

house proud

October 2021

The magazine for St Leger Homes tenants



Being a foster carer page two

Get ready for winter page four

Read our Annual Review 2020/21 page six

Universal Credit Update page 12

A message from the Chief Executive

Hello everyone and welcome to the October issue of HouseProud.

In this issue we take a look back over the last year in our Annual Review 2020/21. It has been an unusual year that has brought challenges for all of us, but among the difficult times there have also been many things to be proud of - like the way our communities have come together to support those most in need.

We also hear some tenants' stories about the positive effect that the help we provide has had on them and their families. You can find out more on page six - and if you like this you may want to watch the short film we have made to accompany our Annual Review, which is available on our website www.stlegerhomes.co.uk and our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/stlegerhomes

I know we are still enjoying autumn with its warm colours and the beautiful changes we see in our landscape, but on page four we invite you to look ahead and think about winter! Winter isn't too far off and with it comes colder weather which can cause some issues for us in our homes, so here we offer some useful tips to make sure you are ready for it and able to stay safe and warm over the next few months.

I hope you all enjoy reading this issue of HouseProud.

Dave

Dave Richmond,
Chief Executive



Being a fostering family

Choosing to become foster carers is a life changing decision, but after a lot research it felt like the right move for St Leger Homes tenants Linda and Colin.

When their own children had grown up and left home, Linda and Colin wanted to make a difference to a child's life even if was just in the short term. After doing some reading and speaking with experienced foster carers, the couple decided to contact Trust Fostering, who deliver fostering services for Doncaster



Council. Four years on, and they haven't looked back on their decision to become foster carers.

Linda and Colin say the thing they've loved the most about fostering is having that 'family environment again and enjoying every moment learning from the child in their care'. The couple praise the help they've received from the fostering team, who have provided lots of support and training, as well as St Leger Homes.

Linda said: "We have a wonderful place for the children to enjoy, a safe family home. The team at the Trust and St Leger Homes are always there if we need anything, we can't thank them enough."

There are many different types of fostering - from shorter stays for a weekend or a few weeks to help children gain new experiences; to longer stays lasting months or years providing child with a safe and secure home to grow up in.

It's a big decision to foster. You can find out more about fostering, including details of information events, on the Trust Fostering webpage www.trustfostering.co.uk or by calling 0808 129 2600.

Cover image: A local neighbourhood in Intake, Doncaster.

Getting in touch with us

If you ever have any queries about your home or tenancy, did you know that you can find lots of helpful information on our website www.stlegerhomes.co.uk?

Our website can give you an answer to your query quickly and easily. The My Access section on the homepage also has details of your rent account and let's you make rent payments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can even send us a message through the website by using the contact form at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/contact-us/.

If you do need to call us, our main telephone number is **01302 862862**, or if you are a Minicom user dial **01302 862719**. Our normal office hours are 8:30am-5pm Monday to Friday so some teams won't be available outside of these times. To report a repair outside of our normal office opening times call **01302 862862** and we will automatically divert you to our emergency repairs service.

You can use our hard of hearing text service by texting **07799 477252** between 8am-7pm,



Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours (and during bank holidays and weekends) you can text **07557 313647** to report an emergency repair only. You will receive a text to acknowledge receipt of your message. If you are having trouble reaching us by phone or through the website you can email info@stlegerhomes.co.uk.

Tenants' and Residents' Involvement Panel (TRIP) Chair Betty Clayton looks back on a summer that feels like it has gone too soon.

How time flies! It seems a lifetime ago that we were hoping for a lovely summer to recharge our batteries and get back to something like normality, not to mention looking forward to holidays.

So here we are now in autumn looking back on the gorgeous weather we had at times, even though it was too hot for many of us! It was lovely to be able to meet up with friends and family again, although I along with many others was frustrated that

we couldn't meet up with loved ones who live abroad due to travel restrictions.

We have done exceptionally well in getting our young people vaccinated against Covid, but we know that winter colds and flu will soon be with us. So, if you haven't yet had the jab please do get it - it is very important as this is the way to combat Covid and keep everybody safe.

We at TRIP are still meeting virtually and carrying on our work on behalf of all tenants. We are looking for tenants who would like to become a member of TRIP as we know that everyone has some experience to offer. You don't have to be Einstein, all we ask as a

volunteer member is your time and commitment so if you are interested get in touch by emailing trip2019@outlook.com or telephone our Customer Involvement Team on **01302 862862** (option 5).

Until next time, take care and remember no one is safe until everyone is safe.



Tenants
Take Over

Stop condensation in your home

Condensation is something that happens in all homes at this time of year. It's caused when moisture in the air hits a cold surface like a window or wall, where it turns into water droplets.

These days our homes tend to be well insulated, have double glazed windows and good quality doors. This is great for keeping the warmth in, but it also means moist air can't escape and that's why we get condensation.

Preventing condensation

The easiest way to stop condensation building up is to

ventilate your home, especially when you are doing something that creates moist air like cooking, bathing or drying clothes indoors.

If you turn the extractor fan on when you are in the shower or cooking and open a window if you are drying clothes, then the steam and moist air can escape and you don't get wet walls! If you can dry your clothes outside that's even better.

Keeping your heating on throughout the day in winter also helps. Remember, it's much better and costs less to leave the heating at around 18°C all the time rather

than keep turning it up as high as it will go.

Treating condensation

If you spot condensation on your window or walls you need to wipe it off or it can lead to problems like mould. If mould appears you can use a fungicidal wash to clean the affected area - be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions on the bottle.

For more information, go to **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** and search for 'condensation'.

Stay warm and well this winter

Winter is coming, but fortunately we have plenty of advice to help you stay safe and warm in your home this festive season.

- Set your heating to between 18°C-21°C and keep it on throughout the day
- Draw curtains at night and keep doors closed to block out draughts
- The Government's Warm Home Discount Scheme can give you £140 off your winter heating bills, and you may be eligible for the Cold Weather Payment Scheme if the temperature is 0°C or below for seven consecutive days. Go to **www.gov.uk** to apply

- We have advice about preventing frozen pipes and dealing with simple heating issues on our website at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/news/newsarchive/heating-hints-during-winter-weather/**
- Doncaster Council has lots of helpful guidance including information on staying warm and winter bin collections. Go to **www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/environmental/get-ready-for-winter**
- Live Inclusive have free advice about finding a cheaper energy provider and saving money on your energy bills. Go to **www.liveinclusive.co.uk** or call **01302 592400**

Our new telephone messaging system

We are now using the latest technology to help us stay in touch with you, so if we need to speak to you in the future we may send a recorded message to your phone to let you know we're trying to get in contact.

When you get a recorded message from us, simply press 1 on your keypad to be transferred through and speak to us free of charge.

The number we'll use for these calls will always be a local number and the message will tell you it's from St Leger Homes. If you miss our call we'll follow up with a text message giving you our contact number.

If you are unsure if the call is genuine, hang up and call us back on **01302 862 862** - you will be charged if you call us yourself, but we can always ring you straight back to avoid unnecessary costs. When your call is transferred you will always deal with a 'real person' and we

will never ask you for bank or card details unless we are processing a rent payment. We will also never ask you to send us personal or financial information by text message.

If you have any concerns, please call us on **01302 862862** - we always want to hear your views as we seek to improve our services.



Support available to get back into work

It's been a tough year for those who have been looking for work, but our World of Work Scheme (WOW) is here to help by offering tenants a way into training and employment.

Amongst the newest group of workers to join St Leger Homes is Gemma, a tenant who wanted to learn some new skills and then put them into practice.

Having attended the four week WOW multi skills course at Doncaster College, Gemma started her six months paid training role repairing paths and servicing low-level gutters in and around our bungalows in Denaby.

Gemma said: "WOW has helped me improve my confidence, skills and also my

mental wellbeing. It's good to have experiences that I have not had before".

WOW is free, voluntary and open to any residents looking for employment or training. You can follow Gemma by joining one of our support and learn courses, or use the help available through our general employment assistance - the choice is yours!

We can also help you prepare for a return to work with assisted job searching, CV writing, guidance on job applications and interview preparation, and we can even help you find training opportunities.

To see how we can help YOU, search for World of Work on **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** or call us on **01302 734384** or **01302 862403**.



Annual Review

2020/21

Welcome to the summary version of our Annual Review 2020/21. Over the next four pages we will be taking a look back at how we have performed during the past year, the services we have provided and the challenges that we have faced along the way. There is also a short film you can watch at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk with some of the highlights from the past 12 months.

We produced our first annual review over 30 years ago and, when we look back at last year, we have to say it's probably been one of the most challenging years for St Leger Homes – but more importantly it's also been a much more challenging year for you. Some of our tenants have suffered in many different ways due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and throughout the year we have continued to do our best to help and support in every way that we can.

Despite the impact of Covid, we managed to keep all of our critical frontline services going and operated emergency services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. Although initially we had to put gas servicing on hold for a small amount of time we ended the servicing year by making sure that 100% of our properties received this vital safety check.

As well as this, we also went beyond what we normally do and gave extra help to not only our tenants but the wider community during these unprecedented times. We worked with Doncaster Council to make over 16,000 telephone calls

to vulnerable residents across Doncaster to check on people's welfare and see if they needed any help. Our staff began supporting people by helping collect their shopping and by collecting medicines and prescriptions for those who were isolating or found it difficult to get out. We were extremely aware that due to the need to isolate, for some this had an acute impact on their mental health. We worked with partner organisations to refer customers to other agencies for the support that they needed to get through what were particularly tough times.

I am proud of the work that we were able to do to give people extra care and support when they needed it most, and proud of our communities for supporting each other during the last 12 months. I hope you enjoy reading this Annual Review.



Dave Richmond
Chief Executive



Dave Wilkinson
Chair of the Board

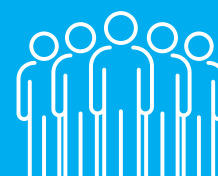


How your rent was spent

Investments and improvements to your home	£26.61
Cost of borrowing	£11.45
Housing management	£17.41
Payments to other council departments	£2.20
Rents, rates, taxes	£1.40
Repairs and maintenance	£12.81
Total average rent payment	£71.88



1,113
Number of new
tenancies



8,104
Number of people
on the housing
waiting list

Repairing and looking after your homes

Throughout the pandemic we provided an emergency repairs service 24/7, ensuring our tenants got the assistance with repairs and maintenance they needed, whilst working in a Covid secure way. We are proud that one of our Gas Team apprentices, Owen Cooper, was named Apprentice of the Year at the Doncaster Business Awards – with particular mention given to the work Owen and others have done to assist vulnerable tenants in challenging situations.

Owen, Gas apprentice:

"I wanted to become a gas fitter because I love working with my hands and the challenge of overcoming obstacles each day is really satisfying. The satisfaction from helping customers out and seeing them happy also makes me happy.

Our work makes a difference for customers because if their boiler breaks down we're there to fix it for them or give them a new heating system so they can keep on having heating and hot water, which is something we take for granted."



Barry, tenant:

"They did the new fascia and soffits, and instead of pointing the chimney stacks they asked me if they could take them down in agreement with my next door neighbour – and we said "Yes, take them down".

So they took the chimney stacks down and put a new roof on, took the old slates off, gave me a new door, one or two new bricks here and there, and basically I'm over the moon with it!

St Leger Homes came and they have done a brilliant, brilliant job – nothing was too much trouble for them. I kept out of the way and let them get on with it and they cleaned up after themselves every day.

They were on time, if I needed to ask them anything they would tell me what they were doing and why they were doing it – they just got on with the job.

They have done really, really, well and it looks brilliant – everybody who walks up the street has a look at it!"



61,204
Number of repairs completed



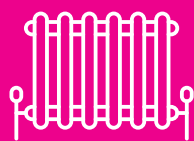
99.2%
Repairs completed Right First Time



98.7%
Percentage of emergency repairs completed within timescales



82%
Goods and services sourced from South Yorkshire



100%
Gas servicing completed



£19.1m
Investments and improvements to your home



3,155
Number of investments and improvements to homes

Supporting our customers

Throughout the last year, we have helped more customers than ever before and wherever possible have gone the extra mile to make a positive difference during these difficult times.

We worked hard to ensure that during the pandemic no-one had to sleep rough – providing emergency accommodation and housing solutions wherever it has been needed. Alongside this, we focused our services to help give the support needed to help prevent homelessness arising in the first place.

Through our Tenancy Sustainability Team and others, we have risen to the challenge of rising unemployment nationally and numbers who were on furlough by offering tailored support to tenants facing financial difficulties – this assistance has helped people manage their debts appropriately, ensure bills are paid on time and get advice and assistance for any other challenges in their lives. We also worked with Doncaster Council to offer a rent payment holiday for those tenants who needed it.

We are pleased to say we also secured the Government's Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the eleventh year in a row – increasing the number of elements we have in the highest 'Compliance Plus' category.

Due to unforeseen impacts of the pandemic, we have seen a small rise in the number of complaints from the previous year and are using the learning from these to improve the service we offer to our customers going forward.

Following the UK's exit from the European Union, we gained accreditation from the Home Office to provide immigration advice about the EU Settlement Scheme. We then contacted tenants to ensure all EU nationals had applied and to offer support where required.

Jane, tenant:

"The Tenancy Sustainability Team were amazing – they went through my income and expenditure, maximised my income, got rid of subscriptions that I wasn't using and had forgotten that I even had. They helped me to learn what benefits I needed to apply for, how to apply for them and what forms I needed to fill in. They came and helped me fill those forms in and then as time went on they helped me to move, helped me to get housing adaptations – the list is endless.

The future now is a lot more positive. I'm completely out of rent arrears and my debt has reduced, it's a fraction of what it was when I first got out of hospital. My house is safe,

I'm not at risk of losing that now and I can concentrate on getting better."

Christian, tenant:

"I was lost, I didn't know what I had to do. Without the help of the team I might have had to go begging on the street with my family.

The problem was I cannot read and write very well. The Tenancy Sustainability Team helped me to sort out the problems. They told me what I needed to do, filled out all the paperwork and sorted out every problem.

The future for me is that I have got my benefits back – I can shop, pay my bills, I can go on holiday again. It is beautiful now to have my freedom back so I have to say to them both and to St Leger Homes thank you very much from me and from my family."



£91,406

Welfare Reform Support Fund given to help people move into more affordable homes



604

Households prevented from becoming homeless



1,702

Antisocial Behaviour cases successfully resolved



£566,654

Financial gains secured for tenants



804

number of households we re-housed

Keeping our customers safe

One of the biggest priorities we have at St Leger Homes is looking after the safety of our tenants, so it was brilliant news that we managed to achieve the British Safety Council's 5 star Health and Safety Award for the tenth year running. We also secured the ISO 45001 accreditation which is the European standard on health and safety.

Achieving both of these prestigious health and safety awards and accreditations shows how committed we are putting the safety of our tenants and staff members above all else. It is also a recognition of the many systems we have put in place to make sure that we continue to improve the way we manage health and safety within our organisation as we move into the future.

We have talked to you and listened to your views to ensure that we keep you safe. We have sent out tailored information to ensure those tenants who live in high rise accommodation

know what to do in the event of a fire. We carry out yearly gas and solid fuel servicing checks and have a 5 year programme of electrical testing to keep people safe in their homes.

Rodger, tenant

"I've been involved with St Leger Homes for quite a long time and now chair the forum for the high rise tenants in Doncaster, which has become important because of the Grenfell disaster in London. We've been lucky in Doncaster because St Leger Homes are top notch regarding providing services. In the high rises we have had new fire safety doors and sprinklers installed."



Looking to the future

Over the next year we will continue to grow and improve the services that we provide for customers. This includes adding new features to the My Access section of our website to give people more freedom in the way that they use the services that matter most to them. We are also moving forward The One Project (TOP) which will bring many improvements to our computer systems that will enable us to offer a faster and more efficient service for people.

Following on from the Government's Social Housing White Paper which was released in November 2020, we will also be working to improve the way we engage with and listen to tenants. We want to ensure we always listen to the views and experiences of our tenants, so please do get in touch if you want to have more of a voice and get more involved.

We know that there will be many changes ahead as we move forward from the challenges of Covid, but we want to make sure your voice is always heard and the services we provide always meet your needs.

Thank you for reading this summary of our Annual Review 2020/21 – we hope you found it interesting. If you would like to watch the film of this year's Annual Review you can find it on our website www.stlegerhomes.co.uk.

Building materials shortage

You may have heard recently that there is a national shortage of the materials used for building and repair works which is affecting everyone in the housing sector.

We are doing everything possible to make sure we secure supplies of the materials that we need to do our work, however there are likely to be some times when we are not able to get the items we need. Unfortunately, this may mean tenants experiencing longer than usual waiting times for work to be completed - and for this we apologise. We will prioritise emergency and urgent repairs, ensuring that all repairs are completed as quickly as possible, but it may mean that some non-urgent work will be delayed.

This materials supply shortage is an issue that people are facing both across the country and internationally. Much of it is out of our control and caused by reduced manufacturing capacity due to Covid, customs delays caused by Brexit, and limited availability of delivery drivers.

It is expected that the shortage will continue to be an issue until at least the end of 2021, and in some cases well beyond. Please be assured we are working hard to do everything we can to minimise the disruption to our services.

Thank you for your patience during these challenging times.



Receptions survey feedback

We recently completed a survey of tenants to get your feedback on the customer receptions that we have in our area offices across the borough.

It has been very useful to hear your views on this because we know that as a result of coronavirus restrictions, many tenants who would previously have gone in to a reception to speak to us have now begun using other methods to access our services, such as the telephone and our website.

Thank you very much to everybody who contributed to the survey. We will now be using the feedback you gave us to help decide the best way we can deliver services to you in the future - look out for more information on this in an upcoming issue of HouseProud.



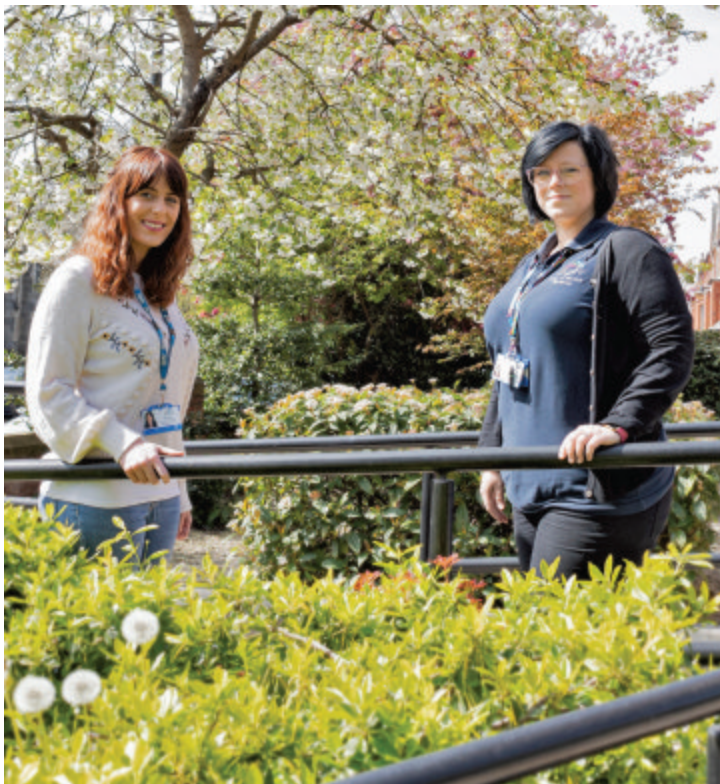
Stair lift and hoist inspections

If you have a stair lift installed in your home or a hoist to help you get in and out of the bath or your bed, then you will soon be contacted to arrange an appointment to have your equipment inspected.

Engineers from Zurich Engineering and Wessex Lifts are working with us to carry out the inspections, which will keep you safe by making sure that everything is in good working order. They will try to contact you by telephone first to arrange a time to come and visit you, and when the engineers arrive they will be carrying identity cards so you can confirm who they are. Always check someone's ID before letting them in your home and if you have any doubts about who they are you should contact us.

If you have any questions or concerns about this, call us on **01302 862862** or email **info@stlegerhomes.co.uk**





Alcohol Early Intervention service launches

A new service is helping people to safely manage their drinking so they can prevent their alcohol consumption from getting out of control.

The Alcohol Early Intervention and Outreach service is run by Aspire Drug and Alcohol Services. They provide up to 12 guided sessions (currently delivered online or over the phone) which help people understand the effects drinking can have on their mind and body.

“It’s about giving people information so they can make healthy lifestyle choices”, said Senior Case Manager, Frankee White. “We are focussing on those who perhaps wouldn’t normally use our services - who probably are quite high functioning, holding down a job, have a home and supportive family and friends, but are finding that their alcohol consumption has been increasing. We want to help them manage their drinking within safe limits so they don’t become dependent on alcohol”.

If you would like to know more, contact the team on **01302 730956** and quote ‘early’, or email **rdash.AspireAEI@nhs.net**

Get debt management help



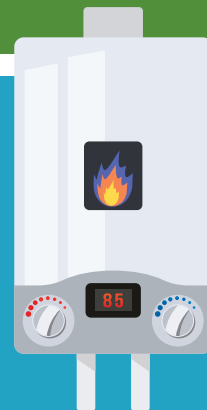
Having problems with your finances is nothing to be ashamed of, especially after the difficult year we have all just lived through. The important thing to know is that no money problem is unsolvable - help is available!

One place you can go to get advice about money and debt management is Doncaster Council’s Your Life Doncaster website.

Your Life Doncaster has information to help you deal problems such as managing bills, struggling to pay Council Tax, creating payment plans for debts, accessing affordable credit and more. It also has lots of links to organisations who you can speak to about your situation and get specialist support from.

Don’t suffer in silence, go to **www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/** and get the help you need to solve your money worries.

Gas and electrical safety checks



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

These safety checks protect you by making sure your gas appliances and electrical wiring are in good condition, so it’s very important you let us in to carry out this work. If you can’t make your appointment please get in touch to rearrange.

Contact our Gas Team on **01302 862862** (option 1) or by email at **tenantrepairs@stlegerhomes.co.uk**

Your Universal Credit is changing

We want to let you know about some important changes that are happening to your Universal Credit award from October 2021.

During the coronavirus pandemic you will have noticed that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) increased the Universal Credit standard allowance by £20.00 per week, or £86.67 per month. This was intended to be a temporary increase to help people during the coronavirus pandemic.

In recent months you will have seen that the DWP have changed the way these temporary payments appear on your Universal Credit statements, so they are now separate from the standard allowance you receive.

From October 2021 your Universal Credit awards will no longer include this £20.00 per week increase and

your payments will return to the usual amounts, which you can see below (these amounts do not include child or housing elements):

- **Single person under 25** - £344.00 will reduce to £257.33 per calendar month
- **Single person 25 or over** - £411.51 will reduce to £324.84 per calendar month
- **Couples under 25** - £490.60 will reduce to £403.93 per calendar month
- **Couples 25 or over** - £596.58 will reduce to £509.91 per calendar month

We do understand the additional stress this might place on you and your family - and we are here to help.

If you think you are going to struggle with this change to your Universal Credit award, please contact the Tenancy Support Team on **01302 862050**. Our expert team can make sure you are claiming the right benefits and can assist with access to grants to ensure you are able to sustain your tenancy. **This service is free.**

Get help and advice on Universal Credit

If you are new to Universal Credit and are looking to find out more about it, you can get lots of useful advice and information on our website at <https://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/moneywise/universal-credit/>

You can see which benefits are included in your Universal Credit payment, learn how to make a new claim for Universal Credit and find out more about meeting your Work Coach. There are also helpful links to the government's gov.uk and Money Helper websites where you can get up-to-date Universal Credit information.

If you feel that you need some more help with Universal Credit, or are struggling with your finances and are worried about paying your rent, remember our Tenancy Support Team are here for you. You can email the team at hots@doncaster.gov.uk or speak to them by calling **01302 862050**.



Do you require this publication in an alternative format, such as large print or audio?
If so, please contact us on 01302 862862 or email info@stlegerhomes.co.uk



info@stlegerhomes.co.uk



01302 862862



www.stlegerhomes.co.uk

Mobile app: My SLHD available on App Store, Android and Kindle

Keep up to date with our news and events by following us on  **Twitter and**  **Facebook.**