



magna



# Opendoor

The magazine for magna housing customers



# Welcome

## Christmas is nearly here!

Yes, I'm a bit of a fan of Christmas and I'm loving the festive cover of this edition as it was created by Jayden Sparks, aged 5. He was the overall winner of our Christmas card competition - you can find out more about this on page 6.

Talking of Christmas competitions - check out the page opposite. This competition is for all ages, so if you're particularly proud of your Christmas tree this year, or think you have the best looking Yule Log, send your pics in for a chance to win!

Onto more serious things, we've shared our latest survey results on page 16, so you can see how we're doing. Thank you to everyone who responded, it helps us understand how we can improve our services and we really appreciate your feedback.

We're also looking for additional customers to join our scrutiny group. If that sounds

interesting to you, read more on page 10 and get in touch with Val, Gary or Neil.

As well as mince pies and reindeer, this season can also bring cold, damp and condensation into our homes as we crank up the heating and turn on the tumble dryer. We've shared some tips on page 18 to help prevent this. We also share top tips and videos on subjects like this on our social media channels, so if you're not yet following us, come and join us and share your top tips too!

Finally, our offices will close on 24 December for Christmas, reopening on 4 January. For contact details during this time, see page 5. We wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.



**Tanya Head**

Marketing Manager

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## Get in touch

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email or on audio CD?

Email us to change your preferences  
communications@magna.org.uk



## How festive are you feeling?

### Enter our Christmas competition for a chance to win £40 in vouchers in time for Christmas!

It's been a challenging year, so we're spreading the festive cheer by asking you to send in a photo of your festive creations for a chance to win vouchers in time for Christmas!

#### Categories:

- Best decorated Christmas tree
- Best homemade Christmas crafts: Anything homemade with a Christmas theme
- Best decorated homemade Christmas yule log

#### Age groups:

Under 5, 6-10, 11-17, 18 & over

Go on - have a go! Send your photo to [engage@magna.org.uk](mailto:engage@magna.org.uk) with your name, age and address. All entries must be received by 13 December.

Judging will take place 15 December.

There's a first prize of £40 in vouchers and a winner's certificate for each category and each age group.



## Seasons greetings from Selina and the board

On behalf of everyone at Magna, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you season's greetings in what has been one of the most challenging years for us all.

I am sure that this Christmas may be very different with restrictions in place, and many of us not able to get together with our friends and loved ones. The news of a vaccine is very welcome, and hopefully will help us get back to some sort of normal – whatever that is now!

I wanted to take this time to thank you all for your support and your patience over the past year. When we started 2020 we had no idea what the year would bring and how it would impact every aspect of our lives. Over the year we have had to follow government guidelines and make sure that our customers and our workforce were safe. I know this has meant disruption for many of you, with improvements and plans for homes being delayed. I am sorry

about this as I know how important your homes are to you, and the impact that this can have on your lives. We have worked very hard to catch up on all the outstanding work and I am now confident that we are getting back on track, so I ask for you to continue to bear with us over the coming months.

So what of 2021? We have ambitious plans for the coming year. We have just implemented a new system to manage our interactions with you, and have introduced our single contact number and email address. You, our customers are our main priority and we recognise that we need to do all we can to make your experience, when dealing with us, as easy and enjoyable as possible. So, we will be investing in this over the next year with more local visibility, more ways to get in touch and more ways for you to manage your interactions with us, when and how you want to.

We're also investing in building more homes, with an ambitious local development plan to increase the number of homes to rent, and buy

through our shared ownership scheme. We are continuing to help people move into safe and modern homes, as well as making sure that our existing homes are up-to-date and well maintained.

We hope that we'll be able to see more of you in 2021, as we are keen to get out and hear what you have to say about our services and how things can improve. We've started a customer scrutiny group to get in-depth look at some of our services to see where things can be changed but we're keen to have an ongoing dialogue to understand what is important to you and how we can work together to improve your home and your community.

I'm hope that you all have a happy and healthy Christmas and that 2021 will be a good year for you. We're certainly looking forward to working with you and I hope you will approve of the plans that we have.

On behalf of myself and the Magna Board, thank you for being a Magna customer, and thank you for your continued support over the past year.

Best wishes,

*Selina White*

Chief Executive



## Contacting us over Christmas & New Year

We will be closing on 24 December and re-opening on 4 January.

If you need to report an emergency repair during that time, please call us on 0800 358 6025.

The careline service will operate as normal throughout the entire Christmas period. If you have an emergency, please contact Medvivo Careline on 0300 777 1053 or press your pendant.

Any emails received during this time will be responded to as soon as we're back.

We wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

# A winning family for our Christmas card competition!

## It's all about the Sparks!

To brighten up what has been a very strange year, we've held some extra competitions to involve our customers and entertain them through lockdown.

At the end of October, we launched a Christmas card competition for children to get involved with.

We had some fantastic entries for each of the categories: 5-7, 8-11, 12-17yrs and it was tough for our colleagues to choose, but a winner from each category was chosen...

5-7yrs winner: Jayden Sparks

8-11yrs winner: Louie Sparks

12-17yrs winner: Kyrun Sparks

We then posted the final three designs on our customer Facebook group for them to choose an overall winner. They chose.... Jayden Sparks!

You may have noticed that the lucky winners were all from one family. All entries were labelled A, B, C etc. for voting so they remained anonymous. It just seems that there's some very talented budding artists in the Sparks family!

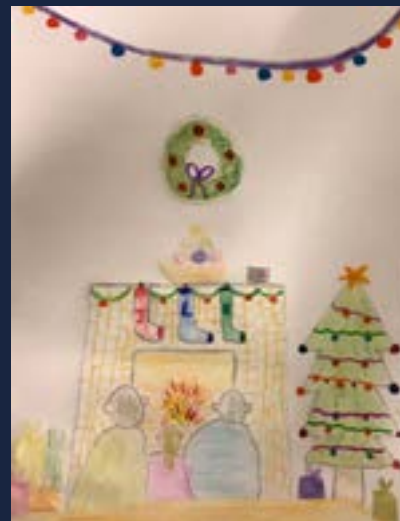
Well done to all our amazing entrants. As it's Christmas, everyone who entered will receive a £5 voucher for entering.

Huge congratulations to the winners, Jayden, Louie and Kyrun, who received £50 Amazon vouchers each.

Jayden, whose design won the coveted spot on the cover of Opendoor, receives an extra £25 voucher for being the overall winner.



Above: Louie's design



Above: Kyrun's design



Pictured: Jayden with his winning design and a lot of toys bought with his vouchers!

# Come and join our customer scrutiny group!

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

We're looking for people to be part of a group to work with us to help check and challenge our work.

## Could this be you?

As part of this voluntary role you'll be:

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

We've already made a start to improve our repairs and maintenance satisfaction, and we're looking to expand this work.

## So what's in it for you?

This is a great opportunity to make our services better for all our customers, using your existing skills and knowledge. You'll learn some new skills and be a key part of helping us to move forward and if you're looking for

employment, a chance to add great experience to your CV.

You'll be working as part of a team made up of customers and people from Magna, to bring your unique perspective to our work.

We'd like a broad range of customers of all ages to make up the group so no matter what type of home you're in, where you live or what your background is; we'd like to hear from you. And you can do all this from your home.

## What skills do I need?

You don't need any previous experience but to begin with the group will be working online so you will need some IT knowledge and your own laptop or tablet.

All we ask is that you commit some of your valuable time to the group and take part in any relevant training to help you help us to be a better housing association.

If this sounds like the role for you and you'd like to know more, two of our group members are keen to speak with you about why they are involved, what the group has done, and what you can expect!

Give Val or Gary a call and have a chat about how you can make a difference!

Or if you prefer, you can contact Neil Bliss, Customer & Community Involvement Officer, on 01984 635134 or [engage@magna.org.uk](mailto:engage@magna.org.uk)



Val: 07807 590742



Gary: 01308 862800  
(this number uses call minder)

# Domestic abuse

At Magna, we are committed to helping and supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

The UK Government says: "Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background."

In 2018, we signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing's Make A Stand campaign. We understand how damaging domestic abuse can be and how it can affect someone's work and home life. We have ensured our colleagues have regular training to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and we can signpost support to our colleagues as well as our customers.

In 2020, the UK has seen an increase in cases of domestic abuse. This is due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in some part, the social restrictions that have been put in place to halt the spread of the virus.

From 25 November to 10 December, we are also taking part in the 16 Days of Action Against Domestic Violence to highlight some of the types of abuse people may experience and the support and advice that is available to them. We've listed some of these opposite, in case you need them.

We have information available on our website too: [www.magna.org.uk/community/community-services/how-were-supporting-survivors-of-domestic-abuse](http://www.magna.org.uk/community/community-services/how-were-supporting-survivors-of-domestic-abuse)

Help is available.



If you have managed to get out of an abusive situation but now feel worried that your abuser is stalking you, contact the police. You have a right to feel safe at home and in your workplace.

**Call the National Stalking Helpline on 0808 802 0300 Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4pm (except Wednesday when the line is open 1pm to 4pm).**



Call the Respect phoneline for support and help to manage your behaviour. This is an anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are harming their partners and families. It also takes calls from partners or ex-partners, friends, and relatives who are concerned about perpetrators.

**Respect helpline: 0808 802 4040**



Between 750,000 and 900,000 children witness domestic violence every year in this country.

It will impact them for life.

**Confidential support for children and young people can be found at [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)**

Domestic abuse isn't always physical. It can be a pattern of behaviour that includes emotional, economic, psychological or sexual abuse and controlling, threatening and coercive behaviour.

**Freephone 24hr National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge: 0808 2000 247.**



If you're concerned for an older relative, friend or neighbour who may be suffering from any of the five forms of abuse: physical, psychological, financial, sexual or neglect then please call 999 in an emergency.

\*statistic taken from the Hourglass website. Correct at time of print.

**Call the Hourglass helpline for advice and support on 0808 808 8141.**



39% of UK adults (nearly 2 out of 5 people) have experienced economic abuse in a current or former relationship\*

\*statistic taken from "Know Economic Abuse" Campaign – The Co-Operative Bank & Refuge (2020)

**If you need help with your financial situation, please call our money matters service on 0800 999 6130 or email [admin-shss@magna.org.uk](mailto:admin-shss@magna.org.uk)**



## Fire safety at Christmas

Christmas is a special time for celebration and should not end in tragedy because of the extra hazards that are present at this time of year. Here are our top tips to stay safe this Christmas.

### Wreaths:

Please don't hang wreaths or any other festive decorations in communal hallways or on your front door in a communal area as these create a fire risk and can affect escape routes.

### Candles:

Don't leave candles unattended, or near anything flammable. With the increased use of candles, make sure you check your smoke alarms are working.

### Decorations:

Decorations made of tissue paper, cardboard or flammable materials burn easily. Don't attach them to lights or heaters or put them immediately above or around the fireplace.

### Fairy lights:

Check the fuses are the right type (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use).

If bulbs blow, replace them and never overload your sockets.

Don't leave fairy lights on when you go out or when you go to sleep.

Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily.

For more information about keeping your home safe from fire, visit the fire safety section on our website: [www.magna.org.uk/your-home/your-safety/fire-safety](http://www.magna.org.uk/your-home/your-safety/fire-safety)

## Customers at the heart of everything we do.

With the variety of services we offer, we have a range of customers - people who rent homes from us, buy homes from us, people who live in our sheltered homes, people who receive additional support and those we work with in our community.

So we decided that just calling everyone tenants or residents no longer reflects the relationship we have and the expectations they have of us. Making sure that we think about everyone as customers means that we're adopting all those great practices that good customer-focused organisations have as standard.

We're a customer-centred business, passionate about creating great homes and about delivering a great customer experience, so for us it was clear how we needed to update our language and our focus. It's now becoming part of how we work and more importantly why we do what we do.



# Creating great homes together



We are delighted to have recently secured planning permission to build on land in Halstock, purchased from Nigel and Audrey Clarke, who live in the village.

Audrey was born in Halstock and grew up in a council house just around the corner from where she and Nigel now live. Audrey said: "I met Nigel in the sixties and after we married we moved into a house in the village together. Our children, Michelle and Marcus, were raised there, attending Halstock School and having the same headmaster as myself!"

New social housing was built in the early nineties at Bullbridge Mead for local people in need of a home of their own. Both of Audrey's children secured a tenancy for their own homes and still remain in the village now.

Audrey continued: "Having been tenants of Magna Housing since the late eighties, we felt that their positive attitude toward their tenants was evident immediately and they still have the same ethic today. With this in mind, when one of our grandchildren said that they would like a house and to remain in the village, we sought to find out what the possibility/probability of them getting a house here was. We found out that there were eleven people on the housing register wanting to live in Halstock.

"Nigel and myself thought it would be great if, like us, other youngsters could get a foot on the property ladder and continue living in this

lovely village. So, we approached Magna, amongst others, to see if they were interested in acquiring a small parcel of land to develop it. Magna's enthusiasm was evident immediately and their attitude toward us and the project clinched the deal."

Planning permission was granted to build eight new homes on the site. Six will be for social rent and two will be shared ownership homes. It's one of seven modular sites that we're building across the county and will be our first 'all electric' modular homes. Modular homes are built off site in a factory-controlled setting, making them more cost-effective to maintain and quicker to construct; the homes also generate less waste and our sustainable design priorities mean they have a lower carbon footprint in use than most traditional brick houses, making them a sustainable housing solution. It's an exciting step forward for the future of housing.

Louise Davidson, Development Manager, said: "We're committed to building new homes where people choose to live, that are affordable and

meet the needs of the community. We're delighted to have secured this land and the planning permissions needed to create these new homes. Being a rural site, the ecology and environment is particularly important to us and the community. We're really excited about the sustainability of these homes and we're putting a lot of work into creating great habitats for wildlife too."

The development will include provisions for bats, birds and bees. Hedgehog holes will be installed in any solid fencing, and a hedge that is home to dormice will be relocated and new nesting boxes provided. In addition, the local environment will benefit from new native hedges, trees and planting from the 'RHS Plants for Pollinators' list.

Louise added: "We want to be able to provide new and affordable homes like this in other local communities. To do this, we need to buy more land. We'd really like the opportunity to talk to anyone who has a parcel of land and are thinking of selling."



# How are we doing?

We involve as many customers as we can to improve our service. One of the ways we do this is by asking for feedback through our Survey of Tenants And Residents (STAR).

STAR is used nationally by housing organisations and coordinated by HouseMark. It is the most important survey we carry out and a crucial way of gathering opinions.

Thank you to the 589 people who replied to our most recent survey, which was sent out to over 2,000 customers across Dorset and Somerset. It will be sent to a further 2,000 customers in the new year.

**80% satisfied that Magna is easy to deal with**



**56% satisfied service charges are value for money**



**79% satisfied overall with Magna**



**78% satisfied rent is value for money**



**81% satisfied home is safe and secure**



**72% satisfied with repairs and maintenance**



**77% satisfied with quality of home**



**68% satisfied with the opportunity to make views known**



## So what's next?

We're working hard to improve the level of customer service we deliver. We've changed the hours our repairs teams work so you can have an appointment at a time that's convenient to you.

We've got a new website, which is much easier to use, so you can find what you're looking for quickly. We're providing our teams with lots of additional training and support to ensure they deliver a great customer experience to all of our customers. But we're not stopping there, we've got so much more planned for 2021 to improve your experience of our services.

# Damp, condensation and mould

## What is condensation?

There's always moisture in the air, even if you can't see it; most moisture in your home is created by daily activities like washing and cooking.

Condensation happens when warm air cools. Droplets of water are released when air comes into contact with cool surfaces, like a window, forming a misty layer. This is why condensation occurs more during the winter months when it's colder outside.

Condensation and mould can appear on or around windows, in corners, behind wardrobes and cupboards, and on any cold surface where there is little or no movement of air. Mould and mildew can also form on furniture, clothes and other fabrics such as curtains.

Condensation can cause damp and mould, and also rot wooden window frames and carpets, so it's best to prevent it forming in your home.

## How to avoid condensation

There are three main areas to look at to avoid condensation in your home.



### 1. Reduce moisture in the air

Some daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly. By following these simple steps you can produce less moisture in your home:

- To reduce steam, keep a lid on saucepans as you cook. Always cook using the smallest pan that will do the job and use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.
- Hang your washing outside to dry. If you can't do this, hang it in the bathroom with the door closed, and a window slightly open, or the extractor fan on. Don't put clothes on a radiator, or in front of a radiant heater or night storage heater.
- Vent any tumble dryer on the outside, unless it is the self-condensing type. DIY kits are available for this.
- When filling the bath, put cold water in first, then add the hot, this will reduce the steam created by up to 90%!



### 2. Ventilate to remove moisture

- Ventilate your bathroom while in use, and for about twenty minutes afterwards by slightly opening a top window or using an extractor fan if there is one - they're not expensive to run, and are very effective.
- Ventilate your kitchen when cooking, washing up, or using your washing machine by slightly opening a window. If your cooker has an extractor hood, make sure you use it.
- Avoid over filling cupboards and wardrobes as this stops air circulation, and leave space between furniture and external walls to allow air to circulate.
- Help reduce overnight condensation by cross-ventilating your home in the morning by slightly opening a small window upstairs, and a diagonally opposite one downstairs for half an hour.

### 3. Reduce 'cold spots'

In cold weather it's better to have a low level of background heating on all the time, even when there is no one at home. Avoid warming unheated rooms by leaving the door open to heated rooms, as this will cause warm air to enter the cold room and condense on cold surfaces.

## Damp

Tackling condensation can drastically reduce damp becoming a problem in your home, but

damp can be caused by other things, such as leaking pipes or overflows, roof leaks, blocked and overflowing gutters, water ingress around window frames and rising damp caused by a defective damp-course. These causes of damp usually leave a 'tidemark' and if you notice any of these problems affecting your home please contact us.

Damp can cause mould to appear on your decorations and furniture. If your home is damp, you're more likely to see the growth of mould.

## Mould

To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive approval number and follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely.

Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of breathing problems.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould reappearing. These are available from most DIY stores. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

If you have tried everything listed above to reduce condensation but are still struggling to keep your home free from damp and mould growth please contact us to see if we can help.

# Contact us

We've listened to your feedback and made it easier to contact us. So there's now just one phone number and email address for your customer queries:

**0800 3586025**

**contactus@magna.org.uk**

Our phone line is open Monday to Thursday,  
8:30am to 5pm and 8:30am to 4:30pm on Friday.

We also have lots of useful information on our  
website:

**www.magna.org.uk**

## Get #social!

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

