

Summer 2017

my great place



THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT!

How an award winning project in Morecambe eradicated cases of antisocial behaviour

great
places
HOUSING GROUP

Get in touch

Email us:
@ cat@greatplaces.org.uk
 Or email us about a repair at:
repairs@greatplaces.org.uk

Phone us between 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday:
0300 123 1966 (local rate)
Select option 1 for repairs
 Text us on:
07797 870 734

Office addresses

Blackburn office

Barnfield House (Suite 4 and 5)
 Groundfloor, Accrington Road
 Blackburn BB1 3NY
Office opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Cheshire office

106 Longridge, Knutsford, WA16 8PD
Office opening hours:
 By appointment only

Fylde office

336 Talbot Road, Blackpool,
 FY1 3QU
Office opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Great Places head office

Southern Gate, 729 Princess Road,
 Manchester M20 2LT
Office opening hours: Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm

Oldham office

119 Union Street, Oldham OL1 1TE
Office opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Salford office

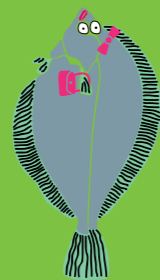
4th Floor, St James's House,
 Pendleton Way, Salford M6 5FW
Office opening hours: By appointment only

Sheffield office

The Quadrant, 99 Parkway Avenue,
 Sheffield S5 9WG
Office opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Struggling to read My Great Place? Let us know and we'll send you a magnifying sheet! An audio version of My Great Place is also available. Contact us using the details below.

Kids' Competition



Margaret Plaiice is our little fishy friend – and she's hiding somewhere in this magazine. Can you find her? If you can, just email or write and let us know exactly where she is (make sure you put the page number) at the address on the left, making sure you put your address and phone number on the entry. The winning entry will get their hands on a cute little iPod, so get searching!

Entrants must be 16 or under and Great Places residents.
Entries must be received by 6 October 2017.
Summer 2017 winner: Kaif Rehman (aged 11), Oldham

If you have any questions or comments specifically about My Great Place, contact:

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 facebook.com/GreatPlacesHousing

Tweet us @MyGreatPlace

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 Daighton-Lee
 Helme and PSCO
 Heather Joslin



Welcome to
my great place



Welcome to the summer issue of My Great Place! This edition is packed full of neighbourhood events, with communities across all our regions making the most of the good weather. Summer also celebrates LGBT pride month, and it's been wonderful to see so many customers and colleagues at the number of events we've taken part in – check out some of the pictures on page 4.

This issue also marks the start of a number of new projects! Nominations are now open for the next Community Stars Awards (page 12), our new branding has been rolled out (page 8), and our fresh new website is almost ready to launch (page 9). A huge thank you to everyone who got involved in the development of the new site – your feedback has been invaluable and we hope you'll find the finished product a pleasure to use.

Due to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London this summer, we have also included some of the information from the Q&A document which was sent out to all customers around fire safety (page 18, as well as below). It's important that we all know what to do in the event of a fire, and we also want to reassure you that we're doing everything we can to prevent a similar incident.

As usual, this issue also contains some finance tips, an update from our Repairs Team, and of course the new Ask the Experts feature. Thanks to everyone who submitted a question for this issue – don't forget to send in yours for a chance to win a £20 voucher! Have a fantastic summer!



Adele



What's inside?

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Fire safety update

Following the tragic event at Grenfell Tower in London we have produced a frequently asked questions, which all customers in high-rise buildings should have received in the post. We have also featured some of the questions in this issue, which you can find on page 18.

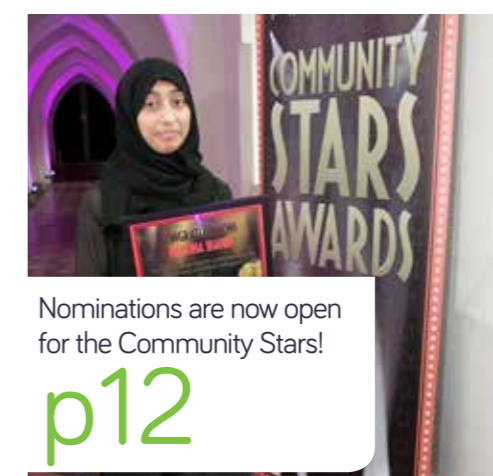
Following the Grenfell fire, to ensure all customers were safe, we carried out extra safety reviews on all blocks with six storeys or more. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) also requested cladding samples from all high-rise tower blocks to be tested. We have had the results back from our tests and can confirm that the samples we submitted are not similar to those used at Grenfell Tower.

We will continue to keep you updated on any other developments regarding fire safety.



Celebrating diversity at Salford Pride!

p4



Nominations are now open for the Community Stars!

p12



Tips for staying flush while you flush!

p16



FSC AND WORLD LAND TRUST LOG-OS





Langworthy Forum members get spring cleaning

Spring clean for Langworthy!

Following issues with flytipping in Langworthy, Salford, the Seedly and Langworthy Forum joined forces with Great Places to clean up local alleyways. But the group's efforts didn't stop there! They then carried out a door-step consultation with local residents, where they discovered that the cause of the problem was that many private landlords were not providing their customers with the correct keys, bins and instructions on properly disposing of waste. To tackle this issue, the group have been working with Landlord Licensing, Salford City Council and Salford University to try and secure support from private landlords across Salford – a good job by all!

Giving Morecambe a lick of paint

Some young Great Places residents have helped to spruce up the Dome in Morecambe. The former swimming pool and entertainment venue was looking tired and run down, so with help from the council, a team of artists have given the space a colourful art deco makeover. Local children and young people were invited along to make their mark and get creative, many of whom were Great Places customers. The site will be used as an 'art park', where people can enjoy cultural events, play and relax.



Customer Dan (aka Tia-Anna) speaks up at the Manchester HouseProud conference

Great Places customers show their pride!

It was great to see so many Great Places customers at the many LGBT Pride events we supported this summer – from Blackpool Pride, to Salford's Pink Picnic, to the Manchester HouseProud conference. We hope to see just as many of our Manchester customers at Manchester Pride, where we will be taking part in the parade with HouseProud, a group of housing organisations committed to promoting best practice for LGBT customers.



'Drag Roulette' contestants show their support for Great Places at Salford's Pink Picnic



The new and improved Dome in Morecambe



Esther meets the customers who made the Secret Garden of Springfields a reality

Getting Morecambe moving!

Great Places resident, Stuart Nevin from Morecambe, has been working in partnership with Red Rose Recovery to provide Morecambe residents with the opportunity to get fit and healthy in a safe environment. 'Northern Angelz' provides a range of sessions from free wellbeing walks along the promenade to an Alpha course for extreme fitness.

Stuart said: "Northern Angelz acts as a gateway for people to meet others and develop skills essential for modern life. Many people fall on hard times which can lead to isolation or depression. We provide safe, structured activities to support the people in our community whatever their ability. Most importantly, it's free and done by people who care!" For more information, search for 'Northern Angelz' on Facebook.



The Northern Angelz ready to get Morecambe moving!

Esther takes a secret garden tour

In the run-up to the general election, we hosted a number of visits from MP candidates across our regions to encourage them to put housing on their political agenda and to showcase the positive impact of housing associations in local communities. Among the visitors was Conservative candidate for Tatton Esther McVey, who visited the Secret Garden of Springfields, a resident-led project which transformed a disused site in Knutsford into a community garden. The project scooped the Green Places Award at this year's Community Stars ceremony, and Esther was keen to take a tour of the garden from the customers who worked hard to transform the space.



Ilan shows off his bird table after completing the six week 'Men in Sheds' course

Ilan finds his inner carpenter

Congratulations to Ian Boardman from Blackpool, who recently completed a six week 'Men in Sheds' course. Ian previously worked as an engineer before unfortunately damaging his hand, and wanted to find out how much he could still do with limited mobility. The course was enlightening for Ian, who surprised himself with how much he was capable of doing, using many of the tools he thought he was unable to handle. Course leader, Davinia Jackson said: "Ian has been really hardworking and a pleasure to have on the course!"

You can see the results of Ian's six weeks of hard work above – he's now beginning work on a small table!



Great Places colleagues working with Red Rose Recovery to transform Church Court



Afzal Khan MP whipping up a healthy treat at the Brook Avenue street party in Levenshulme

Afzal Khan MP gets into the Great Places spirit!

MP for Gorton Afzal Khan got into the Great Places spirit at the Brook Avenue street party in Levenshulme – even taking a turn on the famous Great Places smoothie bike! Many thanks to everyone who attended and enjoyed the sunshine and live band with their neighbours!

Could you be the next star of My Great Place?

Got something to share in My Great Place? Whether it's a story from your community or you just want to say happy birthday to a loved one, we want to hear from you! Send your stories or messages to the Communications Team, using the details on page 2. If we feature your email or letter you will win a high street voucher – so get in touch!

Ramp gives Bolton couple a life-changing lift!

Great Places sub-contract rep, Graeme, first met Bolton couple Mr and Mrs Croft when he was doing some post inspections on their bungalow. After filling in all the necessary paperwork, Graeme stayed for a chat and a brew. "They were a lovely couple," he said. "A month later, during another visit to their home, Lynda came running out to me and said "I'm so glad you're here – Phil has fallen out of his wheelchair! She couldn't lift him so I ran in to get him back sat down. I was so pleased that I was there and able to help!"

A few months later, it was brought to Graeme's attention that Phil did not have an alternative exit from his bungalow if there was a fire.

"Phil has MS and is unable to get around without his chair so this was an essential health and safety fixture. I volunteered straight away to get involved and drew up a specification for a ramp and a new door."

The ramp has massively improved Phil and Lynda's lives – not only has it made their home safer in the event of an emergency, it also means that Phil can open his door and sit outside, get some fresh air and watch the world go by!



Phil and Lynda Croft enjoying their new ramp!

All hands on deck at Church Court!

Great Places and Red Rose Recovery have joined forces to give Church Court in Preston a facelift. Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Beverley Hemmingway, said that the outdoor area was a hot spot for anti-social behaviour and littering, as well as becoming a health and safety concern due to broken slabs, so she applied for Great Places funding to carry out some repairs and renovations. The team removed the slabs and planted shrubs and other greenery to prevent loitering, as well as creating an attractive garden space for residents to enjoy and reducing the risk of accidents. Finally, the bin store and fences were given a lick of paint, giving the scheme a whole new lease of life!



Customers enjoying afternoon tea at The Byrons

Afternoon tea at The Byrons

Customers at The Byrons made the most of the sunshine in June and enjoyed a spot of afternoon tea! The Byrons Committee raised money to fund the event, which aimed to reduce isolation among residents.

Customers enjoyed scones and jam (and of course plenty of tea) in the sun and a great day was had by all.

Talking 'bout my generation!

Limitless are a group of 13 young people who strive to improve their community in Langworthy by creating social action projects. On the 3rd of May, Limitless paid a visit to Hawkshaw Court, to have an intergenerational chat!

Hawkshaw Court customers enjoyed a few hours socialising with Limitless playing bingo and talking about their lives. The event was a great success and has helped to create a better understanding of each other's generation.



Intergenerational chatter at Hawkshaw Court

A historic repair!

A significant repairs project was recently completed at the Grade II listed Beswick Cooperative building, home of the Northmoor Community Centre. Built in 1912, the building has great architectural importance and has been at the heart of the community for more than a century.

In 2016 a number of defects were identified, including damage to the terracotta faience due to vegetation growth, corroding steelwork and issues with the roof and gutters. However due to the age and importance of the building, consultation with Manchester City Council was required before any repairs could be completed.

In March of this year, the building was finally scaffolded and repairs commenced, with help from the Casey Group and Maysand who carried out the works. The building is now in top condition and has been restored to its former glory!



The Beswick Co-operative building mid-repairs



Restored to its former glory!

Great changes for Great Places!



Matt's message

From Chief Executive of Great Places Housing Group, Matthew Harrison

The news of the tragedy at Grenfell Tower in London has also dominated the headlines this summer. Following this horrific event, we've been working hard to ensure we're doing everything we can to keep all customers safe in the event of a fire. As mentioned on page 3, we tested the cladding from our high-rise properties as well as carrying out ample additional fire safety checks. There are things we can all do to reduce both the risk of a fire, and ensure our homes are safe for all. You can read some of these on page 18.

Finally, I am excited to announce that our new website is almost ready to launch. It has been designed (with help from you!) to improve self service on the go, making it easier for you to pay your rent or log a repair. We hope this new site will improve your experience as a Great Places customer – read more on page 9.

I hope you all have a great summer – see you in autumn!

Matt

Though you may not know it from the ever-changeable British weather, summer is upon us, with plenty of fantastic community events taking place across our neighbourhoods for customers of all ages. It's especially fantastic to see so many young people getting involved in community projects throughout this issue, from revamping a local landmark (page 4) to meeting their local MP (page 5)! And of course our cover stars, who made some positive changes both for themselves and their community with help from Regent Park Studios – a project shortlisted for a Community Stars Award earlier this year. It's great to see they're continuing the good work.

We're excited to announce that our head office will soon be moving from Southern Gate, Manchester. Our current office has been sold and the Manchester team will soon be moving across the road to No.1 Christie Fields. But they won't be moving alone! To bring Great Places colleagues together and ensure a more efficient service, our colleagues currently based in Salford and the Customer Access Team (our customer contact centre) will also be moving to the new office. This will result in a saving of £1 million over four years, which we can then pass on to you!

Once there, colleagues will be encouraged to embrace a more modern style of working, using technology to work away from their desks and within the communities they serve. This will especially be the case for colleagues that cover the Salford area, who we want to ensure are still on-hand if you need them once they have left St James' House.

In preparation for this move, the Salford office is now available by appointment only Monday–Friday. To make an appointment, please call the office using the details on page 2.

We will be writing to all our customers to advise of this change soon.



To make things easier for customers so that you have less need to travel to a Great Places office, we're launching a brand new website. Learn more below...



Log on!

Good news! Our new website has been designed and is almost ready to launch! A huge thank you to everyone who helped us develop the new site, whether it was giving your feedback on the design, or testing the functionality.

We took all your comments on board and are really proud of the finished product, which will make it easier for you to manage your home and tenancy online. Through our new and improved customer portal you can...

-  • Pay your rent, view your balance history and set up a direct debit.
-  • Report repairs and arrange for our Repairs Team to carry out the work at a time that suits you.

- Update your contact details or let us know about a change of circumstances.
- Find a new home.
- Get handy tips and advice about money matters, employment and skills and fixing basic repairs in your home.
- Keep up-to-date with the latest news and opportunities in your area.

The website is responsive, meaning you will be able to do all of this on the go using your smart phone or tablet.

Once the website goes live, registering is easy. Just click the big blue 'Resident Login' button and fill in your details.

Keep your eyes peeled for the official launch. We hope you're happy with the results!



Time for a new look...

Have you noticed this issue of My Great Place looks a bit different? That's because we've been shaking things up by refreshing our logo and branding!



It had been a decade since our first logo was created so we felt it was definitely time to reassess our look. We've gone for a simple, contemporary font which looks and feels good for a modern business. We've also continued with our current blue and green colours as we want to remain recognisable to you, our customers. You'll see our new logo rolling out across the business gradually – on our letterheads, signs, name badges and vans. This might take a few months to do entirely, so bear with us.

We think our new font gives the magazine a brighter, cleaner look and feel – what do you think? We always want to hear your feedback on My Great Place. Get in touch with us using the details on page 2.



The Oldham office gets a fresh look!



Congratulations to the Welcome Cafe in Knutsford who recently won a £75,000 grant to continue their excellent work in the community!



Hear a familiar voice on your radio? Our poverty and partnerships coordinator took to the Radio Lancashire airwaves in June!



Happy workers: Our Assets team gave Northmoor a spring clean in June as part of their away day!



THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT!

Young people in Morecambe have been getting active at Regent Park Studios – and their efforts have been commended by the local police force!

Following a number of youth-related antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents in the area, the Great Places Community Safety Team stepped in and launched an consultation with residents, including the young people living in the area, to find the cause of the problem. Boredom was discovered to be a key factor in the incidents, so the team joined forces with Regent Park Studios, a local facility that specialises in sports and physical activities, including trampolining, martial arts and archery, for young people. Young customers were invited to come along after school and get moving!

The sessions ran for 10 weeks and were tailored to include discussions about problematic behaviour and how it affects the community.

The classes were a big hit, and by the end of the course, the local police confirmed that the average number of ASB calls per week had dropped from 30 to zero. Plus, several of the young people had been inspired to start attending other extra curricular activities as a result!

“Thanks to Great Places and Regent Park Studios for this opportunity – an excellent result!”

In June, PCSO Heather Joslin met with the group, along with Great Places Community Development Coordinator Katherine Michaels, to chat about the project and to congratulate them for making such a positive change to their behaviour and the community.

Heather said “I am confident that the reduction in ASB cases is because the young people had something to work towards through the Regent Park Studios programme, thanks to the intervention by Great Places.

“The young people I have spoken to really enjoyed attending the sessions and many plan to keep the momentum going when the programme finishes, which is great news! I would like to pass on my thanks to Great Places and Regent Park Studios for giving them this opportunity – an excellent result!”

Lola (aged 7, pictured) said: “Regent Park Studios is fun and I get to see all my friends. I think it’s great exercise and the trampolining strengthens my legs.”

Her mum, Melodie-Lea added: “It’s great – its gets the children out and it’s great exercise. They burn energy and are always really tired when they get home! It’s perfect for parents who might not be able to send their children to a sporting activity.”

Pictured (L-R): Lola-Hope Henriksen, Ella Helme, Daighton-Lee Helme, Karol Kulig and Jakub Kulig with PCSO Heather Joslin

Our latest activity

By Insight - our customer scrutiny group

Earlier this year, Insight chose to look at the way Great Places improve and invest in customers' homes, such as fitting new kitchens and bathrooms. This service was chosen because although customer feedback highlighted that customers were mostly satisfied with their experience, it was clear that some improvements could be made. The service has undergone a number of changes over the past two years, so the group also felt that now was a good time to find out how those changes were working out.

Once the review was complete, Insight looked at the information collected and identified a number of areas for improvement. These included...

To communicate a program of work so customers know when they can expect investment work to be carried out at their home

To gain a greater understanding of customers' experiences of the service

To inspect all work and ensure snagging is completed within a reasonable time

Update!
During May, Insight heard how their recommendations from the aids and adaptations service review were coming along. They were extremely impressed with progress, especially with the improvements to customer communications.

Insight then went along to the Great Places Board to feed back these scrutiny review findings in July. All of the group's recommendations were agreed and a plan was put in place, which will be reviewed in six months time.

The scrutiny group is a great way for Great Places customers to help influence services. They're always looking for new members, so if you are curious about scrutinising services, feel you have the right skills, and would like to contribute and learn new skills along the way, contact Tracy Gregory on 0161 447 5020 or email tracy.gregory@greatplaces.org.uk.

GREAT PLACES COMMUNITY STARS AWARDS Coming soon...



The Great Places Community Stars Awards are coming soon – and nominations are open now! The awards will take place on Saturday 9 June 2018 and we want to hear who you think should take centre stage. The Community Stars celebrate the unsung heroes in our communities – this could be an individual, community group, or project – and is a chance for you to decide who in your neighbourhood deserves some time in the spotlight.

Visit www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Community_Stars_2018 to submit your nomination today!

Do you have an idea for a Hollywood movie theme for next year's event? Feedback told us you loved this year's theme of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory but now it's over to you! Email your idea to involvement.team@greatplaces.org.uk.

Funding Superstars!



Above: The VOICE Sunday Family Club picking up their trophy at the Great Places Community Stars Awards



Right: Local children enjoy a day out as part of the Sunday Family Club

Congratulations to Community Stars Award winners, VOICE, who recently received funding from the Great Places Residents' Fund.

VOICE, based in Blackburn, provides food for disadvantaged people in the community, including cooked breakfasts for families, frozen food parcels and hot food for the homeless.

VOICE is run entirely by volunteers, many of which are Great Places customers, who give up their time to help those in need and bring the community together. Through promoting volunteering opportunities, the group also helps those suffering with social isolation, as well as promoting health and wellbeing through the nutritious meals they provide.

Sarah Riley, Poverty and Partnerships Coordinator at Great Places, who assisted with the application, said: "VOICE do so much for the community on such a small budget, and so I was more than happy to support their application.

"This has been a fantastic year for the group, who also won the Community Project Award at the Community Stars Awards for their Sunday Family Club, which provides breakfast and activities for low-income families. I hope this funding will take VOICE from strength to strength and allow them to support more local people in crisis. They're such an essential service."

Marselle, from VOICE, said: "The impact this funding will have on the wider community is priceless. It will help us to provide food and volunteering opportunities that we would not have had the funding for otherwise and allow us to continue to tackle food poverty in Blackburn."

To find out about the funding opportunities available for you, visit www.greatplaces.org.uk.

Ask the experts!

Money



Ask Josh

I just left college studying hairdressing and I'm trying to get into work, but struggling to find anything due to financial difficulties. I can't afford the equipment, plus travelling to interviews is becoming expensive meaning I can't save. What help can I get?

Claire, Sheffield

Dear Claire,

There are plenty of resources available to help you find work or to give you a helping hand financially.

One service you might be interested in is the Young Women's Trust (YWT). If you're aged between 18-30, work less than 16 hours a week, receive work related benefits and want to progress your career, the YWT can help. Their grants service will buy things on your behalf that could help you find work – this could be smart interview clothes, training courses, equipment for a trade (such as hairdressing), driving lessons, or technology including laptops or tablets. Simply apply through their website: www.youngwomenstrust.org.

The YWT's services don't end there though – they also offer a free coaching service called Work It Out to help you feel more confident and ready for work. You can get your own professional coach who will work with you one on one at a time that suits you.

You can also read about the Great Places Residents' Fund on page 12.

DIY



Ask Ruby

How do I stop my garden flooding in wet weather? It is on a slight incline and water gathers near the bottom so I can't walk on it. I have tried putting down grass seed but it just washes off – help!

Karen, Morecambe

Dear Karen,

First things first – you're doing the right thing by staying off your garden when it is flooding, as walking on the wet soil will only do further damage to your grass!

Applying a mulch to your soil, such as wood chippings, bark or leaf mould, can help with water damage as mulches increase absorbency, as well as suppressing weeds. You may also want to prick or slit the surface of your garden. The holes can then be filled with a free-draining material, such as horticultural sand, which allows the water to flow from the surface to deeper, less compacted layers underneath. You can pick up spiking tools at any garden centre.

Your garden may also be getting waterlogged due to clogged drains or guttering. Ensure any fallen leaves or debris is cleaned away so that the rainfall has somewhere to go.

To make the most of the rain, why not try introducing some plants that love moisture to your garden? Visit the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) website for tips on which plants feel right at home in wet soil!

Health & wellbeing



Ask Kirsty

My partner struggles with sleeping, particularly in the summer with the longer light days, which means I'm not getting much sleep either! Any tips?

Mike, Burnley

Dear Mike,

This is a really common problem; in fact, 1 in 3 people in the UK are sleep deprived. Here's a few tips:

- Make a promise to not use any digital devices after a certain time – the blue light mimics the sun and confuses our body clock into thinking it's still day time. Put your phone on flight mode at least an hour before bed and pick up a book, magazine, board game or any other screen-less hobby of your choice.
- Caffeine junkies, swap your usual caffeinated hot beverage for the decaffeinated variety from lunch time onwards and say hello to a restful body! If you need an afternoon pick me up, try peppermint tea or even water, as often dehydration can be the reason we're feeling the slump.
- Create a restful sleep environment – a few drops of lavender oil on your pillow or in your bath can help send you off in to a deep restful place.
- Fresh air – as well as being good for your general health, research has shown that getting out into the fresh air and getting our bodies moving helps overcome anxiety and depression and regulates our body clock – aiding a restful night's sleep.

Send us your question and if the experts answer it, you'll win £20 in high street vouchers! Email your questions to communications@greatplaces.org.uk or write to us using the address on page 2!

Go green!



Ask Chris

I like gardening and would love to become more self-sufficient by growing my own vegetables. I've got bags of soil but it only seems to be good for growing weeds! Any advice?

Norma, Manchester

Dear Norma,

The first step is to get rid of those weeds! Weeds are greedy plants and will steal water and nutrients from any other plants you try to grow, so spend some time eliminating them before you plant your veg. This may involve getting your hands dirty to pull them out from the root, but be sure to stay away from herbicides, as these will taint your veggies with toxins, even when the weeds have gone.

Once your garden is weed free, consider how much sun and shade your plants will get. Most fruiting vegetables need a minimum of 6-8 hours of sunlight to do well. Root vegetables may manage with 4-6 hours of full sun and partial shade for the remaining period. If your garden gets only filtered light for most part of the day, leafy vegetables are your best bet, such as rocket, lettuce, or chives.

Finally, it's important to ensure your soil is suitable. Sandy soils will not provide sufficient nutrients and clay-like soil will not allow good root run and drainage. However, both can be improved by adding plenty of organic matter. Good luck!

Send us a question and win £20!

Credit Unions spread the savings to Salford!

Great Places is backing the launch of Salford Credit Union's new loan and savings deal to support our customers.

Three new loan products: Secure Saver Loans, Payroll Loans and Personal Loans, have been set up by Salford Credit Union, all of which have lower interest rates than the union has ever offered before.

Great Places also works with credit unions in Manchester, Blackpool and Knutsford. For more information, visit:

- www.salfordcreditunion.com
- www.manchestercreditunion.com
- www.bfwcu.co.uk
- www.cncu.org.uk

You can also contact us using the details on page 2.



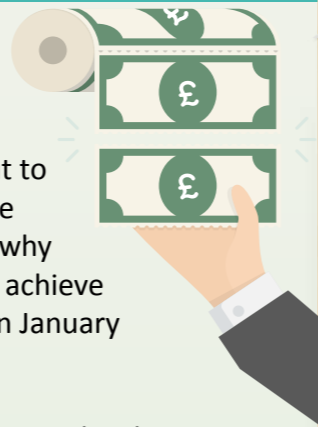
Feel flush when you flush!

At Great Places, we're always on the lookout to make sure you get the right support if you're struggling with your household bills. That's why we've been working with United Utilities to achieve savings of £102K for our customers between January and June of this year.

To take advantage of these savings, call the United Utilities team, who are specially trained to handle sensitive issues. Their debt support schemes include:

- **Back on track** – if you owe money on your water bills and receive benefits, they can provide an affordable bill based on your current income.
- **Payment matching** – if you've built up a lot of debt, for every £1 you pay off your debt they will match this with another £1, helping you to clear your debt twice as quickly.
- **Restart grant** – if you're in real financial difficulty, you may qualify for a one-off payment from their Trust Fund to help clear your debts.

However, there are a number of other ways United Utilities can help – call **0800 072 6765** or alternatively contact Great Places using the details on page 2.



When is my rent due?

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to understand when you need to pay your rent and service charge, so it's one less thing for you to worry about.

(for example monthly), will be allowed providing this is made in advance of the rent being charged so that rent arrears are not accrued in between payments.

As per your tenancy agreement, your rent is payable on the Monday of the week in which it is due.

This also applies to tenants who receive Universal Credit or Housing Benefit directly. If Mrs Jones chooses to pay monthly she should pay £374.84 (the monthly equivalent) on 1 May followed by £374.84 on the 1st of subsequent months.

For example: Mrs Jones' tenancy starts on 1 May 2017 (which falls on a Monday). Her weekly rent is £86.27. Mrs Jones must pay her rent on 1 May and each subsequent Monday. Payment of rent by an alternative frequency other than weekly

If you have any questions about paying your rent, contact us using the details on page 2.

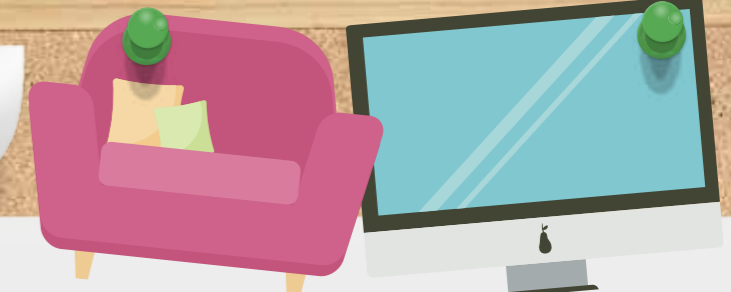
Weekly

	May					June				
Mon	1	8	15	22	29	Mon	5	12	19	26
Tue	2	9	16	23	30	Tue	6	13	20	27
Wed	3	10	17	24	31	Wed	7	14	21	28
Thu	4	11	18	25		Thu	1	8	15	22
Fri	5	12	19	26		Fri	2	9	16	23
Sat	6	13	20	27		Sat	3	10	17	24
Sun	7	14	21	28		Sun	4	11	18	25

Monthly

	May					June				
Mon	1	8	15	22	29	Mon	5	12	19	26
Tue	2	9	16	23	30	Tue	6	13	20	27
Wed	3	10	17	24	31	Wed	7	14	21	28
Thu	4	11	18	25		Thu	1	8	15	22
Fri	5	12	19	26		Fri	2	9	16	23
Sat	6	13	20	27		Sat	3	10	17	24
Sun	7	14	21	28		Sun	4	11	18	25

NEWS BOARD



Get a new look for less!

Decorating your home doesn't have to cost a fortune. There's lots of ways you can update your home on a budget without having to use expensive options like Brighthouse or catalogues which charge high prices and interest rates.

- **Try online!** Freecycle, Freegle and Preloved are websites where people offer items they no longer need for free, as long as you're able to collect them. Facebook also have 'buy, swap and sell' groups in many areas, which are great for hunting down a bargain – search Facebook to find one near you. And try signing up to discount websites such as Groupon and Wowcher, as these often offer deals on new furniture at heavily discounted prices.
- **Support your local furniture charities.** High Street charity shops such as the British Heart

Foundation and Sue Ryder are a good source of quality, pre-owned furniture and furnishings – plus your money will go to a good cause! We work with lots of furniture reuse charities who provide people on a budget the opportunity to access good quality items for the home at low costs. To find the nearest charity to you, search your postcode on the Furniture Reuse Network website: www.frn.org.uk.

- **Borrow through us** – don't forget we offer small value loans of up to £300 via your local credit union at low interest rates which you can pay back on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. You don't have to be in work or have a good credit rating to apply and we will even gift you £50 into your Credit Union account once the loan is repaid! Contact us using the details on page 2 and ask to speak to your Financial Support Coordinator.

Get skilled up in Bolton and Bury!

We've been working with Bolton at Home to provide employment and skills opportunities for customers in Bolton and Bury. We're offering a number of courses to help you back into work, including IT, CV writing and debt and money advice, as well as hobby clubs such as crafting, cooking, DIY and First Aid.

These are available at a number of centres across Bolton and Bury including Tonge Moor, Brightmet, Johnson Fold and Deane. To find out more about what's going on at your local centre, contact Great Places Information and Advice Officer, Callie on 07929 651 260.

Changes to Universal Credit in Oldham

All Oldham claimants of Housing Benefit, Income Support, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) and Job Seekers Allowance (income-related), will now be asked to switch over to Universal Credit the next time they report a change in circumstances. This change came into effect in April, and will be rolled out across all our regions in due course.

Universal Credit is a fully digitised system, which we understand may cause problems for some residents. We're here to help. If you have any questions regarding Universal Credit please call us on 0300 123 2003 or email oldhampfi@greatplaces.org.uk.

Budding business owner?

The PopUp Business School are offering a limited number of free places to their upcoming five day course in Bolton. Learn how to build a website, improve your google rankings and get a business off the ground. To learn more, visit: www.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/bolton.

Want to get fit?

ABL Health offer **free** sessions across the North of England to help you lose weight and lead a healthier lifestyle. They offer sessions for individuals, and for families with children aged five and over. To find out more, visit www.ablhealth.co.uk.



Fire safety: your FAQs



Do we need communal fire alarms?

In high rise blocks of flats, the walls and ceilings between flats are built to be able to contain a fire. In the event of a fire, only residents in the affected flat or flats need to evacuate, so there's no need to be notified immediately of a fire elsewhere in the building. For this reason, building regulations and other guidance recommends that communal fire alarms are not necessary.

What do I do if I discover a fire?

If you live in a block that operates a policy of "stay put" and you discover a fire in a flat or common area you should:

- Alert all occupants of the flat
- Do not use the lift
- Leave by the nearest exit
- Call 999 and ask for the fire brigade

Other occupants not directly affected by the fire should:

- Stay put in their flat unless told to leave by the fire brigade
- If told to leave, do not return to the building until instructed to do so by the fire brigade

If your home is a single dwelling or a flat in a block that operates an evacuation policy you should take the following action:

- Sound the alarm
- Call 999 and ask for the fire brigade
- Leave the building by the nearest exit

On hearing the alarm:

- Leave the building by the nearest exit
- Do not return to the building until instructed to do so by the fire brigade.

Your neighbourhood co-ordinator, neighbourhood officer or fire safety officer will be able to tell you which evacuation procedure should be used at your home. Alternatively, if you live in a flat, refer to the red fire action notices that are displayed in communal areas.

What is a fire risk assessment?

A fire risk assessment is an evaluation of your block and communal areas, which identifies any potential hazards or risks.

How do I know that my block is safe and has been inspected?

Great Places carries out regular inspections of your communal areas to ensure fire protection measures (such

as emergency lights and fire alarms) are working efficiently. These inspections are carried out by our trained fire safety officers (FSOs). The name and contact details of your FSO are displayed on the notice board in the entrance lobby to your building.

How can I help to prevent a fire in my building?

There are lots of things that you can do to help:

- Keep communal areas clear. Items blocking communal areas can help a fire to spread and also block your escape routes. This includes not leaving buggies, bicycles, thick or curled doormats, laundry, shoes or any other items in communal areas, entranceways or corridors.
- Keep your balcony clear at all times. Fires often spread on the outside of the building and flammable items left on the balcony increase this risk.
- Don't use barbecues or leave flammable items such as gas bottles on your balcony.
- Don't leave any open flames such as candles unattended.
- If you smoke in your home, make sure all cigarettes are properly extinguished. If possible, it is always safer to smoke outside.
- If you use heaters, make sure they are never covered or left near any other items.
- Make sure any electrical appliances or devices are in good condition.
- Make sure the fire doors in your home and communal areas are kept closed at all times – this is crucial in preventing the spread of fire.
- Do not tamper with the electrical or gas supply to your home.
- Do not block any vents in your home.
- Allow us access to your property to carry out your annual gas safety inspection.
- Make sure your family know what to do in the event of fire.
- Regularly check and test your fire alarm.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

We always aim to make sure you're satisfied with the service you receive from Great Places and are always keen to hear what you think. So whether you have feedback on what we've done well or could do better at, we want to hear from you. You can find our contact details on page 2.

If you're unhappy with a service you have received from Great Places, you can inform us by any method (telephone, email, in person or by post) and one of our frontline staff will initially try to resolve your issue. We call this 'Nip in the Bud' (NIP) and staff have five working days to identify the best possible course of action to put things right.

If you are not satisfied with how we propose to put things right you have the option of requesting your issue is looked at in more detail by one of our service managers. They will then investigate your issue, discuss why you are unhappy with our initial offer to put things right and provide you with a final, formal offer to put things right. We call this process 'Right First Time' (RFT). We aim to resolve your complaint within 15 working days.

Overall performance (as of June 2017)



Your compliments!

We love to hear that you're happy with the service you've received and appreciate any positive feedback you send us. Here are just some of the compliments we've received from satisfied customers in the last few months:

For Martin Stubbs (Community Warden) and Dominic Dimarrio (Community Caretaker)

They were so lovely and polite – I'm really happy with the job they have done. I'm very grateful.

For Julia, Neighbourhood co-ordinator
I am very very grateful, you don't realise how much you've helped me out.

For Jonathan, Multi-skilled electrician
Jonathan was absolutely brilliant – thorough and his attitude was superb. Top class!

For Jan, Floating support co-ordinator
I appreciate your help very much. I have to say I am very happy with your support – no words explain how very thankful we are.

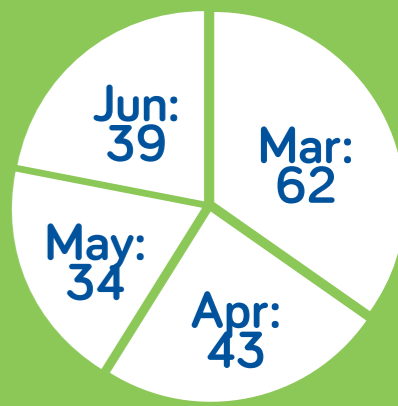
For Chanel, Customer services officer
Chanel is a credit to the team, – you're very lucky to have such a caring and understanding member of staff.



Number of NIP complaints



Number of RFT complaints



Compliments

Competition time

Complete both competitions, along with the survey questions, cut them out and post them to us, along with your full name and address, to be entered into a prize draw to win a £10 shopping voucher. Three winners will be selected. Make sure you include your survey questions with your entry.

Send your entries by post to: FREEPOST, RLSC-HLLJ-EZRZ, My Great Place, Maria Morris, Great Places Housing Group, Southern Gate, 729 Princess Road, Manchester, M20 2LT. **All entries must be in by Friday 6 October 2017. Remember, you don't need a stamp!**

Congratulations to last issue's winners:

David Bicket – Blackpool
 Anna Wysocka – Salford
 Joseph McCormick – Morecambe

Wordsearch

Words to find are:

POLICE	ELECTION	SUNSHINE
WEBSITE	SPORT	OUTDOORS
PRIDE	HOBBIES	WELLBEING
AWARDS	SUMMER	PICNIC



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

There are five differences – can you spot them? Circle the **five** differences on photo two.



Please answer the following questions and send them along with your competition entry in order to be entered into the prize draw.

How do you usually access the Great Places website? (Circle all that apply)

On a laptop or computer / On a mobile phone / On an iPad or tablet

Are you interested in getting involved in shaping our new three year corporate plan? Yes / No

Name:
 Address:
 Telephone/Mobile: Email: