

HOME

matters

THE WELLNESS ISSUE

Looking after your mind



Looking after your health



Looking after your money



www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

HOME *matters*

Welcome to the March 2021 edition of Home Matters



Welcome to the first edition of 2021. As we head into this new year it is hard to believe that we have now been living with COVID-19 and the changes it has brought for nearly 12 months.

Understandably, reports have suggested that the Coronavirus pandemic has impacted the nation's wellbeing.

Please be rest assured, the wellbeing of our residents is of the utmost importance as we continue to face this pandemic. In this issue we look at how you can incorporate the Five Ways to Wellbeing into your daily lives from looking after your mental health to tips on staying active and healthy at home.

With the vaccination programme now being rolled out, it really does feel like the end is in sight and the mood of the nation is starting to lift. Turn to page 13 to see how one tenant from Rawmarsh feels after receiving hers.

This issue also looks at the great work being done around the borough, not only through the pandemic but as a result of the bad weather we saw earlier this year with our housing repairs team swapping hammers for shovels as they cleared snow from outside the homes of our elderly residents.

Finally, as we hopefully head out of our last lockdown, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank residents, volunteers and groups who have worked tirelessly to support the people of Rotherham during the past year.

The community spirit that has been shown during this difficult time has been heart-warming and our Council Housing family is as resilient as ever.

Stay safe and well,

Councillor Dominic Beck
Cabinet Member for Housing
Rotherham Council



SAVE THE DATE!

TENANT'S VIRTUAL OPEN DAY

10am to 12 noon, Wednesday 17 March 2021



www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing



@HousingRMBC

#tenantevent21

All tenants are invited to take part.

Although we can't have our usual event this year, we still want to celebrate all the good things that have been taking place over the past 12 months.

Join us to find out what has been happening in your community and how you can get involved.

To register your interest contact customerinvolvement@rotherham.gov.uk



Pictured left to right occupational therapists Helen Eastham, Abigail Yates and Danielle Le-Vine

ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE

Rotherham Council's occupational therapists are experts in adapting houses to meet specific needs – and now their knowledge is also shaping the future of housing in the borough

Housing occupational therapist Abigail Yates and her colleagues find ways to adapt homes so people who are disabled or have long term health conditions can live safely, and as independently, as possible. From cancer to spinal injuries, age-related mobility loss to the arrival of a child with disabilities – they work with families at every age and stage of life.

Abigail said: “Our goal is for people to have homes that work for them in the long term – that allow for aging or the progress of a health condition.”

While their assessments are based on individual needs, their work also identifies common patterns – which are fed into the Council's housing strategy.

Strategic Housing Manager Sarah Watts said: “We've been able to identify different types of housing that are more adaptable to a wider range of complex needs. Incorporating this in our new developments is allowing us to meet more people's long-term needs.”

This includes building more bungalows, larger houses with level access bedroom, or homes with two reception rooms.

Abigail explains: “Flexible space makes it possible to do things like create a wheelchair accessible bathroom, put in hoists or lifts, give an autistic sibling the space they need, or provide a room for live-in carers.”

A number of properties for specialist needs have recently been made available and many more are planned.

Abigail said: “It's great to see someone get a home that works for them. Daily life becomes easier and they have more dignity, choice and control. The benefits for their health, their relationships and their day-to-day happiness are huge. It makes all the difference.”

From April 1, we will let specialist properties through fixed term secure tenancies. This will allow us to review the suitability of the home for the household, and check whether they still need the adaptations to allow us to help more people who need this type of home.

HELPING YOU BACK INTO WORK



Being in employment is an effective way to improve not only your wellbeing but that of your family and community.

Whether you are taking the first steps into the world of work, looking for re-employment or you want to brush up on your skills, the Pathways Rotherham team are here to help.



Andy Johnson is an employment advisor in the Pathways team. “The pandemic has had a huge impact and a lot of people are struggling financially. It’s my job to give people the confidence and skills they need to move towards or into employment and regain their financial independence.

“The team can help with a whole range of support from writing CV’s to helping identify childcare options. It isn’t a ‘one size fit’s all approach’ and I like to take the time to get to know people, their skills and abilities so that the support offered is very much tailored to meet their needs.”

The team can also support people into training and education.

“Training is a great way for someone new to the employment market to gain experience. It also helps anyone looking to change their employment sector due to redundancy or by choice by opening up a whole new industry of jobs they can apply for.

“There are so many training courses out there including; Health and Social Care, Customer Service, Construction, and IT and we can help find the right one for you.”

HOW CAN THE PATHWAYS TEAM HELP YOU?

- Support you to overcome barriers to learning, training, access to education and employment
- Offer one-to-one coaching and support
- Access specialist support around debt, housing or substance misuse
- Build your confidence and self-esteem
- Find specialist support to help you with childcare needs
- Identify suitable volunteering or work experience opportunities
- Access appropriate learning or training courses
- Help develop a bespoke CV



SKILLS



SUPPORT



EMPLOYMENT



ADVICE



COACHING



EDUCATION



TRAINING

Rotherham resident Shola Oshodi-Shidi joined the Pathways programme in November 2020. In his native Nigeria Shola was an experienced business administrator working in the banking sector but he was worried his skills were not transferable to the UK job market.

“After spending five years volunteering in Rotherham I contacted the team to help me find work. I wanted to be able to provide for my wife, 10-year-old daughter and four-year-old son and give them the security and peace of mind having a regular wage brings.

“I was worried my qualifications would not be enough to secure work in administration and I had started to look at factory and warehouse jobs.

“I was assigned a Pathways Advisor, Andy, who told me that my skillset was very much aligned to those needed for admin roles. I was delighted that I could stay in a role that I had a passion for.

“To really brush up on my skills Andy sourced a training opportunity for me and I soon achieved a level two qualification in business administration which was a great addition to my CV.




“As we began to search for potential jobs, the team helped me spruce up my CV to attract prospective employers and helped me complete applications for the roles I wanted to apply for.”

After just a few weeks Shola had secured an interview for a job at Rotherham Council. “As with a lot of interviews currently taking place it was done virtually. Andy helped

me to set up the software I needed on my computer and gave me a pack on interview techniques which was really useful in helping me prepare.

“Not long after the interview I got the call to say I had been successful! I can’t wait to get back into the world of work. It’s comforting to know I will be able to provide for my family again and we can all look forward to the future.”



If you feel like you would benefit from one-to-one help and advice about employment, skills or training contact the team on **01709 249600** or email **employmentsolutionsteam@rotherham.gov.uk**

NEWS FROM ROTHERFED

COULD YOU BE A ROTHERHAM HERO?



No one would have thought that a year on we are still living with the changes the pandemic has brought to our daily lives.

The Rotherham Heroes scheme has now responded to over 5,500 requests for help from vulnerable residents since it was set up in April last year, with volunteers still playing an essential role in the community.

By becoming a volunteer you can help vulnerable residents with some of the basics such as

- shopping for essentials
- collecting prescriptions
- dog walking
- making weekly befriending calls
- signposting to support services
- and delivering emergency food parcels

FISH AND CHIPS ALL ROUND!

Peter Keyworth, a member of the Leverton Way TARA in Dalton, is making sure that those who are shielding in his community don't miss out on their fish supper by delivering hot fish and chips straight to their door!



Peter Keyworth



Peter making a delivery to neighbour Robert

Peter says: "People phone me up or stop me on my daily dog walks to place their orders which I then collect from our local chip shop and deliver to their homes. People shouldn't miss out on a Friday favourite just because they can't go out. For many, it's a real treat at the end of the week."

"In the summer, when lockdown had eased a little and the weather was better, those that could, came out to eat at a social distance which was a great way to get everyone together."

Robert is one of Peter's regulars and says: "This past year has been really tough. Having to isolate and not being able to see friends and family makes the days really drag. Having Peter deliver my supper on a Friday is a great pick-me-up and gives me something to look forward to after a long week."

If you've got a few hours to spare to make a real difference to someone's life call 01709 807319 or visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/volunteer



Christina Colclough and son Frankie

A FRIENDLY CHAT

A new volunteer programme offering friendship calls is lifting the spirits of our lonely and isolated residents.

Christina Colclough of Wingfield heard about the befriending service after contacting RotherFed.

“When I heard that so many in our community were struggling with isolation and loneliness I wanted to do what I could to help.”

Christina works full time and is currently homeschooling her children, Imogen aged 14 and eight-year-old Frankie.

“I have been assigned two residents who I call on a weekly basis to chat. Lots of people who are shielding are on their own and simply want some company. All I need to do is spare a little of my time and it really does make a difference to somebody’s week.”

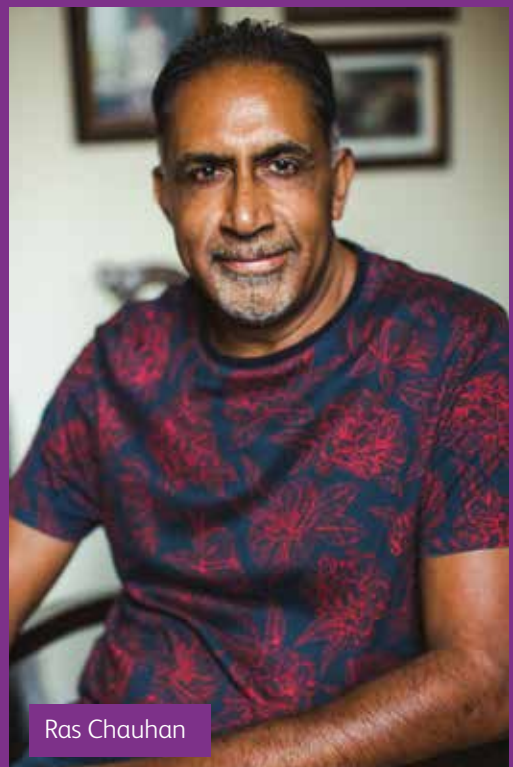
A CATCH UP WITH RAS...

Remember volunteer Ras Chauhan from our winter edition? Ras and his wife were driving back to their home when they stopped at a pedestrian crossing. An elderly gentleman began to cross the road when he lost his footing, and fell to the floor. Ras and his wife immediately rushed to his aid.

The gentleman had suffered a nasty cut to his head and hands and so Ras patched him up while his wife dialed for an ambulance. When the gentleman told them his name Ras soon realised he had regularly chatted to the gentleman in his role as a befriending volunteer.

Ras said: “I couldn’t believe it! It just goes to show what a small world we live in and how close our community is.”

After learning the ambulance could take over an hour Ras decided to take him to A&E himself. “The gentleman was admitted to hospital for a couple of days so I haven’t yet been able to speak to him to see how he is, but when I do, we will have a lot to talk about.”



Ras Chauhan

RotherFed’s Phil Hayes says: “Lockdown has kept us apart from our family, friends and loved ones but in other ways it has brought us closer together. Now, more than ever, people are turning towards their communities for support, help and friendship.

“At RotherFed we are seeing more and more people wanting to get involved in their local groups, engage with community initiatives and help the borough’s vulnerable residents.

“As the effects of the pandemic continue, I would encourage anyone with some free time to sign up to become a volunteer. You can really brighten up someone’s day.”

If you would like to become a befriending volunteer and improve the health and wellbeing of someone in your community contact Jane Owen on 07399 888034.

Five Ways to Wellbeing



TAKING CARE OF YOU – THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB OF ALL

Covid-19 has tipped everything on its head. It's natural to feel anxious during times of uncertainty, but there are steps we can take to make sure we are kind to ourselves and look after our health and wellbeing. Remember we can only look after other people if we are well and healthy ourselves.

THINK ABOUT YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

Many people are enjoying a daily walk as part of lockdown, but others are concerned about worrying new habits such as drinking more or eating unhealthy food and snacks. Think about patterns you have fallen into and whether you could change them to create more positive routines.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

If you can't meet in person, think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family via telephone, video calls or social media instead. Why not try a family quiz on Zoom? RotherFed can also arrange a weekly call with a volunteer just to chat with if you are feeling isolated. Call **07399 888034** to find out more.

HELP AND SUPPORT OTHERS

Think about how you could help those around you – it could make a big difference to them and can make you feel better too. If you have the time and are able, you could simply check in (COVID safely) on elderly neighbours and people who are isolating. Just a chat over the fence can lift their spirits and your own.

TALK ABOUT YOUR WORRIES

It's quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless from time to time. Remember that this is a difficult time for everyone and sharing with family and friends how you are feeling can help.

If you've felt low or anxious for more than a couple of weeks at a time then it may be useful to check out some of the help and support available, such as:

- Rotherhive is Rotherham's own mental health website, visit www.rotherhive.co.uk
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) offers talking therapies for adults aged 18 and over. Self-refer by calling **01709 447755** or visit iapt.rdash.nhs.uk
- You can also speak to your GP who can help you access the support you need
- Every Mind Matters offers expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and how to deal with anxiety, visit www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters
- Be The One has information if you, or someone you know is thinking about suicide, visit www.be-the-one.co.uk

STAYING ACTIVE

When you exercise, endorphins are released, making you feel happier – which we could all do with more of these days. Here are some ways to stay fit while at home.

Substitute gym equipment for home essentials

No weights? Try tins of beans! Of course, it doesn't have to be beans – soup tins will do just fine.

Make use of the stairs

If you have stairs in your house then make the most of them. Push yourself to walk up and down them an extra five times a day to start with and increase overtime.

Mix it up

Mix it up so you don't get bored of the same routine. Exercising doesn't always have to be fast paced. YouTube has some great tutorials on Yoga and Pilates.

Set your goal

No matter how big or small your goal is, if it's important to you then try your best.

Stretch it out

No one likes a pulled muscle so don't forget to stretch before and after exercising.

Get Healthy Rotherham is a free service designed to help you to make healthy changes to your lifestyle.

Visit www.gethealthyrotherham.co.uk or call **01709 718720**.

DON'T STAY GLUED TO THE NEWS

Try to limit the time you spend watching, reading or listening to coverage of the Covid outbreak.

It's great to keep informed, but constantly hearing about Covid can be stressful. You could set yourself a specific time to read updates or limit yourself to checking a couple of times a day.

DO THINGS YOU ENJOY

Focusing on your favourite hobby, learning something new or simply taking time to relax should give you some relief from anxious thoughts and feelings and can boost your mood. Remember, there are free tutorials and courses online as well as entertainment, such as quizzes and music concerts.

Visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/rotherham-together for free and exciting activities taking place where you live.

GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Good, quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough. Lockdowns can affect our sleep patterns but try to maintain regular times for going to bed and getting up. Creating a restful environment with music, avoiding screen time and even some deep breathing can all help to get off to sleep.

For more advice visit 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' at www.rotherham.gov.uk.

SPOT THE SIGNS OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

Better awareness of financial abuse means that more cases are being reported, but lots of people are still not seeking the help they need.

You might think of financial abusers as scammers, such as someone calling your home for your bank details or passwords, but this is only one example. In most cases the abuser is someone you might not expect – a family member, a friend, or even a carer.

Someone experiencing financial abuse might be struggling with their mental health. They might feel withdrawn, anxious, scared or ashamed. Remember, there is no reason to be embarrassed – abusers often groom their victim to the point that they trust them and don't realise the person is doing something wrong.

Financial abuse can take a lot of different forms so will look different within different relationships.

Here are some signs to look out for:

- Bank or cheque withdrawals or payments that you don't recognise
- Missing bank statements, documents or items like jewellery
- An unexplained shortage of money
- Benefits being paid into someone else's bank account
- Home improvements or repairs that are badly done
- New loans or credit cards taken out without any reason
- Neglecting to look after themselves or their home
- A lot of junk mail or phone calls, or unexplained visitors

Financial abuse can leave you feeling isolated, lacking in confidence and trapped. But there's no need to struggle alone. If you think that you or someone you know is at risk of or is being financially abused, there are lots of ways that you can report it and get the help you need.



You can contact the Council through the First Contact team, who will work with you to investigate your concern and look at the best course of action. Phone the team directly on **01709 822330**.

Visit the Council website at www.rotherham.gov.uk where you can report concerns about suspected financial abuse via an online form. You can also report your worries to a housing officer or another member of Council staff.

In an emergency, please contact the police directly on 999.



IT'S A FAIR COP!

Do you know we have Neighbourhood policing teams to support communities with issues that matter to them?

The teams provide communities with dedicated police officers, police community support officers and youth engagement officers who listen to, and work with the public, local groups and businesses to reduce crime, protect vulnerable residents and increase community safety.

As well as their day jobs the teams have also been supporting their communities throughout the pandemic. After visiting vulnerable residents, it became obvious to Clare Ahern and the team at Rotherham South Station in Maltby that food was becoming a real problem for lots of people.

Clare told us: "Our officers found many residents were unable to go out to get the food they needed, with some struggling to get by on the basic provisions they had left in their cupboards. We are passionate about the communities we work in and wanted to do what we could to help those in need."

The team soon got involved in collecting and delivering food to local foodbanks, as well as supporting volunteers by delivering hot meals to vulnerable people in Brinsworth.

Clare added "The pandemic has given us the opportunity to really get to know our residents and we want to continue to build relationships to make sure we continue to tackle the local issues that matter most to them."



Pictured above PCSOs Tony Brown and Glyn Athersych; inset Brinsworth volunteers.

To find your local neighbourhood police team visit www.southyorks.police.uk

You can also find more information, report a non-emergency crime or sign up for SYP Alerts to get messages, updates and information about your area.

Call **999** if it is an emergency

Call **101** for general enquiries or to report a crime in a non-emergency.

 @RothNorthNHP

 @RothSouthNHP

 RotherhamNorthNHP

 RotherhamSouthNHP



NEW SHARED OWNERSHIP HOMES NOW AVAILABLE

The Council began offering shared ownership homes last year, with all 30 of the houses completed on The Bellows development in Rawmarsh now sold.

More shared ownership homes will soon be available in Broom, which will also include 24 homes for council rent. We also still have a few shared ownership houses remaining in East Herringthorpe.

RETIRE IN STYLE!

We have 15 stunning new shared ownership apartments in Maltby, which unlike the other schemes are exclusively available for people aged 55 and over.

Situated just off Braithwell Road, the central location makes socialising and taking care of essentials simple: a supermarket, leisure centre, post office, cafes and hairdressers all close by.

The modern apartments have been designed to a high specification, each has two bedrooms and two bathrooms and the block has a lift, making them particularly suitable for people with mobility problems.

The development is offered exclusively to people aged 55 and above on a shared-ownership basis, meaning they could own a brand-new property from as little as £30,000.

If you or anyone you know may be interested, more information can be found here:

www.rotherliving.co.uk/developments

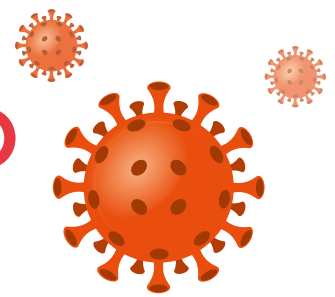
WHAT IS SHARED OWNERSHIP FOR THE OVER 55s?

This scheme recognises that as people age their housing needs change. It can become more difficult to access a mortgage. Some people may have equity in their current home and may be looking to downsize.

Older people's shared ownership works in a similar way to shared ownership, where you can purchase a small amount of your new home (from 25 per cent) and increase this as you feel you can. The maximum amount is capped at 75 per cent so you will not own your home outright. However at the point of 75 per cent, you will not be required to pay rent on the share you do not own.



PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM COVID-19



As you will have heard, the Covid-19 vaccine is now being rolled out across the UK. It is important that as many people as possible get the vaccine to make sure we can all protect the most vulnerable people in our communities.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL



Rita Deeley (above), from Rawmarsh had her vaccine at her local vaccination centre in January. She says: “The vaccine itself was barely noticeable and I didn’t have any side effects apart from a little tiredness the next day. I just made sure I took it easy and by the next day I was fine.

“I have been self-isolating by myself since March last year and having the vaccination feels like I’m one step closer to being able to see my family, including my new great-granddaughter who I’ve not yet been able to meet.”

Lots of people are eager to take up the vaccine but for others, we know that the decision to have the vaccine can be daunting and it is important to know how it works:

- The vaccine doesn’t give you Covid-19. Vaccines are designed to give your body the information it needs so your immune system knows how to fight a disease. A weakened version of the disease is not part of the vaccination.
- You may have a sore arm and feel a little bit under the weather for a few days following having the vaccine, but this is completely normal.
- The vaccine is given through two doses. The first dose provides most of the protection against the virus. The second dose is a booster which protects you for longer.
- The vaccine has been tested vigorously and has independent approval.
- The vaccine does not contain a computer chip. The only ‘tracking’ involved is a note in your NHS patient record that says you’ve had the vaccine.
- You will need to continue to follow the local Covid-19 restrictions even if you have been vaccinated, until the Government says otherwise.
- Following vaccination some people will still become ill with Covid-19, but it is much less likely that this will lead to hospitalisation or death.
- You will be contacted by your local GP or the NHS when your vaccine is ready.

For more information about the vaccine visit www.nhs.uk

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HOUSE FIRES

Losing your home to a fire is a scary thought, but there's plenty you can do to prevent fires from starting and spreading through your home.

To help keep you and your home safe from fire:

- Make sure you have smoke alarms on every floor of your home
- Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they are working so test them regularly
- Take extra care in the kitchen and never leave cooking unattended
- Do not plug too many appliances into an electrical outlet
- Keep matches and lighters away from children
- Do not use damaged or frayed electrical cords or extension cords
- Keep clothes well away from heaters and open fires
- Put out cigarettes properly and dispose of them carefully
- Plan an escape route
- Do not leave candles and tea lights unattended



To book a free home safety check by South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue visit www.syfire.gov.uk

IT HAPPENS!

KEEP A LID ON YOUR MISFORTUNE...



However much you prepare, accidents still happen and so it is a good idea to take out home contents insurance.

It's our responsibility as your landlord to insure the structure of your home but this doesn't include what's inside, like your furniture and personal possessions.

As a Rotherham Council tenant you are eligible for a home contents insurance scheme, created just for you starting from just 56p a week.

There's no long term commitment, it can be cancelled at any time and there's no excess to pay if you need to make a claim.

- Pay-as-you-go
- No excess
- Choose to pay with your rent
- Choice of payment methods

To apply for home insurance with Aon visit www.rotherham.gov.uk or call 01709 255633.

REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE AND SO MUCH MORE

A community isn't just the people who live around you, it includes all kinds of people who are working to make our estates safe and happy places to live.

Throughout the pandemic and the winter weather our repairs and maintenance partners at Mears and Engie have been doing much more than fixing broken fences and boilers.



MEARS

Every year, Mears along with Age UK hosts a Christmas lunch for the community with the team preparing and serving up to 100 residents. Although the pandemic meant this couldn't take place this year it didn't stop the team spreading the Christmas joy by delivering hampers to older residents. Hampers, which included Christmas cake, chocolates and activities packs were delivered to 150 homes throughout December.

A Mears representative said: "This Christmas was the loneliest for many older people in our community and we hope that these gifts brought some Christmas cheer."

When we were faced with bad weather conditions at the start of the year, the Engie teams were out gritting and clearing paths to make sure our most vulnerable residents had safe access to their homes. Even though the weather conditions were so bad that the team had to abandon their vehicles, they were back out the next day to help keep the roads clear.

Some Engie staff have also volunteered for the befriending volunteer service, which provides a friendly ear to those feeling lonely. More information about the befriending service can be found on page 7.



KEEPING US SAFE IN YOUR HOMES

Please continue to follow these simple rules when we are working inside your home:

- Socially distance from our employees
- Wear face masks when speaking to our team members
- Ten minutes before we arrive please open a window or door to ventilate the room where work is taking place.

TOGETHER WE CAN ALL LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER



HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Rotherham Council has contracted The Listening Ear South Yorkshire Bereavement Service to help people who have lost loved ones during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This service is FREE to anyone who has lost loved ones during the pandemic, whether from the virus or otherwise, and need support, advice or guidance.

Telephone sessions are delivered by trained counsellors who understand the difficulties and turmoil faced when someone loses a loved one.

For help and support call free on 0800 048 5224 or visit www.listening-ear.co.uk

Available from Monday to Friday between 10am and 5pm, the service is open for self-referral as well as referrals from emergency services, GPs and a range of other frontline services.

NEED ANY HELP?

If you get a call from our housing team it's often to check that you're OK.

We have a duty to inform you of any missed payments or under-payments and we can help you avoid falling into debt with your account.

Similarly, if you are having difficulty paying your Council rent, or have missed a payment, please contact us straight away.

We appreciate you may be anxious or nervous but the sooner you get in touch the quicker we can help.



Let's work together and treat each other with the respect we deserve.

GARDEN COMPETITION



2021



It's time to start getting your gardens spruced up as our popular competition returns for another year.

More details to follow soon!

CONNECT TO OUR SERVICES

ONLINE

All of our services are available 24/7 online www.rotherham.gov.uk

For housing information visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

or email councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk

TELEPHONE

For housing enquiries and repairs call **01709 336009**

