5.81</b>

## MONITORING SERVICES PROVIDED

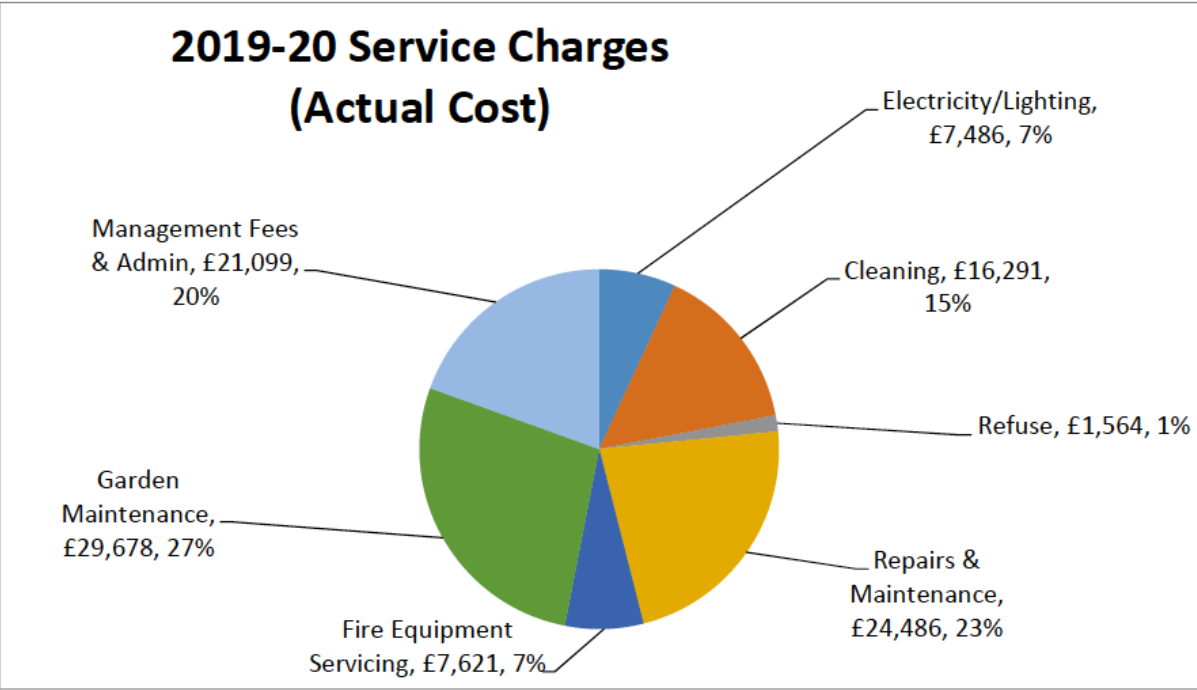
The contractors we use to undertake the work are actively managed by our Property Services team and undergo rigorous checking procedures, both in terms of cost and level of service.

We are continuing to improve the way we manage service charges and ensure that they offer value for money. We hope you have already noticed some improvements over recent years and we will continue to implement improvements at every opportunity.



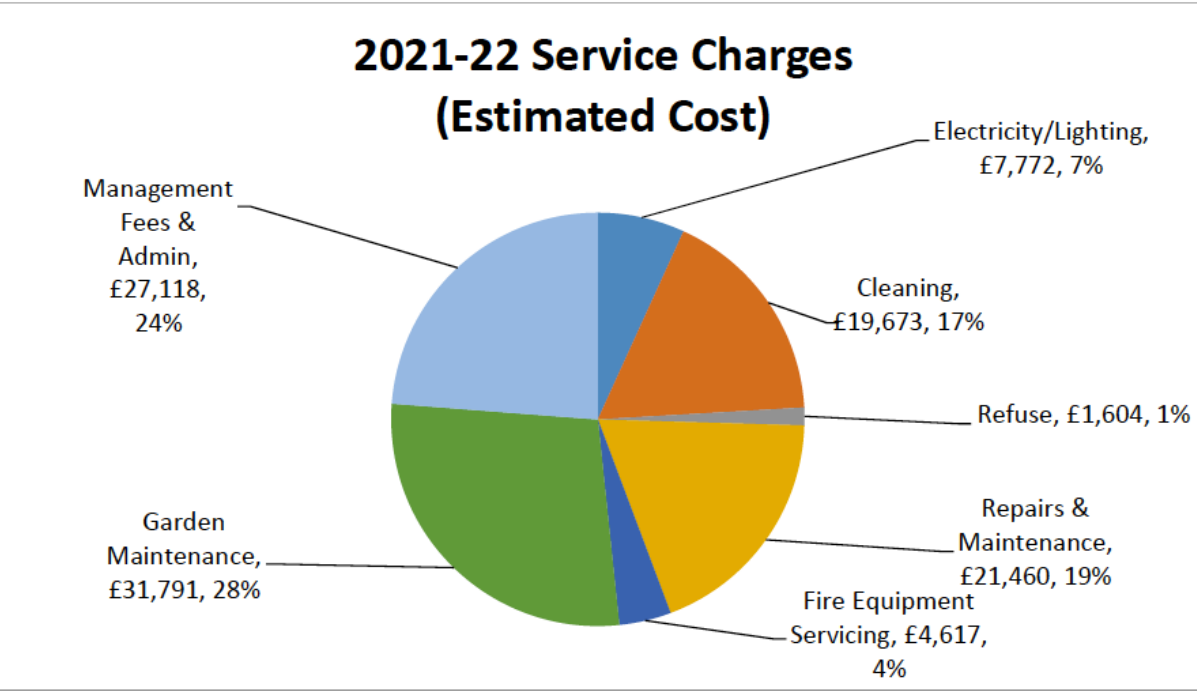


We now split out extra refuse collections made to clear rubbish from communal areas against 'Refuse', as you will see from the chart below.



**SERVICE CHARGE PROJECTIONS 2021/2022**

You will have received a more detailed breakdown of your service charge along with your recent rent review letter.



**HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

Following the submission of a Planning Application for our flagship development at Branstone Farm, Arreton during July 2020, conditional approval was issued by the Isle of Wight Council in February 2021.

Works have now started on site, preparing the ground and constructing the roadways for the development. Over the next 18 months we aim to construct 42 homes with a range of 2, 3 and 4 bedroomed properties for rent and shared ownership.

The £9m development has attracted support from Homes England by way of a substantial grant that will enable us to make the homes truly affordable.

**Branstone Farm**



During the summer 2020 we completed our scheme at Ash Lane, Newport, providing fourteen 1,2 and 3 bedroomed properties and these are now all fully occupied. A further 4 properties are due to be completed at the end of April 2021.







In addition to this, we are shortly to complete a further ten 2 bedroomed properties in Alvington Manor View, Gunville

Following 3 months of planning, we have also completed on a 20 year lease for 9 supported living properties in Shanklin. These 1 bedroomed properties that will become much needed home for residents with learning disabilities are to be occupied from 29th March 2021.

We have a pipeline of a further 4 schemes that we aim to deliver over the next 2 years providing much needed homes in Brighstone, Wellow, Ryde and Calbourne. It is hoped that this will result in a further 67 properties for rent and shared ownership in addition to those already underway.

If you would like to discuss any of the above please contact Grahame Law - Head of Assets.



*Grahame Law  
Head of Assets*



# COMMUNITY EVENTS

## WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING...

In September 2019 we started working on a whole new Community Events programme, running small events specifically for Vectis tenants. We ran a number of very successful Sing About sessions at the Women's Centre in partnership with Independent Arts, we held a Christmas Wreath Making workshop, a Celebrating Age afternoon tea, supported a number of children's lunch and craft clubs at the Women's Centre and booked in a number of Cooking on a Budget workshops to specific groups. We were also working on a large project in Ryde called the World Café, with Mutual Gain and a large number of other organisations. Then Covid hit, and things came to a halt.

Due to the pandemic, we have been unable to run all the activities we had planned and have very much missed seeing our residents. We know this past year has been a challenging and unsettling time for everyone, and we are very much looking forward to happier and safer times, when we can get back to working on exciting projects for you.





Despite the challenges Covid has brought, we were able to run a trip the Isle of Wight Zoo for 13 families. A total of 39 people braved the wet weather and had a well needed fun day out, seeing the animals and enjoying an ice cream. The feedback received was amazing, it was so good to hear that the children had a lovely day. We hope to be able to run another similar trip this year.

For the second year running, we were able to make referrals to the Isle of Wight Radio toy appeal. It was incredible to see the generosity islanders had shown to this appeal, and thanks to their kindness, we were able to deliver Christmas gifts to 27 children from Vectis households. We know this year is likely to bring further challenges to families, as furlough comes to an end and sadly some jobs potentially lost. If you feel your family would benefit from a referral to the 2021 toy appeal, please contact our Community Housing Officer, Sarah Crosbie, on **01983 525985** or email [enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk) and we will do our very best to fulfil your needs.



At the time of going to print, we just finished delivering 50 Easter egg hunt packs to children across the island, and we hope this provides a little fun and sunshine to those children.

### MOVING FORWARD...

With the rapid rollout of the vaccine programme, and the gradual easing of restrictions, we are excited about bringing you future projects and experiences. We understand that it may take some time for peoples' confidence to return in terms of getting out and about and seeing people. That said, we also know that many people have found the isolation over the past year difficult to deal with. The safety of our residents, staff and partners will always come first and safety will be at the forefront of anything we do. We will more than likely run outside events to start with. Future plans include teddy bears picnics and buggy walks for families with young children. We are also in talks with Southern Housing about working in partnership with them on their Muddy Boots project, which involves doing some gardening and spending time in a very peaceful outside space in small groups.



Eventually we would like to offer a monthly coffee morning at our offices, which will be an informal, sociable drop-in arrangement and a member of the housing team will always be available to talk to you. These coffee mornings will be open to every Vectis household, including our Shared Owners and people in leased accommodation. There was a lot of interest in the cooking workshops, and we would love to offer these again when we are able.

We are very keen to hear from our residents about what you would like to see on offer through our Communities team. We are currently working on a way of asking you what you would like to see, and we are always eager to hear your views. Please feel free to contact us at any time by calling **01983 525985** or emailing [enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk) and letting us know what you would like to see.

### VECTIS IN BLOOM...

Do you love gardening? Have you spent time transforming your outside space? Maybe you've created some pretty hanging baskets or window boxes? Perhaps you have been creative with a very small space? Maybe you don't have a garden but have some beautiful indoor plants you have cared for? We would love to hear from you and share your photographs of your handiwork in our newsletters (we would not print your personal details without your express permission).

*Sarah Crosbie*  
Community Housing Officer





# OCTAVIA HILL - EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

8th March marked International Women's Day. So why is International Women's Day necessary? Well, there are two aspects. It is an opportunity for women all over the world to shine on the gender inequities that still exist, such as a gender pay gap, lack of female leaders and the violence against women and girls.

During the pandemic, we have seen a rise in domestic abuse throughout the country. Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence.

This can include but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse

It can happen to anyone, regardless of age, background, gender, religion, sexuality, ethnicity or geography. However, statistics show most domestic abuse is carried out by men and experienced by women. For anyone who is experiencing domestic abuse or know someone who is you can call the 'You First' freephone helpline: **08002346266** or email [youfirstiow@theyoutrust.org.uk](mailto:youfirstiow@theyoutrust.org.uk).

The Government back in January also launched the 'Ask for ANI' domestic abuse codeword scheme to help victims access emergency support within the community. You can use the code ANI (Action Needed Immediately) in participating pharmacies. This will let staff know that you need an emergency police response or help contacting a helpline or specialist support service, all Boots Pharmacies on the island are participating in this scheme.

Finally, we at Vectis can help you to connect to any external services for support by contacting the Housing Team via telephone **(01983) 525985** or email [enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk).



Remember you are not alone and support is available.

International Women's Day is also an opportunity for women to celebrate the achievements of women who have overcome these barriers, which provide hope for the rest of the women worldwide. One woman that truly achieved within her time; with her work benefitting many people including all those living within social housing today is Octavia Hill.

Octavia Hill was a social reformer, public figure, artist and activist of her time, plus one of the cofounders for The National Trust. Strongly influenced by the belief that good environments make better people, Octavia built improved housing and campaigned to give ordinary people access to the countryside. In her lifetime, Octavia was a pioneer. Her legacy is perhaps even more important still as many Housing Associations strive to continue to build affordable housing to a high standard while providing outdoor spaces for the local communities to enjoy.

Men fear not your day of celebration is Friday 19th November.

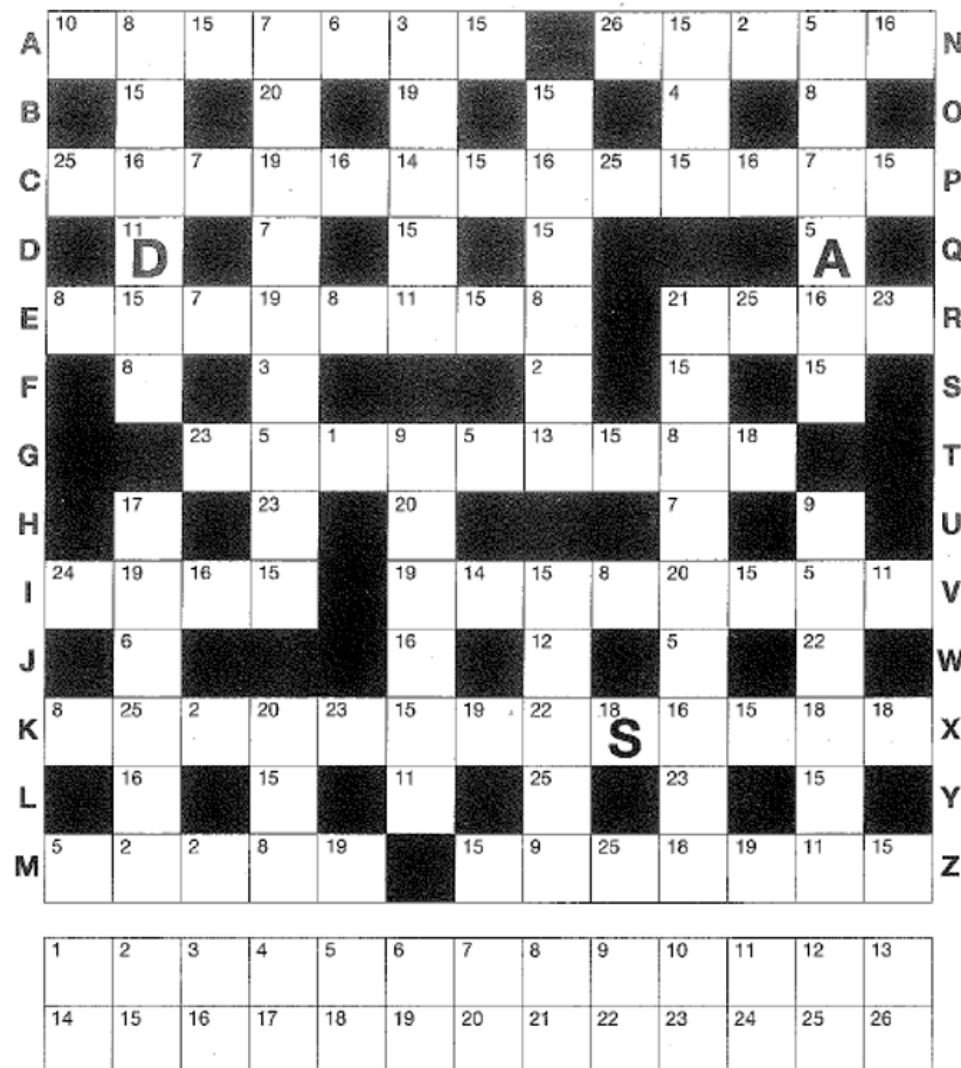
*Sharon Harvey*

*Head of Neighbourhoods and Communities*





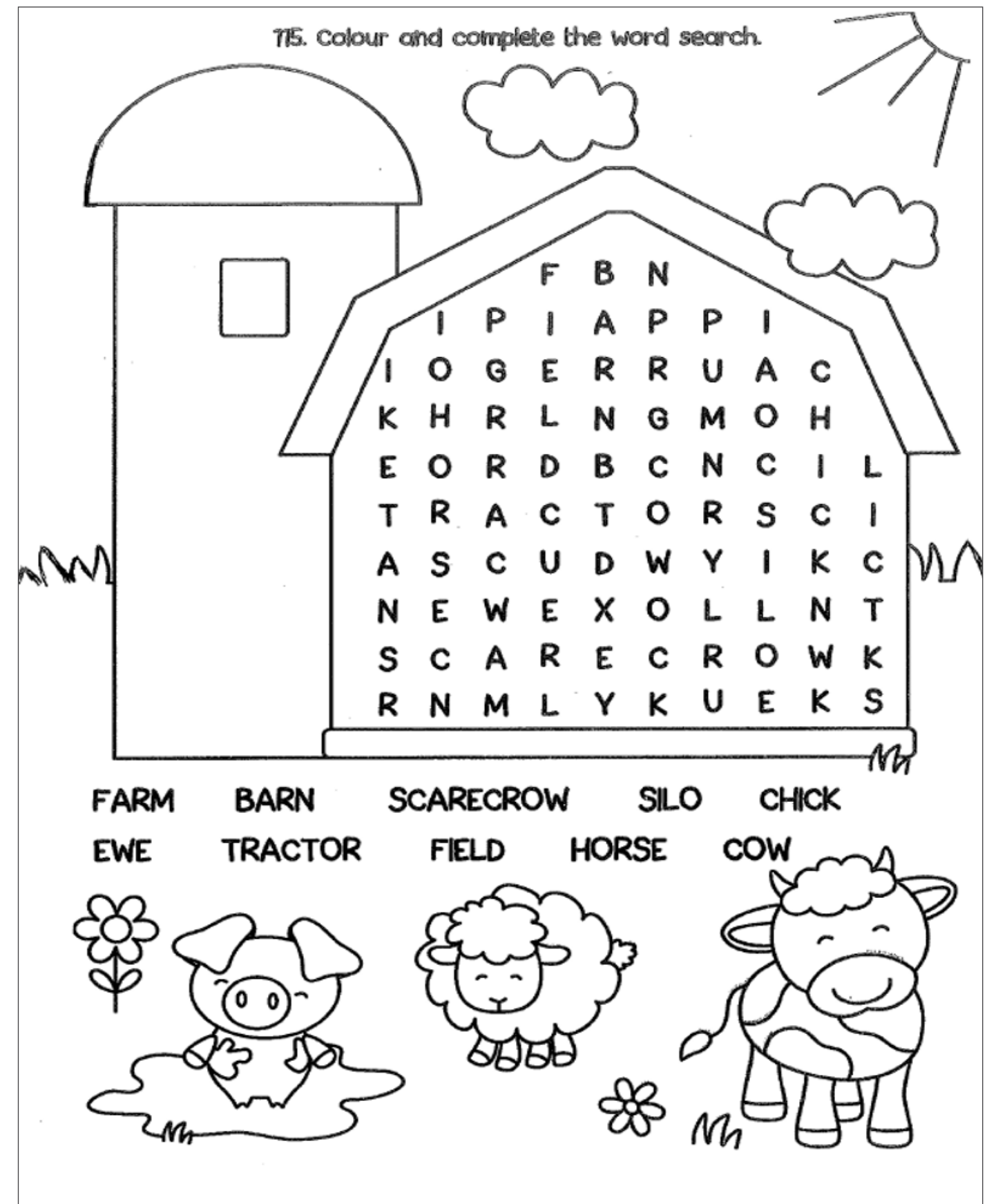
# TIME FOR A BREAK



## Codeword

A codeword is a coded crossword in which every letter has been replaced by a number, indicated by the small digits in the top left corner of each crossword square. Work out which number represents each letter of the alphabet and use this information to complete the crossword grid.

# SOMETHING FOR THE KIDS





# Home Swapper

The mutual exchange solutions for tenants and landlords

## Want to Move Home?

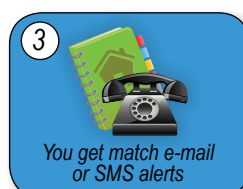
HomeSwapper.co.uk's local & national service means mutual exchange is better than ever. It's the UK's largest community of social housing tenants looking to swap homes.

• Tenants from over 1,000 landlords are registered

• 2 out of 3 matched to potential swaps in 24 hours

• hundreds of households move every month

How it works:



### HOME SWAPPER

If you have an assured tenancy with Vectis you have free access to the services offered by HomeSwapper. The system is easy to use and has already helped many residents find a new home better suited to their needs.

#### VISIT US:

[www.facebook.com/VectisHousing](https://www.facebook.com/VectisHousing)  
[www.vectishousing.co.uk](http://www.vectishousing.co.uk)

#### CONTACT US:

**Emergency Repairs**  
**Phone Vectis Repair Line:**  
**01983 520353**



*Please call this number to report emergency repairs. Inappropriate use may result in any additional costs being re-charged to you.*

*Please do not use the text service for emergencies, especially over bank holidays as we will not receive them out of hours. Please phone these through on the maintenance line **01983 520353**.*

All other enquiries: **01983 525985**  
[enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk)