

Southway Stories

The magazine for
Southway Housing
customers

Spring 2024

“We’re here to help you”

Tenants Rachel, Hannah
and Christine take on exciting
new roles working for our
communities

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2024*

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The end of an era for Southway

Karen Mitchell
reflects on her
17 years as
Chief Executive



Hello, and welcome to my latest – and final – blog.

This summer, I will be retiring as Chief Executive of Southway. I have held the role since Southway was formed in 2007, following a stock transfer decision made by South Manchester residents.

It's been a privilege to lead an organisation that has such a strong focus on our communities and working closely with our tenants, contributing to the improvement of homes, services, and opportunities in our neighbourhoods over the last 17 years.

I've really taken pride in Southway's vision of Thriving Communities, and our innovation, in areas like our work to make Manchester Age Friendly, the implementation of our Green and Zero Carbon Strategies, and our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. And that, against a backdrop of change across the housing sector, we've remained a community-focused landlord that is inspired by our communities.

We do some fantastic work at Southway, yet there's always more we can do, and we know that we need to improve in some of our core services which will remain a priority going forward. I know my colleagues will work hard to make the improvements that are needed.

Though I'm more than a little sad to be leaving, I have absolute confidence that Southway's Board, committees, colleagues, and volunteers will continue to make sure that the organisation improves and grows, listening and responding to our customers and partners, and setting our new Corporate Strategy and priorities in 2025 for the next five years. I've always been supported by an incredibly dedicated and experienced team, who will continue to provide our communities with much-needed homes and services.

K. Mitchell

Best wishes, Karen



“Karen's impact on shaping Southway's story has been exceptional, and the Board is immensely grateful for her dedication to local communities.

“Karen's retirement is the end of an era, and she will be sincerely missed by everyone who has worked alongside her. Southway and the Board wish her the very best in her future endeavours.

“This is a time of significant change for the Trust. We have a great team in place and are looking forward to welcoming a new Chief Executive who will support the Board and work with us on the next exciting stage of the Southway journey.”

Hazel Makinson, Chair of Southway Housing Trust's Board



Meet John Bowker, our new future Chief Executive

Hi everyone, I'm delighted to be joining Southway soon and it is a real honour to take over from Karen who has led the organisation so successfully.

I have been working in housing for 28 years and will join Southway in the summer from Stockport Homes, where my responsibilities have included homes maintenance and investment, new build developments, and neighbourhood services.

I grew up in Manchester and have a deep-rooted commitment to its communities. I'm looking forward to working with you to set priorities for the years ahead, so we have the best possible services for you, our customers, and new homes that meet local needs.

Hazel Makinson, Chair of Southway Housing Trust's Board said: "John will be a great fit for Southway. He has a strong passion for social housing and working with tenants and communities, and will bring a lot of experience and new ideas."

Read more from John in our next edition of Southway Stories!



NEW BEGINNINGS: TENANT



HELP US MAKE A NEW START

In the run-up to our next Tenant Forum on Saturday 11th May, we spoke to Caroline Hardie, who has attended some of the sessions, to see what she thinks of them.



Q & A

Tell us why you started coming to the forum?

I attended the first session because my mum who is also a tenant was experiencing problems with her home. We work full time and found contacting Southway challenging. Seeing a session that was accessible around work was the main draw, and the open-door style approach seemed to work well.

What do you think of the events so far?

I can see real growth in the aims of the sessions and how feedback from one session seems to be part of the focus for the next forum.

There's a partnership to what's being discussed. Southway has the topics it wants to cover but staff seem to be genuinely keen to hear, implement and respond to tenants' views - even when those views aren't positive.

There's almost an aspect of seeing inside the workings of Southway. I've learned a lot and have a better understanding of what

Southway wants to achieve and where I as a tenant can fit into that.

Ultimately, Southway and tenants want good quality homes, easy access to support and repairs, and confidence that it's a two-way relationship where we're all heard and valued.

What message would you give to tenants to encourage them to attend?

If you think it's not for you, then it absolutely is for you. The more voices, experiences and feedback tenants can give, the more we can make sure Southway works for us. There's no one type of person who should come, if anything we need more variety, so the forum truly represents tenants and advocates for them all.

The staff are really understanding and compassionate. They know it's nerve-racking to come to something like this, where you don't know everyone. They're in the same position and have the added pressure of running the events and responding to our feedback. So, book on, bring a neighbour and enjoy a cup of tea and a good chat!

How do you think the forums could be developed?

I'd love to see tenants setting more agenda items and pushing

Southway to focus on what's important to us. We live in these homes, raise our families, and look after the elderly in them. Making sure we can drive change and be informed about how, why and when Southway makes improvements is key.

Taking the forum to areas under-represented by tenants would help it grow. Hearing what tenants are passionate about and their opinions is vital, and putting our feedback into action is even more important.

How would you like to see Southway develop its engagement work with tenants in the future?

I'd love Southway to make better use of what's available to it, digital versions of Southway Stories, spotlight focuses on social media and a better presence in our communities - especially now the weather is better and Cosy Mondays have finished. A gazebo and some chairs with mini forum sessions held where people live opposed to it just being a "come to the office" event.

Sharing more information about meetings will help all tenant engagement events seem more approachable and accessible.

FORUM 11TH MAY

The Tenant Forum is for everyone!

Caroline says
'Make Southway work for us'



We hope reading about Caroline's experience has made you want to come along and help shape Southway's services at our next Forum!

Join us at Southway's Southern Gate offices between 10.30am–1pm on Saturday 11th May. In keeping with the lighter, brighter days of spring, the theme this time will be 'New Beginnings'.

The morning will feature drop-in sessions on different topics for you to join and give your views. You can call in at any time between 10.30am and 1pm. Southway staff will be available to take note of any individual issues you have.

You'll also have a chance to meet Hannah, Rachel and Christine, the Southway tenants who have joined Southway as our new Community Feedback Officers.

Tenants like you who have shared their views at the forums, and in other ways like the STAR survey, have really helped shape our services over the past year.

For example, we invested heavily in our repairs service after you told us how important it was to you that we make things better. Now, with our new staff and extra resources, we've been carrying out high numbers of repairs — more than 500 a week at peak times!

Whether you've been a part of our tenant voice events before or not, we'd love to see you at the forum on Saturday 11th May. We can't wait to hear your valuable insights and start working together towards New Beginnings!

You can book your tickets by visiting our website www.southwayhousing.co.uk/forum-may24



WE'RE WORKING TO IMPROVE KEY SERVICES

We know how important it is to you that we provide high quality customer service and repairs.

We've made it a top priority to invest in staff and new resources to make these services better, and we know we still have work to do to get those services to the standard that you expect.

We've recently changed our repairs policy, improving the target times for us to complete the jobs you need doing in your homes. The target to attend urgent repairs is now 5 working days instead of 10. The target to attend routine repairs is now 20 working days instead of 40.

We'll be keeping you informed about how we report against those standards, as well as showing you how our Customer Hub is doing answering the phones, even when the news isn't as good as it should be.

Keep an eye on our website and social media feeds for these updates as we work to improve these key services. If there are any performance issues, we'll use the updates to explain what they are and what we're doing to make things better.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a maroon trench coat over a black top and a black bag, stands in front of a vibrant mural. The mural depicts a string quartet with four musicians in formal attire playing violins and a cello. The background is a mix of teal, orange, and black. The woman is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

Meet your new community feedback officers

Tenants Christine, Rachel and Hannah have been recruited as Community Feedback Officers to help you share your views with Southway.

They'll be out and about in your area, attending events to listen to you and creating a bridge between Southway and our tenants. They'll make sure that your views and ideas make their way to Southway's teams, helping us make decisions that will improve our services for tenants.

If you have any queries about their role, please email Maureen Ward, Customer Involvement and Community Investment Manager on m.ward@southwayhousing.co.uk

For now, we caught up with Christine, Rachel and Hannah to find out a bit more about them and their new roles.

Christine O'Sullivan
Covering Old Moat & Withington



Christine is a mum-of-three living in Burnage.

She said: "My three boys have grown up and I applied for this role as I wanted to do something for my local community as well as myself.

"I'm looking forward to seeing how the feedback we get from tenants helps to shape Southway's services and hopefully make them better. It will be great to get back into work as well as do something for my community."

Rachel Renshaw
Covering Chorlton Park



Mum-of-three Rachel grew up in Chorlton Park and lives in Withington.

She said: "I'm looking forward to working in the local community and getting tenants' views to help improve services as that will benefit us all.

"I do voluntary work in the local area, as I help in the kitchens at Old Bedians Rugby Club on matchdays. But this will be an exciting new challenge and I can't wait to get started."

Hannah Worthington
Covering Burnage



Hannah is a mum-of-two and lives in Burnage.

She said: "I love helping the community and applied for this role as I want to make the environment my children are growing up in even better.

"I'm a volunteer community champion for tenants so I already speak to friends and neighbours about what is happening in the area.

"I'm really excited about getting started and making a difference to our communities."



NEW STANDARDS TO SHOW HOW WE'RE DOING

As you know, Southway is a social landlord governed by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH).

From early April, new Consumer Standards set by the Regulator have come into effect. The new standards focus on protecting tenants and improving the service all social landlords provide. We'll be assessed by the Regulator against the standards. Part of this will be an inspection at least every four years, when the Regulator will interview Board members and staff, and meet tenants.

What are the new Consumer Standards?

- The Safety and Quality Home Standard** will make sure we deliver repairs, planned improvements, and maintenance efficiently. We'll need to show a good knowledge of our homes, and be clear on our health and safety responsibilities.
- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard** means landlords will work alongside other parties to provide safe, well-maintained neighbourhoods.
- The Tenancy Standard** lays out how homes should be let and allocated, as well as specific requirements for managing tenancies.
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** means landlords will need to show they've involved tenants when making decisions, and the process is transparent. We should make sure tenants feel respected, empowered, and treated fairly. At the heart of this is the importance of organisations

putting tenants at the centre of all they do.

Our success will also still be determined by economic standards already set by the RSH, which are Value for Money, Financial Viability, and the Rent standard. These will sit alongside the Tenant Satisfaction Measures which were introduced in 2023.



What are Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)?

As Southway owns over 1,000 homes, we're considered to be a large landlord. That means that, this summer, we'll submit our data to the Regulator of Social Housing and share it with you. There are 22 TSMs, which include satisfaction, perception and management information measures, and vary from overall satisfaction to how respectful the landlord is. These results will be published so you'll be able to see how satisfied

tenants are with our services. Where satisfaction scores are low, we'll work to improve things and keep you updated about how we're doing.

We asked the TSM questions in the STAR Survey we carried out in 2023. You can find out more about how we've responded to your answers by visiting our website www.southwayhousing.co.uk/star-2023.

We also did a smaller survey based on the TSMs in January and will be running these every three months from now on.



FREE TO
ATTEND!TRY SOMETHING
NEW THIS SUMMER!LIMITED
PLACES

Learn to scythe with us in Chorlton on Monday 19th August*

Scything is...

- › A traditional way to mow grass
- › Gentle exercise
- › A great way to connect with nature

The workshop will be led by a leading scything instructor and will take place at one of Chorlton's green spaces. Places are limited so booking is essential.

Please email Debbie Wallace, Urban Ranger at Southway, at d.wallace@southwayhousing.co.uk by 31st May to book your place.

*Date is subject to level of interest. Participants must be over 18.

New evening Quids In Club



We know it can be difficult to juggle the weekly food shop with the current cost of living, so we've been trialling a Quids In Evening Food Club in Burnage!

If you live in the Southway area, are working, and struggle with the cost of living, you may be able to join for three months.

What is Quids In?

Quids In is a weekly membership-based food club.

Evening members pay a fee (£3 for Southway tenants, £6 for non-tenants) for a three-month membership and then a weekly fee (£4 for tenants, £8 for non-tenants). They can then choose around £20 worth of food a week, including chilled, frozen, and fresh items. Our friendly staff are always on hand if you need any help!

We spoke to Sinead, who told us how positive our Quids In Evening Club has been for her:

"It's a really good idea! Even though I'm back into work part time, it's still a lot with the cost of shopping and having three kids. We can get fruit and veg here, and there are treats that I could never afford to buy in the shops!"

How do I join?

If you'd like to join the evening club or any of our five daytime clubs, or if you have any questions, email quidsin@southwayhousing.co.uk with your name, address and phone number, or call our Customer Hub team on 0161 448 4200.

Please be aware that places are limited.

KEEPING YOU AND YOUR HOME HEALTHY



Here at Southway, we're improving our response to damp and mould so we can now get someone out to a tenant's home much quicker.

Keeping you and your home healthy is a top priority for us. If we get a high-priority call during the working week, our trained Property Care Officers, Don Evans and George Molloy, can do an inspection the next day, or as soon as possible if you call us at the weekend. One of them will complete an immediate mould treatment or temporary mould wash within a week.

If more work is needed, George or Don will tell Mouldex, one of Southway's partners in tackling damp and mould, or our Property Services team and they will come and do the job.

To help us identify these high-priority cases quicker, we've updated our process. Now, if you ring us about a damp and mould issue, our adviser will ask you a series of questions so we can quickly identify how serious the situation is.

These will include finding out if there are any people with respiratory illnesses or other vulnerabilities in the home as well as getting details of the damp and mould issue.

A copy of what's said on the call will be emailed to you confirming the action that will be taken and when. Our Assets Team will then get to work on solving the problem.

Don, George and Mouldex also carry out other work tackling damp and mould in tenants' homes. If you have a problem, please let us know on 0161 448 4200. Just press 2 for repairs, then 1 for the direct damp and mould line.



Danielle speaks very highly of the team that treated damp and mould problems in her bathroom, her son's bedroom and on the outside walls.

She said: **"I was relieved that what had become a big problem for me was effectively resolved. It meant my little boy could have his bedroom back!"**

"If you have a problem with mould, speak to Southway because there will be a cause that can be resolved. They have a fabulous team working very hard to get these repairs done. Don't be worried or embarrassed, just report it!"



Tell the panel your ideas to help the local community

The Beautiful South Fund can help your community

Want to do something to help local people connect with each other or boost community spirit? The Beautiful South Fund could bring your project to life!

Grants of up to £2,500 can be awarded to individuals, groups or organisations to run activities or events that promote good neighbourliness or support Southway's communities to get through the rise in the cost of living.

Grants are awarded by the Beautiful South Fund Panel of Southway tenants, supported by Southway staff.

Here are two great ways people have used funding to support communities:

- › **Southway Swap Shop:** Community Champion Carol Haney had the idea for a Swap Shop where people could swap toys and games to help them to spend less at Christmas. The successful event was held at Westcroft Community Centre in November 2023.
- › **Cost of Living:** Barlow Moor Community Association Cost of Living Partnership organised a programme of support for Chorlton Park residents during the winter of 2023-24.

If you want to organise something special for your neighbourhood, apply online at www.southwayhousing.co.uk/beautiful-south.

The application deadline and panel meeting dates are:

Application deadline	Panel meeting
13 May 2024	20 May 2024
1 July 2024	8 July 2024

To find out more, or for help with your application, please email Roz Hampson at r.hampson@southwayhousing.co.uk or Maureen Ward at m.ward@southwayhousing.co.uk

Cohousing — A new approach to housing

Southway's Age Friendly Communities team recently launched their cohousing project in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University and University of Manchester.

The aim of this research project is to explore, alongside Southway tenants aged 50 and above, the potential for developing a cohousing project in south Manchester.

What is cohousing?

Cohousing is when a group of people work together to create a small housing community, based on a shared desire to live in a supportive and connected neighbourhood. In a cohousing community, there are shared spaces, facilities, and resources.

Residents manage the scheme, do a wide range of activities, and can regularly eat meals together.



It's a great way to make friends, connect to people and foster a supportive, and greener, way of life.

If you want to find out more about cohousing, take a look at the cohousing page by visiting www.southwayhousing.co.uk/cohousing or scan the QR code above.

Where we're up to

We've almost completed stage one of this project, and already Southway tenants have shown interest in the idea. Anyone curious about cohousing is encouraged to get involved with a steering group to help further investigate the potential for a cohousing scheme here in south Manchester.

Interested? It's not too late to get involved!

You can do so by contacting Paul Greenwood at p.greenwood@southwayhousing.co.uk or call 07860 758 361.

Examples of some great cohousing schemes

Watch a fascinating video about the project

Scan the QR codes to find out more

Watch a great TEDx Talk about the benefits of cohousing



LILAC Cohousing

LILAC Cohousing
A cohousing scheme in Leeds. It has 20 eco-friendly households built using straw bales.



New Ground Cohousing

New Ground Cohousing
New Ground is the first older women's co-housing scheme in the UK.



Lancaster Cohousing

Lancaster Cohousing
Also made up of eco-built houses where the residents strive to live a lower-impact lifestyle.

MANAGED MIGRATION

WHAT IS IT AND WILL IT AFFECT ME?

Managed migration is the name the Government has given to the process of moving people off their existing benefits and onto Universal Credit (UC).

This process began in autumn 2023 and has affected over 300,000 households across the UK so far. The Government is gradually sending out letters (Migration Notices) and, eventually, everyone on existing 'legacy benefits' will move to UC.

Those claiming Tax Credits are the first of those on legacy benefits to be invited to claim UC. If you claim Jobseekers or Employment Support Allowance, the DWP will begin sending letters inviting you to claim UC from June onwards. The six legacy benefits being replaced by UC are:

- › Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- › Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- › Income Support.
- › Housing Benefit.
- › Child Tax Credit.
- › Working Tax Credit.

What should I do if I receive a Migration Notice Letter?

If you've received a migration notice letter, you'll have three months from receiving it to make

a claim to UC before your Tax Credits end. This is known as your deadline day.

There are many more important points you must consider regarding UC to make sure you don't lose out. These are listed below, along with how to contact us if you need some help from us with your claim:

- › You must claim UC within the three months to receive the Transitional Protection element in your award of UC. This is to protect you from receiving less benefit.
- › If you don't claim UC by your final deadline day, you will not be considered for transitional protection.
- › Your Tax Credit payments will stop on the day before you claim UC or on your deadline day if you haven't put your claim in before then.
- › Once you have claimed, there will be a wait of at least five weeks before you receive your first UC payment.
- › You can ask for an advance payment from UC, but be aware that this is a loan, and you will have to repay this from your future UC payments.
- › If you receive Housing Benefit, this will end when you claim UC and you will receive the Housing Element as part of your claim to UC. You will need

to re-claim Council Tax Support.

When you receive your letter from the DWP, **do not ignore it**. Remember to claim UC or your benefits will stop. Please let our Income Team know that you're moving to UC so they can manage your rent account.

If you need any help or advice regarding this process, contact the Advice Team at adviceteamreferrals@southwayhousing.co.uk and we can help you with your claim.

Claim Universal Credit?

Report your rent and service charge changes to the DWP as soon as possible!

If you don't, you may lose out on money you are entitled to.

To find out how go to www.southwayhousing.co.uk/uc-report-rent/

Partnership brings jobs for tenants

Salford-based Cara EPS is one of the UK's most trusted installers of home-efficiency technology that helps people reduce their fuel bills.

We're working with Cara EPS to make energy-saving improvements to homes. In the five months since Cara EPS has started work on Southway's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), the partnership has employed **FIVE** Southway residents who were previously unemployed or in insecure unskilled employment.

Our ambition is to recruit 20 people over the next few years.

**FIVE START
NEW ROLES!**

**...AND MORE
TO COME**

MARCEL PARTINGTON

Apprentice Multi-Trade

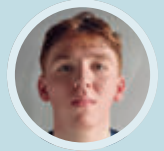


Southway resident Marcel, aged 19, joined Cara EPS as an apprentice in October 2024 with an interest in property repairs and maintenance.

He attends college one day a week and works alongside an experienced and multi-skilled team. His work ethic and passion for different trades should see him go far.

JOE CHARD

Trainee Loft Installer



Our newest trainee. At 19, Joe was working in McDonald's part-time. He is a Southway resident and was referred by the Southway team at Westcroft Community Centre.

He's now enrolled on his NVQ Level 2 in loft insulation working alongside our loft installer team and we hope to see him progress into cavity wall insulation.

DANIELLE BELL

Tenant Liaison Officer at Cara EPS



Mum and Southway resident Danielle was unemployed and looking for work. We met Danielle through her volunteering with Southway.

Danielle is now a full-time Tenant Liaison Officer who has taken to the role with enthusiasm. She works flexibly from home and Southway's offices giving her time for school runs.

We have arranged driving lessons for Danielle and are supporting her with training and development.

IAN YATES

Newly Qualified Loft Installer



After completing an eight-week bootcamp arranged by Southway and UK Skills Academy, Ian joined Cara EPS as a trainee loft insulation installer.

He has now passed his NVQ Level 2 in loft insulation and has skills in supervising and management.

We've arranged a driving course for Ian and he has started an NVQ Level 2 in Cavity wall Insulation.

Ian will also be an ambassador at the next Bootcamp Southway and UK Skills Academy to help other people into work.

JAMES NEE McGAGH

Trainee Electrician



We met James, a Southway resident through one of our jobs fairs. He needed work experience to gain and NVQ Level 3 to become a qualified electrician which he's now working towards whilst working full-time with Cara EPS.

James is also one step closer to owning his own home after receiving a permanent work contract.

James hopes to be a fully qualified electrician soon and is looking to attend a course around electric vehicle charging.

There are many ways to contact us



southwayhousing.co.uk

The online form on our 'Contact us' page sends an email to our Customer Hub with your enquiry



my.southwayhousing.co.uk

Book routine repairs, check your rent account and update your details 24/7 on our Tenant Portal



Connect with us

On Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram. Direct messages on Facebook are monitored from 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday



Visit us

Our Southern Gate office is open from 9am–3pm, Monday to Thursday. Closed on a Friday.



Write to us

Our address is Southway Housing Trust, Southern Gate, 729 Princess Road, Didsbury, Manchester M20 2LT



Call us

Our phonelines are open 8am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays

HOW TO REPORT MOTORBIKE NUISANCE

With summer just around the corner, sadly some of you will be reporting noisy off-road bikes and the associated anti-social behaviour they cause in our communities.

We know that this issue is a problem but, as a landlord, we cannot take action unless we know which homes these bikes are coming from. Once we have that information, we'll work with our community safety partners and look to confiscate these bikes where possible.

You can report motorcycle and other vehicle nuisance online by searching for motorbike nuisance on the Greater Manchester Police website www.gmp.police.uk

When you next contact us, please make sure your contact details are up to date and tell us who lives in your home.

This makes it easier to contact you in an emergency and process any tenancy changes you ask for.

If you've given power of attorney to anyone or want to give permission for someone else to speak to us on your behalf, please let us know.



Pinch me

GECKO™

If you thought you couldn't afford to get on the property ladder, then you could be wrong. Because with Shared Ownership you probably can. Buy with a 5% deposit from £3,460.*

Find out more at geckohomes.co.uk
Call our team on 0330 995 1333



*Prices based on a 40% Shared Ownership and a 90% LTV mortgage. Homes are bought as leasehold, full T&C's apply. See website for more information. Price correct at the time of advertising (14.03.24) and may be subject to change. Gecko Homes provides Shared Ownership properties separately from Southway's role as a social housing provider.

