



Opendoor

The magazine for magna housing customers

Winning gardens

Page 18

Working differently

Page 5

Tony says farewell

Page 6

Our plans for a greener Magna

Page 14

Welcome

Autumn is here and we've got lots to share with you.

I can't believe I'm writing the autumn Opendoor already - where has the time gone? I hope you all had a lovely summer, making the most of the weather and being able to finally meet up with friends and family.

Some of you certainly spent a lot of time in your gardens this year. We had lots of entries for our annual garden competition and our judges really enjoyed their virtual tours. Take a look at [pages 18 and 19](#) for the winners.

Talking of green things, on [pages 14 and 15](#) we start to talk about our environmental ambitions and our new sustainability plans. We'll be asking you to get involved with this in the coming months.

Many of you reading this have probably met or know of our housing director, Tony Murray. He's been with us for many years and has always enjoyed getting out into the community, taking part in neighbourhood inspections, judging competitions and most importantly, talking to our customers. He has decided now is the right time for him to retire and wanted to say goodbye to everyone he has met over the years. His farewell message

is on [page 6](#) and we'll certainly miss him at #TeamMagna.

Getting out into the community is really important to us. In this edition, we share news about a recent school event we took part in ([page 22 and 23](#)) and Selina, our chief executive, met up with some local National Trust colleagues to offer our support for a new forest school (see opposite). We'll also be working in our communities more rather than in offices - you can find out about our new ways of working on [page 5](#).

Finally, each year we review our performance and publish an annual financial statement so you can check how well we're providing our services. If you're interested in reading this, the report for April 2020 to March 2021 will be available on our website this month: magna.org.uk/money-matters/facts-and-figures/latest-annual-report-and-financial-statements

As always, if you have any feedback or suggestions for future articles, please get in touch.



Tanya Head

Marketing Manager and
Editor of Opendoor



Investing in our local community

As part of our commitment to invest in the work of local communities, we have donated materials to support the opening of the new Fontmell Down Forest School.

Responding to a call for help, we saw an opportunity to make a difference for local people and quickly committed to supporting this work. As a local employer and housing provider, we're keen to support this type of opportunity for young people to learn and develop in a safe and inspirational environment.

Our chief executive, Selina White, said: "We know how important the health benefits for children are of spending time outdoors in woodland areas, and especially so with the restrictions on social interaction we've experienced in the last 15 months or so. This is why we're excited to be supporting the work of the National Trust to help children in our communities enjoy new experiences and adventures.

"For us, this isn't just about donating items to get the school up and running. We want to

get more involved and see this as an opportunity to really make a difference and be part of something which will have a positive impact on many local children. This fits so well with our ambitions around the environment, wellbeing, and community development and we're really proud to play a part in this wonderful initiative as it opens up."

Clive Whitbourn, North Dorset Area Ranger for the National Trust, added: "The generous donations from Magna for combination locks, tarps and cooking kit have been essential for getting the Forest School up and running this year and will really help to make a positive difference to local children both now and in the future, which is just brilliant and so needed. Thank you".

Want to read the latest news from Magna?
Visit: magna.org.uk/news

Find out more about Forest Schools here:
forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/

Get in touch

General enquiries

contactus@magna.org.uk

Postal address

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



Online

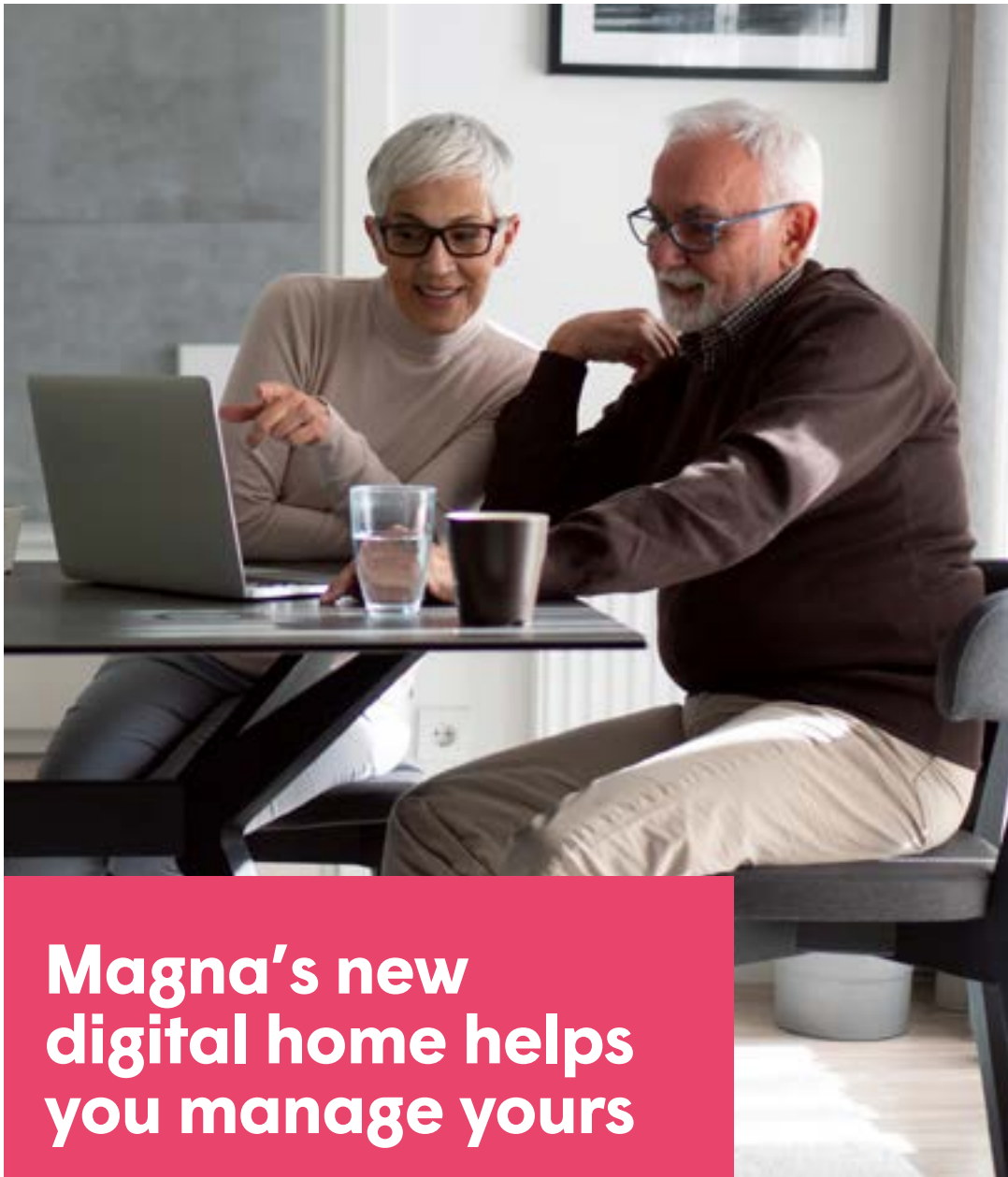
magna.org.uk

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





Magna's new digital home helps you manage yours

At Magna, we know how precious your time is. So, we've been busy developing our website so you can access Magna customer services from anywhere at any time, making your life a little simpler.



Visit our website to find out more
magna.org.uk/digital-doorway



Working differently

We've all had to do things a bit differently over the past 18 months, and here at Magna we're also changing the way we work.

We've spent some time over the past month updating our website. There's more information to help answer lots of your queries, so take a look at our FAQ section:

magna.org.uk/faqs.

We've also put together some short videos to show you how to do some simple tasks around your home and we'll be adding to these over the coming months.

It's much easier to contact us now too, so for anything non-urgent you can email us at contactus@magna.org.uk and we'll get back to you within two working days. Our contact centre team are also on hand to take your urgent call whenever you need us.

Our offices remain closed to customers, but our teams are still out and about in the community, so if you have

any specific needs, you can talk to your housing officer.

We are currently working through the repairs we didn't get to because of COVID. However, if you have already been in touch with us, don't worry, we haven't forgotten you and we will be in touch when we are ready to book you in.

You can also take a look on our website to see what services are back up and running:

magna.org.uk/coronavirus-covid-19.

Finally, if you have any feedback or suggestions about how we can continue to improve our website, we've got a comments, compliments and suggestions form online that you can use to submit your ideas:

magna.org.uk/contact-us/comments-compliments-and-suggestions



Tony Murray says farewell

At the end of August we wished Tony a fond farewell as he began his well-deserved retirement. As he's known by so many, Tony wanted to share a few words:

I have decided it's time for me to retire after 39 years of working in housing in London, the Thames Valley and, for the last 19 years, with Magna Housing in Somerset and Dorset.

It's been a difficult decision because I have really enjoyed my time at Magna, and in particular, working with colleagues and customers to both improve and develop the services we provide for you as customers.

I am very proud of the positive changes we have made both to homes and services and the difference we make to the communities we work with throughout Somerset and Dorset. I'm leaving Magna at a very exciting time where we have clear plans in place to further develop our services to improve the customer experience for all of our customers.

I am going to enjoy my retirement by pursuing my other interests which include walking and nature conservation. I will still be living in Somerset and I will follow Magna's future progress with interest. I may even bump into you in Exmoor or the Dorset coast!

Best Wishes, Tony
Housing Director



Selina White
Chief Executive

I know that many of you have known Tony for a long time and will be, like us, sad to see him go. I am sure that you will join me in wishing him well for the future, and we all hope he has a long and happy retirement.

We will all miss Tony and we'd also like to thank him for his years of service to Magna and our customers, as well as his ongoing commitment to the wider housing issues in the local area.





Universal Credit

What it is and what you need to know about the £20 weekly increase ending on 1st October 2021

What is it?

Universal Credit is replacing legacy benefits, which are housing benefit, income-related employment and support allowance (ESA), income-related jobseeker's allowance (JSA), child tax credit, working tax credit and income support. If you've claimed legacy benefits before, you may stay on them depending on the award and your circumstances.

Universal Credit works differently from these older benefits in that it's combined to make one single payment every month to those who claim it. You can claim as a single person or as a couple, where one payment will be paid between the two of you.

If you're eligible, it can also include elements for your housing costs, children, childcare costs, if you're disabled or have a health condition or care for a disabled person or child.

In most cases, the whole payment will be made directly to you but in some circumstances, your housing costs can be paid directly to your landlord through what's called an alternative payment arrangement (APA).

You can normally get Universal Credit if you're unemployed, or if you're working or self-employed on a low income. How much you get will depend on what you earn and your payments will reduce as you earn more.

New claims can take around five weeks to process but you can apply for an advance if you need help to pay your bills and cover living costs while you wait for your first payment. The advance is then normally paid back by small deductions from future payments spread over 12 or 24 months.

What you need to know

If you're currently claiming or have made a new claim since last year you'll probably be receiving the £20 a week increase that the government introduced in April 2020 to help deal with the effects of Covid-19. This increase will be phased out from 1st October 2021. You may receive information about this reduction before October to advise you of a change in your payments.

What does this mean?

This means that a standard allowance for a single person under 25 will see their monthly payments go down from the current rate of £344.00 to £257.33.

Over 25's will go from £411.51 to £324.84.

Couples under 25 will go from £490.60 to £403.93.

Couples over 25 will go from £596.58 to £509.91.

The increase was only added to standard allowances - other elements of your Universal Credit will not be affected.

We know this may be a worry if you're currently claiming Universal Credit. Our money matters team can help you with any queries you might have, whether you're worried about the changes to your income in the future, or struggling with your money now.

Visit our website for more information about our money matters service:

magna.org.uk/money-matters/money-benefits/money-matters-service

Want to get involved with us?

Our online customers and mystery shoppers recently helped us to review our electric, gas and oil safety standards.

Following their feedback, we will:

- review the wording of the letters to make sure the aspects about Magna taking legal action are clear
- make various wording and grammar amendments as per customer suggestions
- include offering support to those experiencing fuel poverty.

Involving our customers in what we do is really important to us - we want to work with you to create great homes together.

If you'd like to get involved with us, there's lots of ways you can do this. Check out our website for more information:

magna.org.uk/community/get-involved-at-magna



Do you have a community project that needs funding?

We want to work with people in our communities to create great places where people choose to live. And we know that sometimes local groups or communities need a little extra support to help really make a difference.

We recently launched a new community development fund that people in our communities can bid for. This fund is designed to help communities develop and to help projects and programmes that align with what we stand for.

Specifically, we're able to support local not-for-profit organisations, charities, groups, or communities with activities and programmes that have the potential to benefit our customers and/or the communities in areas where we have homes.

We've put together some guidance on our website, with an application form, so why not take a look and see if we can make a difference to your community, together.

magna.org.uk/community/community-services/community-development-fund



Our new three-year strategy puts customers at the heart of what we do.

We want to make sure that everyone who lives in our homes has a great experience; this means feeling safe, comfortable and satisfied with our services.

So we'll be looking at creative and engaging ways to do this. One key area we are developing is around how we listen to and act on the suggestions from you, our customers.

There are lots of ways you can get involved and help us shape our services – from answering a simple survey to being part of our more involved customer groups who look at specific projects. We know we don't have all the answers, and that people who experience our services have much more of an idea about what it feels like, what is working and what we should do more of.

We're starting to build on the great work we have already done to involve people and we'll be asking you more about what works for you, how you want to be involved and how we

can make it inclusive and work for anyone who wants to take part.

Through effective involvement we'll make sure that you feel listened to and we'll make service and investment decisions based on your feedback. As well as supporting our colleagues to make sure they have the right skills and attitude to effectively involve people in our work, we'll also offer you training and development opportunities. This could be digital support, confidence building, coaching, buddying up or whatever is needed to enable you to provide feedback.

So look out for ways to be involved with our work over the coming months and keep checking our website for more information:

magna.org.uk/community/get-involved-at-magna

If you want to find out more about our strategic approach to customer experience, then take a look at our three year strategy:

strategy.magna.org.uk/our-strategic-priorities/customer-experience



Our journey to becoming more sustainable

With the UK hosting the Global Climate Summit in a few months, it seems the right time for us to share our environmental ambitions.

In the last few months, we have appointed Paul Read as Director of Sustainability and Jason Hawkes as Energy Officer. They are starting the process of writing our long-term sustainability strategy and looking at future investment levels to enable us to get all of our homes to net zero carbon levels by 2050. This means that, although our homes will still be using energy, we will aim to minimise the energy required to such an extent that the grid can meet the demand with minimal emissions that can be offset by schemes such as tree planting.

This is not going to be an overnight job. In the south west alone, there are over 150,000 housing association homes and the supply chain for contractors and materials to carry out these works are simply not in place. We're working across the sector to rectify this; working with partners in industry, education and other housing associations to make sure we are able to achieve our aspirations.

But the environment goes beyond carbon emissions from our homes, offices and vehicles. We want to look at issues like communal food-growing spaces, rewilding and biodiversity, community energy clubs and all manner of other things.

During July, we marked #NetZeroWeek by beginning to engage with our colleagues, asking their opinions on

environmental matters, what extra training and resources they need to be able to help customers live more sustainably and affordably and whether they thought their own job roles could be 'greened'. The response was really positive and encouraging and has given us a great launch platform.

It's now time to start having that conversation with you, our customers, to find out what you think and what you need. We'll be asking for feedback and ideas over the coming months and will be putting sustainability articles in Opendoor on a regular basis.

As we said, we can't solve this alone or overnight, and we'll only get one shot to get it right - so it's really important that we take everyone with us on the zero carbon and sustainability journey.

You can find out more about our strategies here: strategy.magna.org.uk/

Residents' Design Conference

Are you interested in shaping our future homes? Or making our current ones more green?

Our annual design conference on 21 October will be focusing on biodiversity, climate change and wider environmental issues both for our new and current homes.

If you're interested in joining up with other housing association customers from around the south west to help consider these important issues, please email Neil Bliss, Customer and Community Involvement Officer, for more information: engage@magna.org.uk



Attracting bees and butterflies

This lovely garden belongs to Bee and Edward Everson. They have planted it to attract bees and butterflies, which is a great idea for the environment.

Bee said: "We thought that having two lovely green lawns was quite a treat, but then we heard that the bees needed some help, along with all the other lovely insects, so we thought we'd add some wild flower areas.

"We are grateful that Magna gave us permission to do this. We get so much pleasure watching these wild flowers grow, along with 21 sun flowers!

"If anyone else has a small plot they could dedicate to wildlife I promise you won't be disappointed."

We're delighted to see Bee and Edward encouraging wildlife and helping the environment where they live. If you're doing something similar, why not share it with us too?

To apply for permission to make an improvement or alteration to your home or garden, visit:

magna.org.uk/your-home/maintenance-and-modifications/getting-permission-to-make-an-improvement-or-alteration-1

Flooding

Top tips to help prevent your home from flooding

High rainfall, especially over a short period of time, can cause flooding. We can never predict what weather we are going to have, however, you can help reduce the impact the weather has on your home.

Here are a few simple checks which you can do to prevent flooding in your home, especially if you live in an area that is susceptible to flooding:

Check your gutters.

If you have a blocked gutter or down-pipe please go to our contact us page on the website and we can arrange for an operative to come out and clear the issue:

magna.org.uk/contact-us

Check your drains and gullies.

Check if they are blocked or covered with leaves or dirt. If you live near trees or have lots of vegetation in your garden, please keep on checking your drain covers and clear leaves and dirt that may get there.

Check the road drains or gullies.

If you notice that the road drain is blocked or starting to get blocked, please report this to the local council. This is their responsibility to clear and the earlier this is picked up the less likely it is that flooding will happen.

Dorset:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/roads-highways-maintenance/maintenance/drainage-and-manhole-covers

Somerset:

www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-blocked-drain-on-the-road/

Devon:

www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/maintaining-roads/managing-the-network/flooding-and-drainage/

If you have been hit with a severe flood, please call us on 0800 358 6025 straight away.

Winning gardens

Our customers love their gardens and were keen to show them off in our annual garden competition!

Following a successful virtual garden competition last year, we decided to run it virtually again this year and we were delighted with the fantastic standard of entries we received.

We asked entrants to show us around their gardens using whatever video calling platforms they were comfortable with. With over 30 entries across six categories, our judges were virtually walked around our customers' gardens in Somerset and Dorset.

Amanda Taylor, complaints officer at Magna, helped to organise the competition and was one of the judges. She said: "It was great to see our customers' ideas and designs and particularly lovely to see how many gardens had a 'cottage garden' feel to them. I've even taken some ideas away to do in my own garden!"

Our other two judges were Henry Powell and Nick Brown from our grounds maintenance team. Henry said "It was a pleasure to take part in the gardening competition. I found it very interesting to see the different ideas people had with their gardens, I was most impressed with the smaller gardens and how the space they had was so well used".

Nick added: "As a member of grounds maintenance I normally just see the open communal areas, but it was a privilege to be asked to help judge the garden competition. The standard and variety was

amazing, and it was lovely to see the pride customers take in their gardens."

After much deliberation, our judges came to their decisions and winners were agreed:

Patios and containers:

1st place: Fred Dale, Alcombe
 Joint 2nd place: Ron Edwards, Alcombe & Inez Wood, Porlock
 3rd place: Paul Pearson, Minehead

Wildlife:

1st place: Helen Chant, Beaminster
 2nd place: Terri Payne, Brushford

Small garden:

1st place: Gillian Hurley, Minehead
 2nd place: Debbie McCarthy, Lyme Regis
 3rd place: Dutch de Vries, Stogursey

Large garden:

1st place: James & Natasha McDonald, Dorchester
 2nd place: Linda Sharpe, Clatworthy
 3rd place: Amanda Seacombe, Alcombe

Childrens':

1st place: Sophie Newton, Bridport
 2nd place: Aurelia Pettegree, Shaftesbury
 Joint 3rd place: Alba & Lincoln McDonald, Dorchester & Jake Hawker, Sherborne

Fruit & Veg:

1st place: Cathleen Dyer, Sherborne
 2nd place: Katie Hawker, Sherborne

Special Prize:

Small garden - Mr Duck, Washford

Well done to the lucky winners and thanks to all our entrants for their hard work.



Large garden winner: James & Natasha McDonald



Patios and containers winner: Fred Dale, Alcombe



Wildlife winner: Helen Chant, Beaminster



Childrens' garden winner: Sophie Newton, Bridport



Small garden winner: Gillian Hurley, Minehead



Fruit & Veg winner: Cathleen Dyer, Sherborne



Special prize went to Mr Duck, Washford



Domestic abuse

In 2020, there was a shocking increase in cases of domestic abuse across the country due to the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, subsequent lock downs and social distancing requirements.

Victims of domestic abuse were suddenly trapped 24/7 with their abusers and the added pressures of the pandemic also saw instances happen where no known abuse had occurred before.

This year both Houses of Parliament passed the Domestic Abuse Bill, and the new Domestic Abuse Act (DAA 2021) was signed into law. The majority of provisions in the Act apply to England and Wales, or

England only, and will be implemented across criminal justice systems and agencies later this year.

The DAA (2021) creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive, or controlling, and economic abuse. As part of this definition, children will be explicitly recognised as victims if they see, hear, or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.

A Domestic Abuse Commissioner has been established in law and they will stand up for victims and survivors and raise public awareness.

At Magna we are committed to helping victims and survivors of

domestic abuse – this applies to customers and colleagues. We already have a domestic abuse policy in place and it's mandatory for all new colleagues to complete e-learning training on domestic abuse. We also encourage our existing colleagues to take the training to increase their awareness.

However, in light of the DAA 2021, we're currently reviewing our domestic abuse policy again, and with the support and input of involved customers and colleagues, we will ensure we do everything we can to put our customers' and colleagues' safety at the heart of everything we do.

If you or someone you know needs help, please call the Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence helpline on 0808 2000 247.

If you are in immediate danger, please call 999.

The Home Office has a system in place called Silent Solutions, which helps callers, such as domestic abuse victims, who cannot speak to an operator. If you are unable to say that your call is an emergency then you can signal this by coughing after dialling 999. You will be put through to the operator. If you are in danger, you will be asked to dial "55" otherwise the call will be terminated.



Building skills in our local communities

At Magna, our vision is to create great homes together - with our colleagues, our customers, through partnerships and with our local community.

A great home means different things to different people and we're always keen to know what it means to our customers and community. Recently, Stephanie Lloyd-Foxe, Building Safety Manager at Magna, organised a full-day event for 175 students in year 10, at The Woodroffe School in Lyme Regis, to design a home of the future.

Students had to produce an elevation drawing, floor plans and a written summary of key features. They had to think about who the home was for, where it would be - in a town or the countryside, what features it would have, how the people that live there

would get around and what environmental impact there might be.

Stephanie was joined by several colleagues from our development and maintenance teams to manage three topic areas: architecture and design, environment and sustainability, and home functionality. Students gathered information from the area experts to help them create their great homes of the future.

Stephanie said: "We had an amazing day and saw 21 inspiring and enthusiastic presentations. We were very impressed with the standards of work from the students and the wide range of concepts and designs they created. We then agreed on an overall winning team, and a runner up, as well as some individual prizes for fantastic work. We could definitely see some future talent showcased here!"

Students really enjoyed the day, saying:

"It was great fun learning about the building industry and working with people I didn't know. The Magna team were so informative about housing and architecture."

"It was a really interesting day; I didn't realise there were so many bits to consider when building houses!"

"I found out a lot about myself - I was surprised how confident I was when presenting in front of the whole year group."

"Magna made the day fun; I learned a lot about the company, and it has made me think about my future options."

As well as us finding out what a great home of the future meant for these students, the day also offered an insight into the opportunities available for the students when they leave school, and was a great way for us, as an employer, to give back to the communities we have homes in.

Our ambition is to be a great place to work, where talented and ambitious people enjoy rewarding and fulfilling careers in an inspirational environment.

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

Mr Holding, Head of Careers at The Woodroffe School, said: "I am incredibly grateful to all the visitors from Magna Housing for making the day so successful. The students were fortunate to be offered such a range of interesting activities and I hope that they learned a lot about teamwork, motivation, communication and themselves. Magna is partnered with the school and has already supplied countless hours of support. We hope this will be a long-lasting relationship and hope the students appreciate how lucky they are having Magna work with us!"

We regularly have apprenticeship opportunities at Magna. If you'd like to know more about this, visit:

magna.org.uk/about-us/careers/apprenticeships

Or, to see our latest vacancies, visit:

magna.org.uk/about-us/careers

You can also find out more about The Woodroffe School here:

woodroffe.dorset.sch.uk/



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 4:30pm on Friday.

0800 3586025

Get #social!

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

