

# house proud

October 2022

The magazine for St Leger Homes' tenants



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# A message from the Chief Executive

## Hello and welcome to the October 2022 issue of HouseProud.

As we move into autumn and winter, I know that everyone is growing more and more concerned about the huge rises in energy prices that the whole country is facing right now. That is why we have decided to devote most of this issue of HouseProud to telling you about the support that is available to help you through the coming months.

Over five pages you will find lots of helpful advice, information about the ways that St Leger Homes can support you, and contact details for partner organisations who can provide assistance if you need it. I hope everyone will find something in here that is helpful for them,

and please do share this information with anyone else who you think may benefit from it.

Also in this issue you can find our four page Annual Review which looks back at the work we have done and how we have made a difference for customers over the last year up to the end of March 2022. If you would like to find out more, then please visit our website

**[www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk)** where you can also watch our Annual Review short film.

Thank you for reading this issue of HouseProud.

*Dave*

**Dave Richmond,  
Chief Executive**



## Cost of living support

## Worried about your rent and bills? Help is available

**We are all facing a big rise in the cost of energy and other bills, and this can leave people feeling worried and alone - but help is available for you.**

Over the next few pages we have lots of advice, tips and contact details for places where you can get support, we hope you find this information useful.

## Tenancy Sustainability Team

Our Tenancy Sustainability Team have helped tenants receive over £3 million in unclaimed benefits such as Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Pension Credits; and they have been successful in claiming backdated payments and appealing benefits decisions too. The team have also helped people apply for grants to help with emergencies such as unexpected bills or broken washing machines, and supported people facing eviction.

We know money problems can impact on people's mental health, so our experienced and caring advisors are trained to give you the support you

*"I am so very grateful for all the help I've received, not just with forms but this has really helped with my mental health too."*

*"We honestly wouldn't have been able to get through the past 12 months without our Tenancy Support Officer. We would probably be homeless."*

*"My Tenancy Support Officer has once again saved me from serious problems regarding my health, sanity, staying warm, staying housed. This has reaffirmed my faith in humanity - thank you isn't enough."*

need. Whatever the problem, no matter how big or small, they can offer support tailored specifically to you - so if you need help call them on **01302 862050** or email **HOTS@stlegerhomes.co.uk**

# Help with energy bills

The cost of gas and electricity bills is rising, however there is support available that can go some way towards helping you pay for your energy bills. Take a look below.

## Energy saving advice

Doncaster Council offer lots of energy saving advice. Visit [www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/housing/energy-saving-tips](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/housing/energy-saving-tips) to find tips and advice that could help you stay warm and save money. You can also contact their Sustainability Unit on [energy.team@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:energy.team@doncaster.gov.uk) or **01302 737053**.

**Did you know** that if you turn your boiler temperature down to 70 degrees and then use the control dial on your radiators to lower the heat in specific rooms, it will help save you some money!

## Energy Bills Support Scheme

In May 2022, the Government announced there would be £400 support available per household. This will be paid to your bank account as automatic monthly credits of £66 or £67 between October and March.

## A £650 DWP Cost of Living Payment

Some people who receive benefits will be entitled to between £324 and £326 each quarter. Check with the DWP to see if you are eligible.

## A One-off £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment

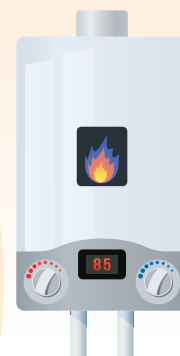
Pensioners who receive a Winter Fuel Payment will receive an extra £300 this year to help them cover the rising cost of energy this winter.

## A £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment

If you are receiving Disability Benefits, you will have received an automatic payment into your bank account of £150 in September.

## Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before 25th September 1956, you will receive between £250 and £600 to help you pay your heating bills.



## Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount Scheme for winter 2021 to 2022 has closed. The scheme will reopen again in November 2022. Speak to your energy provider to discuss eligibility.

## Cold Weather Payment

If you claim certain benefits, you'll get £25 for each seven day period of zero degrees Celcius between 1st November and 31st March. It will be sent automatically by the Department of Work and Pensions, so you will not need to do anything.

## Whatever you do, don't just stop paying your energy bills

There have been social media campaigns encouraging people not to pay their energy bills - however, please be aware this is very bad advice.

If you cancel the Direct Debit for your energy bill you could be charged a fee, and if you move to a different payment method you will likely end up paying more as Direct Debit is usually the cheapest way to pay. If you stop paying and build up arrears your energy provider may take action such as moving you to a prepayment meter which is likely to be more expensive, and in rare cases they could even disconnect you.

Remember, your energy provider has to follow Government rules and give you time to pay off any debts you have built up - so if you are struggling to pay you should always speak to them about it.

# Support available from Citizens Advice

**Citizens Advice Doncaster provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to anyone who needs it about their rights and responsibilities.**

The UK is facing its biggest cost of living crisis in decades and Citizens Advice Doncaster has seen more people asking for help with crisis support, energy problems and money issues than ever before. If you are struggling, they are here to help you.

Citizens Advice offer support in many areas, including:

## Benefits

**Need help filling in a form?  
Have your benefits been stopped?  
Want to know what you're entitled to?**

Citizens Advice advisers can help you with performing benefit checks, filling in benefit applications and helping you appeal a benefit decision.

## Debt

**Are you in debt?  
Worried about cash flow?  
Can't seem to see a way out of your situation?**

Being in debt is stressful and that's why Citizens Advice have specially trained advisers who can talk you through your financial troubles, regardless of the amount.

## Consumer support

**Concerned about energy bills?  
Issue with an item you've purchased?  
Been the victim of a scam?**

Citizens Advice cover a wide range of consumer issues - from the complexities of managing energy bills, to simple things like changing your mind about a purchase. No matter how trivial you think the issue is, you're welcome to get in touch if you need advice.

## Energy Advice

**Problems with your gas or electricity supply?  
Struggling to pay your bills?**

Citizens Advice can help with energy advice, sorting out problems with your bill, getting a better energy deal and more.

## Work

**Having issues at work?  
Feel you're being discriminated against?  
Want to know your rights?**

Working is an important part of many people's lives and if you ever have issues at work you should know what your options are. If you have any questions you can contact Citizens Advice.

## Contacting Citizens Advice

**Citizens Advice have branches at:**

Bullcroft Memorial Hall, Carcroft  
Civic Office, Doncaster City Centre  
The Hope Centre, Stainforth  
The Bridge Street Centre, Thorne  
Helping Hands Community Centre, Edlington  
Rossington Family Hub  
Neighbourhood Centre, Cantley  
Armthorpe Community Centre  
18A Adwick Road, Mexborough

**You can speak to Citizens Advice by calling:**

**General Advice** 01302 243 057  
**Debt Advice** 01302 499 330  
**Benefit Advice** 01709 572400  
**Help To Claim Universal Credit**  
0800 144 8444  
**National Advice Line**  
0800 144 8848

You can also find advice on their website  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/)



# Where to get help now

If you are finding it difficult to pay your rent or manage your money and debts, please call our Tenancy Sustainability Team on **01302 862050** or email **HOTS@stlegerhomes.co.uk** for help. You can also check your benefits at <https://stleger.entitledto.co.uk>

## You can also contact the following services:

**Debt advice:** email [advice@citizensadvice-doncasterborough.org](mailto:advice@citizensadvice-doncasterborough.org) or visit

[www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)  
[www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk)  
[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

**Universal Credit help:**

[www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk](http://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk)

**Pension Credit:**

[www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim)

**Yorkshire Water Support Scheme:**

01302 862050

**Well Doncaster:** [www.welldoncaster.uk](http://www.welldoncaster.uk)

**Mental Health support:** [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**Credit Union:** For affordable borrowing and white goods visit [www.communityfirstcu.co.uk](http://www.communityfirstcu.co.uk)

**Foodbank referral:** Call our Tenancy Sustainability Team on 01302 862050

**Addiction issues:**

**Drug and Alcohol:** [www.aspire.community](http://www.aspire.community) or <https://project6.org.uk/doncaster>

**Gambling:** [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk) or [www.begambleaware.org](http://www.begambleaware.org)

## Employment

The Department of Work and Pensions have increased the work allowance by £500. This means you can earn an extra £500 before it will affect your Universal Credit. Check what jobs are available locally at **<https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk>**

Completing a benefit calculation on **<https://stleger.entitledto.co.uk>** will help you work out how much better off you may be.

During the next few months, many organisations will be advertising for temporary Christmas jobs, so do keep an eye out for these opportunities.

**Find a job:** <https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk>

**World of Work (WOW) Academy:** WOW can help you with training, paid 'support and learn' jobs, job searching and more. Call us on 01302 734384 or visit [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/wow](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/wow)

**Jobcentre Plus:** Did you know, your work coach can assist with transport and interview clothing? Speak to your Work Coach for more information

**Childcare:** You can claim up to 85% of your childcare costs through Universal Credit.

## Support if you have a disability

Live Inclusive is a disability charity in Doncaster who support anybody with any kind of disability or long-term health condition. They offer benefits advice, energy advice and also run an Inclusive Voices peer support group.

For more information call Live Inclusive on 01320 592 400 or email [admin@liveinclusive.org.uk](mailto:admin@liveinclusive.org.uk)



## Create a budget to help save money

We all think we know what we spend our money on, but often it can be a real eye-opener when we put it all down on paper!

A budget is a list of all the things you spend. By creating a budget, you get a true picture of where you are spending your money and where you might be able to make some savings. You can create a budget using the online calculator in the Moneywise section of our website at <https://stleger.entitledto.co.uk> where you can also check to see if you are receiving all of the benefits you are entitled to.

Why not write your outgoings down and stick it on the fridge to keep track of your spending?.

If you are still struggling with your budget, please contact our Tenancy Sustainability Team for help. Citizens Advice Doncaster also provide free, independent advice and have a Breathing Space scheme which can give you time to manage your finances - their contact details are on the next page.



## Eat well for less

**Here is some advice on how you can eat healthily without spending too much. We are sure that a lot of you will already know some of these tips, but it is good to share this knowledge so that as many people as possible can benefit and save a bit more money.**

### Plan ahead

- Keep an eye on the 'use by' dates on foods and remember most foods can be frozen if they are still in date, but do check the packaging!
- Write down the meals you plan to make that week with the food you have available. This will reduce any waste and help make sure you only buy what you need.
- There may be times of the day when your supermarket reduces the cost of some items that are close to their best before date - look for the yellow labels. You may also be able to freeze these items to eat later.



### Healthy, lower priced foods

- You can get more for your money buying frozen foods. Check the label to see that they don't have added salt and sugar to make sure they are good for you.
- Tinned foods can cost less and last longer than other foods. Beans, lentils and peas are cheap, healthy and tasty! Try to get foods in water or natural juices rather than those that are in syrup or brine. Tinned foods are easily stored if you don't have a fridge or freezer too.
- Fruit and vegetables cost less than meat and fish. Try adding fruit and veg to meals to make it go further so you can feed more people for less.



# Annual Review

## 2021/22

**Welcome to our Annual Review 2021/22 where we will be looking back and highlighting some of the key work we have been doing to help and support our customers.**

The last year has not been an easy one, either for you our tenants, or for ourselves at St Leger Homes. None of us have been immune to the wider challenges in the country - rising prices, the shortages of goods and materials, more people facing homelessness and of course the legacy of Covid. Things have been difficult for everyone so delivering high quality services has been a challenge, but throughout this time we have stayed fully focussed on working to constantly improve the services we provide for you.

Our absolute top priority has been our tenants. Social housing is not just a housing business, fundamentally it's a business that cares about the people, and that's why this year we worked hard to deliver better support to those who needed the most help.

Our Tenancy Sustainability Team have been working hard to provide support for households and communities that have been facing difficulties throughout the pandemic. Last year they worked with 900 tenants, many of whom had been struggling with debt problems, and were able to help them claim a total of £750,000 of additional benefits that were due to them.

We started work on increasing the type of help we offer people by setting aside budget to employ two mental health

workers. This will make a massive difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable customers.

We also introduced a new Shared Tenancy Scheme for care leavers which matches groups of two young people together and provides them with a safe, furnished home where they can make a start on living independently. It really is a great way to set young people off on the right path in life and we are proud that we can help to make a difference for them.

These are just some of the ways that everyone at St Leger Homes has been striving to make a difference for customers over the last year. I hope you enjoy reading more about our work in this Annual Review, and I encourage everyone to visit our website [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk) where you can watch our short Annual Review video.



**Dave Richmond**  
Chief Executive



**Dave Wilkinson**  
Chair of the Board



**98.54%**

**Repairs  
appointments  
kept**

**People who joined  
World of Work  
scheme**

**71**



**Total number of apprentices**



**39**



**How your rent  
was spent**

Major improvements to your home	£25.99
Housing management	£18.62
Repairs and maintenance	£13.21
Cost of borrowing	£11.73
Payments to council departments	£2.22
Rents, rates, taxes	£1.32
<b>Total average weekly rent payment</b>	<b>£73.09</b>

# Looking after your homes

**Our Repairs and Maintenance teams provide an absolutely essential service and while we have been heavily affected by a national shortage of building supplies - which has meant we have had to prioritise the work we can deliver - we are continuing to do everything possible to minimise the impact this has on customers.**

Despite the challenges we have been working hard to offer customers more and improve the services that we provide, and one way we have achieved this is through the launch of our Repairs Excellence programme. This new way of working is improving the way we communicate with people when they request a repair and helping us to provide a more modernised, efficient and cost-effective repairs service.

As part of our Repairs Excellence programme, our trade operatives ring ahead before they attend a repair to make sure someone will be at home. This is more convenient for customers and helps us to avoid wasted journeys, which frees up time to attend more appointments. It also allows us to make sure that we have the correct materials, parts and tools we need to do the job.

The feedback we have gathered from post-visit surveys has shown us that customers feel more satisfied with our repairs service now because they feel we are communicating with them more - with 92% of customers saying they were happy with the repair we carried out.

We significantly reduced the number of visits where we weren't able to get access to the property. This has dropped from 137 a week in mid-January 2022 to just 14 a week at



the end of June 2022 - and again, this means our trades staff can spend more time in people's homes carrying out repairs and less time less time driving to jobs, which is a result that everyone wants.

We always take the health and safety of customers and staff members incredibly seriously, so we were thrilled to achieve a five star rating from the British Safety Council for the 11th year, and we secured the ISO 45001 international health and safety standard again. We also created a new Building Safety and Compliance Team to make sure that we continue to provide safe homes for our tenants to live in, and that we meet the demands of emerging safety legislation.

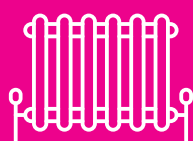
On top of this, throughout the pandemic period we maintained our record of carrying out gas safety checks on 100% of our properties, ensuring that all tenants can be confident in the safety of their homes and appliances.



**54,971**  
Number of repairs  
completed

***"The roofers were both so friendly and polite - they were incredibly tidy, left no mess, and most of all have done an excellent job!"***

St Leger Homes tenant



**100%**  
Gas servicing  
completed



**98.74%**  
Repairs completed  
Right First Time



**£24.2m**  
Major improvements  
to your home



**11,268**  
Emergency repairs  
carried out



# Supporting our customers

**The challenging times we have faced over the last year are having a huge impact on people's lives, so we have responded to this by prioritising the wellbeing of our tenants and working hard to give people the support and assistance they need to get through it.**

Our Tenancy Sustainability Team have played a key role in providing help to those who need it most. To increase the amount of help and support we are able to offer to people we are now planning to add a number of specialist mental health and alcohol workers to the team.

In the last year they have supported almost one thousand people with issues including dealing with debt and financial worries, helping people get support for mental health issues, to working with people to help them face addiction problems and more.

Some tenants have struggled with financial problems that have caused them to build up rent arrears. Over the last year our Tenancy Sustainability Team have worked with them to reduce these rent arrears by over £150,000 which means these tenants no longer have to worry about possibly losing their home, giving them the possibility of a much more positive future to look forward to.

The team have been contacting tenants who are living in properties that have a lower energy performance rating so we can give them the support to make sure they stay warm in their homes and can manage their energy bills. We are also working directly with companies and organisations such as Yorkshire Water, electrical supplier AO and Community First Credit Union to make sure people can get the extra help they need.

***"I just didn't think I could function, I had got nowhere to go and then I got a support worker that put me in touch with Tenancy Sustainability Officer Catherine who has basically been an angel to me.***

***"She got me a grant to get a fridge, fridge-freezer, microwave, kettle, pots and pans, a cooker - and to top it all off she even got me a food voucher to fill my cupboards up with food."***

St Leger Homes tenant



**95.2%**

Say our staff  
are friendly and  
approachable



**566**

Households  
prevented from  
becoming homeless



**£750,000**

Financial gains  
secured for tenants



**1,522**

ASB cases we  
resolved for tenants



**84.80%**

Customers  
satisfied with our  
overall service



**86.50%**

Customers satisfied  
with the quality of  
their home

# Achievements and accreditations

**In 2021/22 we were very proud to receive many awards and accreditations that recognised the high quality of the services we provide, and the commitment that our staff members give to looking after our customers' needs.**

Here are some of our biggest achievements, accreditations and awards from the past year.

## Customer Service Excellence and Health and Safety accreditations

We achieved accreditation from the Government's Customer Service Excellence scheme for the 12th year. The Customer Service Excellence scheme assesses organisations to make sure that they provide a fair, efficient and effective service for customers.

The independent assessor said: "St Leger Homes is a customer focused organisation, providing excellent customer service with a high level of customer satisfaction. Staff have risen to the challenge admirably - they are very committed, helpful, supportive, knowledgeable, positive, approachable and hard working."

We also achieved a five star rating from the British Safety Council for the eleventh straight year - and retained the international ISO 45001 accreditation for health and safety.

## Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation

We became the first housing provider in South Yorkshire to receive a prestigious national accreditation for the work we do to help tenants affected by domestic abuse.

The nationally recognised Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation means we are now part of a prestigious group of housing providers from across the country to achieve this standard of service - ensuring people facing domestic abuse get the care and support they need.

## South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Awards - Large Employer of the Year

The work we do to train and support local apprentices continued to go from strength to strength in 2021/22 and we were named Large Employer of the Year at the South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Awards.



This award recognised the excellent apprenticeship scheme that we provide - a scheme from which around 97% of trades apprentices go on to secure a permanent position at St Leger Homes.

## SHIFT Gold accreditation

We received national recognition for our commitment to reducing the environmental impact of housing in Doncaster when we achieved the SHIFT Gold accreditation for the second year running.

We were awarded gold accreditation following SHIFT's independent assessment which measured our performance against 21 environmental factors, including carbon dioxide emissions, landfill waste generated, and water use. We also began a programme to fit external wall insulation to 1,800 homes across the borough, reducing heating bills for tenants that delivers environmental benefits by reducing the amount of carbon emissions that households produce.

## Improved complaints procedure

We worked with our customers to complete a self-assessment of our complaints procedure in-line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code.

This has resulted in a stronger, improved procedure that better suits customers' needs. You can view the self-assessment document at [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/complaints-and-compliments/](https://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/complaints-and-compliments/)

We hope that you have enjoyed reading our Annual Review 2021/22. If you found this interesting then you may also like to see our short Annual Review video which is available on our website [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](https://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk)



## Tenants' and Residents' Involvement Panel (TRIP) Chair Betty Clayton gives an update on the work that the panel have been doing.

Well here I am again, the nights are drawing in and the fantastic summer is a memory for those who loved the ridiculously hot weather - and also for those who hated it for health reasons or otherwise.

At TRIP we have been looking at St Leger Homes' policies and procedures from a tenant's point of view. We have made extensive recommendations on Estate Walks; Repairs; Cleaning Service Standards affecting high rise buildings; the Covid

response; and the reporting of anti-social behaviour (including how it can be made easier) and how people are supported throughout the process.

TRIP help ensure that tenants are fairly treated, making recommendations if we feel the standards were not met. If you ever have any concerns, then do get in touch.

The response to the application for a Tenant Board Member has been great and we would be delighted to harvest some of that interest people have in making a difference at TRIP! We meet on the third Wednesday of each month from 10.30am to 1.30pm to work on projects and reports on whatever topic we feel is

relevant. We are also asked for our views on all aspects of services provided by St Leger Homes and our reports are very thorough! We really want to make a difference for all tenants!

You can email TRIP at **[tripsecretaryslhd@google.com](mailto:tripsecretaryslhd@google.com)** or find out more from our Customer Involvement Team on **01302 862743**.

Until next time, stay safe and keep well.

Betty



**Tenants  
Take Over**

## Prepare for the risk of flooding

In recent years our area has had some severe flood warnings at this time of the year so, while we all hope not to have these troubles again, it's a good idea to be prepared by signing up to receive flood alerts. You can register by calling **0345 988 1188**, using textphone number **0345 602 6340** or going to **[www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-](http://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings)**

**flood-warnings** where you can also get advice on planning for a flood.

We also offer home contents insurance which is arranged with the insurance firm Marsh and underwritten by Royal Sun Alliance. This can be a huge help for you should the worst happen, and payments start from just 64p per week.

For information call us on **01302 862859** or email **[incomemanagementteam@stlegerhomes.co.uk](mailto:incomemanagementteam@stlegerhomes.co.uk)**



## Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

All properties have these detectors installed, so it's important to make sure yours are working properly by pressing the test button once a week - it only takes a second and it could save your life! If your detectors don't work, call **01302 862862** and we will replace them for you.





# Remembering HM The Queen

**We were all shocked and saddened to hear about the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II.**

Just a few months ago Tenants' and Residents' Associations and community groups across Doncaster held events to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Residents at Travis Gardens in Hexthorpe decked out their communal hall in regal bunting and balloons, as they invited everybody in to celebrate the occasion together. The Chain Gang group in Rossington got creative and crocheted a fantastic jubilee post box topper, which was a big hit when it went on display in the area.

We hope you enjoy these photos from some of our local jubilee events - as we all remember Her Majesty and pay tribute to her in our own ways at this difficult time.

To find out more about the groups and activities in your area, call our Customer Involvement Team on **01302 862743**, or go to **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/getinvolved** and choose 'Find my community' from the menu on the left.



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**If so, please contact us on 01302 862862 or email [info@stlegerhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@stlegerhomes.co.uk)**



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