

house proud

January 2023

The magazine for St Leger Homes tenants



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A message from the Chief Executive

Hello and welcome to the January 2023 issue of HouseProud.

I'd like to start by wishing everyone a happy New Year! I think you will all join with me in hoping that this year will bring better times for everybody once we are able to get past this winter period, which I know is unfortunately proving to be a difficult time for so many of us.

I hope that you have found the cost of living advice we included in the October issue of HouseProud to be helpful in dealing with the increasing costs that we are facing. If you know of anyone who would benefit from the information we provided please feel free to share it with them – we also have a digital version which anyone can access on our website at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/news/houseproud**. We have some more information in this issue on who you can contact if you need support, you can find this on page nine.

Also in this issue of HouseProud, on page five you can find coverage of our Tenants' Choice Awards 2022 awards ceremony where we presented our winners with their trophies. This event is always a highlight of the year for me as it offers a chance to say thank you to some truly amazing people who work tirelessly to help and support those living in our neighbourhoods. These local heroes help our communities to shine even brighter and it is a pleasure to celebrate the positive difference that they make for all tenants.

I hope you enjoy this issue of HouseProud.

Dave

**Dave Richmond,
Chief Executive**



Meet our new apprentices and student placements

We are delighted to share the news that a group of 19 apprentices and student placements have recently joined St Leger Homes – it's great to welcome them on board!

Our apprenticeship and student training programme gives young people a fantastic opportunity to be

trained in a trade or office-based profession, whilst also gaining qualifications that will set them up for a successful career. One of our new starters, Apprentice Electrician Aidan Waring, said:

"I'm looking forward to learning a new skill knowing it's with one of the best apprenticeships in Doncaster. I believe this

apprenticeship will help me as it is what I decided to do whilst in school, and if I stick to it, I will get the certificates and be able to build a successful and reliable career after my apprenticeship."

We are proud to be helping the next generation of workers learn new skills and at the same time ensuring they have the right skills and knowledge for the future, so we can continue delivering high-quality services for you.



Did you know?

Our rent is the **9th lowest** in the country – and the lowest in South Yorkshire.



Cover image: The winners of our Tenants' Choice Awards 2022

Building greener, cleaner communities

We are pleased to say that for the third year in a row, we have secured the SHIFT Gold accreditation in recognition of the work we are doing to reduce the impact our housing and supply chains have on the environment. Yet again we have improved our overall performance and this achievement shows just how serious we are about working together with Doncaster Council and other local partners to help tackle climate change.

SHIFT carry out independent assessments of housing organisations to see how they perform against challenging environmental targets. They looked at the 20,000 council homes that we manage, as well

as our offices and supply chain, and measured us against environmental factors including carbon dioxide emissions, landfill waste generated, and water use.

The SHIFT report showed that over the last year we kept up our record of ensuring 100% of office waste is being recycled or diverted from landfill. We also prevented 95.4% of waste from the maintenance and refurbishment of existing homes from going into landfill.

Overall we earned a score of 65.31, which is a 10% improvement on last year's total and means that we ranked second out of the 40 most recent SHIFT assessments.

We want to make sure that the homes we provide, our workplaces, and the ways in

which we work are all as environmentally friendly as possible – and this independent assessment from SHIFT shows that we are delivering on these commitments.

Climate change is something that has negative impacts for everyone, so let's all play our part and do everything we can to create a greener, cleaner world!

For more information on SHIFT go to <https://shiftenvironment.co.uk/>

Did you know?

Over **86%** of tenants say that they trust St Leger Homes.



Tenants' and Residents' Involvement Panel (TRIP) Chair Betty Clayton looks forward to the work they will be doing this New Year.

Welcome to 2023! I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year, despite the horrendous jump in the cost of living we are all having to endure. Now is the time we all have to pull together and help each other through this crisis, as we 'oldies' found out after the second world war (and it took almost seven years to do that!).

Here at TRIP we are working hard to look after the interests of

tenants and are going to undertake reviews into a couple of areas where we feel our input will be vital. St Leger Homes frequently ask for our input and views on many issues, which shows the excellent working relationship we have, and that can only be in the interest of tenants. Our membership is growing and this enables us to take on even more reviews which is great.

As you will see on p5, the Tenants' Choice Awards were again a great success this year, and with the fantastic work being done by tenants, the awards can only go from strength-to-strength. If you want

to get more involved in your community, email the Customer Involvement Team at **customerinvolvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk** or call **01302 862862 (option 6)**.

'If you would like to get in touch with TRIP please email **tripsecretaryslhd@gmail.com** Until next time, chin up and let's keep going together.

Betty



**Tenants
Take Over**

Simple winter home maintenance jobs

Winter is a time when colder weather can cause some problems around your home. Fortunately, two of the most common issues households experience during winter have simple fixes you can do yourself, without the need to call an engineer. Here's how:

Condensation is common at this time of year, so if you notice it in your home:

- Wipe the affected windows or walls dry.
- Keep the room door closed when cooking or washing, and either open a window or use your extractor fan.
- If possible have a moderate amount of heating on through the day rather than putting it on in high bursts.
- Wipe any mould affected areas with a fungicidal wash, being careful to follow the manufacturer's instructions.

A frozen condensate pipe can stop your boiler from working. Condensate pipes are made from white plastic and go from underneath your boiler through the wall to the outside of your home, where they release waste gas that turns into water.

- If your boiler has stopped and this pipe is frozen, you can unfreeze it by pouring hot water over the pipe.
Don't use boiling water, and don't pour water into the pipe.
- You can also put a hot water bottle around the section of pipe that feels frozen.



- Once defrosted, press the reset button to restart your boiler (you may need to hold this in for a few seconds).
- You can get more info by visiting www.stlegerhomes.co.uk and searching for 'condensation'.
- **Remember, only attempt to defrost the pipe if you can reach it easily, and always be careful outside when it is icy.**

The high cost of disrepair claims

As your landlord we have a duty to carry out repairs that are necessary to make your home safe and secure, so if you need a repair please speak to us rather than to a disrepair claims company.

In recent times, we have seen an increase in canvassers who knock on doors encouraging tenants to make disrepair claims, so that they can sell these claims leads on to solicitors and make a quick profit.

This can be both time consuming and costly for you – one disrepair claim that failed

last year left a tenant having to pay huge legal bills of over £6,000.

If you are considering making a disrepair claim you should ensure you have reported the issue to us, allowed a reasonable time for us to do the work, and spoken to us if you feel we haven't resolved your problem. You must also look at what evidence you have to support your case, and whether you could afford the court action if you don't get help with legal costs.

Instead of putting yourself at this risk, we urge all tenants to

report any repairs to us on **01302 862862 (option 1)**, through the My Access or 'Report a repair' buttons at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** and we'll be more than happy to help you.

Did you know?

Our Customer Access Team answered **109,640** of your calls between April-October 2022.



Tenants' Choice Awards 2022

Did you know?

Over **92%** of customers say our staff are friendly and approachable.



The results of our annual Tenants' Choice Awards are now in and we are thrilled to be able to tell you all about our amazing winners!

The Tenants' Choice Awards are our way of recognising, celebrating, and saying a big thank you to those tenants who work non-stop to support the people in their community.

The awards ceremony was held in autumn at the The Earl of Doncaster, where we gave out six awards to individuals and community groups who have all made a positive difference over the past year by looking after their fellow tenants and residents. The winners were chosen by Doncaster residents in a public vote.

Our Chief Executive, Dave Richmond, was at the event to give his congratulations to the winners.

Dave said: *"I am delighted that our Tenants' Choice Awards are celebrating the incredible work that these people carry out every day, all for the benefit of their neighbours and others in the local community. So many people have been helped as a result of the positive spirit and dedication that these winners show, and I am glad that we can give them the credit they deserve. I would like to congratulate all of this year's Tenants' Choice Awards winners, and also to thank the other nominees for everything that they do to offer support and make a difference in their communities."*

You can read about all our worthy winners on the next few pages.

The winners of our Tenants' Choice Awards 2022 are:

The Tenant of the Year award

Won by **Margaret Tarren**. Margaret has been fundraising for most of her life, raising a staggering total of more than £45,000 for a number of charities including Macmillan, British Heart Foundation, Firefly, Marie Curie and Doncaster Hospitals. During the pandemic she raised funds for a defibrillator for the community of Arksey which has made a huge difference to the community and surrounding areas.

Margaret also runs coffee mornings and pie and pea nights at her local communal hall. Margaret is well-known in her community where she is loved and respected by everyone.



Tenants' Choice Awards 2022

The Young Person of the Year award

Won by **Lily Johnson**. Lily attends several groups at her local communal hall, including the Craft and Creations group, where she helps staff set up the events, serves refreshments to the attendees and joins in with the activities. She is a natural at making people feel welcome and encouraging everyone to get involved and have fun.

Lily also volunteers at the local community café and has recently completed a food hygiene course. She has also been building up her skills for the future by taking part in training courses on first aid and safeguarding.

The Community Champion award

Won by **Helen Mahon**. When Helen moved to the area around five years ago she found that there weren't many groups and activities for people to get involved in. She decided to change this and help tackle the loneliness many were feeling by arranging coffee mornings, craft sessions and other social events in her local communal hall.

These events have gone from strength to strength, and now most days the communal hall is full of people all enjoying themselves with their friends and neighbours. Helen's latest project is creating an outdoor area with raised flower beds, and planting salads and vegetables which will be used to cook food for local residents.

The Community Group award

Won by **b:friend**. This South Yorkshire charity tackles loneliness by matching volunteer befrienders with socially isolated older neighbours so they can meet for an hour each week to have a cup of tea and a chat.

They also run social clubs where they organise guest speakers and groups to speak so that everyone who attends can have fun and learn new skills. To many people it's a lifeline and something they can look forward to each week. This all helps reduce social isolation across Doncaster – lots of new friendships have been made and everyone gets a great deal of the experience.

The Best Green Initiative award

Won by **Doncaster Men's Shed**. This group worked tirelessly on two allotments in Barnby Dun to remove rubbish and improve the general quality of the ground, which had been left in a poor state. The once barren allotments now look wonderful and are providing a place for people to get together, enjoy the outdoors and take pride in their local environment.

The group intend to keep developing the plots into a lush green space where members are able to come along to grow food and plants.

Did you know?

Since 1st April 2022 we have supported **53** tenants and local residents into work and training.





The Community Project award

Won by **Angel Wings Community Lunches**. This Conisbrough based group provide low-cost and nutritious home-cooked food for local residents, and they offer a delivery service for those who are housebound or find it difficult to attend. The meals they provide are varied and they often take requests from the diners on what to cook next.

Community is at the heart of the project and they also offer space for people to sit and chat together. The group believe that healthy meals support the development of healthy communities – and the local people seem to agree!

We hope you have enjoyed reading about the good work that this year's winners are doing out in their communities, and that you will join in us in giving thanks to them for everything that they do.

If you have been inspired by our winners' stories and would like to get more involved in your local community, you can contact our Customer Involvement Team to learn about the ways that you can help make a difference.

To find out more call us on **01302 862862 (option 6)**, email customerinvolvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk or visit the Get Involved pages on our website at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/getinvolved, where you can also learn about the tenant training programmes, local groups and other activities happening where you live.

Did you know?

We completed more than **10,000** emergency repairs for customers in 2022.



WELL DONE EVERYONE!

STAR survey 2022 - the results

Our Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) is a tenant satisfaction survey which asks you for feedback about how you think we are doing. This year over 1,000 randomly selected tenants, from areas all across the city, gave us their views, and we can now share the results!

The results show that our performance remains good for the key services we provide. When we look at our performance alongside other satisfaction surveys and feedback we receive we are performing well. However, similar to the experiences of other housing providers, we have seen a decrease in satisfaction and are committed to getting our scores back up by working on a number of initiatives to help deliver further improvements to the services we provide.

Next year you will also be able to judge our performance against other housing providers when the Regulator of Social Housing publishes the results of feedback against the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures for all landlords. You can read more about both of these in future editions of HouseProud.

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who took the time to get involved in our STAR satisfaction survey – we really do appreciate your feedback!

If you have a question about anything we do, you can email us at info@stlegerhomes.co.uk or call **01302 862862**. If you want to leave a comment, compliment or complaint about our services, please email CustomerCare@stlegerhomes.co.uk, call **01302 862726** or log your feedback at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk

STAR results:



DAHA Domestic Abuse Accreditation

We are proud to have achieved a nationally recognised accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) for the work we do to help people affected by domestic abuse.

Gaining this accreditation is just the start of the journey though, and we are committed to keep improving the way that we work so we can always offer victims and survivors the support they need, at the time that they need it.

If you need to speak to someone about domestic abuse, you can call us in confidence on **01302 736532**. You can also get support from the Doncaster Domestic Abuse Hub by calling them on **01302 737080** or emailing dahub@doncaster.gov.uk



Did you know?

Between April-October 2022 we responded to **84%** of anti-social behaviour reports within five days.



Cost of living support

This winter has brought difficult times for many people who are suffering as a result of the increases we are all seeing in the cost of energy, household bills and food.

Our Tenancy Sustainability Team are here to help if you are finding it hard to pay your rent or are struggling to manage your money and debts. They can provide support tailored specifically to you and your own personal circumstances, so if you need help you can speak to the team by calling **01302 862050**, or you can email them at **HOTS@stlegerhomes.co.uk**

If you have internet access, the website **www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk** has a dedicated cost of living support section which is a hub for help and advice that can help you get through the winter months if you are finding things difficult.

This has useful information about the financial support that is available for you, advice on keeping your home warm this winter, and guidance on how to stay fit and healthy. There is also advice and contact details to get support if you are having problems with debt, employment, benefit entitlements, accessing grants, saving money on bills, as well as information about local foodbanks.

In the October 2022 issue of HouseProud we gave you lots of information on ways to deal with the cost of living pressures and the support that is available. Every St Leger Homes property receives HouseProud, so be sure to get your copy out and have a read – you can also find a digital version which anyone can access on our website at **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/news/houseproud**

Help is available, so if things are difficult for you this winter please do get in touch.

Gas servicing keeps your household safe

From February to October each year, our gas engineers visit all properties to service your gas meter, gas fire and boiler as well as carrying out a visual check of your gas cooker, and smoke and CO2 alarms. This year we will also be replacing existing CO2 alarms that are more than 8-years old – your Gas Engineer will let you know if this is required in your home.

Gas servicing checks keep you, your neighbours and your home safe, so it's vital we can access your home to carry out this essential work. We will send a letter approximately two weeks before your appointment and we will also send a text reminder 24 hours before your service.

If the date and time isn't convenient please let us know as soon as possible by calling **01302 862862 (option 1)**. This way we will not waste time and resources coming out when no-one will be in - and we can ensure someone else gets the visit they need. You can make sure that we have up-to-date contact details for you by visiting **<https://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/myaccess/>**

Thank you for helping us to keep you safe!



The flyer features the St Leger Homes logo in the top left corner. The main title 'ANNUAL GAS SERVICE' is in large white letters on a dark blue background. Below this, two bullet points are listed: 'An appointment letter will be sent in advance' and 'We will send a text the day before to remind you'. A blue button with white text says 'Not convenient? Call us to rearrange: 01302 862862'. In the bottom right, there is a section titled 'UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO' with a phone icon and the website 'www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/myaccess'. The background of the flyer shows a gas engineer working on a boiler.

Did you know?

We carry out around **19,000** gas service inspections every year to keep households safe.



Need to make a complaint?

Last year we worked with tenants to carry out a self-assessment check on our complaints procedure. We followed the new Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code to identify changes we needed to make in order to strengthen our complaints policy.

When you make a complaint we will acknowledge it within three working days and then confirm the issue and the outcome you are looking for with you. By doing this we hope to resolve your complaint quicker and more effectively, and it also gives us a chance to explain our process and what to expect.

Complaints process stages:

Stage 1 Most complaints will be resolved at this stage by the relevant Service Manager or Team Leader.

Stage 2 Appeal - If you aren't satisfied with the answer you receive at stage one, you have the right to appeal. Appeals must be submitted within 20 working days after the date of the response letter, along with any supporting evidence. All appeals will be fairly and thoroughly investigated by an independent appeals panel, which includes tenant representatives.

We do use the feedback you provide to learn and to improve our services. An example of this is the change we have made to how we deliver our repairs service. Following a review of feedback received our trade staff now phone ahead for all responsive repairs. We have also put in new procedures so that you can easily feedback on our performance following a repair being completed.

If you want to find out more about the self-assessment we carried out, go to **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/complaints-and-compliments/** where you can also make a complaint, view our complaints performance figures, and see how we are learning from your complaints in our 'You Said, We Did' section.

Don't forget – you can always send us a compliment too if you feel a member of our team has made a positive difference to your day!



Take control with My Access

The My Access section on our website is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be used to see important tenancy information, such as details about your rent account. You can also use it to make rent payments at a time and place that is convenient for you.

As well as this, My Access allows you to contact our Repairs and Maintenance Team if you have an issue in your home that you need us to look at – without the need to hang around waiting on the telephone!



If you haven't already registered, just go to **www.stlegerhomes.co.uk** and click on the My Access button at the top of the page. All you need to get started is your tenancy reference number from your rent statement and your date of birth, then you are good to go!

Did you know?

We are carrying out annual safety inspections on over **5,000** flat entrance fire doors.



Supporting our estates

Tenants are at the heart of everything we do at St Leger Homes so, as part of our mission to support people and communities, we have been working with our partners to improve the neighbourhoods that you live in.

Between April and October last year we held 15 separate Action Days in areas across Doncaster, where we tackled issues that have a negative impact on communities such as littering, anti-social behaviour and damage to the local environment. Each Action Day focussed on one particular local area and we were joined by Doncaster Council and South Yorkshire Police, as well as a number of volunteers.

Here are some of the ways we were able to make a difference for our neighbourhoods:

- Our Caretakers collected up more 700kg of rubbish and waste, improving the local environment for people who live there
- We were able to gather evidence about people who cause a nuisance whilst riding motorcycles on our estates which has now led to court cases

- In two areas we gathered evidence and information about drug dealing, which is now being examined by the police
- In three areas we opened investigations into cases of untidy gardens, which can be a blight on our neighbourhoods
- Tenancy and Estates Officers were on hand to provide help and support to many customers in person on issues including paying their rent, benefits advice and reporting repairs.

We will be holding more Action Days this year so keep an eye out for us making a difference in your community soon!

Did you know?

Last year, we completed over **50,000** repairs in response to requests from customers.



Let's take care of each other!

With the price of food and energy going up, and the days getting colder, now is a great time to make sure we are all being good neighbours to those who live around us. This can be especially important if we have older neighbours.

Age UK estimate that almost two million older people in the UK feel ignored or invisible, which is a very sad statistic. Saying hello to an older neighbour is such a small thing for us to do, but greeting them with a smile and a wave can make a huge difference for someone who doesn't have a lot of contact with other people. It can really make their day a lot brighter!

There are lots of small acts that can make a big difference, such as: knocking on an older neighbour's door and asking if they need anything; offering to pick up some shopping for

them; offering to sweep up the leaves or take the ice off their doorstep; or taking a mince pie round at Christmas.

Of course we are all different, not everyone wants to be best friends with their neighbours! Make sure you properly introduce yourself first by saying who you are and where you live, and try to judge the mood when you meet them to help build that relationship.



Our Housing Allocation Policy - thank you for your feedback.

Listening to our customers is an important part of what we do. That's one of the reasons why we carried out a massive consultation exercise on how we can update our Housing Allocation Policy to ensure we are meeting the needs of our customers.

Each year approximately 1,400 council homes from our housing stock of around 20,000 properties become available to re-let. This means the demand for council housing is much greater than the number of empty properties we have to offer, so it's very important that people who need homes the most are prioritised.

To make sure we are helping those in greatest need, we proposed changes to our Housing Allocation Policy and asked people across Doncaster for their feedback. This was our largest consultation ever – we received **almost 2,000 responses** and comments from residents, and heard opinions from 12 community groups and

over 450 different organisations.

We also spoke to 234 tenants living in houses with more bedrooms than they need about changes to incentivise them to move into a bungalow or flat, which would release more homes for families in need.

We're pleased to say that our proposals were supported with a favourable score of over 55% of people saying they either agreed or strongly agreed – and more than half of the proposals received 70%-80% agreement.

We have taken all of this feedback into consideration and will now be putting these plans into action – thank you to everyone who got involved in the consultation for helping us to be

able to offer safe, secure homes to even more people.

If you are looking to downsize to a smaller home because you don't need the extra rooms or want to reduce your household costs, please contact our Customer Access Team on **01302 862862 (option 4)**.

Did you know?

Between April-October 2022 we resolved **91%** of anti-social behaviour reports we received.



Quit smoking this New Year

The New Year is always a good time to make a change in our lives, and for many people their New Year's resolution in 2023 is to stop smoking.

There are lots of great reasons to quit smoking, but a big one is the cost. Stopping you can save

yourself over a thousand pounds every year. Just think what you could do with all that extra money in your pocket!

Cigarettes also do terrible damage to your body and your smoking can also cause health problems for those who are closest to you.

You don't have to do it on your own, there is lots of help and support available to make quitting easier, and a good place to start is by going to **www.yorkshiresmokefree.nhs.uk/** or speaking to your GP or local pharmacist.



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info@stlegerhomes.co.uk



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