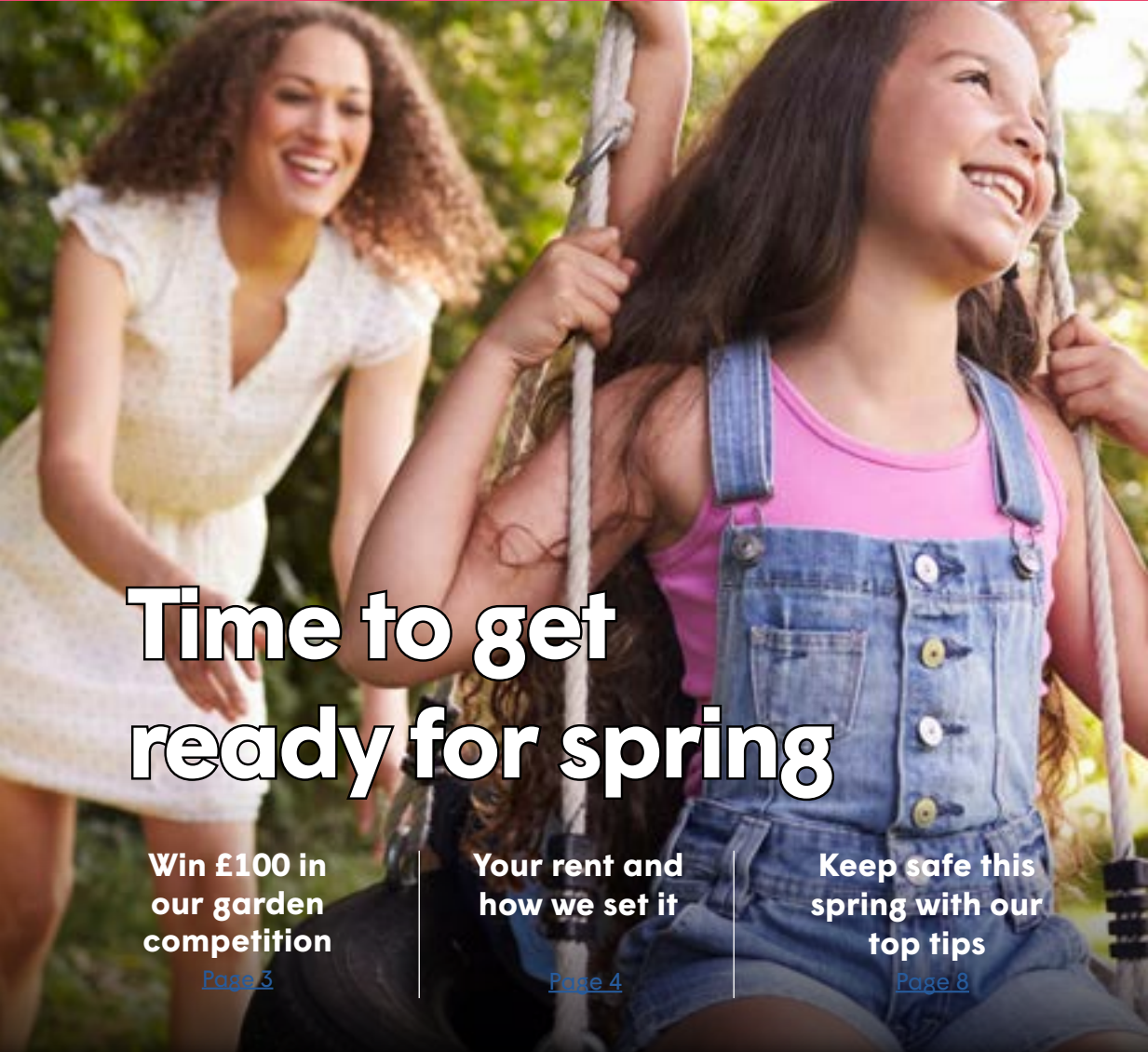




# Opendoor

The magazine for magna housing customers



## Time to get ready for spring

Win £100 in our garden competition

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Your rent and how we set it

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Keep safe this spring with our top tips

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# Welcome

Spring is here and hopefully warmer weather is on its way!

With that in mind, let's start the spring edition by launching our annual garden competition. It's open for all customers to enter, no matter how big or small your garden is - it could even just be a pathway or balcony. Take a look at the next page for entry details.

We know that at the moment many of you are concerned about money and coping with increased prices. On [page 4](#) we explain about the rent we charge and what it covers. On [pages 6 and 7](#) our money matters team have put together some useful information on benefits, and the team are always available to talk to anyone who needs help with their finances.

Energy has been a big topic in recent months, and we've shared some of our energy-saving tips on [page 20 and 21](#).

Your safety continues to be our priority. On [page 10](#) we talk about the pledges we made last year and what we've done so far. We've also got some safety tips for spring on [page 8 and 9](#).

As always, if you need to get in touch with us, our contact details are on the back page and also below.



**Tanya Churchill**

Marketing Manager and Editor of Opendoor



## Green fingers at the ready!

### It's time to enter our annual garden competition.

There are cash prizes up for grabs, so, even if it's not usually your thing, give it a go this summer!

**Categories:**

- Large garden
- Small garden
- Patios/containers/windows/hanging baskets/indoor pots
- Wildlife garden
- Vegetable/and or fruit garden
- Children's creative gardening (this could be fairy gardens, miniature gardens, seed growing—anything at all!)

This year we're also looking for the most ingenious use of objects that are upcycled as planters or for decoration—you could win a special prize!

**How to enter:**

Complete our entry form online - [click here](#). Entries must be received by 17 June 2022.

**Judging:**

The judging will take place week commencing 11 July 2022. We will contact you in advance to arrange a suitable time to visit.

Winners will be announced on our customer Facebook group and our website in August.

**Prizes:**

Everyone who enters will receive a £5 gardening voucher for taking part.

There will be one winner in each category. They will each receive gardening vouchers and a certificate:

- 1st place - £100
- 2nd place - £50
- 3rd place - £25

[Click here for our standard competition terms and conditions.](#)

Good luck!

### Get in touch

**General enquiries**

[contactus@magna.org.uk](mailto:contactus@magna.org.uk)

**Postal address**

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



**Online**

[magna.org.uk](http://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](mailto:contactus@magna.org.uk)





## Your rent and how we set it

Every year we review our rents and our Board decide how much they should be for the coming year. For most customers, there are rules set by the government, which we must follow, about how much we can increase rent by and how much rent we can charge.

This year, most customers will see a rent increase of 4.1%. Put another way, that's just over 4 pence extra for every £1 in rent you pay. Rents for our shared owners will increase in line with the lease depending on when the lease started.

When deciding on this year's rent increase, our Board has carefully considered all the implications and were fully aware that, for many of our customers, other costs will also be rising - higher energy and fuel prices, higher food bills and higher national insurance contributions. This was not an easy decision to make as they had to balance this with the need to invest more in our homes to keep customers safe and warm as well as meet rising costs such as:

- Keeping your homes safe – there are now higher standards to meet changes to regulations and new laws about fire and building safety as well as improving fire safety through more

detailed, thorough, and more frequent fire risk assessments

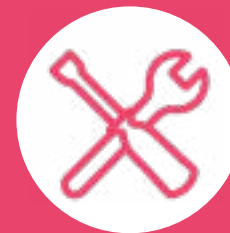
- Changing electrical testing programmes on homes from every eight years to every five years to meet industry best practice
- Increasing costs of repairs and maintenance activity - in particular the rising cost of materials and labour in an increasingly competitive market
- The need for us to reduce our carbon footprint and make sure we are more sustainable for the future
- Our own increasing costs – we are paying more for all of our supplies, workforce, fuel, and equipment to maintain your home and shared spaces, and for the new homes we are building.

In February, you will have received a letter containing details about your specific rent changes, which will come into effect in April.

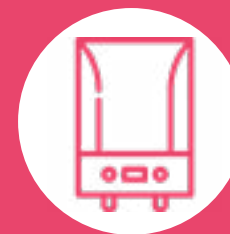
Every year, we also compare Magna's average rents with those of other social landlords who operate in the same areas. Overall, Magna's rents compare very well with those of other housing associations. We have published tables on our website [-click here to view them.](#)

## What your rent covers

Your rent mainly covers the use and occupation of your home, and some of the communal areas around your home. However, there are lots of services we offer which are also funded by your rent which may benefit you directly or indirectly. If you're a shared owner, the services marked \* are not covered by your rent. 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. Here's a bit of a breakdown about some of the services your rent covers:



Delivering repairs\*



Servicing gas, electrical and oil heating systems\*



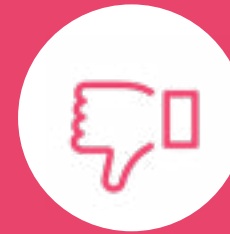
Delivering fire safe homes\*



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\*

[Click here for more information on these services.](#)

# Money matters

Our money matters team have put together some useful information that covers milestone changes in your benefits.

For more info on these topics, contact our money matters team who will gladly chat through the finer details. [Click here to complete the contact form on our website.](#)



## Reaching pension age

### How do I claim my state pension?

Are you reaching pension age this year? Receiving your pension and any other benefits doesn't happen automatically - you have to claim it. This can be done by calling the State Pension claim line on 0800 731 7898 or completing a form online at [www.gov.uk/state-pension/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/state-pension/how-to-claim)

### What happens with my rent?

If you're on Universal Credit, this will stop when you reach pension age. If you were getting housing costs included in your Universal Credit, this will also stop and you'll need to claim Housing Benefit instead. If you have council tax support already in place during the transition, it should keep going but can be dependent on the amount of state pension and any private pensions you might receive, so you'll need

to let your local authority know how much you're getting.

### How much will I get?

The amount of state pension you receive will depend on your national insurance contributions or credits throughout your working life. It's possible for you to check this for any gaps too. You can check what you might get when you reach retirement age online through the GOV.uk website.

### What if my income is low?

If your income is below a certain threshold, you may be able to claim pension credit. You may be entitled if you receive less than £177.10 per week, or £270.30 for a couple. These will be subject to change every April. If you're a carer or have a disability you may also be entitled to extra amounts.

### My health isn't as good as it used to be – can I get extra help?

Yes you can. If you're state pension age or over and need help with your personal care or mobility needs, you may be able to claim attendance allowance. You can find out more about this online at [www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance](http://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance).



## Children leaving school

As your child approaches 18 and either leaves school, goes to university or starts an apprenticeship, the benefits you receive will decrease. It can be a daunting time for parents and carers who have a sudden drop in income and may also be subject to a bedroom shortfall (sometimes known as the bedroom tax) when their child leaves home.

### My child is leaving school – how does this affect me?

It all depends on what your child intends to do when they leave. The difference here is whether they will be in advanced or non advanced education or training. There's a lot of criteria that states what approved education and training is classed as - you can find more details online at [www.gov.uk/child-benefit-16-19](http://www.gov.uk/child-benefit-16-19).

### Child Benefit

Child Benefit will stop if your child leaves education or training. If they stay in approved education or training, it can continue up until your child's 20th birthday. The Child Benefit Office will usually write to you as your child approaches ages 16 and 18 to find out what your child intends to do.

### Tax credits

The same applies if you're claiming child tax credit – you'll need to let the Child

Benefit Office know what your child intends to do when they leave school and if they go in to non-advanced education or training. If you don't let them know your payments could stop or you may be overpaid.

### What if my child has a part-time job too?

If they're in non-advanced education or training and working part-time they are still classed as a dependant so it shouldn't affect your benefits.

### What happens to my housing benefit and council tax support?

These aren't affected if your child is in non-advanced education or approved training and as long as you're still getting Child Benefit for them.

### My child is going to university

This is classed as higher education and they are no longer seen as your dependant so you won't be entitled to Child Benefit, Universal Credit or tax credits for them. You'll need to inform these agencies too. If you don't, you could be overpaid and it will be taken back from future benefits. Working tax credits may also be affected depending on whether you have any other dependant children. You may also be subject to a spare room deduction from your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs. If this is the case, your housing benefit or Universal Credit housing element will usually be reduced by 14% - the current spare room subsidy for one spare room.

### My child is leaving school to do paid work or an apprenticeship

Child Benefit and child tax credit will stop as they are no longer classed as a dependant. If you're on Universal Credit, the child element will stop for your child leaving school to go in to paid work or an apprenticeship.

# Keeping safe this spring

Spring is traditionally the time of year that sees us spring cleaning our homes, but can also cause hazards of their own. Here are some quick and easy things you can do to help keep you and your family safe this spring.



## Check your smoke detectors

Give your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms a clean and ensure they are free of dust or cobwebs. While you're at it, give them a quick test. It's best to test your smoke alarm every week. You are 80% more likely to survive a fire if you have a working smoke alarm. Please report any issues with smoke alarms to us and we will come and replace them.

## Clear the clutter

Recycle old newspapers, magazines and junk mail. These items tend to pile up and can contribute to the severity and spread of a fire if one starts in your home.

And always keep stairs and landings clear for safe evacuation in the event of an emergency.



## Check your windows

Windows should be checked to ensure they open and close properly in case they are needed as an emergency exit.

If you have any issues with your windows, report it to our customer contact centre (details on back page).



## Garden maintenance

If you're getting ready to start cutting your grass or carrying out garden maintenance, be sure to inspect carefully any lawnmowers, hedge trimmers or tools. Check that the power cables or extension leads are intact with no signs of wear and tear.

Ensure that any fuel is stored safely in a suitable container and away from sources of ignition.

## Storing chemicals

Properly store household chemicals and never mix cleaning agents. Make sure they are also kept out of reach of children and pets.



## Don't forget to keep your safety check appointments

It's really important that you let us in to carry out safety checks, such as gas servicing, electrical testing and fire door checks as this helps to keep you safe.

For more info about how we work to keep you safe in your home, [click here](#).

# Our pledges to keep you safe in your home

We're supporting the National Social Housing Safety and Compliance week again this year. This event, which runs from 7 – 11 March 2022, aims to shine a spotlight on safety and compliance at an operational, strategic and cultural level. However, safety isn't a one-week event - keeping you safe is one of our core objectives.

Last year, we made the following pledges, and we will continue to focus on these pledges this year too:

The safety of our customers and colleagues is our top priority at Magna.

"Always safe" is one of our key values. We'll be customer focused in our approach and work together to keep everyone safe.

We all take ownership and responsibility when it comes to safety.

Our information and advice about safety will be easy to understand and accessible for everyone.

Since making these pledges, we have:

- Set up a new building safety team who are focusing on fire safety
- Established a new building safety customer focus group
- Commissioned a survey of all our sheltered homes to upgrade detection and links to our out of hours warden call service
- Started a trial of new remote linked smoke detectors
- Implemented new software to manage our fire risk assessments and actions
- Started to check all of our fire doors
- Delivered additional training to our colleagues on fire safety
- Produced new, easy to understand fire safety guidance which we have published on our website
- Completed the backlog of electrical testing and solid fuel servicing from the pandemic
- Implemented more rigorous reporting on all compliance areas
- Received external assurance from our auditors across a number of compliance areas.

And we are:

- Working on installing sprinkler systems to blocks of flats
- Increasing the frequency of electrical testing.

There will be much more planned for the year ahead to continue to improve your safety. You can help with this by joining our building safety group.

## Our building safety customer group

The second meeting for this new group took place in January.

The new pilot scheme for a smoke detector/environmental system was presented to the group for feedback. This will be trialled in a mixture of houses, bungalows and flats.

The ability to see your block of flat's risk assessment on the new customer portal is in development and the group are being involved in this work.

If you would like to join this virtual group and help us shape building safety, contact Neil on 01984 635134 or email [engage@magna.org.uk](mailto:engage@magna.org.uk)



# Our customer voice

Late in 2021 we asked you to help us understand how we can involve you in our work. Making sure we have a clear and easy way for our customers to shape our work is really important – both for us and our customers.

We had some really helpful feedback to our questions which will all be used to help us develop our approach to involvement.

We heard that the majority of those who responded thought that involving customers in our work was important, with the main areas they wanted to be involved with being:

- improvements to homes
- our spending priorities and rent setting
- providing advice on communication.

When we asked about preferred ways to be involved, digital methods were generally more popular with younger people, whereas older people tended to prefer a mix of digital and non-digital. The range of options included surveys, phone calls, text messaging and face-to-face meetings.

We also know the importance of letting customers know about the outcomes of any involvement. They told us the preferred ways to hear about this was by letter and email, with the website and Opendoor also proving to be popular.

We've already used these comments to help us improve our approach to involvement and you can find out more about this on our website - [click here](#).

# Window cleaning Have your say



This year we'll be reviewing the current arrangements we have for the window cleaning services we provide to our blocks of flats and sheltered schemes.

Currently, there are some inconsistencies between locations, with some of our customers receiving a full service, some receiving a part service with just communal windows being cleaned, and some customers only receiving a responsive ad-hoc service delivery.

It's our intention to provide a more consistent service to all customers, so if you live in a block of flats or a sheltered scheme, we'll be contacting you in the next couple of months to gather your feedback to help shape what the new service should look like.

We're mindful of the costs that we pass on to customers through service charges, so, one option we will be considering is whether we should just provide a service that covers any communal windows, thereby allowing customers to use their personal choice to determine how often their own windows are cleaned, and who by. This would keep any related service charge to a minimum and could offer savings to those currently paying for a full service.

Please keep a look out for the communication and share your views so we can deliver a service that is right for you.



# Customer involvement



We want to give all of our customers the opportunity to influence how our services are delivered, so we offer different ways for you to engage with us, including completing surveys, reviewing documents and attending focus groups.

If this sounds like something you'd like to get involved with, [click here for more info](#).

Recently, we've asked our involved customers to review some of our policies.

## Mobility scooters

15 customers responded and the majority found the policy clear.

Our Building Safety Manager answered the queries received and we'll use the feedback to create our mobility scooter procedure.

## Anti-social behaviour

10 customers replied and most found the policy clear.

Queries were answered by our ASB team and, as a result of customer feedback, we have added a reference to the Equality Act 2010 to ensure customers are treated fairly and equally. We will also be providing customers with additional guidance in 2022.

## Repairs

We consulted with our scrutiny panel on proposed changes and their feedback is built into a new draft of the policy which will be put in place in April.

Responses from panel members were positive. They particularly liked the fact that there was a focus on convenience, that the policy applied equally to homes and common areas and that the application of the policy would be flexible to meet the individual needs of customers, particularly around vulnerabilities.

They welcomed clearer definitions around what constitutes priority repairs and the work that we're responsible for.

## Closed circuit television (CCTV)

23 customers replied and the majority found the policy clear.

Responses to queries were provided by the ASB team.

We have amended our policy, as a result of customer feedback, to make it clearer. We have also used the feedback to inform the review of the supporting CCTV procedure.

## Alterations and improvements

14 customers replied and the majority found the policy clear.

Following feedback, we have added additional information to clarify the scope of the policy. We have amended it to clarify that for larger improvements a surveyor will look at the proposed work in order to make a decision, as a result of customer feedback. We've also added a paragraph to indicate we may charge an application fee for permissions for homeowners.

## Data protection

14 customers replied and the majority found the policy clear.

Minor amendments were made to the policy as a result of customer feedback to clarify some points.

## Domestic abuse

13 customers responded. The majority found the policy clear and agreed with our approach.

The ASB team responded to their feedback and we have made several changes suggested by customers to clarify points within the policy.

Customers also gave their feedback on the supporting domestic abuse guidance for colleagues and we have also made amendments to reflect this.

## Aids and adaptations

14 customers replied and the majority found the policy clear.

Our Head of Asset Management provided answers to specific questions that were raised by customers. As a result of customer feedback, we have amended the policy to make it clearer.

## Legionella safety

13 customers replied and the majority were happy with the policy. Queries regarding responsibilities in this area, conditions for legionella to occur and checking occupied properties, were raised and the Head of Asset Management provided responses. Customers were happy with these answers and no amendments were made.





# Going digital

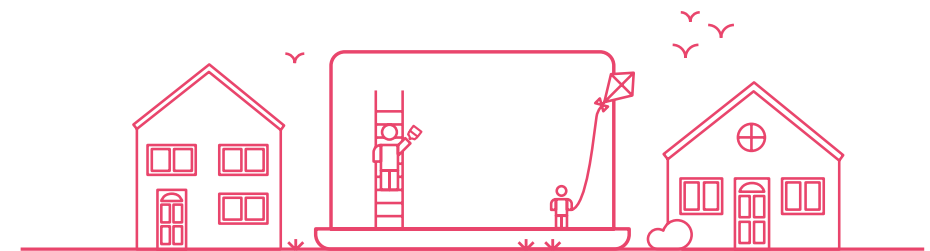
Did you know that our website has lots of useful information and forms for you to use when you want to get in touch with us?

Increasingly, we are moving lots of information and services online as, in many ways, this is easier for people to use and it's more cost effective for us. The more people who use our online services, the more time we have to support those who can't.

But we know that for some people going online is tricky – either because they can't get onto the internet, don't have the confidence or the skills, or quite simply are not interested in being online.

Over the next few weeks we're doing some work to find out exactly what you think about going online and how you use the internet. This will help us to develop relevant online information and services, and provide support to those who need it.

We'll be sending lots of our customers a questionnaire so we can get a better understanding of your skills, ability, preferences and current use of the internet. We'll be sending this by email to those who have an email address and the rest will be sent by post. So look out for this and please take some time to share your information.



Visit our website to find what you can do online:

[magna.org.uk](https://magna.org.uk)



# Our policies on domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour

## Domestic abuse

**At Magna we are committed to helping survivors of domestic abuse – this applies to our customers and colleagues.**

Last 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 it is now being implemented across criminal justice systems and agencies.

The DAA 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 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 survivors and raise public awareness.

Following the DAA 2021, we have reviewed our domestic abuse policy, with the support and input of our involved customers. We have ensured that our policy is in line with the new act and that it puts our customers at the heart of everything that we do.

[You can view the policy on our website.](#)

## Unacceptable customer conduct

We have received reports that some of our colleagues have been experiencing some challenging behaviour from customers, and this is something that we are looking at carefully.

We are working on a policy which clarifies and updates our approach to this to make sure that colleagues can get on with their job safely and without fear of abuse. The new policy will help set out how we will support our colleagues and the actions that will be taken.

The new unacceptable customer conduct policy, at its heart, aligns to our 'always safe' value; this states that 'the safety of our customers and our colleagues is always our main priority'.

The new policy defines unacceptable behaviour and sets out our approach to dealing with unreasonable customer demands.

Ownership is vital to helping ensure we're clear on who takes responsibility for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and the policy will help make this clear.

The policy will be going to our Board for approval at the end of March 2022.

## Anti-social behaviour

We have joined Resolve, an organisation solely focussed on effectively tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and community safety.

We commissioned Resolve to carry out a review of our community safety service to help us improve. The Resolve report recommended a review of our ASB policy and procedures and set out clear criteria to ensure the policy is fit for purpose:

Following these recommendations, we have now reviewed our ASB policy, with the support and input of our involved customers. [You can access the policy on our website.](#)

**The safety of our customers and our colleagues is always our main priority.**



# Tips for getting the most out of your energy

In the face of rising energy prices, using energy more efficiently is a must. We understand that these rising costs can be worrying, so we've put together some tips which can help you stay warmer and save money too.

There are some small things you can do every day to help save on your bills, as well as some things you can invest in which will pay themselves back over time with the savings they provide - we've outlined these below:



## Understand your heating controls

Setting your heating system to only come on when you need it can make a big saving. If you're not sure how to use your heating system, read the manual to see how to set it up correctly – if you can't find your manual, you can usually find them online on the manufacturer's website.

It might seem simple, but just by setting up your heating system correctly, you can make a big saving – if you can turn down your thermostat by 1°C, you could save up to 10% on your bill!

If you have a heat pump, try to keep it at an even temperature so that it remains most efficient.

## Turn off things you aren't using!

It sounds simple, but lots of people often forget to turn off things that they aren't using, and the cost can add up. Even things like your oven are still using electricity to power the clock when you're not using them to cook, so switch it off at the wall to save yourself some pennies.



## Radiator tips

If you have a radiator with a valve, remember to turn off the ones that you're not using. In the rooms where you are using your radiators, try to keep the door shut so that the heat stays in the room for longer.

If you have a radiator under a window with long curtains, don't hang the curtains over the radiator while you're using it as the heat can escape through the window more easily rather than heating the room.

If you've got any furniture in front of your radiators, try to move it somewhere else as furniture can absorb the heat from your radiator which means it isn't being spread around the room. By moving it out of the way, your radiator will be more efficient, and your home will warm up faster.

## Have you switched to LED lightbulbs?

Replacing traditional lightbulbs with LED bulbs will cost you up front, but we estimate that these will pay themselves back within a year as they use around 90% less energy than traditional bulbs.



## Wash your clothes at a lower temperature

By reducing the temperature of your wash, you could be saving lots every year – if you wash your clothes at 60°C, try reducing this to 30°C as it could save you up to 40% on your bill!

# Happy birthday Betty!



Many happy returns to Betty, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday at our sheltered scheme in Puddletown.

Betty has lived in Puddletown for 29 years, having moved from Surrey to be nearer to her children.

Despite having bad eyesight and mobility issues, she organises fish and chips fortnightly, a monthly shopping trip, monthly bingo and coffee mornings for her fellow neighbours and residents in Puddletown.

Her birthday was on 13th February and friends and neighbours organised a tea party in secret, cajoling Betty into coming to the communal hall for what she thought was a late coffee morning,

and surprising her with gifts, cards and a beautifully-made cake.

The weekend before her birthday, Betty celebrated with her family, who took her out for a meal and invited all members of her family - some even travelling over from America for the special occasion.

Carla Bain, sheltered housing advisor for the scheme, said: "Betty is kind, gentle, warm hearted and still has her sense of humour. She is very highly thought of amongst the residents of Beech Road."

We love to hear from our customers. Do you have a story or announcement you'd like to share? [Join our customer Facebook group here.](#)



## Join the conversation!

Our social media channels provide the latest news and updates.



### Facebook

Join our main Facebook page for the latest news, community info, top tips and job vacancies.

[Click here to follow us on Facebook](#)

We also have a separate group for customers only. Join this group for exclusive competitions, opportunities to get involved and customer info.

[Click here to join our customer group](#)



### Twitter

Follow us on Twitter for the latest news, top tips, service updates and job vacancies.

[Click here to follow us on Twitter](#)



### Instagram

For top tips for your home and latest properties available, come on over to Instagram.

[Click here to follow us on Instagram](#)



### LinkedIn

Would you like to join #TeamMagna? Follow us on LinkedIn for the latest vacancies and stories from our colleagues about working at Magna.

[Click here to follow us on LinkedIn](#)

# Contact us

We have lots of useful information on our website:

[magna.org.uk](https://magna.org.uk)

Email:

[contactus@magna.org.uk](mailto:contactus@magna.org.uk)

Our phone line is open Monday to Thursday, 8:30am to 5pm  
and 8:30am to 4:00pm 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!

