

house proud

July 2022

The magazine for St Leger Homes tenants



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A message from the Chief Executive

Hello and welcome to the July 2022 issue of HouseProud.

In this issue we tell you about the recent fire training exercise held at Shaftesbury House in Intake. This was an important event that helped St Leger Homes and the fire service practise the robust plans we have in place to look after the safety of tenants in our high-rise buildings in the unlikely event of a fire. You can read more on page four, where we also share some advice on the things you can do in your own home to keep you safe from the risk of fire.

Our Tenants' Choice Awards have returned and on page eight you can find out how to get involved in this year's event. Once again we have had some truly amazing people nominated, so I encourage everyone to get

online or call us to cast your vote for the heroes who make a difference in your community.

Finally, we are looking for someone to come and join us as a Tenant Board Member. It's so important that we keep the views of tenants at the heart of everything we do, and having tenants on our Board is key to making sure this happens - if you are interested, you can learn more on page seven.

I hope you enjoy this issue of HouseProud.

Dave

Dave Richmond,
Chief Executive



Double success in health and safety

We are pleased to announce that we have again achieved a five star rating from the British Safety Council and have also retained our ISO 45001 health and safety accreditation.

This is the 11th time that we have successfully secured the British Safety Council five star rating, which has been given in recognition of the way we manage the health and safety of our tenants and staff members.



The British Safety Council provides trusted guidance on health, safety and environmental issues, as well as campaigning to protect people from accidents, hazards and unsafe working conditions. Their independent audit examined more than sixty different elements of our performance, acknowledging our commitment to continuing to improve the systems we have for managing health and safety.

ISO 45001 is the international standard for occupational health and safety which is used in more than 60 countries across the world to protect both employees and the public

from work-related accidents and diseases.

Taking care of our tenants and staff members has always been incredibly important to us and it will continue to be an essential part of the work we do each and every day. This commitment can be seen not just in these accreditations, but also through the steps we have taken to improve fire safety across our properties - particularly in our high rise buildings where we have installed sprinklers and worked closely with the fire brigade to establish training exercises that we hope alongside other measures will help keep people safe.

Cover image: Cllr Glyn Jones; Chris Margrave, Director of Property Services; Dave Wilkinson, Chair of the St Leger Homes Board; and Cath Toovey, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Area Manager; with local firefighters.

Report it to sort it!

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is upsetting, intimidating and can have a very damaging effect on people's quality of life.

Together with the police and Doncaster Council, we are absolutely committed to reducing ASB because we believe that whoever you are and wherever you live, everyone has the right to feel safe in their own homes and communities.

You can help by reporting ASB to us so we can take the right action against those causing the problems. You can do this by calling us on **01302 862 862** or emailing **info@stlegerhomes.co.uk**. You can also report it to Doncaster Council on **01302 736000**, or to the police by calling **101**.



Tenants' and Residents' Involvement Panel (TRIP) Chair Betty Clayton pays tribute to a much loved member of the group.

In this issue it is my privilege to let you know, with great sadness, that our fantastic colleague and friend Ron Rickwood



passed away on 3rd April. Ron joined TRIP several years ago and quickly established himself by becoming TRIP secretary. We will all remember him as a very amiable gentleman with a ferocious sense of humour which we all came to admire and enjoy.

Nothing was too much trouble for Ron and he would help anyone who was having difficulties. I am not very IT

minded, so my special phone call to Ron was always "Help Ron, I'm having trouble" and he would come to my aid and sort it out. My thanks also go to his wife who was very tolerant of our need for his expertise.

Ron's background of business and entertainment was very apparent, and this made him an extremely valuable asset to TRIP. His demeanour and personality could always lighten a very intense situation with great diplomacy. We will all miss him greatly. R.I.P. Ron.

Ron's post as secretary has been taken over temporarily by our Deputy Chair until the Annual General Meeting. Hopefully, TRIP will very soon be able to meet in person once again, however until then we will continue to meet virtually.

We now only have seven members and really need to recruit more volunteers to enable us to continue working on behalf

of tenants. TRIP meet on the third Wednesday of each month and undertake reviews on matters that are crucial to the wellbeing and interests of tenants. It may be that you can only give so much of your time, but please do give it a try and come along to one of our TRIP meetings as an observer to see if it is 'your cup of tea' as the saying goes.

If you are interested then please contact the Customer Involvement Team to get more information or arrange a meeting - just call them on **01302 862 743** or email **customerinvolvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk**

Until next time, stay well and safe.

Betty



Tenants Take Over

High-rise fire training keeps tenants safe

In April, we worked with South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) to carry out a fire training exercise at Shaftesbury House in Intake, as part of work to improve safety for tenants.

The training exercise gave firefighters the opportunity to practise new procedures for responding to fires brought in following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower. It also allowed firefighters to familiarise themselves with the layout of Shaftesbury House and the challenges they might face when tackling an incident in a high-rise building. This was one of a series of training exercises that took place in high-rise buildings across South Yorkshire.

In the last few years a lot has been done to keep people living in our high-rise buildings safe, including installing sprinkler systems. This is another safety measure that can give people confidence that St Leger Homes, Doncaster Council and SYFR are all focussed on continuing to improve safety for everyone.



Cath Toovey, SYFR Area Manager, said: "Whilst classroom and online training can be effective at explaining theoretical changes to our firefighters and incident commanders, there's really no replacement for carrying out live, practical exercises like these.

"We're particularly grateful to the residents in the buildings for their patience as we plan and deliver these exercises, and to the colleges, local authorities and housing associations for working with us to make the training as realistic and effective as possible."

Here are some simple steps to avoid the risk of fire in your home:

- Test your smoke alarms once every few weeks and if they don't work then tell us by calling 01302 862862
- Never leave cooking unattended and don't use a chip pan or any other pan filled with hot oil
- Don't overload your plug sockets
- Don't leave items like mobile phones, laptops or e-cigarettes charging overnight or longer than the recommended charging time
- Don't smoke in your home
- Avoid using candles in your home
- Plan an escape route and make sure everyone in your home knows how to get out in an emergency

Gas and electrical safety checks

We are carrying out our annual gas and five year electrical safety checks and will soon be contacting some customers to arrange appointments.

These checks keep you and your family safe by making sure the gas appliances and electrical wiring in your home stay in good working order.

Poorly maintained appliances can lead to serious problems such as fire and carbon monoxide poisoning, so it's essential you let us in to carry out these important safety checks.

If you do need to speak to someone about your safety check you can call **01302 862862** (option 1) or email **tenantrepairs@stlegerhomes.co.uk**

Estates get a spring clean

April saw the return of the Great British Spring Clean, the annual event organised by Keep Britain Tidy which encourages people to come together to spruce up their local area.

Our Customer Involvement Team were out and about across the borough to help communities pick up litter and remove unwanted items from people's gardens, which even included things like tyres, a paddling pool and an old shed!

They were joined in the clean-up by Estate Caretakers and Housing Officers, along with lots of residents from the local area.

As a result of their hard work, almost 40 bags full of rubbish were removed from our estates which has made a real difference for people living locally, and has greatly improved the look of our neighbourhoods.

Mexborough also received a makeover recently when our West Area Estates Team partnered with Doncaster Council and South Yorkshire Police to join in a week of action. This campaign aimed to tackle a number of different issues that local people have been facing.

The teams made visits to tenants to offer advice about money management and support those affected in the pandemic by helping them to access funding they didn't realise they were entitled to. Safeguarding support was also given to vulnerable people in need of assistance, and the teams were able to help some new tenants to get beds and white goods through the Local Assistance Fund. As well as this, our officers made contact with around 40 people to tackle antisocial behaviour issues.

Finally, our hard working caretakers were also clearing

rubbish from people's gardens to remove fire hazards and improve the appearance of the estates - they removed 4,220kg of waste, which is equivalent to the weight of two black rhinos!

Thank you to everyone who got involved in these clean-up campaigns and helped to make a difference for our communities!



Local group liven up their estate

This Easter, members of Woodlands New Estate Tenants' Club were brightening up their neighbourhood by creating a fabulous knitted Humpty Dumpty which has been given pride of place on top of their local post box!

They made Humpty at their regular Knit and Natter group where they have also been raising money to support the people of Ukraine by making knitted sunflowers, which are Ukraine's national flower. The group are now planning to knit crowns to go on post boxes in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee marking her 70 years of service to the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

Woodland's New Estate hold their Knit and Natter group at Circuit House communal hall every Thursday from 10.30am until 3pm, so if you live locally and would like to get involved, or you just fancy a chat, then do pop in to see them!



Get help to maximise your money

If you are finding it difficult at the moment to pay all of your household bills and expenses, there is support available that can help you to maximise your money and make it a little easier to keep on top of everything.

Are you getting all the benefits you are entitled to?

As well as Universal Credit, there are a number of other benefits that you may be entitled to such as Council Tax Support and Pension Credit.

We have a benefits calculator on our website that can tell you everything you should be receiving, you can find this at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/moneywise/benefits/ or ask our Tenancy Sustainability Team by calling **01302 862050**.

Council Tax Rebate

In April, the Government announced that households living in Council Tax bands A-D

would be eligible for a £150 Council Tax Rebate. People who pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit will have already received this money, but if you do not pay your Council Tax by Direct Debit then you will need to apply for it.

You can do this by using the form on Doncaster Council's website at www.doncaster.gov.uk/doitonline/apply-for-a-one-off-150-council-tax-energy-rebate-payment - you must apply for this before the deadline on 30th September 2022.

Practical advice and support

Our Tenancy Sustainability Team are here to help any tenant who is struggling with their finances and would like



some help and support. The team can give practical advice on household budgeting, benefits, debt management and much more. You can speak to a member of the team by calling **01302 862050**.

If you have internet access, you can also find lots of useful information and advice by visiting the Moneywise pages on our website which you can find at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/moneywise/

Cheaper broadband for people claiming benefits

Did you know that if you are claiming benefits such as Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit, then you may be able to apply for a reduced price broadband package?

These discounted deals - called broadband social tariffs - are being made available by a number of national internet providers, with prices from between £10 to £20 per month for broadband speeds ranging from 10mbps up to 67mbps. Depending on the package that is being offered, you may even be able to get a discounted landline telephone service too.

Internet providers that are currently offering broadband social tariffs in Doncaster include BT, Sky, Virgin Media and Talk Talk. You will need to prove that you are receiving benefits in order to sign up for these deals, in most cases this will be done by asking you to provide your National Insurance number.

If you are interested you can find out more details by speaking to these companies by telephone, looking on their website or searching the internet for 'broadband social tariffs'.



More foster carers needed in Doncaster

Every day foster carers across Doncaster are making a difference and changing children's lives for the better.

Janice has been fostering for over 35 years, helping children and young people to stay living near the people and places they know. She said: "The children and young people have taught me so much, and I found strength I didn't know I had."

"We have a national shortage of foster carers though, and even more children are needing a home at the moment. I feel this is a great time to shout about the fantastic role foster carers have and encourage others to provide loving homes for children."

Local not-for-profit organisation Trust Fostering deliver fostering services on behalf of

Doncaster Council.

Trust Fostering has an inclusive approach to fostering and welcome carers from all backgrounds. You don't need any experience as training is provided (although it is advantageous if you have worked with children before) - you just need at least one spare bedroom and to be aged 21 years or older.

Janice said: "To anyone that is thinking about fostering, don't just THINK about it - find out more and join our amazing extended fostering family!"

You can get more information about becoming a foster carer at **www.trustfostering.co.uk** or call **0808 129 2600**.



Make a difference - join our Board!

We are looking for someone to join the St Leger Homes Board as our new Tenant Board Member. This is a rewarding role where you can make sure the opinions and experiences of tenants are heard and have your say on all the big decisions about council housing.

We have a diverse range of customers and would like our Board to be representative of this. We very much encourage applications from people of all ages and backgrounds, and we're particularly keen to see more women join. Tenant Board Members all receive full training and will get constant support from our Directors and staff members to help them settle into the role.

Board Members receive an allowance of £2,289 per year. All tenants are welcome at future Board meetings to get an insight as to what the role entails - the next meeting is Thursday 4th August at 2pm.

If you are interested, please contact Executive Assistant Leandra Graham-Hibling on **01302 862700** or email **Leandra.Graham-Hibling@stlegerhomes.co.uk** to find out more.

Our head office has moved!

We have now moved our head office from St Leger Court over to Doncaster Council's Civic Office. Rest assured that nothing about the service we provide for you is changing - it just means that if you want to speak to us in person you will need to go to our reception at the Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster DN1 3BU, rather than St Leger Court!



Tenants' Choice Awards 2022

Where has the time gone? It feels like only yesterday that we were celebrating our amazing tenants at the Earl of Doncaster for their achievements and accomplishments throughout 2020 and 2021!

We are proud to continue the tradition of our Tenants' Choice Awards and have been pulling together nominations over the last few months of some of the wonderful work that goes on across Doncaster.

The following categories are back by popular demand and we want you to pick your favourites via our website in July! Make your vote count and get involved!

Best Green Initiative

Environmental pride is so important to us at St Leger Homes, and we want to say a huge thank you to the people who look after our green spaces and make them something to be proud of.

Community Group of the Year

These groups are the soul of the community, offering a much needed safe space for people to come along to and take part in fun activities. Community led projects are at the heart of Doncaster and deserve to be celebrated.

Community Champion of the Year

These people go above and beyond to support others in their communities, without people like this, the world would be a dull place. They are a credit to their communities.

Community Project of the Year

We know that some groups have one off projects, such as the Queen's Jubilee this year, so we want to make sure we have given the opportunity to celebrate these one off events, they do make a difference to people's lives.

Young Person of the Year

Under 25s in Doncaster are a force to be reckoned with. They are energetic, passionate and make a difference for their community and the borough. They are focused and hardworking and deserve a pat of the back to say thank you!

Tenant of the Year

We have so many wonderful tenants who work within our communities and take part in organising events and much more. We feel very lucky to have them and they truly deserve recognition for their outstanding work over the years.

We are pleased that we have had some fantastic nominations again this year, and can't wait for you to read up on them and their activities on our social media pages and website. If you don't have access to this, our Customer Involvement Team would be happy to talk you through, if you want to vote!

For further details call us on **01302 862743**, email **customerinvolvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk**, or visit **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** and click the link in the banner.

12 years of excellent customer services!

Every year we invite the Government's independent Customer Service Excellence (CSE) assessor to make sure we are continuing to provide a fair, efficient and effective service for tenants.

They have now finished examining our performance over the last 12 months and we are proud to tell you we have once been successful in achieving CSE accreditation - this is the twelfth time we have received this honour!

The Customer Service Excellence Assessor said:
"St Leger Homes is a customer focused organisation, providing

excellent customer service with a high level of customer satisfaction. Throughout the pandemic...the emphasis has continued to be on striving to deliver all the usual services to the customer, as permitted by Government guidelines, with the same customer service standards, but sometimes in a different way or taking a little longer than usual.

"Staff have risen to the challenge admirably - they are very committed, helpful, supportive, knowledgeable, positive, approachable and hard working. The Assessor is very pleased to recommend that St Leger Homes continues to be

accredited to the CSE Standard."

Our tenants will always be at the heart of everything we do, so as we move forward we are more determined than ever to make sure we continue listening to the voices of customers and making improvements for everyone living in our communities.



Do more online with My Access

Did you know you can find lots of information about your tenancy quickly and easily on the My Access section of our website? You can use it to check all the important details about your rent account and make rent payments at a time convenient for you - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have a problem in your home, My Access lets you report a repair without needing to wait on the telephone. You can also use it to update your contact details so we can stay in touch with you, if you change your telephone number or email address.

To get started, go to **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** and click the My Access button at the top of the page. All you need to register is your tenancy reference number from your rent statement and your date of birth, so why not go online and give it a try?

Please don't abuse our staff

Our staff members are here to support and help people with any problems they may be facing. Most of the time when we meet face-to-face with tenants or talk on the phone, people remain calm and reasonable while they tell us about their issue.

However there have been instances where people have been abusive or threatening to members of staff. We would like to politely remind everyone this sort of behaviour is completely unacceptable and we will always take action when it happens.

Thank you very much for your co-operation with this matter.



Do you know about your Right to Buy?



Right to Buy is a Government scheme that gives council tenants the ability to purchase their rented home at a discounted price.

To be eligible for Right to Buy you must have held a secure tenancy for at least three years, it must be your only home, and the property must not have shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Also, certain types of property may be excluded, such as bungalows, homes designated for older people, specially adapted housing, and temporary accommodation.

There are some things to consider to make sure Right to Buy is the best choice for you. You must decide how to finance the purchase, for example

by taking out a mortgage. You will be responsible for the cost of repairs, including routine repairs and any major structural work. You should also expect one-off costs including Stamp Duty, survey fees and solicitor fees; and you will no longer be eligible for the housing element of Universal Credit.

If you buy a flat, you will become a leaseholder and have to pay service charges for the maintenance of the building and surrounding area.

You can find full details on how to apply for Right to Buy at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/right-to-buy/**, email **rtb@stlegerhomes.co.uk** or call **01302 862809**.

Give your views on our Housing Allocations Policy

We are committed to helping people access high quality, affordable housing. In the last few years however, there have been a lot of changes in both the demand for these homes and the number of empty homes available.

The challenges include:

- Fewer empty family houses and younger single person accommodation
- Housing demand exceeding supply and increased numbers of people with higher priority needs
- A rise in the number of people who are homeless
- Many people living in homes too big for their needs
- Lower demand for flats and bungalows for older people

To ensure we make best use of the empty properties that are available we are updating our Housing Allocations Policy. This sets out the rules on how we re-let Doncaster Council and Housing Association properties, for example:

who can apply; what type of accommodation they can apply for; how applicants' housing needs are prioritised; and how people can appeal if they are unhappy with a decision.



We have opened a public consultation on the policy and would love to hear your thoughts. It's difficult to completely solve all the problems we face, but we believe the proposed changes will make a big difference and help people find the safe, secure, affordable homes that they need.

To give us your views on the new policy, go to **www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AllocationConsul2022**, email **DMBCHousingAllocationPolicyCon@doncaster.gov.uk** or call **01302 862862 (option 6)**.

It's good to talk!

Over the past few months we have introduced a brand new telephone system called VoiceScape.

VoiceScape uses recorded messages to help us stay in touch with tenants, keep you up-to-date on what we are doing, and get feedback from you to help improve our services. Depending on what we are contacting you about, the VoiceScape call may give you the option to press 1 on your keypad to be transferred to speak to a member of our team, free of charge.

As well as improving the way we communicate with you, VoiceScape also allows us to devote more time to doing the things that matter most to you - like answering your enquiries and dealing with the more complex issues you tell us about.

If you receive a recorded message but are unsure that the call is genuinely from St Leger Homes, please feel free to hang up and call us on 01302 862862 to check.

In the future we will use VoiceScape for more things,

such as sending reminders about your repairs or gas servicing appointments. But don't worry, we won't start bombarding you with calls!



Always ask to see someone's ID

We would like to remind everybody about our advice regarding potential bogus callers coming to your home.

If someone knocks on your door claiming to be from St Leger Homes, Doncaster Council or any other organisation, you should always ask to see their photo ID card and check it carefully.

All our operatives carry ID and will be happy to show it to you, as will representatives from most other organisations. If you see their ID and still aren't happy then don't allow them in your

home - instead call us or the company they claim to be from to check. Remember, our staff will never come to your door asking you to hand over money.

If you suspect someone is a bogus caller, then please report it to the police by calling **101**, so it can be properly recorded and investigated.



Looking for work? WOW can help!

If you're looking for a job or are interested in getting some training to start a new career, our World of Work scheme (WOW) is here to help you.

WOW has a range of support and learn courses which offer a four week training course at Doncaster College, followed by the possibility of a paid six

month position at St Leger Homes in a trades or office based role.

WOW can also help you get back to work with assisted job search support; CV writing; training opportunities; guidance on filling in job applications; and general employment advice that can make all the difference

when it comes to finding the right job for you.

WOW is free, voluntary and available to all Doncaster residents. Find out more about how we can help at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/worldofwork** or call **01302 734384**

Managed Migration to UC

You may have heard in the press or on social media about something called Managed Migration to Universal Credit. This is the plan from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to move people from claiming means-tested working age benefits onto Universal Credit.

DWP are starting the process of moving all working age people who claim any of the following onto Universal Credit:

- Housing Benefit
- (Income Related) Employment and Support Allowance [ESA(IR)]
- (Income Based) Jobseekers Allowance [JSA(IB)]
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit

At the moment, the process is starting in certain parts of England and doesn't affect residents in Doncaster yet - at the moment we

don't know when the rollout will come to Doncaster. When it does, those claiming any of the benefits listed above will receive a letter from the DWP inviting them to claim Universal Credit. If you receive one of these letters do not ignore it, as it could result in your benefits stopping and you losing out.

Whilst you can make a voluntary claim for Universal Credit at any time, it is important to understand that the rules for Universal Credit are very different and although some people will be better off claiming Universal Credit, not everyone will be - have a look at **www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk** to check if it's the right thing for you with your circumstances.

If you are moved to Universal Credit after receiving a letter inviting you to claim, something called Transitional Protection will apply meaning that those who would get less under Universal Credit will get some extra help for a

while. People who make a voluntary claim are not entitled to Transitional Protection.

If you are claiming any of the benefits above, once you start the process of moving to Universal Credit, those benefits will stop - however, if you are claiming Income Support, Housing Benefit, JSA(IB) or ESA(IR) you will get a two week 'run on' to help you until you receive your first payment from Universal Credit.

We will keep you informed about Managed Migration as we find out more, keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter pages for more information.



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