

house proud

July 2023

The magazine for St Leger Homes' tenants



Tenant Voice Special

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A message from our One Voice Forum

Hello everyone, I'm Luke Laister, Chair of the One Voice Forum. Welcome to the July 2023 issue of HouseProud.

This is a special issue celebrating the 'Tenant Voice' and letting you know about the different ways you can make your voice heard, as well as catching up with some local tenant groups and finding out about their recent activities.

On pages four and five you can learn more about our One Voice Forum, Tenants and Residents Involvement Panel and High Rise Forum. These tenant groups are a great opportunity for tenants to look at the services provided by St Leger Homes, to give their feedback and to inform the decisions made to ensure they are meeting tenants' needs. The aim is that by having this input and working with St Leger Homes we can improve the lives of tenants across Doncaster and have a positive impact on the communities we all live in.

Also in this issue you can read about how two groups from Mexborough and Toll Bar are supporting their communities, see photos of how tenants celebrated the coronation, and more.

Over the coming months I'll be getting around Doncaster as much as I can, joining estate walks and attending as many different TARA meetings as possible. If you see me then do come and say hello, we can have a chat and see if there is anything the One Voice Forum can do to support you.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Luke



Did you know?

You can report complaints by email, phone or on our website - and we always try to resolve them at the first point of contact.



New council homes open their doors to tenants

33 new affordable homes have been built across the borough in the first phase of City of Doncaster Council's new Council House Build Programme.

The new homes are a mix of bungalows and family homes using award-winning designs from the council's in-house architects. A big focus for these new homes is sustainability with features included to make them energy efficient, cost effective for people to run and supporting efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

All homes have solar photovoltaic (PV) panels installed within the roof tiles, providing green energy as standard for the tenants. Under-floor insulation and electric vehicle charging points have

also been included on each property.

The new homes include:

- Twenty one 2-4 bedroom properties in Adwick Lane, Toll Bar
- Seven 2-3 bedroom properties on Appleby Road, Intake
- Five 2-3 bedroom properties on Athlestone Crescent, Edenthorpe

"I am delighted that St Leger Homes is managing this new housing development on behalf of City of Doncaster Council" said St Leger Homes Chief Executive, Dave Richmond. "These attractive properties will make a real difference for our city by providing more high quality, affordable homes where local people can have a great quality of life."

Cllr Glyn Jones, Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Business, said: *"It is great to reach this landmark stage in the development of our Housing Strategy and the Housing Delivery Plan. This is just the start with more than 500 new homes planned over the next five years."*



Did you know?

Between Apr '22 and Mar '23 we allocated **1,342** homes to people on the housing register.



You can be the difference, foster for Doncaster!

Every day, foster carers from across Doncaster help children to stay living near the people and places they know. The support they provide is amazing, and we need more people to open their homes and foster for Doncaster's children.

Fostering can be challenging at times, but it can also be incredibly rewarding. There is no such thing as a typical carer – just like the children who need them, foster carers come from all walks of life. City of Doncaster Council's Fostering Team are seeking people who are patient, flexible, understanding, determined and keen to learn. It is your individual qualities and what you can offer to a child or young person that matter most.

You can be a foster carer if you are:

- 21 years or over
- Home owner, renting or council tenant with a spare bedroom
- Have experience of caring for or working with children
- Working, studying or unemployed
- Single, married or co-habiting
- Live within 20 miles of Doncaster

Why foster with your local council?

- Great financial support
- Dedicated 24/7 staff to support you
- Excellent local training
- Local support groups
- Advice and guidance when you need it

You can find lots of information on the Council's website, including details of events where you can speak with carers, and how you can sign-up for their fostering newsletter.

Visit **fosterfor.doncaster.gov.uk**

You can also chat with someone today by calling the team on **01302 737 789** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or emailing

FosterFor@doncaster.gov.uk

Did you know?

How we deal with tenants is important to us, so all staff take Customer Excellence training to ensure we're respectful and helpful.



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

Hope you are enjoying the wonderful warm, sunny weather we are having as I am writing this.

I am pleased to tell you that new TRIP member, Luke Laister, has been elected as Chair of the One Voice Forum which meets every six weeks to give tenants an opportunity to have their say in ensuring St Leger Homes services and policies meet customers' needs and are delivered to the highest standard.

Luke is also involved in developing the new St Leger Homes website to allow tenants to have easy access. His expertise on this subject is excellent and hopefully will help produce a website that is easy to use and understood by the 'lesser mortals' like me who are not 'savvy' with this type of thing!

Recently TRIP have spent hours, weeks and even months scrutinising the work done to keep our low rise buildings clean, and we have submitted a review including 14 recommendations. We await the feedback and results of this, and will keep you informed.

The establishment of the new One Repairs Service seems to

be progressing favourably, enabling tenants to get repairs done more quickly. We are also considering more ways to help make sure tenant's questions and requests get to the appropriate place so action can be taken where necessary.

Until next time, enjoy the summer whatever you're doing and take care.

Betty



One Voice Forum

The One Voice Forum gives us a customer perspective on the work we do and helps make sure we always stay in touch with the needs of our customers.

Luke Laister, Chair of the One Voice Forum, said:

"You can't improve services and policy or make a strategic change without knowing what the tenants think about it through consultations and talking to them. That's where we hope the One Voice Forum will bridge that gap, and that will be a massive benefit to the tenants because any issue they have had over policy and in their communities will be made better. St Leger Homes benefit as well because it brings them closer to their customers."

"We're trying to make the forum grow in a way where it makes more positive change for tenants and residents around Doncaster. The Forum meets to do important work, but it's a relaxed environment where tenants can give their views to contribute to the overall, big picture of what we can improve for St Leger and for tenants."

"The Tpas accreditation has been a huge success story as there aren't many organisations in the country that have this. It shows that St Leger is there to engage with tenants, they are actively working with them through groups such as the One Voice Forum."

It shows there's a commitment towards the tenant, so it gives us more impetus to want to help

St Leger with guidance and through the consultations.

"Going forward, we are doing a consultation on Housing Management and that is a huge area which will improve things such as anti-social behaviour policies to make tenants feel safer in their communities."



High Rise Forum

This group gives tenants living in our nine high-rise buildings the opportunity to have their say about the things that matter most to them. They also receive updates about improvement works and safety upgrades to their buildings, matters that are of great importance to residents.

Rodger Haldenby, Chair of the High Rise Forum, told us more.

"The High Rise Forum meetings are held quarterly in Intake and Balby Bridge for all tenants to come along to and hear first-hand how St Leger

Homes is meeting building safety standards. Members are kept up to date on planned works and any progress regarding ongoing works."

At the meetings, tenants can also bring any other concerns they may have regarding their high-rise and these are taken away for action."

"The high-rise community is diverse, and we need to show a wonderful example of community spirit to ensure our homes and families are safe within the confines of these huge buildings. St Leger Homes has developed a

two-way system where all tenants can talk directly to members of the newly formed Building Safety Team and are able to address concerns within their community."

Did you know?

One Voice Forum gave valuable feedback on the Tenant Voice Strategy; Damp, Mould and Condensation policy; Furnished Tenancies Scheme and our management agreement with City of Doncaster Council.



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"The High Rise Forum has highlighted to St Leger Homes observations that have been of concern to them. This collaborative approach has culminated in changes to internal and external aspects of the buildings, and ensured the communal areas meet all the new safety standards."

"The meetings are not formal – there is an agenda, but tenants feel able to enjoy the social aspects with the chance to talk to other high-rise tenants they would not normally see in their daily life. The High Rise Forum would like to generate this community spirit we see so much in other areas of the city and other St Leger Homes



Tenants and Residents Involvement Panel (TRIP)

TRIP are a customer-led group that scrutinises a chosen service area then makes recommendations on ways we can improve our services further.

Betty Clayton, Chair of TRIP, said:

"It is extremely important to have TRIP as this positively impacts on the thousands of tenants across the borough. It is also beneficial for St Leger Homes to know that their services and policies are scrutinised by this panel to help them meet the needs of our tenants." TRIP have an Appeals



Panel who are involved when a tenant is not satisfied with the result of a complaint, so being there as a representative on behalf of the tenant is helpful for them. We also carry out service reviews, with the most recent being that of the cleanliness of communal areas in flats. This was a success and many will benefit in the long term from the recommendations put forward by TRIP.

"We also did a review on empty properties and the turnaround time taken to re-let them. To our dismay we found that the cost of returning some empty properties to a re-lettable standard differed tremendously, with seven properties in particular costing over £7,000 owing to the fact that tenants hadn't sought permission for the alterations they made. Examples were glass doors with unsuitable glass in, radiators not to standard, and painting wooden interior doors which affected their original fireproofing. Tenants

should always read their Tenancy Agreement carefully and abide by the rule "if in doubt, find out."

"Our meetings have a friendly atmosphere, we all enjoy putting forward our views and decisions on actions that need to be taken for the benefit of all tenants – you will even get a hot drink and a piece of cake or a biscuit too!"



Did you know?

We take the time to listen to your enquiries - from Apr '22-March '23 the Customer Access Team answered **201,244** calls with an average wait time of under 2 mins.

Dog Daisy Community Group

The Dog Daisy Community Group are a group of tenants and residents who meet at the Derwent Road Communal Hall in Mexborough.

Group Secretary, Diane Huntington, said:

"We've got chair exercises, arts and crafts, we're starting a sewing group, sessions to help people use tablets – there's all sorts happening here! There are activities here every day you can join in if you want, and people also bring along their sewing, painting or anything else they would like to do while they are here.

"During the winter just gone, this was also a warm space where

people could come and stay comfortable without using their own heating. We gave them free coffee and soups so we looked after people."

Group member, Peter Radcliffe said "The group is great, it stops people from just sitting on their own in their home with the telly on – you can come here enjoy yourself and have a natter."

"We have trips out too. We booked a bus to go to Bakewell for the day and we've got another trip planned to Pickering, then taking the sea train up to Whitby. It's more fun to go as a group, we have a great laugh when we're out!"

Diane said "We're open Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays from 10am-4pm, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am-1pm. If you live locally then come in and enjoy it, we're all so friendly and there's always a cup of tea and a biscuit for you!"



Toll Bar TARA

Toll Bar Tenants' and Residents' Association (TARA) meet in Villa Gardens Community Centre three or four days each week.

Chair of the group, Christine Willoughby, said:

"We have a coffee morning on Tuesdays where we help anyone who has a problem. It may be things like council tenants who need support and we can put them in touch with the right people or ask a local councillor to come down and help them. People don't always know who to go to when they have issues so we

can give them that help, we've built up that knowledge over the years – we didn't know anything we started but now we know quite a lot!

"We do afternoon teas too as a way to fund raise. We held one for my husband who died of pancreatic cancer and through that we managed to raise £600 which went to support cancer charities.

"We also have our Monday one o'clock club, bingo on a Wednesday evening, craft groups, summer fun days for the local kids – there's lots going on here and our doors are always open!"



Did you know?

Learn about joining a tenant group or starting your own at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/getinvolved or contact 01302 862743 / customerinvolvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk

We want to hear from our diverse tenants!

Do you ever feel like you want to make your voice heard and share your experiences with others? Have you gained important life skills you think could help make a difference in your community?

If the answer is 'yes' then you might like to join one of our new Equality and Diversity Involvement Groups!

The idea is that by providing safe spaces for people to meet and talk about their life experiences we can help to grow an even more open

and inclusive environment for our tenants and the wider community. The groups can also offer help to solve issues that are making it harder for you to access our services, or other services within your local area.

There are many different Involvement Groups that you can take part in, including:

- Disability Involvement Group
- LGBTQ+ Involvement Group
- Ethnic Minority Involvement Group
- Religion Involvement Group

If you have life experiences in any of these areas – even if this is through living with family members who fit into one of these groups – then we'd love you to get involved and bring your insight and skills to the group.

If you have any questions and would like to know more, or if you want to join one of our Involvement Groups, contact our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager at **Daniel.debenham@doncaster.gov.uk**

Tenants' Choice Awards

2023

Our Tenants' Choice Awards are returning this year to honour the amazing work our tenants do to help and look after people living in our communities – but if you know someone who deserves an award then time is running out to send your nomination in!

You only have until Wednesday 26th July to nominate a person or group for an award in one of this year's six categories, which are: Good Neighbour; Young Person of the Year (aged 25 or under); Community Warrior;

Heart of the Community; Cleaner Communities and Community Wellbeing Project.

To nominate all you have to do is visit our website www.stlegerhomes.co.uk where you will find details about how to do this on the front page. Our Customer Involvement Team can also support you with completing a nomination form and any other questions you may have, you can speak to them by calling **01302 862743** or email **customerinvolvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk**

The awards ceremony will take place later this year on 28th September – to find out who the winners are just keep an eye on our Facebook page and our website **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** where we will be bringing you all of the results as they happen.

Did you know?

Between Apr '22-Mar '23 we installed heating upgrades in **1,250** homes, helping tenants stay warm with modern, energy efficient heating.

Coronation streets!

In May people from all over the country, and the world, came together to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. Many in our communities wanted to pay their respects so in communal halls and tenant groups across the borough, people brought out the bunting and flew their flags with pride.

Here are just some of the ways that you marked the coronation:

- Members of the Knit and Natter group at Circuit House in Woodlands wowed everyone with a beautiful post box topper featuring the new King and Queen.

Rosemary Lambert, Chair of Woodlands New Estate Tenants Club, said:

"The ladies in this group are incredible, the things they make are just fantastic. They made a post box topper to mark the Platinum Jubilee which was very popular and is actually now being displayed in Cusworth Museum."



- Church Balk Gardens in Edenthorpe held a street party to celebrate the royal occasion.
- Walbank Road Communal Hall in Armthorpe held an afternoon tea hosted by the Crafty So & Sews group; and the Armthorpe Busy Bees group had activities for young people so they could enjoy the event.



- Whinfell Tenants Club had a celebration event complete with lovely food and patriotic outfits.

These are just a few examples of how everyone marked the day, but we know many, many more of you got involved and enjoyed the day in your own way. Well done to everyone, you did Doncaster proud!



Did you know?

In the last 12 months we completed almost **74,530** responsive repairs.



One Repairs Service

In recent issues of HouseProud we have been keeping you informed about improvements we are making to our Repairs Service. These changes are the result of feedback from you and will help to ensure that the repairs service we provide will become even more effective and efficient into the future.

The changes include customers getting an appointment time when you first contact us about a non-essential repair; appointment reminders sent to you by text message; a courtesy call before we come out to do the repair; and improvements to help us complete more repairs on the first visit.

Managers from our Repairs Service will be visiting a number of our tenant groups across the borough to meet customers, explain the changes and talk about our plans with as many people as possible.

We are also consulting with the One Voice Forum and our other tenant involvement groups so we can work together to improve services for all tenants. We will continue to update you in HouseProud, so keep an eye out for more information in upcoming issues.



Who to contact after bereavement

Losing a loved one is something none of us want to think about until we have to. When the time does come, having to make the necessary arrangements as well as sorting out their affairs can be daunting and upsetting.

The 'Tell us Once' service lets you report a death to most government organisations all in one go, making it a quick and simple process. The service can be contacted on **0800 085 7308**, or online at **www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once**

You can also find information about the Department of Work and Pensions Bereavement Service on **0800 151 2012**.

Gas and electrical safety checks

If we haven't already, we will soon be contacting you to arrange your annual gas and five year electrical safety checks.

These checks keep you and your family safe by making sure 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 serious problems such as fire and carbon monoxide poisoning, so it's essential you let us in to carry out these important safety checks.

To speak to us about these essential safety checks, call **01302 862862** (Option 1), or email **tenantrepairs@stlegerhomes.co.uk**.

Did you know?

Between Apr '22-Mar '23 we carried out electrical improvements to **1,794** homes, including upgrading consumer units and providing LED lighting.



Award honours for trades apprentice and mentor

Did you know?

In the last 12 months we completed almost **94%** of routine gas repairs within our target time to maintain building safety



Two trades operatives from our Repairs and Maintenance Team were proud to be named as finalists in the South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Awards 2023.

Apprentice Plasterer Gemma Davies (pictured on the left) was a finalist in the Construction Apprentice of the Year category. At the awards ceremony she was also presented with a 'highly commended' award in recognition of the drive, ambition and willingness to learn that she has shown as she served customers in her role.

Plasterer Matthew Bywater was a finalist in the Mentor of the Year category for the work that he does to help develop the next generation of trades staff at St Leger Homes. Matthew started out as an apprentice himself back in 2003, so it is fitting that as he enters his 20th year of service he is giving back to new apprentices by mentoring them and sharing the wealth of knowledge and experience he has built up.

Gemma and Matthew received their honours at an awards event in May, held at Magna Science Adventure Centre in Rotherham.

Well done to both of you!



Been away? Check your shower when you return

Now that the summer sunshine is here some of us may be thinking about holidays or going away to visit family and friends. Something we may not think about however is the potential hygiene risk we could find in our bathroom shower unit when we return.

If your shower hasn't been used for a couple of weeks then it is possible for legionella bacteria to develop in the shower head (the part where the water comes out). This can cause serious health problems. Fortunately it's very easy to flush out anything nasty that has built up by simply turning your shower on and letting the hot water run for about five minutes when you return home.

It's best to leave the room while you do this so you don't breathe the water vapour in, then once

it's done then your shower will be clean and perfectly safe to use!

Limescale is something else that builds up in shower heads and taps, this can encourage bacteria to grow so you should descale these regularly. Again, this is easy to do by putting some white vinegar into a small plastic bag then tying it over your shower head or tap – leave it for an hour before removing, rinse thoroughly and the limescale will be gone.

If you follow these quick and easy steps then you will be all set to enjoy a happy, healthy summer!



Make a difference – join our Board!



We are looking for someone to join the St Leger Homes Board as our new Tenant Board Member. This is a rewarding role where you can make sure the opinions and experiences of tenants are heard and have your say on all the big decisions about council housing.

We have a diverse range of customers and would like our Board to be representative of this. We very much encourage applications from people of all ages and backgrounds, and we're particularly keen to see more women join. Tenant Board Members all receive full training

and will get support from across the business to help them settle into the role.

Board Members receive an allowance of £2,381 per year. All tenants are welcome at future Board meetings to get an insight as to what the role entails – the next meeting is

Thursday 3rd August at 2pm.

If you are interested in this role, or wish to attend a Board Meeting as an observer, please contact Anne Tighe, Executive Support Officer on **01302 862707** or email **anne.tighe@stlegerhomes.co.uk** to find out more.

Meet your new Housing Officer!

We are making improvements that will enable your local Housing Officer to deliver a more comprehensive service in your area. Housing Officers will now carry out new tenancy sign ups, estate and communal area inspections, handle some ASB issues and answer general tenancy enquiries.

You can contact your Housing Officer by calling our Customer Access Team on 01302 862862 and asking for them by name or saying where you live. If you have an ongoing issue your officer will give you their direct contact number.

Our Housing Officers and areas are:

- ✓ Armthorpe – **Hayley Buck**
- ✓ Stainforth – **Helen Connell/Cheyenne Hallam**
- ✓ Thorne – **Melissa Shaw**
- ✓ Hatfield/Dunscroft – **Bridget Blows**
- ✓ Edenthorpe/Kirk Sandall/Barnby Dun/Moorends – **Jane Wilsher**
- ✓ Hexthorpe – **Alison Douglas**
- ✓ Hyde Park – **June Clarke**
- ✓ Balby South – **Lynette Jenkins**
- ✓ Balby North – **Alison Humphreys**

- ✓ Cantley & Lakeside – **Wendy Skipp**
- ✓ Clay Lane – **Aileen Tutgun**
- ✓ Intake (except for Intake High Rise) – **Lydia Bisby**
- ✓ Wheatley (except for Unity Flats and Jubilee Court) – **Claire Atkins**
- ✓ St James Street (Unity Flats and Jubilee Court) – **Holly Tyler**
- ✓ St James Street – **Duane Williams**
- ✓ St James Street & Intake High Rise – **Lisa Nixon**
- ✓ Bentley New Village & Bentley – **Murray Hall**
- ✓ Carcroft/Sprotborough/Cusworth/Skelbrooke/Arksey – **Kim Hudson/Kerry Herd**
- ✓ Woodlands/Barnburgh/Cadeby/Clayton/Adwick – **Stacy Clarke**
- ✓ Scawthorpe/Toll Bar/Bentley West End – **Sarah Gill**

- ✓ Askern/Campsall/Norton/Braithwaite/Moss – **Kath Staniforth/Lisa Moizer**
- ✓ Skellow/Highfields/Scawsby – **Sally Boughen**
- ✓ Rossington/Auckley/Branton/Finningley/Blaxton/Austerfield/Bawtry – **Emma Oates**
- ✓ Edlington,/Warmsworth/Wadworth/Braithwell/Stainton – **Hanif Oz**
- ✓ Rossington (Radburn)/Tickhill – **Jude Metcalfe/Ian Sides**
- ✓ Mexborough East – **Sue Redfern/Janet Sharkey/Jo Howe**
- ✓ Mexborough Central/Adwick-on-Deane – **Leigh Singh**
- ✓ Mexborough West – **Marlena Karys**
- ✓ Conisbrough – **Karen Hopkins**
- ✓ Denaby North – **Sarah McMahon**
- ✓ Denaby South – **Megan Rooke**

Tenancy Support – It's OK to ask for help

If you are finding it a struggle to manage your money, or you are borrowing just to afford the essentials, please give us a call.

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

- Checking entitlement to benefits and helping you make a claim
- Helping to claim grants from charities
- 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 have:

- 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 £168,480 through new Pension Credit claims
- 98% of customers we supported were able to pay their rent and maintain their tenancies six months after their support had ended – and 97% were still doing this after one year

We work closely with lots of organisations to get tenants the help they need – including Doncaster Citizens Advice who provide specialist advice, and Community First Community Bank who can help you access banking, savings and affordable credit.

If you think our Tenancy Support Team can help you, or you just want to check that all your finances are OK, visit our website for more information at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/TST

Increases in childcare support

The Government has announced increases to childcare provision, meaning low-income families

will be able to access increased childcare support from 28 June.

The Department of Work and Pensions are set to raise the amount that parents can claim back for their childcare costs on Universal Credit each month by 47%. The new amounts are:

- £951 for one child (up from £646)
- £1,630 for two or more children (up from £1,108)

At the same time, eligible parents will get help to cover the costs for the first month's childcare when they enter work or significantly increase their hours – instead of having to pay childcare costs upfront first.

Pension Credit – claim what's yours

Our Tenancy Sustainability Team have been contacting some of our tenants who we think may not be claiming Pension Credits – too many people are still missing out!

Pension Credit gives people extra money to help with their living costs if they are over State Pension age, on a low income and getting Housing Benefit. Pension Credit can also provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with housing costs, Council Tax, heating bills and for those aged 75 or over, a free TV licence.

If you think you, a relative or someone you know may be entitled to Pension Credit and they are a St Leger Homes tenant, let us know by calling **01302 862050** or check online at www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator

Did you know?

Between Apr '22-Mar '23 we supported **240** tenants to complete a mutual exchange move to a home more suitable for their needs.



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



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