

house proud

April 2022

The magazine for St Leger Homes tenants



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A message from the Chief Executive

Hello everyone and welcome to the April 2022 issue of HouseProud.

Now that things are getting back to normal, this might be a good time to get out in the spring sunshine and spend some time with friends and neighbours in your community. On page five we help you to do this by telling you about b:friend, the local charity that is tackling loneliness by pairing older residents up with volunteer befrienders for a weekly catch-up chat and a cup of tea. This is a really fantastic charity that has helped improve the quality of life for lots of local people, so if you think you might benefit - or you would like to volunteer - then do give the article a read.

On page six you can find our Social Statement for 2020/21. This is an annual report we produce that looks at all of the work we have done over

the last year to make a difference for people living in our homes. As a social housing provider we like to think of ourselves as more than just a landlord - we are also here to help vibrant, safe, friendly communities grow and give people the opportunity to live happy successful lives.

I hope that you will enjoy reading about some of the ways that we have been able to make that positive difference.

I hope you enjoy this issue of HouseProud.

Dave

**Dave Richmond,
Chief Executive**



Judith has the key to success!

We would like to say a huge 'well done' to our tenant Judith who has been awarded an Unlocking Success bursary from the Northern Housing Consortium!

Unlocking Success is a scheme that helps social housing tenants to access learning and develop skills that can help them on the path to a fulfilling career. Judith is now using her bursary to help fund



her studies and training on an Accounting Software course.

"I found out about the Unlocking Success scheme through the St Leger Homes World of Work Academy", said Judith.

"Being awarded the bursary will really make a real difference to me. The Accounting Software course is very important for my career progression and future employment prospects. It will boost my employment chances, strengthen my knowledge, and help me develop my skills. This will have a hugely beneficial impact to both mine and my children's lives to be able to work in a profession that offers a secure and flexible career."

The Unlocking Success scheme will re-open for applications in summer 2022. You can find more information at <https://bursary.northern-consortium.org.uk/>

If you would like some support to help you apply for the next round of the Unlocking Success scheme, or you think that somebody in your household would benefit from receiving some employment or training support, our World of Work team are here to help!

For more information visit our website at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/worldofwork/, email wow@stlegerhomes.co.uk or give the World of Work team a call on **01302 734384**.

Cover image: A view of Cusworth Park taken by photo competition winner Debbie Tyreman.

Could YOU be a Tenant Board Member?

Would you like the opportunity to make a real difference for council tenants in Doncaster? Well now is your chance!

We are looking for somebody to come and join the St Leger Homes Board as our new Tenant Board Member. This is an interesting and rewarding role where you can help to make the views of your community heard, and ensure that tenants have a say on all of the big decisions.

Your knowledge and experiences as a council tenant will be invaluable in helping make sure that we continue to focus on the issues that matter most to our tenants.

We know that we have a very diverse range of customers and we want our Board to be representative of all the people living in our properties. We very much welcome and encourage applications from people of all ages and backgrounds, however we are particularly

keen to see more women join us, so if you are interested please do get in touch.

Joining the Board may sound daunting, but you will receive training and get constant support from our Directors and staff members to help you settle into the role.

The appointment will be made following an interview process and will start after our AGM in September, but between now and then we have a number of Board meetings that anyone is more than welcome to attend.

The meetings all start at 2pm and are on Thursday 7th April; Thursday 26th May; Thursday 7th July; and Thursday 4th August.

If you would like to find out more, or attend one of our Board meetings to help you get a feel for it, please contact Executive Assistant Leandra Graham-Hibling on **01302 862700** or email **Leandra.Graham-Hibling@stlegerhomes.co.uk**

Tenants' and Residents' Involvement Panel (TRIP) Chair Betty Clayton talks about the support available for tenants through our Garage 32 project.

What an upheaval the last couple of years have been for most families in one way or another.

The good news is that the majority of the population have had their jabs, so thanks to all as this is the best way to combat the virus. Travel is becoming less tiresome without all the paperwork and tests involved for families wishing to enjoy a holiday abroad or visit relatives overseas. Nevertheless the down side of this is inevitable - the cost of

everything is rising at an alarming rate for everyone.

I am pleased that Garage 32 has started up again, with most areas of the borough now up and running and the North area to follow shortly. Garage 32 is an extremely worthwhile project that takes good quality furniture and household items left by tenants moving home, and re-uses them by offering them to other tenants who are in need. It helps new and established tenants who are suffering hardship and need household items they can no longer afford at this stressful time. To see if you qualify for support through Garage 32, please call St Leger Homes on **01302 862862**.

At TRIP we are still meeting virtually, BUT (and it's a big 'but')

we need more tenants to join us and get involved. TRIP scrutinise aspects of St Leger Homes' management and make recommendations whilst still being a critical friend to the organisation. By volunteering to join TRIP you will add strength to our cause of trying to improve things for all tenants. To join us, call 01302 862743.

Until next time - take care and stay safe.

Betty



Tenants
Take Over

New investment and improvement plan launches



We have now begun our 2022/23 investment programme which will bring improvements to tenants' homes across the borough.

One of the largest improvement schemes will take place in parts of Cantley and includes replacing the roof on some homes, fitting new fascia soffits, replacing guttering and drain pipes, repointing brickwork and repairing pathways. We will also be carrying out an external wall insulation scheme in Intake and some parts of Wheatley that will help to make peoples' homes easier to keep warm.

In addition to this we will be replacing old boilers in homes across the borough and upgrading electrical systems. These electrical upgrades will focus on safety with smoke, fire and carbon monoxide detectors, and new consumer units (also known as fuse boards) being fitted.

Our estates will see a number of environmental improvements, such as a small number of new parking spaces being created and the demolition of some old garage sites that are no longer being used. We will also be continuing with our unadopted road scheme in Rossington where we are undertaking work to repair issues on some private roads that the Council are not responsible for maintaining.

Lastly, we are carrying out a fire safety programme that is helping to further improve safety for everyone living in our high rise buildings. This important work includes replacing fire doors where necessary, fitting new fire detection equipment and improving the signage in our buildings so that it is easier to get out in an emergency.

This is just a flavour of some of the work that we will doing this year to make sure your homes stay comfortable and secure into the future!

Supporting young people

Two new properties for young people who are moving out of care opened recently thanks to a partnership between St Leger Homes, Doncaster Children's Services Trust and Doncaster Council.

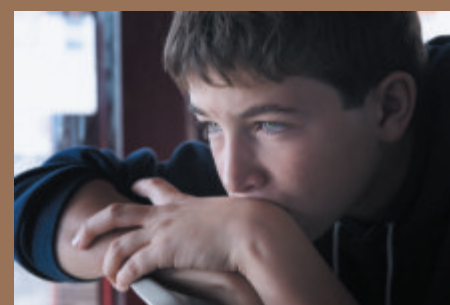
These safe, secure homes will now give these young people a place where they can learn the skills they need in order to live independently and look after themselves without having to rely on expensive private supported accommodation outside the borough.

Doncaster Children's Services Trust will provide the young people with a package of support that focuses on their

emotional and physical wellbeing, and helps them to develop the life skills that we all need in order to live well. These include learning how to shop for the best value and cooking healthy meals on a budget, as well as how to keep their home clean and well maintained.

Initially, four young people who have already been supported by Doncaster Children's Services Trust will live in the two new properties. One of the young people taking part in the project said: "It's good because you don't get distressed. It helps teenagers like us become adults of the world."

Mags Silvester, Housing Independence Manager for Doncaster Children's Services Trust, said: "It's great to see the amount of accommodation for young care leavers in Doncaster is growing - offering young people the chance to live independently with the support from youth workers, social workers and other agencies where needed."



Do you fancy having a cuppa and a chat with someone?

Loneliness feels absolutely rubbish! We've all experienced isolation over the last couple of years but, as the weather improves and things start getting back to normal, local project b:friend are bringing people together across Doncaster.

They pair volunteer befrienders with an older neighbour nearby who would enjoy a bit of company and a good chinwag



each week. Just knowing that someone is visiting for a cuppa or a stroll around the park can make such a huge difference. There are over 24,000 older neighbours living alone in Doncaster, with many going over a week without seeing or speaking to anyone.

Barbara was paired with her befriender, Sarah, in Doncaster. Barbara said: "the moment I met her we just clicked. She's a young girl but I've always had a young mind. It's definitely never boring when we catch up."

b:friend also host Social Club groups around Doncaster. There's a new activity every week and it's an open-door policy - just turn up, grab a drink and see if it's something you enjoy. Pat attends a weekly



session and is adamant it makes a difference. She said "These clubs are as good as medication, you know. They're just as important. More important!"

If you, or someone you know, is spending a lot of time alone and would like to hear more about the befriending project, just give b:friend a call on **07523 698530**.

Could you spare an hour a week to have a chat with someone nearby?

You could pop in after work, once the kids are at school or even after the big shop at the weekend. If you're interested in supporting an older neighbour near you, just get in touch with the charity at <http://bit.ly/letsbfriend>



New community group opens in Rossington

If you live in Rossington and would like to get back out in the community to make some new friends, then you should come along to the Happy Hearts group!

Happy Hearts hold drop-in sessions on the first Wednesday of every month from 5pm to 7pm at the Ragusa Centre in Rossington. The group offers support to people who feel that they are struggling to return to normal following the pandemic. Each month they have a guest speaker each month and there are always games, conversation and lots of fun to be had.

The Happy Hearts group is warm and welcoming to all, so if you are interested please pop in to the next meeting. If you would like to find out more about the group and the different sessions they run, you can have a look at their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Happy-Hearts-Drop-in-100611302389912



Our Social Statement shows we are making a difference

At St Leger Homes, the work that we do is about more than simply providing high quality homes for tenants and their families - we also want to make a real, positive difference for all of the people living in our local communities.

To make sure that we succeed in doing this, each year we produce a Social Statement which

examines the impact that our activities have had across the borough.

We have now published our Social Statement for 2020/21 which looks at the ways we helped to improve the quality of life for our tenants and the wider community over the last year. Here are some of the key improvements we have made:



£19.1m

was invested to improve homes and estates



280

community groups used our Communal Halls across the borough to offer a variety of activities for people



96%

of new antisocial behaviour cases reported to us were successfully resolved



65

people signed up to our award winning World of Work scheme, and 45 of those people went on to gain employment thanks to this support



£566,000

of financial gains (including benefits and support payments) were achieved for tenants



927

tenants were supported by our Tenancy Sustainability Team, who provide tailored support relating to Universal Credit



97%

of tenants who received support from our Tenancy Sustainability Team kept their tenancy for at least six months after support ended



11

apprentices and student placements were taken on and supported



865

temporary accommodation places were given to people who faced homelessness during the pandemic



16,000

telephone calls were made to vulnerable people across Doncaster to check on their welfare during the pandemic



604

households were prevented from becoming homeless thanks to our support



£8,691

was donated by our staff members to support families using local foodbanks



289

safeguarding referrals were made by us so that vulnerable customers could get the support they need

If you would like to read our full Social Statement, you can find it on our website at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/about/social-statement-making-a-difference/

Working together to improve our services



Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, so we know how important it is to listen to your thoughts and opinions about our services.

At the end of last year we invited customers to take part in our Transactional Survey which asked for feedback on how you thought we had performed during the final three months of 2021.

We were particularly keen to hear about the things you were happy with and the things where you felt there was some room for improvement.

You told us that in general you are very happy with most areas of the work we do,

and you gave us an overall satisfaction score of 93% - which is over 8% higher than the score you gave in our July 2021 survey. It's great to hear that most of you feel our services improved over the year!

You also had praise for some specific teams within St Leger Homes. 100% of tenants we spoke to were satisfied with the support they received from our Tenancy Sustainability Team, who help tenants having problems managing their tenancy or keeping up with bills.

Our Complaints Team also had 100% of people surveyed happy with how their complaint

was handled. These teams deal with difficult and complex issues every day, so it's amazing to hear how happy you are with the service they provide.

Of course, we are always looking to improve our services and will look at all of your feedback to take that learning on board. One example is around how we communicate with you when visiting your home to carry out work. You told us you would like this to improve and this is something we are now addressing through our new Repairs Excellence Project - which you can read more about later in this issue!

Do you have concerns about someone's partner?



If you are worried that your partner might pose a risk to you, or you have serious concerns about the partner of someone you know, you can get support from the police under the scheme known as Clare's Law.

Clare's Law helps protect potential victims of domestic abuse by letting them apply to the police to find out if their partner has a history of violence and abuse. By giving this information, the aim is to keep people safe and enable them to make an informed decision about their relationship. The police also offer support to help that person make that important choice about what they should do next.

It isn't just potential victims who can apply for information under Clare's Law - any member of

the public can make enquiries about the partner of a close friend or family member if they are worried for their safety.

If you have concerns about someone and want to make an application, you can call the police on 101 or visit your local police station. The officers will get all the information they need from you and if you asking about the partner of a loved one they will arrange a safe way to have the conversation with the potential victim. You can find out how to make an application under Clare's Law at www.southyorks.police.uk/find-out/right-to-information/clare-s-law/

Support is available from the Doncaster Domestic Abuse hub by calling **01302 737080** or emailing dahub@doncaster.gov.uk

Thanks for your feedback

Every year we contact a random selection of 1,000 tenants from across the borough to hear your experiences of living on our estates, and to make sure that we are delivering services to meet your needs.

The results of our latest survey are now in so let's have a look at some of the key comments and feedback that you gave us.

80% of the tenants that we spoke to told us they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. Where people did have concerns, the most complained about issue was to do with rubbish and litter on their estate.

One way that we stay in touch with issues occurring in neighbourhoods is through our regular Estate Walks. If you would like to join an Estate Walk in your local area you can find details in the activities calendar on the home page of our website

www.stlegerhomes.co.uk



85% of tenants feel that St Leger Homes are easy to deal with when they have any enquiries or issues that need to be raised.

Just 5% said that they were dissatisfied with how easy we are to deal with and the top reasons people gave for this were issues with repairs, the time taken to carry out repairs and poor communication.

These are all issues that we are currently focussed on improving through our new Repairs Excellence Project, which you can read more about in this issue of HouseProud.



When we asked tenants about their perceptions of St Leger Homes as a landlord, 91% said that we treat tenants fairly; 92% said that they trust St Leger Homes; and 82% said they were satisfied that we give tenants the opportunity to express their views on our services.

It is good to see that the vast majority think we are a fair and trustworthy landlord but we want every single customer to feel this way about us, so we still have some work to do. If you would like to help us to improve, you can find ways to get involved at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/getinvolved**



We asked tenants what their preferred method of communication is and 97% said they like to be contacted by telephone.

In recent months we have been improving the way we communicate by introducing a new telephone messaging system. If we need to contact to you the system will send a recorded message that gives you the option to be transferred through to one of our customer services representatives to speak with them free of charge. As part of our new Repairs Excellence Project we are now also contacting customers before we set off to carry out repair appointments, and sending text messages to keep people informed of the status of their request.

Thank you very much to everyone who took part in our STAR survey. Remember, if you ever want to get in touch to tell us what you think about us you can call **01302 862862**, email **info@stlegerhomes.co.uk** or do it online at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/contact-us**

Make the most of your money



The cost of everything seems to be on the rise these days, from energy bills to petrol prices. We know how difficult it can be to manage a household budget so here are a few helpful hints on ways you can maximise your money, and places you can go to get financial support.

Household budgeting

If you are trying to manage the amount you spend on your household expenses it is always a good idea to draw up a budget and then try to stick to it.

Write down how much money you have coming in each month and then make a list of your regular household costs. These will include: rent; council tax; gas, electric and water bills; food; TV licence; telephone bills; travel costs; home contents insurance; and any credit card or store payments.

This will give you more control over your money as you can see where it is being spent and you might spot some opportunities to make savings.

Energy saving advice

Doncaster Council's Energy Team can give advice on the discounts and grants available to help you with your energy bills - such as the

Warm Home Discount, winter fuel payments, Household Support Fund and more. You can speak to them by calling **01302 737053** or go online to **www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/housing/energy-saving-tips**



Benefits

Are you getting all of the benefits that you are entitled to? There is a benefits calculator on our website that will tell you what you should be receiving, you can find this at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/moneywise/benefits/**

Information and advice

If you would like to speak to someone about budgeting support, benefits advice, help with debts and more, you can call our Tenancy Sustainability Team on **01302 862050**.

If you have internet access, the government website **www.moneyhelper.org.uk/** has information on a huge range of money related topics that you might find helpful.

The Moneywise pages on our website also have lots of tips about budgeting, benefits and looking after your money. You can find this at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/moneywise/**

Photography competition - the results!

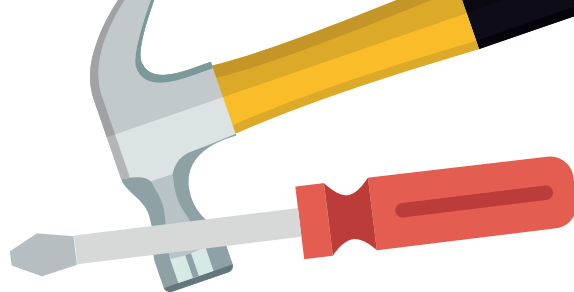
Last year we asked HouseProud readers to send in photographs you have taken that show the things you love about life in Doncaster - and we now have a winner!

Congratulations to Debbie Tyreman who took this fantastic picture of the views that you can see in Cusworth Park whilst on an early morning walk. Doncaster is full of lovely sights like this, so why not get outside this summer and enjoy the natural beauty that our town has to offer you!

If you have any local photos of your own, or anything else that you would like to share with us, you can send a message to our Facebook page at **www.facebook.com/stlegerhomes**



Repairs Excellence Project update



Earlier this year we launched a pilot scheme called the Repairs Excellence Project which is set to modernise the way that we deliver our repairs service for customers.

The first stage of this project focussed on improving our communication with customers when they have requested a repair. The new system now keeps people updated on the progress of their repair by



sending text messages at key moments, such as to let customers know that their appointment has been booked in and when we are on our way to their home to carry out the work.

We are now also contacting customers before we begin travelling to their home in order to make sure that somebody will be in to open the door to us. This is proving to be successful as during the launch week of our Repairs Excellence Project for the first time ever we were able to gain entry to 100% of the homes that we visited to carry out repairs - which is great news for everybody!

We have had lots of positive feedback from customers about this new way of working and this has been valuable in helping us to continually improve the service, so a huge thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share their comments with us.

As this is still a pilot scheme, the Repairs Excellence Project is not yet operating in all areas of Doncaster but we hope to be rolling it out across the borough later this year.

Things to remember:

- If your contact details change, please let us know as soon as possible so we can stay in touch with you. This is very important if you have already requested an appointment.
- When we contact you to confirm your repairs appointment, the number we are calling from may appear as 'withheld' or 'unknown'.
- If you miss our call we will send a text message with details on how to call us back. Please remember this number can only be used for the issue we called about – if you have a general repairs enquiry you should call

01302 862862



Gas and electrical safety checks

We will soon be contacting customers to arrange appointments for your annual gas and five year electrical safety checks.

These checks help to keep you and your family safe by making sure that the gas appliances and electrical wiring in your home stay in good working order. If your appliances aren't properly maintained it could lead to very serious

problems such as fire and carbon monoxide poisoning, so it really is essential that you let us in to your home to carry out these important safety checks.

If you would like to speak to the Gas Team you can contact them by calling **01302 862862** (Option 1), or by email at **tenantrepairs@stlegerhomes.co.uk**.

Let's look after ourselves!

More and more of us have begun to appreciate the importance of looking after our own mental health.

With Mental Health Awareness Week coming up from Monday 9th to Sunday 15th May, we have some suggestions on practical things you can do to improve your mental wellbeing.

- Physical activity can have a surprisingly positive effect on the way we feel. You don't need to run a marathon, just going for a 10-15 minute walk once a day can really lift your mood and make you feel better about yourself.
- We have all heard the phrase 'it's good to talk' - well, it's true! If you have friends and family members (even if you haven't seen them in a while) it's good to keep the lines of communication open, so why not give them a call or send them a message? Chatting to your neighbours can also be rewarding and you might make new friends!

- There are lots of Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TARA) and Tenants' Clubs (TC) across Doncaster where people meet regularly to talk, join in activities and have fun spending time together. To find out about your local TARA or TC, call our Customer Involvement Team on **01302 862862** option 5.
- If you feel lonely, b:friend host social club groups and match volunteer befrienders with people who are looking for a chat and some social interaction. You can find out more by contacting b:friend on **07523 698530**.
- Your GP can help if you are struggling with your mental health. Mental health services are free and confidential on the NHS, and your doctor can introduce you to the right people who can help and support you.

We all need a little extra support sometimes so if you are having problems please do reach out and ask for help.

HouseProud is helping the planet!

Did you know that we work with the World Land Trust to produce HouseProud magazine using Carbon Balanced Paper? This allows us to balance the impact of the paper we use by helping to protect some of the world's most important and threatened habitats.

The emissions we generate are offset (or balanced) by the carbon stocks that are saved when the World Land Trust protects ecologically important forests from being cut down. These forests then 'lock in' carbon that would otherwise have been released into the atmosphere, and will continue to absorb carbon dioxide from the air throughout their lifetime.

Through the production of the January issue of HouseProud we balanced the equivalent of 749kg

of carbon dioxide, which is around the same amount that the average person living in the UK generates each month - that is a big saving! This also enables the World Land Trust to protect

143m² of critically threatened tropical forest from destruction. It feels good to know that we are doing our bit to help our planet stay green and healthy for future generations to enjoy!



Reporting your rent change

On 4th April 2022 the amount of rent you pay changed. If you claim UC, to avoid missing out on money you are entitled to, it is very important that you tell the DWP about this change to your rent charge. When you do this, your housing costs will increase based on the new amount.

Your online Universal Credit account will show a 'To do' notification which will appear on the 4th April or shortly afterwards - this is where you can report your rent change. You will also have received a letter from St Leger Homes in March 2022 advising you about this change to your weekly rent charge.

This letter tells you how much your new rent is, and details of the new rent charge are also on the back of the address sheet that came with this edition of HouseProud.

If you do not report the change you will be underpaid, miss out on any money you are entitled to and you will not receive the correct amount

of Universal Credit to pay your rent, which means that you would have to pay the shortfall yourself.

Please note, if you are claiming Housing Benefit then we will report the rent change for you.

How do I report the rent change?

Here are the simple steps to take to report your rent change. You will need:

- Access to the internet
- The letter we sent you in March about your rent change, or the rent change information that is on the back of the address sheet that came with this edition of HouseProud

1. On 4th April 2022, log in to your online Universal Credit journal
2. Click on the new 'To Do' item named "Confirm Your Housing Costs (see picture). If the 'To Do' is not showing yet, check back every day until you see it
3. 'Did your housing costs change on 4th April 2022?' - click **'yes'**

4. 'Are you still charged weekly for your rent?' - click **'yes'**
5. 'How much is your new rent per week?' - enter the new weekly amount shown on your rent change letter and on the back of the address sheet that came with this edition of HouseProud
6. 'Are you still charged weekly for your service charges?' - if you do have service charges click **'yes'** and follow the instructions. If you don't, then click **'no'** (you may also have to enter £0.00 as the amount)

If you need help reporting this rent change, please contact St Leger Homes on **01302 862862** and we will be able to assist you.



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If so, please contact us on 01302 862862 or email info@stlegerhomes.co.uk



info@stlegerhomes.co.uk



01302 862862



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