



Step into summer

**Tackling the rising
cost of living**

Find out how we can
support you on page 4

**Join our Customer
Scrutiny Panel**

Find out how to join
on page 8

Meet the team

Find out more about our
Service Quality Managers
on page 11

Hello and welcome to your new-look newsletter from Sage Homes!

It's been a busy few months at Sage, continuing to find new ways of working post-pandemic and rolling out our new name – Sage Homes – and new brand. This includes our new tone of voice which has been developed to help us communicate better with you – our customer. We've also launched our new website with vastly improved accessibility features and key customer information.

As part of this, we've relaunched this newsletter and this month you'll find information-packed articles on how to deal with increased costs and ways to save energy and money. You'll also be able to read about our Customer Scrutiny Panel, and how we've taken your feedback that we need to be more customer-centric to heart.

I hope you enjoy reading this and see that Sage Homes is putting in the work to understand your needs, frustrations and concerns. I wish you all a very happy summer.

Lucian Smithers
Chief Customer Officer



COMPETITION

Choose our newsletter's new name

We've updated this newsletter along with Sage Home's new brand, but it still needs a new name. Help us choose a new name for our future magazines, that reflects our purpose of providing homes, inspiring change and improving lives.

Email us your idea for our new magazine name by 1 September 2022.
CustomerComms@sagehomes.co.uk

Addressing the cost of the living crisis

Take a look at how we've helped two customers with financial guidance and advice.



How we helped Amy

Amy was struggling with paying her rent each month and had fallen into arrears while struggling with a long term health condition. Our Financial Wellbeing Team got in touch with her and offered support in looking at getting a council grant. With our help, Amy applied for a discretionary housing payment.

Amy was successful and the council awarded £2,500 directly to her rent account, clearing her arrears. The Financial Wellbeing Team then helped her apply for more welfare benefits including Personal Independence Payment, making the most of her income and helping her deal with her health concerns.

How we helped Jamie and Laura

Jamie and Laura have two young children and were unable to move into their new Sage home because they couldn't afford to buy essential white goods. They were having to live with extended family in an uncomfortable and overcrowded house, causing them a lot of stress.

Our Financial Wellbeing Team got in touch and helped them apply to East Riding of Yorkshire Council's emergency assistance scheme. They were then given an oven, fridge and washing machine and were able to move into their new home and start a happier life.



Need some support?

If you need some support or advice around finance, get in touch.

Rental customers:
IRCenquiries@
placesforpeople.co.uk

Shared ownership
customers: SORents@
sagehomes.co.uk



MONEY MATTERS

Tackling the rising cost of living

It's a challenging time for many as the cost of food, energy and fuel continues to rise. We've recently sent you a letter about support the government is providing to help you manage these costs and you can read about this on the next page.

If you're struggling, take a look at our customer page on the [sagehomes.co.uk](https://www.sagehomes.co.uk) website. It offers you two useful tools to help you manage your money:

Benefits calculator

You may be entitled to more support than you realise. An estimated £20 billion of welfare benefits aren't claimed each year in the UK, so it's worth checking to see if you can get any extra help. Our benefits calculator takes about 10 minutes to complete and will point out benefits and other sources of financial help you may be eligible for.

Budgeting tool

Budgeting doesn't have to be mind-bogglingly difficult. By understanding your income and how much you spend each month, you can start to effectively manage your finances. Our budgeting tool helps you understand what you're currently spending – and how to make changes that see you feeling less stretched before each payday.

Government support coming soon

There's help coming your way on energy bills – and here's how to manage it. The government is giving every household a £400 discount on energy bills this year (look on your energy bill to find out more).

If you've claimed any of these by 25 May 2022, you'll also receive a tax-free grant of £650:

- Universal Credit
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Pension Credit.

This will be paid into your bank account in two instalments – one of £326 from 14 July 2022 and another of £324 in the autumn. This payment doesn't count towards the benefit cap and won't affect your existing benefits. If you claim tax credit, this'll be paid slightly later so the DWP doesn't duplicate payments.

Struggling to cover your energy bills?

Visit agilityeco.co.uk or find useful hints and tips at sage.co.uk/moneysupport.

You don't need to do anything – you'll automatically receive the discount on your energy bill and if you're eligible for the tax-free grant, you'll get this automatically in your bank account. Energy bills are set to rise again later this year. This money is to help you with these increased costs so do try to save this money or speak to your energy supplier to pay more ahead of the increase.





Save energy this summer

Summer is a great time to make some money-saving changes. Here's some ideas for what you could do:

Avoid the oven

- Lower your gas use by turning off the oven and making easy, light meals like sandwiches and salads
- Keep your kitchen cool by just using the hob to make summery dishes
- Invite friends over and fire up the BBQ – it's a great way to embrace the sunshine and socialise.

Go outside

- Save electricity by switching the TV off and going for a walk or playing games in the warm weather
- Hang your clothes up in the sunshine to dry and save yourself the cost of tumble drying them.

Be smart

- Turn off your lights if it's already sunny, and unplug any devices, saving you energy
- Keep curtains closed to keep your home cool in a heatwave
- Save energy by pre-treating stains on your washing and using a lower temperature.

And remember

The summer is the perfect time to service your boiler, making sure it's in tip-top condition and ready for the colder winter months ahead.

Our Jubilee competition

Thank you to everyone who entered our Jubilee photo competition. The competition was hotly debated but the judges eventually awarded the win to Faryal and Rohail with their amazing photo of their celebrations at home with a magnificent cake!



Our runner up was Ethan and his family with a great photo of them enjoying their Sage Homes garden on the Jubilee weekend.



Help your community

Communal areas are great for playing in during the summer months and we encourage kids to get out in the sunshine! Please make sure you tidy up after playing so that everyone can continue using the areas together.



Win a
£25
voucher!

Enter our art competition

Are your kids budding artists? Send us a photo of their wildlife or animal drawings and you could win a £25 voucher! Email entries CustomerComms@sagehomes.co.uk

Member spotlight

Our Customer Scrutiny Panel is a specialist panel made up exclusively of our customers. They meet regularly to make sure that customer views and priorities are at the heart of everything we do and holding our Leadership Team and Board to account.

Alice

“As a small panel, we knew our voice wouldn’t necessarily be reflective of all Sage Homes customers, but as we brought our ideas to the table (though you could just as accurately say complaints), we realised some common themes and knew we weren’t alone in some of our experiences – the good and the less good. It’s refreshing that Sage Homes are so open to criticism. In recognising that their customers are the heart of their business, Sage Homes are keen to listen, learn and improve. I am grateful to be a part of the Scrutiny Panel as it provides a behind the scenes view at Sage Homes’ commitment and progress.”



“...a fantastic opportunity to provide a customer’s voice as a means of advocacy for those that may be experiencing difficulties.”

Becca

“Being a panel member is a rewarding opportunity and really helps in providing insight into social housing from a customer’s perspective. It’s also a fantastic opportunity to provide a customer’s voice as a means of advocacy for those that may be experiencing difficulties. There are some really exciting things going on at Sage Homes at the moment, including the newly developed area of financial wellbeing support which has a direct impact on overall wellbeing – something that I am passionate about.”



Helping us offer financial wellbeing services

The feedback from the Customer Scrutiny Panel has been integral to the design of our Financial Wellbeing Team. You can read more about this team and the work they’ve already done on page 3.



Join our Customer Scrutiny Panel!

Our Customer Scrutiny Panel is currently well represented by shared ownership customers - now we're looking for more customers who rent to join us. You'll meet four times a year (online) and give your thoughts, feedback and ideas on living in a Sage Homes property. Your contribution will help us shape the services we offer. This is a paid opportunity. Please email customerpanel@sagehomes.co.uk for more information.



HAVE YOUR SAY

You said, we did

Take a look at some of the work we've done to make sure we're always offering you the best service.

You said:

there were issues around the handling and tracking of defects

We did:

We introduced Clixifix, letting you raise defects and track them to resolution in real-time.

You said:

you were finding our website inaccessible

We did:

built a new website with improved accessibility features including ReciteMe, allowing you to change font, text size and colour as well as accessing speech and translation functions.

You said:

there were issues around bin stores being full

We did:

put in extra bin store clearance and checked with managers that estate management services are running properly.

SUMMER TIPS

Stay safe this summer

Several of our customers have recently had safety incidents happen in their homes. Stay safe this summer with these helpful reminders.



Stay safe in the sun

- Wear a sunhat to protect your ears and neck
- Always wear sunscreen (at least SPF 15) and drink plenty of water
- Take regular breaks in the shade to cool down.

Putting up outside lights

- Check the socket and wiring look okay
- Make sure the instructions say they're safe for using outside
- Plug them in safely (don't overload extension leads).



Enjoy incident-free BBQs

- Stay with your BBQ – don't leave it unattended
- Keep it level on a flat, open surface (and never on a balcony)
- Only move it after it's cooled down again
- Don't use petrol: use approved firelighters, wood and coal.



Fire safety: be careful with candles

We've had some recent incidents where candles have damaged our customer's homes. Stay safe by:

- Keeping candles away from flammable materials (including shelves)
- Blowing them out when you leave the room (and checking they're actually out)
- Making sure they're level by using proper candle holders.

And just a general reminder to test your smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries regularly!

Meet Peter Service Quality Manager

Peter is one of our Service Quality Managers (SQM) who work across the country checking our homes are up to scratch and being a familiar face to many of our customers. We caught up with him to ask him about his role at Sage Homes.

“We’re the eyes and ears of the organisation – we know the type of homes we have and how we manage them. We have most of the on-the-ground information about our properties and how they work.

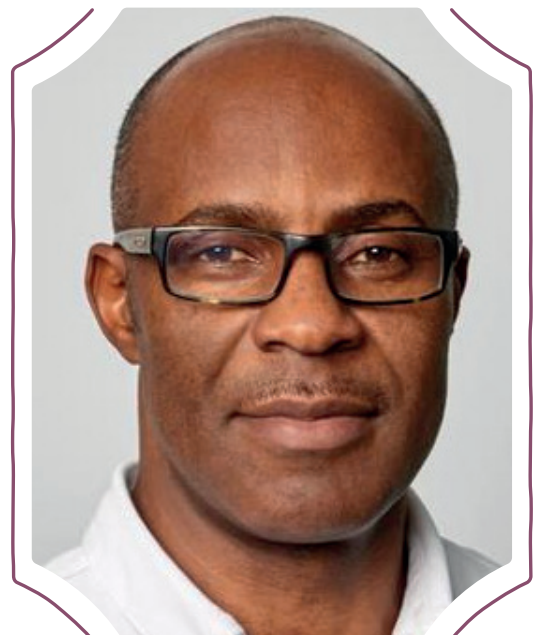
Day-to-day, we’re carrying out inspections, looking at new sites and working with Places for People’s place managers to make sure our customers’ communal spaces and grounds are in good condition. We also communicate with other teams about repairs and any issues.

When I started it was myself and one other SQM covering the country. Now there’s six of us! I cover Greater London, Hertfordshire, Reading and other small areas. Customers will come up to us when we’re onsite and we can help them with details like where their carparking spaces are or where they can find their gas meter.

“Sage Homes is always learning about how to improve and understand our customers. We’re taking the time to understand what our customers need – making sure they enjoy their homes.”

Sage Homes is always learning about how to improve and understand our customers. We’re taking the time to understand what our customers need – making sure they enjoy their homes.

If I had one piece of advice for our customers is – be mindful of your neighbours. You’re in a lovely home and you’re living around other people. People sometimes don’t understand how certain behaviour can affect others (like practicing musical instruments at anti-social hours). If each resident is mindful of this, you’ll find everyone is happier. We want you to enjoy where you live!”



Do you have any feedback for us?

Thank you to all the customers who've given us feedback this year. We've had feedback from over 1,000 customers already this year, helping us understand how we can improve.

We gather feedback through online surveys, phone interviews and customer research groups, to really understand what Sage Homes needs to do better.

Please let us know your thoughts about this newsletter and what you want to know more about from Sage Homes at CustomerComms@sagehomes.co.uk.



Need this in a different language?

Potrzebujesz tego w innym języku?

इसे एक अलग भाषा में चाहिए?

ਇੱਕ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ?

Braille and audio versions also available.

Please email CustomerComms@sagehomes.co.uk

Prefer a digital newsletter?

Drop us an email and we'll sort it.

You can now access our website in 104 languages by clicking the 'hello' icon on the bottom right.



How can we help you?
Click here to ask a question

hello