

# house proud

October 2023

The magazine for St Leger Homes' tenants



## Annual Review Special

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# A message from the Chief Executive

## Welcome to the October 2023 issue of HouseProud.

On page five, we look back at our work for customers over the last twelve months in our four-page Annual Review special. It has been another challenging year for everybody, however there are also many achievements for customers that we can be positive about.

As we approach the colder seasons, on page four we have guidance for you about condensation. This issue happens more often at this time of year, but this advice will make a big difference when it comes to preventing and dealing with it effectively.

Your feedback is very important and helps improve our services, so on page nine as part of our Annual Review we look at some of the ways you have helped make a difference. Here we also tell you about your right to contact the Housing Ombudsman if you aren't satisfied with our response.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Dave

**Dave Richmond,**  
**Chief Executive**



## New five-year contract agreed with Council

We are delighted to tell you that City of Doncaster Council have announced a new management agreement with us which means we will continue to look after council housing on their behalf until March 2029.

We have been managing housing for the Council since October 2005. The contract renewal came after they carried

out a review which showed we are a low cost, medium to high performing organisation when compared to other housing providers and Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) across the country.

Cllr Glyn Jones, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing and Business, said: "We have been impressed by

*St Leger Homes' commitment to delivering excellent services and look forward to carrying on our work with them to deliver our shared vision of quality council housing and services for local people across Doncaster."*

It's great to know that we will be taking care of tenants and offering high quality housing well into the future!

## New website coming soon!

### From October you may notice something different when you visit our website.

That's because it's getting a makeover which will not only improve the way the website looks, but will also make it easier to use so you can find the pages and information you need faster than ever before. The new website will add many new features which we think you will find very useful, and it will now work even better on mobile devices and tablets.

If you use the website to check your rent account through the My Access section, pay your rent and report repairs - don't worry, you will still be able to

do all the things that you currently do on the new website.

To see it for yourself, just go to [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk)

### Did you know?

Between Apr 2022-Mar 2023, **100%** of customers we surveyed said our staff and contractors are helpful, respectful, courteous, polite, friendly and professional.





# Affordable food hubs open in Doncaster

**Award-winning affordable food charity, The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT), has worked with City of Doncaster Council to bring its mobile food clubs to communities across the borough.**

TBBT takes affordable, high quality, nutritious food to more than 100 areas in the north of England to help families deal with cost of living pressures. At its weekly hubs, members can get three bags of food containing fruit and veg, chilled food and kitchen cupboard staples at deeply discounted prices.

The local hubs are located at The Rugby Clubhouse in Thorne, Mexborough Community Hub, Bullcroft Memorial Hall in Carcroft, and the Central Family Hub in the City Centre.

TBBT's groceries are made up of surplus sourced from retailers, wholesalers, food manufacturers and farmers. The bag contents vary from week to week, but always include a wide range of healthy, nutritious ingredients. Members often need to top up at the shops, but TBBT helps people save money on their overall shopping bill - empowering residents to have sustainable routes of food access and to move away from regular foodbank use.

There's no joining criteria - **residents interested in using the service just need to register as members by texting 07860 063304; or by filling in the contact form at**

**[www.breadandbutterthing.org/](http://www.breadandbutterthing.org/) with their name, address, postcode and hub they would like to join.** Once registered, members receive a weekly text offering the food service which they can then collect from their hub.



## Did you know?

You can get help with household budgeting, bills, benefits, mental health and more on the 'Get support' pages at **[www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk)**



**Tenants' and Residents' Involvement Panel (TRIP) Chair, Betty Clayton, brings us the latest news from the group.**

As I sit and write this the sun is shining and it is very hot outside, it is a little late this year but great to at least have summer after a wet August!

TRIP have been working a lot on the new St Leger Homes website which is going live soon. This simpler website will give more

tenants the ability to use it to their advantage by being able to access services digitally from their mobile phone, computer or iPad. We have also been heavily involved in the new Tenancy Agreement consultations and the Damp and Mould policy.

Some changes are being proposed to how tenants are involved in the review of Stage 2 complaints, but the intention is for TRIP to have a role in challenging how the organisation deals with and learns from complaints as this is extremely important.

A new variant of Covid is rearing its head, so please make sure that when called to have the jab you do so - especially older members of the community and those with health problems.

Until next time, take care and keep well.

Betty



**Tenants Take Over**

# How to stop condensation in your home

## Did you know?

You can search 'condensation' at [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk) for more information on preventing and dealing with this issue.



**Condensation is something that most of us start to see in our homes at this time of year. It happens when moisture in the air hits a cold surface like a window or wall, where it turns into water droplets.**

**These days we are fortunate that 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.**

**There are things we can do to help prevent it however, here are some of our top tips:**

## Reduce moisture in the air

- **Use a lid to cover pans when you are cooking** - this stops steam from going into the air and causing condensation.
- **Close the door when cooking or bathing** - this stops steam escaping into other rooms and causing condensation.
- **Dry clothes outside if possible, or use a tumble dryer** - this stops moisture from damp clothes building up in the air. If you do need to dry inside then close the door and open the window so moisture can escape; and use a clothes airer rather than drying on radiators as this creates more condensation.



## Ventilation - so moist air can escape

- Open a window and use an extractor fan when cooking or bathing
- Open your windows for a short time each day
- Don't block air vents in your home
- Don't place furniture tight up against external walls, instead leave small gaps to allow air to circulate



## Keep your home warm, if possible

We understand that energy costs are still a concern for a lot of households. However, if you are able to keep your home at around 18-21 degrees through the day when the weather is cold it will help prevent condensation.

- Avoid blocking radiators or heaters with furniture.



## 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 - but be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions on the bottle.

Persistent problems with damp and mould are something that we take very seriously. We have a dedicated Damp, Mould and Condensation Team who can provide support so that you are able to control the amount of condensation in your home and prevent mould from forming. The team can also help if you have mould which is caused by other structural issues, such as rising damp.



You can get further advice and support by contacting us on **01302 862862**.

# Our Annual Review

## 2022/2023

**Welcome to our Annual Review for 2022/23 where we will be looking back and highlighting some of the key work we have been doing to help and support you - our customers.**

As Chief Executive and Chair of the Board of St Leger Homes we are extremely proud of the work we do. Social housing is not just a housing business, fundamentally it's a business that cares about the people, and that's why we continued to work hard to deliver better services to those who needed the most help.

We've done things slightly different this year so if you check out our website or YouTube channel you can hear from some of our tenants about their experience of our services in the past year.

The last year has been a positive one, but we're also conscious that it's been a challenging one for all of us – you, our tenants and ourselves.

The cost of living challenges continued, meaning costs for everyone have risen once more. However, that hasn't stopped us doing all we can to help and make sure we offer the best value for money services possible. We kept our rent increases below the rate of inflation whilst still giving a high-quality service.

We continued to focus on the very important issue of damp, mould and condensation by committing to resolving this problem and moving resources. Thanks to

feedback from you and our tenant involvement groups, we put in place a new team specifically to work on these issues. This also included introducing new policies and procedures which were approved this year, along with bringing in trusted contractors to support this work. We look forward to our tenants seeing the benefit of this in the forthcoming months.

**Our absolute top priority has been our tenants.**

There are so many things that everyone at St Leger Homes have been working hard on to make a difference for our customers over the past year. Some of which you can hear about in our Annual Review videos on our Youtube channel and our website at [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk). You'll hear first-hand from customers about how our people have made a positive impact on their lives.



**Dave Richmond**  
Chief Executive



**Dave Wilkinson**  
Chair of the Board

### How your rent was spent:

Improvements to you home	£25.04
Cost of borrowing	£11.82
Housing management	£22.31
Payments to other council departments	£2.24
Rents, rates and taxes	£1.14
Repairs and maintenance	£13.42
Bad debts	£0.31
<b>Total average rent payment</b>	<b>£73.09</b>



**19**

**Total number of Apprentices**



**95.31%**

**Repairs appointments kept**



**71**

**People who joined our World of Work Scheme**



# Looking after your homes

**Our repairs and maintenance teams provide an absolutely essential service for you, our tenants. This service sees the highest demand from our customers year in, year out and 22/23 was no different.**

Despite the cost of living challenges continuing, we continued our efforts in providing the best service possible.

Once again one of our priorities was to continue to make our buildings safer – not only from a bricks and mortar point of view, but also making sure our customers feel safe in their homes.

One of our biggest projects from the past year was work in one of our independent living buildings, Jubilee Court. Not only did we make significant improvements to the building, but we made sure our customers feel as safe as they could when it comes to fire safety.

We introduced new technology into the building so we have full access to monitor and check all smoke and fire alarms in flats, without needing to gain access to customers' homes. The improvements also mean that should there be an incident in the building, residents can stay in their home safely. You can hear more about these changes in our video here.



*"I've lived at Jubilee Court for 17 years and the improvements have made us feel a lot safer."*

*"My personal life in this building is now a lot happier thanks to these changes. I think everyone in the building is a lot happier."*

*"St Leger and the contractors that did the work were really friendly and we were never left wondering what was happening – we were always kept informed."*

*"Danny [Boardman] and his team were brilliant throughout and were approachable whenever we had any questions."*

**Mr Johnson – St Leger Homes tenant**

We have continued to improve and move towards our target to make more quality homes available to people in Doncaster, quicker. When properties become empty, improvements in how we turnaround the property has meant we now have a shorter turnaround time. Our turnaround time is amongst one of the best in the sector.

Our repairs service has continued to show a positive increase in completing repairs at the first visit. Check out our performance below. Following feedback from our customers we introduced a new ring ahead service to make sure someone is home and that we have the correct parts to do the job. This has allowed us to attend more appointments and avoid wasted time and journeys.



**75,248**

**Number of repairs completed**  
(responsive and emergency)



**£31.3m**

**Investments and improvements to your home**



**99.22%**

**Repairs completed right first time**



**100%**

**Gas servicing completed**



**85.44%**

**Customers satisfied with their repair**

# Supporting our customers and communities

**This year we continued to make the wellbeing of our tenants a priority and made sure people had access to the support and assistance they need.**

Our Tenancy Sustainability team have once again played a key role in making sure our customers have access to the support they need. This year we have introduced of a specialist mental health team.

Our mental health navigators have been on hand to support people with a range of different issues, including anxiety and hoarding. Their commitment to our customers has been fantastic and you can hear what it means to them in our videos on our YouTube channel.

*"I would tell any tenant who may be struggling to get in touch with Laura and the other Mental Health Navigators because you'll have a great time in getting help with your mental health.*

*"They are very, very good."*

**St Leger Homes tenant**

Through the work of our financial inclusion teams, we have been able to make sure our customers had access to £1.6m worth of additional money through benefits and grants.

In 22/23 we also made some changes to our teams after consulting with customers. These conversations led to the formation of our new antisocial behaviour (ASB) team which will help focus on making our communities even safer.

Following extensive consultation with tenants, we developed and launched our new Tenant Voice Strategy (2022-26) to help us improve the ways we make sure tenants are at the heart of what we do and that we embed tenant involvement across St Leger.

And to make sure we capture the voices of our tenants, a new One Voice Forum was launched in October 2022. This is an engagement Forum for tenants and TARA representatives for consultation and discussion on service delivery and key strategic and policy changes. The Forum has already had useful input into key policies and service changes.



Our Tenancy Sustainability team



**£1.6m**

**Financial gains secured for tenants**



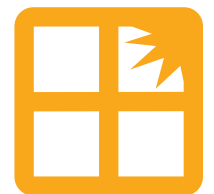
**81.3%**

**Customers satisfied with our overall service**



**92.3%**

**Say our staff are friendly and approachable**



**3,225**

**ASB cases resolved for tenants**



**850**

**Households prevented from becoming homeless**



**75.7%**

**Customers satisfied with the quality of their home**

# Achievements and accreditations

**2022/2023 saw us once again receive many awards and accreditations. We are proud that we continue to achieve many long-standing accreditations as well as gaining some new recognitions. These recognise the high quality of services we provide and the commitment our staff give to looking after the needs of our customers.**

Here are some of our biggest and proudest achievements over 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 following an independent assessment in April 2022. The Customer Service Excellence scheme assesses organisations to make sure that they provide a fair, efficient and effective service for customers.

Here's a sample of some of the great things the independent assessor said when she visited in 2022:

*"They [staff] are very committed, helpful, supportive, knowledgeable, positive, approachable and hard working."*

*"There is strong corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery, with a clear emphasis on teamworking and the use of customer insight to improve service delivery"*

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



## **TPAS accreditation**

Last year we were proud to achieve the TPAS Accreditation which recognises our work focussing on involving tenants in decision-making and making sure that tenants' voices are heard at all times.

TPAS are the country's leading tenant engagement experts. They promote, support and champion tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England.

The accreditation will last until 2025.

Cllr Glyn Jones, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing and Business, said:

*"Receiving this accreditation from TPAS is a fantastic achievement that clearly demonstrates St Leger Homes' commitment to serving tenants' needs and looking after their wellbeing."*

*"By listening to the views of tenants and empowering people to shape the housing services they receive, St Leger Homes are helping to build stronger, more confident communities across Doncaster."*



## **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance**

We were proud to become the first local housing provider in South Yorkshire to receive a national accreditation for our work in helping tenants affected by domestic abuse.

The nationally recognised Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation means we are now part of a prestigious group of housing providers across the country to achieve this standard of service.



# Learning from feedback

**We love to hear all the positive feedback we get from our customers when they compliment us on the services we provide, but we equally welcome the feedback we get when tenants feel we haven't got something right, as this is how we learn.**

In 2022/23 we received **1302** complaints across our services ranging from time taken to complete a repair, to lack of communication. That's 0.09% of all the transactions we provide. We thoroughly investigate each and every complaint we receive and provide a full response.

We manage all our complaints in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Code and are required to carry out an annual self-assessment against the code. A copy of the self-assessment we carried out in 2023 can be found at [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk).

## Complaints



**Property services  
complaints**

**998**  
Received



**Housing  
services**

**296**  
Received



**Corporate  
services**

**8**  
Received



*"I want to praise the St Leger officer who helped me in sorting out a payment for our broken washing machine. After trying to chase it with other departments she agreed to monitor it until it had gone through, even telephoning us after she had finished work to advise let us know it had been processed."*

**St Leger Homes tenant**



Here's some examples of where we have learned from complaints.

### **You told us we could improve how we deliver our repairs service**

We introduced a text reminder and a 'call on way' service and combined scheduled and responsive repairs teams into one team to provide a more responsive, flexible service.

We carried out re-training to make sure trade staff have the correct materials to complete a job at the first visit.

### **You told us we could improve how we deal with complaints about anti-social behaviour**

We started the process of re-aligning our housing services, part of which involved putting in place a dedicated antisocial behaviour team, which we implemented in 2023/24.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading our Annual Review 2022/23. If you found this interesting then you may also like to see our short Annual Review videos which can be found on [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk) or on our YouTube channel.

# Need work and training support?

**Our World of Work (WOW) scheme is here to help customers who are looking to get back into work or training. As well as providing general employment help, WOW also has a support and learn scheme. This offers a four-week Doncaster College course for unemployed job seekers with the possibility of then coming to work for us for six-months in a paid role.**

This support recently helped tenant Shaun Gray. Shaun said: *"After previously working in property maintenance, I spent nearly 10 years caring for my partner who sadly passed away in 2022. During a conversation with my Rents Officer, World of Work was mentioned and as I was looking to do something to help with my mental health, I signed up to the Multi-skills course."*

*"I really enjoyed the course, learnt many new skills and formed friendships with other participants. I then applied for a training role as an External Property Maintenance Operative. I was successful and have spent the last six months working for St Leger Homes in the local community. It's been absolutely brilliant, learning new skills with every day being different."*

Chargehand John Higgins, said: *"Shaun has been very reliable. He uses his initiative, is extremely hard working and presents a good image to our tenants."* Following his training, a permanent position came up at St Leger Homes so Shaun applied. We are pleased to say he got the job and will now hopefully have a fulfilling career working here!

If you would like help finding work or training, call us on **07817 124351**, email **SLHDWOW@stlegerhomes.co.uk** or check out the World of Work page at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk**



(left to right): John Higgins (Chargehand), Shaun Grey, Nigel Blackburn (Team Leader) and Kevin Butler.

## Fire safety - tumble dryers

**Serious house fires are fortunately quite rare, but if one does start it can quickly cause a lot of damage and put lives in danger. Tumble dryers are one of the more common 'white goods' items involved in house fires, so it's wise to make sure yours is kept in good condition.**



Here are our top tips for preventing tumble dryer fires:

- Keep it clean - empty lint and fluff from the filter after every use
- Don't leave it running overnight when you are asleep
- Follow the manufacturer's servicing and maintenance guidelines
- Make sure it's properly vented - this will also prevent condensation
- Register it to ensure you get any recall notices or updates from the manufacturer

There's more fire safety advice on the South Yorkshire Fire Service website at **www.syfire.gov.uk/safety-advice**

### Did you know?

During August and September, **17** tenants joined our WOW Multi-skills course at Doncaster College to help them back into work.



# Support for victims of stalking

**Stalking or harassment is something that can happen to anyone. It is persistent, unwanted attention that makes you feel distressed and worried. This could be in person or online, and the person doing it could be a former partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, work colleague or even someone you don't know.**

Stalking is illegal and it's something no-one should have to live with - everyone has the right to feel safe in their own home or workplace. If you, or someone you know, is being affected then help is available.

- The National Stalking Helpline is a free service that provides practical support and advice. Call them on 0808 802 0300, weekdays from 9:30am-4pm (except Mondays and Wednesdays when they open 9:30am-8pm)

- The Doncaster Domestic Abuse Hub can give you information and confidential advice. Call **01302 737080**, email **dahub@doncaster.gov.uk** or go to **www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/crime-anti-social-behaviour-nuisance/domestic-abuse-2**
- You can find information about the help and support that St Leger Homes' offer by visiting the Safeguarding support pages at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk**

Remember, if you or someone else is in immediate danger then call 999.

## Did you know?

Between Jan-Mar 2023 we responded to over **93%** of the most serious ASB cases in less than 24 hours.



## Reporting repairs

**We always work to provide the best repairs service possible for customers, and whilst it is very important that you continue to report any repairs as soon as they arise, it is also important to be realistic when it comes to expectations about how quickly we can carry out non-emergency repairs.**

We have several categories of repair, which helps to ensure the most urgent cases are dealt with first - as much as we would like to attend every repair reported immediately, realistically we don't have the resources to do this.

Please be reassured however that we always attend the most serious repairs within two hours, day or night, and other emergencies within 24 hours. It's really important however that you only request an emergency repair when it is a genuine emergency - such as where there is a risk of injury or major property damage.

Attending out of hours appointments that aren't emergencies costs a lot of money, leaving us with less to spend on other repairs, and means fewer staff are available to handle genuine emergency calls. We may also recharge you if we attend a repair out of hours and it isn't an emergency.

Remember, when you report a repair we will let you know how quickly we can attend and the reasons why when you first contact us. We will also give advice on how to lessen the impact until we can come out to complete the repair.

With your understanding and co-operation we can make sure all our customers continue to get the help they really need when contacting us for a repair.





# We're here to help!

## Falling behind with bills, finding it harder to make ends meet or needing to borrow to afford the basics? Why not give us a call!

We can offer support and advice on a range of things, including:

- Checking entitlement to benefits or grants and helping you make a claim
- Dealing with debts and debtors
- Finding a home more suited to your needs
- Making sure you're not paying too much for essentials

## We really can help you - in the last year we:

- Received over **1,400** referrals for support
- Achieved **£1.6m** of financial gains for tenants
- Reduced tenants' arrears by over **£88,000**
- Helped older tenants get over **£168,000** through new Pension Credit claims
- Helped **229** tenants claim over **£370,000** in grants

We work closely with lots of organisations to get you the help you need. If you think our Tenancy Support Team can help you, visit **[www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/TST](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/TST)**

## Move to Universal Credit (UC)

UC replaces six 'legacy benefits':

- Housing Benefit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Child Tax Credits (CTC)
- Working Tax Credits (WTC)
- Income Support

You can't usually make a new claim for these benefits. If you already get one of them, you'll have to move to UC **by 2029**. This may happen earlier in Doncaster - we will provide more information when we are notified that Move to UC is happening. Until then, you can stay on these benefits, **unless:**

- you get a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) telling you to claim UC by a certain date (known as Move to UC or Managed Migration)
- your situation changes - for example, if you've separated from a partner or moved to a different council area (known as Natural Migration)

You can still move to UC if neither of these things happen - **but it's important to check if you'll be better or worse off**. Remember:

- any other legacy benefits you're getting will end
- you can't go back on legacy benefits in the future
- if you make the switch to UC yourself, you won't be able eligible for your UC to be 'topped up' (transitional protection)

If you have a choice between staying on your old benefits and claiming UC, talk to us or use our Benefits Calculator on our website to compare.

## Yorkshire Water



We've partnered with Yorkshire Water to help you get the best deals!

**YorkshireWater**

We've identified some of you who might be able to save money on your water bills. Over the coming months we may be in touch to check if you are on the best plan for your household. We will contact you through our automated phone system, so look out for our text and call us back when you get it.



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