Did you know Housing Benefit is changing?

Right To Buy: find out more

Tackling pigeon pests in Corsham

GreenSquare’s resident magazine gets a new name

Royal opening for Salisbury scheme
Welcome to the first-ever issue of G2 – our new GreenSquare residents’ magazine.

This replaces the old ‘HOME’ and ‘Citizens’ magazines from Westlea and OCHA, and incorporates the content from the ‘Down Your Way’ and ‘Disability News’ newsletters too. Producing one magazine is more efficient and better value for money, cutting down on the post we send you – something you have told us is important, and which is also a priority in the new residents’ business plan that’s being mailed to you with this magazine.

We are producing three editions of G2 – one for each of the new GreenSquare Communities Board areas – to ensure that the articles and information (such as the ‘Local Focus’ section on page 6) are relevant to where you live. This is the Avon edition for residents living in Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Corsham, Bradford on Avon and villages.

We hope you enjoy reading G2. Would you like to make suggestions for improving it or, even better, write articles or take photographs for future issues? Then join our Residents’ Communication Group! (see page 11).

Ann Cornelius, Executive Director (Customers & Communities)

WHY

GreenSquare Academy pg 5
Local focus pg 6
Money matters pg 8-9
Complaints report pg 12
Planned maintenance pg 15
Contact us pg 16

Our new magazine’s name was suggested by GreenSquare resident Louise Barnes (pictured here with her son). Her idea was picked by a ballot of Residents’ Communication Group members and staff, and was one of those put forward by residents using the form in our last issues of HOME and Citizens. Louise wins £50 to spend at a local Chinese restaurant that’s a favourite with her and her son. On hearing she’d won, Louise said: “WOW! This is fabulous news! Thank you so much – we’re so excited!”

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

From 1 April 2012 Oxford Citizens Housing Association (OCHA) and Westlea Housing Association (Westlea) began trading as ‘GreenSquare’. We told you about this in our last magazine.

You will have noticed that our letters, vans, leaflets, and staff uniforms now feature the GreenSquare logo only and not the previous OCHA or Westlea branding.

However, OCHA and Westlea do still exist and you should make any cheques (or other payments) payable to OCHA or Westlea. Your tenancy also continues to be with either OCHA or Westlea, and you can expect to deal with the same people at the same office locations.

But both housing associations are now using the GreenSquare trading name. We have made this change because we believe that:

✓ using the name GreenSquare will, in time, be clearer for residents and those we work with;
✓ the change will help increase awareness and understanding of all we do across a wide geographical area; and
✓ we can work more efficiently with the same name and brand in place across the Group in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, and Gloucestershire.

CLEAR RENT ACCOUNT WINNERS

1st prize £300 – Mr and Mrs W, Calne • 2nd prize £150 – Mr K, Chippenham • 3rd prize £100 – Mr H, Cricklade
The £5.3m project has been made possible thanks to a partnership between GreenSquare and the charity Alabaré, with investment from the Homes and Communities Agency and Wiltshire Council. It has resulted in the creation of a new 30-bedroom direct access homeless hostel and conversion of the adjacent Grade II listed building into 8 flats for ‘move-on accommodation’.

GreenSquare’s Jo Curson said: “This fantastic scheme is the result of years of hard work from all involved and we’re very proud of what’s been achieved. This is a flagship development for Salisbury and for GreenSquare, and it’s great to celebrate the creation of a place where so many people’s lives will change for the better in the months and years ahead.”

Alabaré’s Stewart Mustard said: “We’ve created a hostel that goes beyond merely meeting the accommodation needs of our residents. The new building incorporates facilities to allow them to engage in skills, learning and leisure activities, ultimately boosting morale and helping them integrate back into their communities.”

Meanwhile, in other GreenSquare areas, two major development projects have also been celebrated recently:

- Residents of Rose Hill in Oxford celebrated the completion of the new homes development there – and the ongoing community work that’s being supported by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund.
- A £15.2 million 70-home development in Swindon, has been built on the site of a former police station, and most of the street names have been inspired by television detectives, including Dixon Way, Frost Close and Morse Gardens.
GreenSquare’s cash and clothing boost for local charity

A charity that supports people who have experienced homelessness, unemployment, and substance misuse has benefited from our recent name change and re-branding.

When OCHA and Westlea housing associations changed their trading name and branding to GreenSquare in April, we wanted to make the process as green as possible and involved local recycling charity Aspire.

As part of its branding change, GreenSquare challenged its staff to recycle all old uniforms to raise funds for Aspire because they can raise income from recycling the clothes. Staff were asked to bring filled bags of old uniforms and other donated clothes to help meet the ‘Going Green Clothing Challenge’ and GreenSquare match-funded their work with a donation of £500 per tonne of clothing donated by staff.

Chief executive David Ashmore and Board chair Hilary Gardner toured the Aspire workshops recently and met service users repairing and cleaning clothes for resale and shredding unusable items for use as fillings. They presented Aspire with a cheque for £1500, following the donation of three tonnes of old uniform items and other clothing from GreenSquare staff.

“It was great to be able to see Aspire’s inspirational work at first hand,” said Hilary Gardner. “We’re really pleased that our clothing donations have gone to help such a worthy cause and are glad to have presented this additional financial contribution that we know really will help change people’s lives.”

Aspire chief executive Jenny Fox said: “All the old branded workwear will be shredded by Aspire’s team, prior to sending to a textile company that uses them for mattress fillings and rags. For non-uniform donated clothing, Aspire will try and re-sell as much as they can through our market stall and other outlets. It’s win-win all the way. Disadvantaged people get work experience and a step on the ladder towards their new life.”

Aspire earns income from the proceeds to plough back into the social enterprise to help even more local disadvantaged people.”

Above: Former Westlea managing director Ann Cornelius and former OCHA managing director Andrew Smith help with the recycling effort on the changeover day. Left: Aspire’s Jenny Fox is presented with a cheque by GreenSquare’s Board Chair Hilary Gardner (right).
So far we have had courses and workshops on community journalism, food hygiene, first aid for families, time for yourself, and DIY.

Personal skills workshops are starting in September where you will learn:

• what skills you have;
• how to manage your time better;
• how to manage stress;
• how to build your confidence and get the most out of others;
• how to ask questions and interview people;
• how to use positive body language; and
• how to be more assertive.

Each workshop runs for 3hrs. If you take part in all the sessions you can gain credits towards a qualification.

All the training is free. Travel costs are reimbursed and childcare costs are subsidised.

Residents from here, there and everywhere completed a ‘community journalism’ training course as part of the new GreenSquare Academy.

One of the participants actually phoned in to do a ‘do it yourself’ course. She didn’t see herself as a writer and didn’t think the course would benefit her. After doing the course, she was surprised to find that she had a hidden talent after all.

We plan to use our new-found knowledge to write articles for the GreenSquare local magazines. Some may even go on to start a local newspaper for their communities.

What this course has taught us is that you’re never too old to learn and that, with a little help and encouragement, anyone can do it. See, even I can do it!

So, why not try one of the courses for yourself. It’s a great place to meet people, learn new things and who knows where it might lead?

Do these sessions interest you? Yes... then contact us today!

• personal finance • singing • finding out about councils & local democracy • first aid.

We can also re-run • food hygiene • community journalism • DIY.

If you would like more information about any of the courses offered by the GreenSquare Academy, please contact Julie Bielby on 01249 466054 or email julie.bielby@greensquaregroup.com
In this section we feed back on action we have taken in your area as a direct result of comments and requests from you.

- We were recently successful in our application for two injunctions to stop serious antisocial behaviour occurring in Greenway Court, Chippenham. Working with local police, we were able to exclude one resident from the area and we are now looking to install additional security measures to help ensure that residents feel safe in their neighbourhood.

- Residents asked us to stop a resident persistently having bonfires in Pockeridge Road, Corsham. We have worked in partnership with local police to stop this happening in future.

- Our caretakers removed dumped mattresses, carpets and other furniture from Allington Way, Chippenham. Working with Wiltshire Council, we arranged for the resident responsible to be recharged and Wiltshire Council issued them with a ‘Section 46 Notice’ to stop this happening again.

- After receiving complaints about garden furniture being permanently left in a communal area of Little Englands, Chippenham, and attracting antisocial behaviour, we worked with the resident who made arrangements for the area to be cleared up and for the furniture to be removed.

- You told us that people were fly-tipping at Dicketts Road and Poynder Road in Corsham. We have been working with Wiltshire Council to resolve this.

- When we received complaints that an abandoned caravan (pictured below) in Kington St Michael was in a dangerous condition and attracting vandalism, we liaised with residents to find the owner. We also reported it to Wiltshire Council who arranged for it to be removed.

- Our caretakers have been regularly clearing litter from Greenway Court, Chippenham. We also removed a picnic bench that had been left in the communal area by residents and was becoming a focus for antisocial behaviour.

- We received complaints about children damaging fencing and vehicles whilst playing at Pound Mead in Corsham. We have written to all of the residents and will be making further visits to parents to discuss the issue.

Jubilee parties
Caught on camera

Holton House residents above and below Jargeau Court residents.

We helped remove this abandoned caravan

Corsham, Trowbridge, Melksham & Bradford-on-Avon
Karen Williams, Neighbourhood Manager
Cheryl Scratchley, Customer Manager

Chippenham and surrounding villages
Heather Stewart, Neighbourhood Manager
Paul Worthen, Customer Manager
Terri Yewkins, Customer Manager

Get in touch by email: firstname.lastname@greensquaregroup.com or call the team on 01249 466140.
Preserved Right to Buy?

The Government has recently reinvigorated the Right to Buy scheme and has made changes to the discount that may be available to qualifying residents.

The scheme is available to assured tenants of housing associations who moved with their homes from a local authority to a housing association as part of a stock transfer. Therefore, to qualify for this scheme you must now be an assured tenant with GreenSquare who transferred their tenancy from North Wiltshire District Council in December 1995.

The scheme gives tenants a discount on the market value of their home. The longer you have been a tenant, the greater the discount you may be entitled to, up to the maximum limit of £75,000.

The table here gives some examples of the discount you could receive on a home worth £120,000. But you should note that you may not get the full amount shown in the table because of the cash limit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifying period (years)</th>
<th>Houses (%)</th>
<th>Flats (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>35% £42,000</td>
<td>50% £60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>40% £48,000</td>
<td>60% £72,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>45% £54,000</td>
<td>70% £84,000</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>55% £66,000</td>
<td>70% £84,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>60% £72,000</td>
<td>70% £84,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>60% £72,000</td>
<td>70% £84,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, see www.direct.gov.uk and search for ‘Right to Buy’

If you think that you qualify and would like to discuss this option further, please contact Maggie Thompson, Property Sales and RTB Officer, on 01249 466045 or email maggie.thompson@greensquaregroup.com

Duncan Hames MP joined the Jigsaw team to celebrate the fact that MORE THAN 1,000 parents and children have been helped over the last five years.

The team works with local families who need some extra help to turn their lives around. Managed by Barnardo’s on behalf of GreenSquare, the Jigsaw team provides independent advice to residents with children aged from 0-19 years old, or young people who are tenants in their own right.

Call Barnardo’s Jigsaw on 01249 463907, email jigsawwiltshire@barnardos.org.uk or visit www.barnardos.org.uk/jigsawwiltshire.

Resident inspectors are a group of residents who inspect services offered by GreenSquare. This is to ensure that residents are receiving the best value for their rent money.

We recently looked at whether residents knew about the help that GreenSquare offer those who are having financial difficulties.

Would you be comfortable contacting GreenSquare if you had financial problems?

We found that many don’t know about the service. Some thought it would be a good idea to tell new residents when they sign their tenancy agreement. Others felt that it should be advertised more.

The Citizens Advice Bureau seemed to be the first place many would turn to before contacting GreenSquare.

One reason for residents not contacting GreenSquare was because they feared eviction if they could not pay their rent. The good news is that GreenSquare do in fact offer help for residents. If you are having any financial difficulties, please contact the GreenSquare funded Moneyfriend or benefits advice worker at the CAB on 01249 445115 (ext 3).

If you are interested in joining our team of Resident Inspectors please call Julie Bielby on 01249 465465
All tenants have the option to change suppliers for gas and electricity as many times as they wish – you do not need GreenSquare’s permission.

Most gas and electricity suppliers have some form of ‘social tariff’. These offer cheaper energy deals and extra free services to certain customers. You may qualify for a social tariff if you are over 60, on means tested benefits, or are on a low income. See www.energychoices.co.uk for details of each supplier and scheme available.

You can also compare different tariffs to find a cheaper one by looking on other comparison websites such as www.uswitch.com (freephone 0800 404 7908) and www.energyhelpline.com (freephone 0800 074 0745).

• In most cases, the easiest way to make savings on your fuel bills is to pay by direct debit.

• A pre-payment meter is a device that allows customers to pay for their energy via a top-up card or token. If you have a pre-payment meter, you may be paying much more than someone who is paying by direct debit. If you have a pre-payment meter you may benefit from discussing your options with Ebico, a not-for-profit energy supplier, which charges the same rate no matter how its customers pay: www.ebico.org.uk or phone 0800 458 7689.

There are lots of things you can do around your home to help save heat and energy – and save money!

UNPLUG IT!

If chargers for devices such as mobile phones and MP3 players were unplugged when not in use, the UK could save enough electricity each year to power 115,000 homes.
Credit unions

Credit unions aim to help you take control of your money by encouraging you to save what you can and borrow only what you can afford to pay back.

Credit unions provide financial services, such as savings accounts and affordable loans. A credit union is member-owned and run purely for the benefit of its members. There are no outside shareholders and any profits are returned to the members as a dividend. It provides its services locally, at a time when many post offices and banks are closing.

To find out more contact your local credit union:

60 Redland, Chippenham, SN14 0JB or call 01249 248313, email enquiries@wiltscreditunion.co.uk

APR – Cost of credit

How much will it really cost?

You can check how much is paid back with different APRs using the loan calculator on the Financial Services Authority ‘Moneymadeclear’ website – www.moneyadvice-service.org.uk/yourmoney/interactive/loan_calculator.aspx

As an example, the likely cost of buying a £300 cooker, based on paying over 1 year, would be £336.43 with a credit union loan (24% interest APR); or a massive £499.81 via a money lender charging 177% APR. Remember: the longer you take to repay, the higher the cost will be.

Credit unions

Cash machine charges

Some machines charge for getting money out, some don’t. You should get a warning on the screen before you get your money if you will be charged for using the machine. You can also get cashback at a shop, or if you have a bank account, you can get cash out over the counter at the Post Office.

Pay by Direct Debit

GreenSquare is offering Direct Debit as a payment method for all who currently pay full rent on their home and any customers who rent garages.

The Direct Debit payment method is one of the safest and most convenient ways of paying your bills.

To find out more please contact Customer Accounts on 01249 466120.

And don’t leave your appliances on standby. Consider buying a ‘standby saver’ that cuts the power to the devices plugged into it when they are not in use. Also, turning off your mobile phone overnight will mean you have to charge it less.

TURn YOUR lIGHTS Off – AND USE ENERGY-SAVING BUlBS

When you leave a room, turn the light off on your way out. Energy-saving light bulbs last up to 10 times longer than normal light bulbs, and each bulb fitted could save around £40 over its lifetime. They come in a range of styles, and often your energy supplier will provide you with some for free.

LIGHT TIME LIGHT

If you have an outside light, replace the bulb with an energy-saving light bulb. You can also fit a timer or a motion sensor so it’s only used when it’s needed. You can also buy solar garden lights for night time lighting.

LOOK OUT fOR THE lOGO

When purchasing new appliances, always look for the ‘Energy Saving Recommended’ logo for the most efficient models that could save you up to £34 a year. See www.sust-it.net, which lists thousands of appliances and how much they cost to run.
**Do you need furniture that won’t cost the Earth?**

Waste Not Want Not is a registered charity that collects, free of charge, unwanted items of serviceable furniture and household goods to pass on at affordable prices.

Waste Not Want Not is for people on low incomes who may be in receipt of any of the following: Income Support, Housing Benefit, Working Family Tax Credit, Disability Allowance, etc. Waste Not Want Not is also pleased to supply goods to all senior citizens and students in full-time education. Evidence of qualification may be requested to support any purchases.

For more information phone 01249 447140, email wwn303@aol.com or visit www.waste-not-want-not.org.uk

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**Domestic abuse support**

Domestic abuse can be psychological, physical, sexual or emotional. It can include many things, such as the constant breaking of trust, psychological games, harassment and financial control. It is rarely a one-off incident and is usually a pattern of abuse and controlling behaviour.

GreenSquare already provides two refuges for women in Wiltshire, and we are committed to helping people with domestic abuse issues.

GreenSquare has formed a partnership with PeopleCan and Splitz, two other charitable organisations in our area, to provide advice, help, and support to men and women who suffer from domestic abuse throughout Gloucestershire.

The number for our Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service is 0845 602 9035. Other support, regardless of where you live, is available from the National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247.

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**Tackling pigeon pests in CORSHAM**

Netting has been added to the balconies of many flats to stop the birds nesting in these areas – and birds of prey are being flown in the area from time to time to act as a further deterrent.

Neighbourhood Manager Karen Williams explains: “We have netted balconies, caught and relocated approximately 100 pigeons, and deterred them by flying birds of prey. We will continue to try to clean up the area, because the damage to our buildings and general mess the pigeons cause has been a major nuisance for many years.”

Residents in these areas have been very happy with the outcome, and local children have enjoyed the regular visits from birds of prey.

**Pictured: birds of prey have been flown in Corsham to deter pigeons**

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**Extra funding from GreenSquare has paid for a project to reduce the impact of pigeons in the Corsham area.**

GreenSquare has paid for a project to reduce the impact of pigeons in the Corsham area. This project has included the installation of netting on balconies to prevent pigeons from nesting, and the use of birds of prey to deter them from the area.

For more information on this project, please contact GreenSquare at 01249 447140, or visit their website at www.waste-not-want-not.org.uk.
If you are expecting a visit from GreenSquare’s staff, please make sure that your dog is safe and secured.

Several GreenSquare staff have been bitten by dogs in the past year, and, although these incidents have thankfully caused relatively minor injuries, there is a potential for more serious injuries.

GreenSquare has a legal duty to report dog bites to the police under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. If you do not keep your dog under control, your dog could be destroyed and you could be banned from keeping a dog. The maximum penalty for allowing a dog you own, or are in charge of, to be dangerously out of control is two years imprisonment, or a fine, or both.

- Staff in one of our neighbourhood teams worked with the police and RSPCA in response to reports that an out-of-control dog in Chippenham had killed cats in the neighbourhood. Staff were concerned that the dog’s next victim could be a child. When the dog owner agreed to sign the dog over, they arranged for the RSPCA to collect the dog, a banned breed. The dog was later destroyed because of its unpredictable nature and genuine concerns about the safety of anyone who came in contact with it.

Have you heard of ‘Social HomeBuy’?

The Social HomeBuy scheme gives you the chance to buy your housing association home through ‘shared ownership’.

You can buy a share of your home and pay rent on the remaining share. The share must be at least 25 per cent, but you can buy more or even the whole property if you can afford it. You’ll get a discount so you won’t have to pay the full ‘market value’ [how much your home could fetch on the housing market].

Not all homes are eligible, in which case we may be able to offer an alternative.

You can use this scheme if you can’t afford to buy your home through the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire schemes. (see article on page 7). You need to be able to show that you can afford to meet the costs of owning your own home as well as other living costs.

If you would like more information, contact Mel Bristow on 01793 602861 or email sales@greensquaregroup.com

Resident Communications Group (RCG)

The newly-improved RCG offers opportunities for different levels of involvement!

You can sign up to give your views on our communication materials – to help ensure that they are easy to understand and jargon-free. Or you can do this PLUS be a contributor, sending in your articles and photographs for this magazine and our website. You can contribute often or just from time to time - whatever suits you best! And you can take part by post as well as by email. All members of the group will be invited to meet other RCG members at 2 workshops each year, with opportunities for discussion and debate about what’s good and what can be improved.

To sign up please contact Sue Rendell on 01249 466163.

GreenSquare goes a little greener

Our Methuen Park office recently had 204 Solar PV (photovoltaic) System panels installed over three roof pitches.

“The installation of these panels is another great example of us putting the ‘green’ into GreenSquare!” said Stewart Gayden, Group Reinvestment Manager. “The panels will save energy and save us money because of lower electricity bills with a payback period on this investment of less than ten years.”
The Skype’s the limit!

GreenSquare residents at Jargeau Court in Corsham had a live video chat with residents at Glovers Court in Malmesbury, as part of ‘Spring Online Week’ recently. Nearly 60 residents took part in the event.

“Some residents had never seen Skype before and were amazed how clear and easy it was to use,” said IT Learning Coordinator Pam Burton. “One said he wished he had Skype so he could see his grandchildren in America, so hopefully we will now be able to help him with that!”

GreenSquare’s AVON AREA

If you would like more information on our free computer training for residents please contact Avon area Coordinator Pam Burton – 07771 957775

Complaints

GreenSquare received 24 new formal complaints between January and March 2012. We agreed with 16 of these complaints and have made changes to our processes in order to improve our service.

From these complaints, we can see that the biggest areas of issue include: mould and damp; quality of diagnosis and repairs; defects work on newly-built properties; housing allocations; and the handling of neighbour complaints.

As a result of customer feedback from these formal complaints, we have noted that:

- defects work on newly-built properties needs to be completed more quickly, and better communication with new residents about this is needed;
- staff must consider carefully how they communicate with customers, including the wording of letters;
- care must be taken to carry out a quality repair and correct diagnosis of maintenance and defect issues;
- staff need to check what residents’ preferred method of contact is before visiting or calling;
- work needs to be completed in target times – if this is not possible, communication about why and when it will be completed is needed;
- our answerphone message on the out of hours mobile needed to be changed to allow for periods of high call volume; and
- work with residents on how to manage mould and damp needs to continue.

If you would like any further information on how to make a complaint, please refer to your complaints leaflet, go to our website www.greensquaregroup.com or call the Customer Service Co-ordinator, Celia Fletcher, on 01249 466148.

Your feedback and views matter to us and they can help us to shape how we work in future.

Check today to see whether you qualify for a Disabled Persons Railcard. Visit www.disabledpersonsrailcard.co.uk or phone 0845 605 0525. A one year railcard costs £20, which enables 30% off tickets.

Anyone with mobility or accessibility issues will find...
How many bedrooms are in your home?

If you have one or more spare bedrooms, from April 2013 you may have your housing benefit (regardless of the amount) reduced. This could affect you if:

- you are 16-61 years old; and
- even if you are sick or disabled.

You won’t be affected if you receive pension credits. By April 13, the pension credit age will be around 61 years and 6 months.

If you have one spare bedroom, you will lose 14% of your housing benefit.

If you have two or more spare bedrooms, you will lose 25% of your housing benefit.

But what is a spare bedroom?

There are very specific rules about how a spare bedroom will be used. From April 2013, one bedroom will be required for:

- Each adult couple
- Any other person aged 16 or over
- Two children of the same gender under the age of 16
- Two children under the age of 10 regardless of their gender
- Any other child
- A carer (who does not normally live with you), if you or your partner need overnight care.
- If you or your partner need to sleep apart due to medical reasons, or if you have a spare room for your children or grandchildren, these rules will still apply.

I have a spare bedroom, what does this mean?

For each spare bedroom you have, you will receive 14% less housing benefit of the rent you pay, every week. You will therefore be responsible for the payment of this.

So, if you live in a two-bedroom property with a spare bedroom, and have a rent of £70 per week, 14% of this is £9.80. You will then be responsible for £9.80 per week or £39.20 every four weeks.

If you live in a three-bedroom house with two teenage boys aged 10 and 14, you will be classed as having a spare bedroom. You claim full housing benefit, and your rent is £110 per week. You will lose £15.40 per week, and will be expected to pay £15.40 per week or £61.60 every four weeks.

What should I do now?

If you are worried about being able to pay your rent or would like to move to a smaller property, please contact us to discuss your options.

You can also contact the Citizens Advice Bureau on 08444 111 444 or the Governments information line on 0845 605 7064.

The bedroom tax

From April 2013, the total amount of benefit you receive will be capped to be:

- £500 per week for single parents
- £500 per week for couples with or without children
- £350 per week for single people without children

This does not apply if you get pension credit or working tax credit, or a member of your household is claiming disability living allowance, attendance allowance, or the support element of employment support allowance.

Limit on benefits

From April 2013, the total amount of benefit you receive will be capped to be:

- £500 per week for single parents
- £500 per week for couples with or without children
- £350 per week for single people without children

This does not apply if you get pension credit or working tax credit, or a member of your household is claiming disability living allowance, attendance allowance, or the support element of employment support allowance.

the Time Out Open London guide a great asset in getting the most out of the city. If you’re lucky enough to be going to either the Olympic or Paralympic Games this will prove invaluable. The guide covers sightseeing, walks, shops, nightlife and activities. It costs £10.99 and is available from all good bookshops or at www.timeoutguides.co.uk

You can save up to 50% off a 2012 Haven holiday if you are a Motability customer. For more information phone 0871 230 1917 and quote Z_MOT2, or visit haven.com/mot

You can save up to 50% off a 2012 Haven holiday if you are a Motability customer. For more information phone 0871 230 1917 and quote Z_MOT2, or visit haven.com/mot

If you’re going away remember to check you holiday insurance and make sure it covers you for all your health problems, and remember to shop around!

The RADAR National Key Scheme offers disabled people access to around 9,000 locked public toilets throughout the country, through a provision of a special key. Keys can be bought through selected mobility shops, disability groups and through the RADAR website at www.radar-shop.org.uk. Prices vary and start at around £3.50.
Gardening without a spade!

with Lynne Brook, GreenSquare resident

I love gardening, but ill health and disability meant I had to think up alternative ways to indulge.

Wall to wall gravel solved the ‘mowing’ problem. I added a row of plastic storage boxes, a roll of reed screening, compost and plants.

The only tools I use are a trowel, hand fork, secateurs (garden snips), and a hedge trimmer (even I can’t stop the conifers getting too big).

The row of boxes along the boundary holds perennials (easy to grow and come back year after year), plus grow-bags for potatoes, tomatoes and onions. A large bucket holds the rhubarb and a tray is ideal for salad leaves.

Hanging baskets look nice, but with a layer of peas round the sides and nasturtiums in the top I get some extra veg, and the overhanging flowers attract insects to pollinate. The flowers are edible (a peppery addition to salads and stir fries).

Add in dwarf beans, corn, beetroot and strawberries and my garden looks great and tastes better than supermarket produce.

Add in the odd seat and a few ornaments and I’ve got my own slice of paradise.

Go on, get the gardening bug!

We are looking for residents from Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, and Wiltshire who are interested in taking a role as a Board or Panel member.

You don’t need any particular skills and experience to be considered for the roles but you must be enthusiastic and committed to working with GreenSquare and its great team of existing Board and Panel members. You will help make sure that GreenSquare delivers the right services for your area and invests money in the places where the Boards and Panel feel it is needed most.

APPLICATION DEADLINE
Friday 31 August

INTERVIEWS
Evening – Thursday 13 September

Have you got around 12 hours per month that you can give to this role?

In return, we can pay Board and Panel members £2000 per year, and refund any reasonable costs you incur from carrying out your role (transport, child/dependent care, for example). We provide you with IT equipment (if you don’t already have it) so that you can take part in our e-mail and electronic discussions with other members. And there’s an opportunity to develop your skills with free GreenSquare Academy training courses.

We have one vacancy on the Panel, but would like to recruit more people who are willing to learn about the Board and Panel roles so that they are ready to take on a role when vacancies occur in the future.

You can develop your knowledge and understanding from attending these meetings as an observer and enrolling on our GreenSquare Academy in the mean time – a chance to ‘get up to speed’ without feeling any pressure!

Are you interested? Contact Alice Pearce on 01793 602804 to find out more, email alice.pearce@greensquaregroup.com to find out more or see www.greensquaregroup.com/comeonboard

We particularly welcome applications from residents from Black Minority Ethnic backgrounds who are under represented on our Boards and Panel.

COME ON BOARD
Your chance to shape services for residents!

We are now recruiting for more people to get involved with GreenSquare’s work – either on one of our new Communities Boards or the Resident Scrutiny Panel.

Comes along and find out more about the Communities Board’s work so far and its priorities for next year – plus what the Resident Scrutiny Panel have been working on, and your chance to ask questions of the Board and Panel members.

Corsham Community Centre • 6.30pm • 23 October 2012

All those attending will be entered into a prize draw with a chance to win £100 in shopping vouchers. Refreshments and transport will be provided.

Please let us know you’re coming, and for more information contact Alice Pearce on 01793 602804 or email alice.pearce@greensquaregroup.com. Also contact Alice if you would like information about the Board meetings in the other areas.

Communities Boards Annual Meeting AVON

Gardening without a spade!
Residents do make a difference

with Eve Crook & Josie Owens

The Residents’ Forum is led by a group of residents who are passionate about making a difference in our housing association.

We challenge staff to make sure that residents views are taken into account when making decisions. We all work together to ensure GreenSquare provides an excellent service to everyone.

Residents had a chance to quiz Homes4Wiltshire about housing allocations at our recent Residents Forum AGM.

GreenSquare’s staff and Board were given the opportunity to show residents how their rent money would be spent in 2012. This comes from the Residents’ Business Plan and what residents said their priorities were.

All residents are welcome to attend our meetings. They are 100% resident led.

For more information please email josie.owens@greensquaregroup.com (Chair) or eve.crook@greensquaregroup.com (Vice Chair). Together we CAN make a difference!

Please call Sue Rendell on 01249 465465 for more information about the Residents’ Forum and details of our next meeting.

Pictured: Resident Forum members recently presented a cheque to Dorothy House Hospice.

WHAT IS

Wheels to Work

GreenSquare has launched a new ‘Wheels To Work’ scheme for people on its ‘Whatever’ and ‘What Now’ work placement projects.

The scheme makes it easy for those on a placement to get to and from work, with the free loan of a moped for the 13 weeks.

The new moped loan scheme is being paid for with funding from Tidestone, GreenSquare’s construction company.

GreenSquare arranges the compulsory basic training and also provides a motorcycle helmet, jacket, gloves and high visibility vest. Insurance, road tax, breakdown cover and general maintenance is all included.

Contact the Community Involvement Team on 01249 466163 to find out more.

Planned maintenance

The following properties are due to receive the Planned Maintenance Service within the next six months. This involves a surveyor visiting your home and looking to see whether any work is required, both inside and outside the property.

This will help us to plan when we need to replace items in your home. You can expect our surveyor to look at the following: inside – the kitchen; bathroom; ceilings in all the rooms; loft or attic; floors; stairs; heating and hot water systems; electrics; and doors. outside – the roof; walls; garden; paths; boundary fences; gutters; and doors.

After the survey, the surveyor will discuss with you all the repair and improvement works they have identified.

CHIPPENHAM
Pipsmore Road, Lords Mead, Hungerdown Lane, Neeld Crescent, Redland and Wessex Roads.

If your property is not listed and you would just like to find out more, please contact Eddie Barr on 01249 466092 or Ken Neale on 01249 466125.
**Rhubarb crumble**

Rhubarb is great in summer! Try our easy crumble recipe for a delicious and comforting family pudding.

**Ingredients**
- 10 sticks of rhubarb
- 1 tsp of powdered ginger
- 4 tbsp of water
- 110g/4oz butter, softened
- 8 tbsp of castor sugar
- 110g/4oz demerara sugar
- 180-200g/6-7oz flour

**Method**
1. Preheat oven to 180c/350f/Gas 4.
2. Cut the rhubarb into 7cm long sticks and place on oven tray, sprinkle with water and castor sugar and roast in the oven for 10 mins.
3. Once cooked, remove from the oven, sprinkle over the ginger and mix well.
4. Fill an ovenproof dish about 4cm deep with the rhubarb.
5. Rub the butter into the flour and sugar to make the crumble topping. Sprinkle over the rhubarb and bake in oven for 35-45 mins or until the crumble topping is crisp and golden brown and the rhubarb filling has softened and is bubbling.
6. Remove and allow to cool before serving with cream or ice cream.

If you would like to have any part of this explained or translated, or in a different format such as in larger print, or on audio tape, please contact us on 01249 465465 to discuss your needs.

## How to Enter

Make sure you keep up-to-date on what’s happening in your area. Facebook is also a great way for getting in touch with us and chatting to other residents.

To be entered into the prize draw you must:
- click ‘like’ on your Communities Area Board facebook page;
- click on the iPad icon and complete our short survey; and
- read our terms of use and accept them.