

house proud

January 2021

The magazine for St Leger Homes tenants



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A message from the Chief Executive

Happy New Year everyone and welcome to the first HouseProud of 2021!

I think we can all agree that last year was a difficult one which brought many challenges for people, not just locally, but across the globe. Hopefully this year will see more progress in stopping the spread of coronavirus and we will be able to start leading more normal lives. For now it is of course still vitally important that we all stick to the rules and do everything we can to keep our friends, family and communities safe.

In this issue of HouseProud you can read about the people who have recently joined St Leger Homes to take on apprenticeships and student placements. We have a long and proud tradition of providing opportunities and training for local people, a great many of whom have gone on to serve their community as permanent members of our organisation.

You can read about our new starters on page four.

On page seven we introduce you to our latest Tenant Board Member, Sam Bartle. Having tenants on our Board is incredibly important as it is one of the ways we can make sure the work we do and the services we provide meet the needs of our customers at all times. I know that Sam brings a wealth of experience with him, so we are all excited to see him take his place on the Board.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of HouseProud, take care everyone and stay safe.

Dave

Dave Richmond, Chief Executive



Coronavirus - an update on our services

The coronavirus outbreak certainly made 2020 a challenging year for everybody. As we move into the New Year we want to assure you that we will continue doing all we can to deliver our usual services, such as repairs and tenancy support, with the same high level of care and customer service that you expect.

We remain committed to doing this whilst following all of the latest coronavirus guidance from Public Health England, to make sure that both you and our staff members stay safe at all times. During this time we do ask that if we are in your home for an arranged visit, you and any other household members follow the current advice about social distancing.

Remember that you can find all of the most up-to-date information on our website **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk**. Here we also have a useful Q&A page that has answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about how our services have changed in response to coronavirus.

Of course, if you prefer, you can always get in touch with us by telephone by calling **01302 862862** to get help and support, ask us a question or report a repair.

Our phone line now also has a recorded message that will give you the very latest information on any changes to our services.

Stay safe everyone!

Cover image: Our new apprentices and work placement students with Interim Learning & Development Co-ordinator, Samantha Whitaker.

Happy New Year from TRIP

Tenants
Take Over

TRIP Chair Betty Clayton reflects back on 2020 and takes a look to the future.

I am pleased to report that we have welcomed three new members to the Tenants' and Residents' Involvement Panel (TRIP) which brings us up to our maximum of nine members. This gives us much more scope to work together with St Leger Homes to put tenants' interests at the heart of everything we do.

Unfortunately TRIP is still unable to meet in person, but we are managing to continue meeting virtually and I must say we are getting better at it considering it was all very new to us in the

beginning. We continue to keep our 'fingers on the pulse' during this challenging time!

I cannot believe it is almost a year since this horrid pandemic took over our lives.

We have all had to endure lots of hardships, but on the whole we have managed - although some have experienced more difficulties than others.

Over the last few months Doncaster has been hit hard by a second wave of coronavirus and we have faced another national lockdown which I know has meant further challenges for many of us.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy and happy New Year (and hoping

that you have had a wonderful Christmas) - whilst none of us has a crystal ball, we can only hope that things will improve.

Once again thank you for your support. Remember to follow the guidelines, Hands, Face, Space - and here's to a better 2021.



Introducing My Access - the new way to access our services online!

We are making it even easier for you to access the St Leger Homes services that you care about most, and you can do it at a time that suits you - 24 hours a day, seven days a week!

My Access is a new part of our website that has replaced the old My Service section. My Access lets you check your rent account, view your rent statements and make rent payments. You can use My Access on your computer, tablet or phone and you can do it from your armchair at home or even while you are out walking the dog, if you like!

Accessing your rent details is just the first stage. Over the next few months we will be adding more and more features to My Access. By next summer we hope you will be able to use this function to report a repair or antisocial behaviour and even make appointments without needing to call us first. Watch this space for more details!



If you haven't already logged in to My Access, it's really easy to set up a new account. All you need is your Tenancy Reference Number, which you can find on your rent statement, and an email address. Simply go to **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** and click the My Access button near the top of the screen, then follow the simple instructions.

Meet our new apprentices and student placements

We have always been proud to provide employment and development opportunities to local people, so we are delighted to introduce you to our new St Leger Homes apprentices and student placements!

This year we have taken on 11 young people who will be learning their trade and gaining valuable experience working in different parts of our organisation. Seven of these new recruits have now started trade apprenticeships in the gas fitting, electrical, and bricklaying teams.

Four students have also joined us for one year undergraduate work placements in our Business Transformation, Equality and Diversity, Housing Management and Business Intelligence teams.

Apprentice Gas Engineer Adam Todd told us: "Both my great-grandmas lived in St Leger Homes properties and I'm from Doncaster, so St Leger Homes is a name that I have grown up with. I see this apprenticeship as helping me to reach my long term goals. It will give me the building blocks - I know I'm going to come out of this in an



amazing position and it will give me the opportunity to progress in life."

Equality and Diversity student placement Charlotte Greengrass said: "The work I've been doing at St Leger Homes is really interesting. It includes setting questions for surveys of staff and customers to inform the new strategy that's being written, and contacting hard-to-reach groups in the local community to build relationships and help deliver more targeted services to those communities. I'm really enjoying it!"

Get help to find your next job



Are you looking for paid work? Would you like the chance to learn new skills and potentially come to work for us in a six month paid training role?

Our World of Work scheme (WOW) will shortly be starting a new 'support and learn' course at Doncaster College where



you can receive training in groundworks, health and safety, and basic multi trade skills. At the end of the course you will have the opportunity to apply for a guaranteed interview with St Leger Homes. If successful, you can start to put these skills into practice by coming to work for us and helping our local communities!

Don't worry if you think this course isn't for you, there are lots of other ways that WOW can help you to get back into employment. We offer assistance with CV writing;

specific job searching; career advice; filling out job applications; preparing for interviews; and accessing training.

WOW is free, voluntary and you decide how much support you need. Since 2014 we have helped hundreds of people to find new employment and training, so why not see if we can help you?

If you are interested in joining go to **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/worldofwork** or call us on **01302 734384** or **07817 124351**.

Going green wins us a Gold Award!



We are proud to tell you that we have achieved national recognition for our commitment to reducing the environmental impact of council housing across Doncaster.

As a result of this important work we have now received a Gold Award from the Sustainable Homes Index for Tomorrow (SHIFT) accreditation scheme.

SHIFT carry out thorough, independent assessments of how housing organisations are performing against challenging environmental targets. Their assessment looked at the 20,000 council homes we manage, as well as our offices and supply chain, and measured our performance against 21 environmental factors including carbon dioxide emissions, landfill waste generated, and water use.

Some highlights from the SHIFT report include:

- 100% of office waste was recycled or diverted from landfill
- 96.6% of housing stock was at low risk of overheating and resilient to climate change

- 96% recycle rate from refurbishment of homes
- Our carbon emissions from vehicle business mileage was 3.85 kg of CO2 per home managed - which is one of the lowest levels across SHIFT landlords

We want to continue making our homes and our organisation as environmentally friendly as possible, and we will be looking to improve even further in the future wherever we can. We are delighted to be reducing our carbon footprint and playing our part in protecting the planet for future generations!

You can read more about this achievement by visiting www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/news/housing-provider-achieves-gold-award-for-sustainability/



St Leger Homes wins award for supporting flood victims

Our Emergency Flood Response Team has received a national award for the help and support they gave to tenants who were so badly affected by the flooding that struck our region in November 2019. They were named Frontline Team of the Year at the Housing Heroes Awards 2020.



The floods were an unprecedented event for our local communities and caused a huge amount of disruption and distress for many households. In the immediate aftermath, our Emergency Flood Response Team worked closely with partners from Doncaster Council, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and other support services to get people the help they needed and find alternative accommodation for those whose homes had been badly damaged by the flood water.

Since then we have worked to get tenants back into their

homes as quickly as possible and, while coronavirus has unfortunately caused even more difficulties for people, we are continuing to provide ongoing help and assistance for those struggling to get back on their feet.

If you are worried about the risk of flooding you can get up-to-date information about any flood warnings that are in place, and to sign up to receive local flood warning alerts by phone or email, by visiting <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings>.

Tenants' Choice Awards postponed

We are sorry to tell you that we have made the difficult decision to postpone this year's Tenants' Choice Awards.

The reason for this is that we want to make sure we are able to hold the awards in a way that allows people to

celebrate the amazing contributions that members of our local communities make, whilst also following Public Health England advice about keeping people safe from coronavirus.

Thank you to everybody who has already taken the time to

nominate someone for an award - we do hope you understand why we are having to postpone the event and we hope to give you information on when the Tenants' Choice Awards will hopefully take place in a future issue of HouseProud.

Living with addiction - get support!

Local charity Support4Change is a support group that offers a lifeline to friends and family members of people living with a drink or drug problem. The charity provides telephone support and weekly meetings online - and in the last six months they have helped over 65 new group members.

Support4Change trustee Sheila Seymour said: "It can often feel like there is plenty of help and support available for people suffering addiction, but not so much for the rest of the family or people who love them."

"If people don't want to talk at first that is fine", said Sheila. "It is a bit of a taboo subject and we understand that people may feel ashamed or uncomfortable talking about it at first, but gradually we find that people do come out of their shells. We talk, listen and offer advice. Everybody in the group has been there and felt the same emotions, so we all know what people are going through - you are not on your own."

"My daughter is recovering from an addiction to alcohol. For me going to the group every Monday night made me realise that what she was going through was not my fault. Sharing my experiences and hearing other people's stories enabled me to finally accept this."

"We normally have group meetings and go for days out but since the social distancing and other restrictions have come into force we are now holding all of our groups online. We have a group meeting using Zoom every Monday between 6.15pm-7pm, and we have a WhatsApp group that meets every Monday between 7pm-8.15pm."

If you are going through a rough patch you can also post a message and know that someone will be there to reply to you. It's OK if people haven't used these before, we can help you get set up - it's really quite simple, so don't be scared!"

If you need support and want to get involved with the group you can contact them by calling **07736 477812** or emailing **info@support4change.org.uk**

You can find more information about Support4Change online at **www.support4change.org.uk** or on Facebook at **www.facebook.com/Support4change-102325741172920**



Sam joins the Board

We are pleased to welcome a new Tenant Board Member to the St Leger Homes Board!

Sam Bartle lives in Armthorpe and has been a St Leger Homes tenant for the last 16 years. He is currently studying philosophy at the University of



Leeds, and has previously worked as a support worker for a non-profit housing organisation. When he is not working or studying, Sam's hobbies include running, reading and travel.

We spoke to Sam to find out what attracted him to being a Tenant Board Member.

"When I saw the advert for the Tenant Board Member position, I began thinking about my local community and the ways that I could have a positive impact", said Sam. "I have quite a bit of experience as I have worked for many years for a non-profit housing association, so I felt there was a lot that I could bring to the role.

"In my previous housing job I worked with people who had

come from living on the streets and often had many issues that they needed to work through. I led groups with them and came up with plans that enabled people to move on from the supported accommodation they were in, to a more independent way of living.

So how does Sam hope to make a difference for tenants through his role on the Board?

"I would like to encourage young people to get involved in positive activities in their community and to help them find some direction in their lives, as that can sometimes be missing", said Sam. "I've got children myself, so I know how important this is for people."

Welcome to St Leger Homes, Sam!

Share your love of reading

Are you passionate about reading and sharing the experience with others? Then why not get involved with The Reader and help spread the joy of books!

The Reader are a national charity who bring people together to enjoy shared reading. Volunteers lead the group by reading a great novel, short story or poem out loud.

During the sessions, which are currently being held virtually, there are opportunities to stop and talk about what has been read. There is no need for group members to read aloud or speak - it's fine to just listen! The idea is to create a space where everyone feels at ease.

In partnership with Well Doncaster and Doncaster Libraries, The Reader are looking for people who would like to lead a shared

reading group and they also want to hear from you if you want to become a group member.

If you are interested contact **helen.foster@doncaster.gov.uk** or go to **www.thereader.org.uk/what-we-do/shared-reading/** for more information.



Be Winter Well

The winter months can be difficult for many of us with the arrival of shorter days, cooler temperatures and the inevitable colds, bugs and seasonal flu which circulate and are spread easily.

This winter we have also had the ongoing challenge of protecting ourselves against coronavirus, which has disrupted lives across the globe. It's really important that you take extra care this winter to protect your own health and that of those around you.

To help you do this, here are some top tips to help you 'Be Winter Well' this New Year!

- It's absolutely vital that you follow the latest coronavirus guidance to help protect yourself and others from the spread of the virus. Please continue to wash your hands, cover your face and make space to protect yourself and your local community
- Use the right service for your health need and help protect emergency services for those

who really need them.

In Doncaster, we have a wide variety of health and care services available such as local GP practices, the Same Day Health Centre, local pharmacies, GP out of hours, the urgent treatment centre and the Health Bus which is on tour at various locations until spring. NHS 111 is available online and via telephone 24 hours a day too, so please, take time to think about which service you need and if in doubt, always call NHS 111 who will advise you

- Be prepared for winter ailments with a winter first aid box at home containing essential medicines and supplies in case you get ill. Useful items include paracetamol, cough medicine, plasters, a thermometer and antiseptic cream
- If you can, sign up to online services with your local GP practice and pharmacy to help save time ordering



prescriptions, and use their reminder services to make sure you have enough repeat medication to hand

- Winter can be a lonely time for people who are isolated and the darker days can bring mental health issues to the forefront of all our minds. Be kind to yourself and make time for things that make you happy. Please take time to check in safely with neighbours who may be elderly or vulnerable

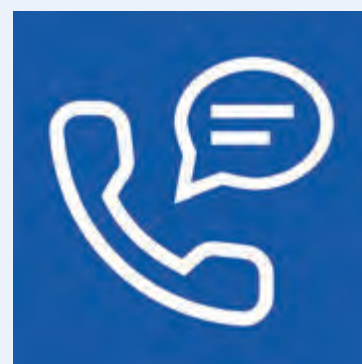
For more information about staying healthy over winter please visit www.BeWinterWell.co.uk

Contact us through Relay UK

We are now using BT's Relay UK to make it easier for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate with us over the phone.

The service, previously known as TypeTalk, can connect you to an operator who will then will type back anything that our staff member says. Relay UK can be used on mobile phones by downloading the app, or on textphones and other devices by dialling **18001** followed by our telephone number **01302 862862**.

To find more information about how to use the Relay UK service, go to www.relayuk.bt.com



Local heroes honoured by the Queen

There was good news for Doncaster in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List when five local people received recognition for their outstanding achievements for our community. We spoke to two of them to find out more.

Elaine Spencer was awarded a British Empire Medal for the work she does at Holmescarr Ark and Crafts in Rossington.

Elaine and her hard working volunteers offer lots of services for people including a foodbank, subsidised café, arts and crafts sessions, and activities for children. When lockdown began the team took on even more roles to support the community.

Elaine said: "We have been helping people who are isolating by doing their shopping, going to the post office and pharmacy for them when they need it, and we have a friendly phone call messenger group who call people to see if they are OK and check if they need help with anything.

"We have a couple of volunteers who make up and deliver food parcels. At the height of the lockdown there were over 100 households receiving food parcels from us, and we are still delivering to around 35 households now.

It is heart-warming to see all of the volunteers giving up their time to support the community, and also to see the reactions of those receiving the food parcels because they have been so grateful for the help.



Elaine Spencer BEM

"People have said that we all deserve a medal for what we are doing for the village but it never struck me that it would really happen - that was never in our minds! I just think it is great that Holmescarr is being recognised as a hub for the whole community."

Samantha Sidall received an MBE for the support she has given to her local community in her role as Project Lead at Edlington Community Organisation (ECO).



Sam said: "People come to ECO for emergency food parcels, the foodbank, our pay-as-you-feel market where they can buy a variety of items for a donation of just £2.50, and the Community Cupboard where people can pay £5 for a weekly shop. Whether someone is really struggling or just needs a bit of help to manage their money, there is always something for them at ECO.

"When news of the Queen's Honours was posted on Facebook there were people who we helped years ago, people who don't even live in Doncaster anymore, who got in touch to say: 'Thank you so much, you really helped me'. The fact that they still remember what you did for them is really nice and very humbling.

"I absolutely love what I do, it doesn't feel like a job and is so much more rewarding than the money you get paid. That's more important than everything, making a difference in people's lives and seeing their smiling faces. When you live in the community and you can see the impact you are having, that is excellent."

Do you have home contents insurance?

Have you ever thought about what you would do if your household items were to get damaged or stolen?

While St Leger Homes is responsible for looking after the structure of your home, such as its roof and external walls, items like furniture and personal belongings are your responsibility - so we strongly recommend that you take out home contents insurance.

Taking out this insurance can cover you financially against a range of incidents such as burglary, your freezer failing, losing keys, accidental damage, and events such as fire and floods.

There are lots of places that you can buy insurance from - banks, supermarkets, insurance companies and price comparison websites are a good place to start looking. St Leger Homes has worked with insurance provider Royal Sun Alliance to offer an

affordable home contents insurance package that has a number

of cover options to choose from. You can find more information about this by searching for 'home contents insurance' on our website

www.stlegerhomes.co.uk

To learn more about home insurance, why it is important and what you should look for in a good insurance policy, you can get help and guidance from Citizens Advice by visiting **www.citizensadvice.org.uk** or calling their Adviceline on **0800 144 8848**. You can also get impartial guidance and information at **www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk**

If you would like to speak to us about this, you contact the Income Management Team by calling **01302 862862** or by email at **IncomeManagementTeam@stlegerhomes.co.uk**



Gas and electrical safety checks

We will soon be contacting you to let you know when we will be carrying out your annual gas and five year electrical safety checks. These checks are very important as they keep you and your family safe by making sure the gas appliances and electrical wiring in your home stay in good working order.

Poorly maintained appliances can lead to very serious problems such as fire and carbon monoxide poisoning, so it is essential that come to

your home to carry out these safety checks.

To make sure we all stay safe from the spread of coronavirus our gas engineers will follow Public Health England guidance when visiting your home including wearing any protective equipment that is required.

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**

Fire risks from smoking and vaping

Smoking is the most common cause of fire fatalities in the UK and clearly quitting is the best thing to do - not just for your health, but also for fire and safety reasons!

If you do smoke please remember our top tips to stay safe:

- You should not smoke inside your house or flat
- Always ensure cigarettes are put out properly
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach
- Never smoke whilst using medical oxygen or after used paraffin-based emollient creams on your skin

Vaping may be less likely to cause a fire than smoking, but fake or faulty vaping products and poor charging practices can still pose a fire risk. To stay safe you should:

- Only buy vape equipment, chargers and batteries from reputable sellers and ensure what you are buying is a genuine and safe product
- Don't charge your e-cigarette overnight, keep it away from things that could easily set fire and make sure you use the right charger
- Don't let the battery come into contact with metal items, such as coins or keys in your pocket, as it is possible this could cause it to explode

If you feel that you are at risk of having a fire in your home, you can contact South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue to arrange a visit to do a home safety check. You can do this on their website - **www.syfire.gov.uk/** - where you can also find lots more safety advice to reduce the risk of a fire starting in your home.



Get help to control problem gambling

Over the last few months we have all got used to spending more time in our homes, but for some people this increased isolation has had the effect of making their gambling habit worse. The good news however is that help is available.

If you (or someone you know) wants to make a change and reduce the amount that you are gambling - or even stop it completely - then you can find lots of support and advice online or over the telephone.

- Betknowmore are a gambling support service with a mission to provide support and education services to help people overcome issues caused by gambling. Call free on **0800 066 4827** or visit them online at **www.betknowmoreuk.org** for more information

- BeGambleAware provide advice and access to free, confidential help for anyone who is worried about their or someone else's problem gambling. Visit their website at **www.begambleaware.org**
- Gamcare's National Gambling Helpline provides confidential information, advice and support for anyone impacted by problem gambling. You can call free on **0808 8020 133** - the line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week - or get help online at **www.gamcare.org.uk**

If you are affected by problem gambling remember that you aren't on your own and you can get help from people who understand what you are going through!

Universal Credit update



Universal Credit

Since April, the Department of Work and Pensions have increased the amount of Universal Credit you can receive for the year 2020-2021.

If you did not qualify for Universal Credit earlier in the year, recent changes to your circumstances may mean that you do qualify for it now. You can check if you are eligible to receive Universal Credit by visiting **www.entitledto.co.uk**

St Leger Homes has a dedicated Tenancy Support Team who can assist you in a variety of

ways to help maximise your income and prevent you from falling behind with your rent and other bills. Over the last year our team have secured over half a million pounds of financial gains for our customers, and a total of £1.5 million since the team began in 2018.

If you are finding it difficult to manage your finances or worry you might lose your home, contact your Income Management Officer on **01302 862862** and we will do all we can to help you.

Other help

The Government has announced packages of financial support for people who have seen their incomes affected by coronavirus. These include:

Job Retention Scheme (Furlough)

Since 1st November 2020, your employer can claim 80% of your usual salary for hours not worked up to a maximum of £2500 per month. This scheme has been extended to 31st March 2021.

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme

To claim the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant you must have been previously eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme first and second grant (although you do not have to have claimed either of these grants).

You must also declare that you intend to continue to trade, and either:

- are currently actively trading but are impacted by reduced demand due to coronavirus

or

- were previously trading but are temporarily unable to due to coronavirus

Test and Trace Support Scheme

If you have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, and are therefore unable to work and will lose income as a result, you may be eligible to apply for a self-isolation support payment of £500. This scheme will operate until 31st January 2021.



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info@stlegerhomes.co.uk



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