

house proud

April 2024

The magazine for St Leger Homes' tenants



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A message from the Chief Executive

Hello and welcome to the April 2024 issue of HouseProud.

I'd like to start with the sad news that Betty Clayton, Chair of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, unfortunately passed away in February this year. Betty was one of our most active tenants, working with us for many years to try to make services better for everyone, and I know that is how many of you will remember her.

Betty gave huge amounts of her own time to St Leger Homes and our tenants, and she was always helpful, cheerful and constructive. Over the years she has had a massive influence on the development of housing services within Doncaster. Betty did this not for personal gain, but because she wanted to make things better for all tenants. She is a massive loss to this organisation and we will sorely miss her. You can read more on page three.

I also wanted to bring to your attention the fact that I will be retiring in May when our current Director of Property Services, Chris Margrave, will take over as Chief Executive. Chris has had a massive, positive impact on our services since he joined in January 2021, and I know that as Chief Executive he will be equally committed to making the services we provide the best they possibly can be for the benefit of our tenants. You can find out more in the article on page two.

Thank you everyone and goodbye, it has been a privilege serving you as Chief Executive of St Leger Homes.

Dave

**Dave Richmond,
Chief Executive**



Chris Margrave named as our new Chief Exec

Chris Margrave has been announced as the new Chief Executive of St Leger Homes. He will take over from our

current Chief Executive Dave Richmond in May 2024 when Dave will be retiring.

For the last three years, Chris has been our Director of Property Services where he was in charge of our Repairs and Maintenance service, building safety and fire safety, and our investment programme which is delivering upgrades and improvements to council homes across the borough.

Chris has worked in the housing sector for more than 30 years, so he brings a huge amount of knowledge and experience to the role. Before joining St Leger Homes, he served as both Director of Investment and Director of Assets at Wakefield and District Housing.

"I'm delighted to be given the opportunity to become Chief Executive of this fantastic organisation" said Chris.

"I'm really looking forward to building on the great work done by Dave and our colleagues to deliver the best services we can for our tenants."

Chair of the St Leger Homes Board, Dave Wilkinson, said: "Chris has a wealth of experience and has demonstrated in recent years his absolute determination to deliver excellent services for our customers on behalf of the City of Doncaster Council."

Did you know?

Between Oct-Dec 2023, over 95% of repairs jobs we attended were completed on the first visit.





Looking after our neighbourhoods

Over the last few months we have been out and about across the borough making a difference by helping communities look after their local neighbourhood.

We held a Day of Action on the Edlington Royal Estate where we helped tenants tidy up the area. Skips were provided so people could have large unwanted household items or rubbish from their garden removed. People were pleased to see us and many took the opportunity to have a clear out, with everything from empty gas bottles to broken freezers collected.

Our Caretaker Team and Housing Officers took part, along with partners from City of Doncaster Council. Street Scene and Community Payback Teams carried out litter picks and South Yorkshire Police were there to support - it was a real group effort!

We also had a Day of Action in Rossington where as well as litter picking and skips to tackle fly-tipping, we also ran a Cost of Living Hub to offer support on dealing with food and energy costs and household bills. Local Councillors hosted a cuppa and cake session that gave tenants the chance to talk about any issues affecting them.

Keep an eye on our website and social media for details of upcoming Days of Action in your area.

Did you know?

In 2023, we completed fire risk assessments on 100% of our properties to help keep tenants safe in their home.



It is with great sadness we would like to share the news that regular Tenants Take Over writer and Chair of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, Betty Clayton, passed away in February this year.

Betty was dedicated to supporting her fellow tenants and spent nearly twenty years working to bring about social housing improvements that would benefit everybody. She devoted many thousands of hours to serving on groups and committees at St Leger Homes where she represented the views of tenants, so that together we could develop even better services for all customers.

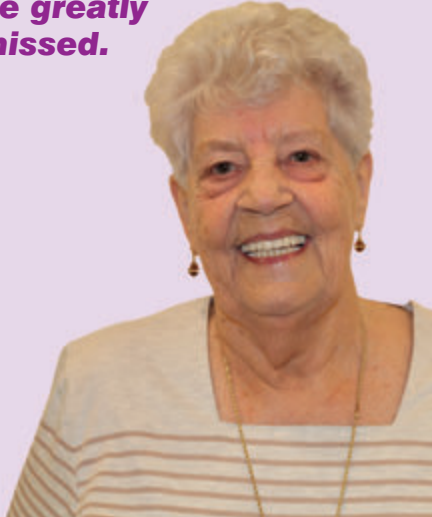
Betty had been involved with St Leger Homes since 2006. She was part of the West Area Board and then focused on tenant challenge through our Tenants and Residents Involvement Panel, which recently became the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP).

Betty's focus was always on providing a tenant's voice to the highest levels of the company, and she never wavered in her vocal opinions and strong leadership. Betty led on many changes to policies and procedures, all to make tenants' lives better and more rewarding.

Her friends on the TSP will miss her indomitable spirit and firm leadership. They will miss her sense of duty and dedication,

and especially that smile she always she had. To many she was just Betty, but to her friends on the panel she was 'simply-the-best-Betty'.

Thank you Betty for everything you have done - you will be greatly missed.



Secure Tenancy Agreement Review

We are carrying out a review of the Secure Tenancy Agreement that all tenants have with your landlord, City of Doncaster Council. We last reviewed this in 2017, so it's good practice to do it again to make sure it is up to date, covers all relevant legislation and reflects the needs of tenants and communities.

We have already consulted with lots of other tenants and other service providers to hear their views. We will provide plenty more opportunities to have your say and tell us what you think should be changed, added in or taken out of the tenancy agreement.

You will have received a big document through the post called a Preliminary Notice of Variation – this is a long title that means 'these are the changes we propose to make to your tenancy agreement'. These proposed changes have come out of lots of consultations with tenants and partners.

We are looking to introduce the new tenancy agreement from 2 September 2024. Before this you will receive another document titled Notice of Variation which provides you with the final approved changes and gives four weeks' notice of the changes coming into effect.

The summary of changes we are looking at are:

- Strengthen the information and powers we have to gain access to properties where tenants won't allow us in to carry out essential maintenance
- Changes to the way you can terminate your tenancy
- New section on Damp, Mould and Condensation to specify our responsibilities and the responsibilities of tenants
- New section on Fire and Building Safety to specify our responsibilities and the responsibilities of tenants
- Dangerous Dogs – explaining the Council's position on this as a landlord
- CCTV / Ring Doorbells – ensuring tenancy conditions are compliant with Data Protection rules

We are strengthening our stance on 'no

Did you know?

Our Tenant Scrutiny Panel are planning an away day to hear your views on issues affecting tenants, and to find volunteers to help us improve services through our new Mystery Shopping scheme. If you are interested, email tenantscrutiny4slhd@gmail.com



access' due to the increasing number of tenants who won't allow us in to do essential work to your home.

This work – such as gas servicing, electrical safety and fire safety – is critical to ensuring you and your household are safe, so it's very important you allow us in to complete it. The new tenancy conditions will state that if all attempts to gain access fail we will use the Courts to get access without your permission, and any additional costs incurred will be passed on to the tenant involved.

Please take the opportunity to give us your thoughts on the proposed tenancy agreement changes. You can do this by:

Telephone: **01302 862862**

Email: SLHDtenancyagreementreview@stlegerhomes.co.uk

You must provide feedback no later than 26 April 2024.



Did you know?

Our Customer Access Team supported customers by answering over 146,000 calls between 1 April 2023 - 28 Feb 2024.



Gas servicing keeps your home safe

From February to October each year our Gas Servicing team visits all properties to service your gas meter, gas fire and boiler. As well as this, they will also carry out a visual check of your gas cooker and smoke and CO2 alarms to make sure everything is working correctly.

Gas servicing checks keep you and your household safe, so it's vital that you give us access to 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.

Did you know?

97% of our Trades Apprentices take up permanent jobs with St Leger Homes. This means they have had the best training to keep your home safe and in good repair!



If the date and time isn't convenient please let us know as soon as possible by calling **01302 862862**. 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 www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/myaccess/

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.

Thank you for helping us to keep you safe!

Measles – get protected

As you may have seen in the news, there has been a rise in the number of measles cases reported across the country.

As you may have seen in the news, there has been a rise in the number of measles cases reported across the country.

Measles is an infection that spreads easily and can lead to serious problems for some people. Two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination can offer protection from measles for life, so it's important to make sure you and your loved ones have received it.

Children are usually given their first dose of the MMR vaccine around their first birthday, and the second at around three years and four months old. You can check if your child had these by looking in their Personal Child Health

Record, also known as the Red Book.

If your children are between 6-11 years old and have not yet been vaccinated, you will soon receive a letter or text message from the NHS encouraging you to contact your GP. (Please note, you can contact your GP about this straight away if you want – you don't need to wait for the message.)

Anyone can check their own vaccination records through their GP surgery app, the NHS app, or by contacting your GP. If you haven't been vaccinated, you can contact your GP to arrange a catch-up vaccination – this is free and can be done regardless of your age.

For more information, visit the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine

Our Corporate Plan 2024-29 is out now! It sets out our key priorities for the next five years - read more at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk or in the July HouseProud.



Move to Universal Credit



Earlier this year, people in Doncaster who claim Tax Credits as their only benefit received a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) titled 'Universal Credit Migration Notice'.

This explained that between February and September 2024, Universal Credit (UC) will replace the following six legacy benefits – you will be affected if you currently receive:

- Housing Benefit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Child Tax Credits
- Working Tax Credits
- Income Support

The changes will start with those people who are receiving Tax Credits only (and not claiming any other benefit including Housing Benefit) being invited to make a claim for UC. Your 'Universal Credit Migration Notice' letter tells you the date that you must make a UC claim by – this will be three months from the date of the letter.

If you are invited to do this but decide not make a claim for UC within three months, then your Tax Credits will stop. People who are claiming other benefits will receive their Migration Notice letters from April 2024 onwards.

When you are invited to make the move to UC you will be eligible for 'transitional protection' payments. These payments will make up the difference if your UC entitlement is less than your previous Tax Credits or benefits.

Please note that if you move to UC before you are officially invited by letter then you will not get these payments and could lose money.

Therefore, it's important you do not make a UC claim before you receive your official 'Universal Credit Migration Notice' letter from DWP.

Some Tax Credit claimants don't make a UC claim because they think they won't be entitled to anything. This isn't always the case so it is worth checking – you never know, you might be pleasantly surprised! You can check this using our benefit calculator which you find on the Advice and Support pages on our website www.stlegerhomes.co.uk

If you are not sure if you are affected and what you need to do, contact DWP UC Migration Notice Helpline on **0800 169 0328**.

You can also get free support from Citizens Advice on **0800 144 8444**.

Further information

You can find more information about the Move to UC on the Government website at www.gov.uk/guidance/tax-credits-and-some-benefits-are-ending-move-to-universal-credit

There is also a helpful video with lots of useful information which you watch at www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wq98MuQG7c

Did you know?

In the Q3 2023, we resolved 329 antisocial behaviour cases to improve neighbourhoods for tenants – that's more cases resolved than were opened during this period.



You said, we did!

When you give us feedback, we listen!

We offer customers lots of ways to get in touch and tell us your views. This can be by sending a compliment or complaint; contacting us by email or phone; or through the many involvement and engagement platforms and groups we have.

The best thing is that what you tell us really does make a difference. Here are some recent examples of what you said we need to do to improve.



Repairs and Maintenance

- **We needed to improve how we delivered repairs that aren't urgent**
- ✔ After speaking with tenants, in 2023 we brought our scheduled, emergency and responsive repairs services together into our new 'One Repairs' service. This is making repairs more effective and even better value for money.



Policies and procedures

- **Housing Management Policy review**
- ✔ Feedback from customer forums helped inform a new Housing Management Policy which makes sure that we carry out a robust, effective and inclusive housing management service for all tenants.



Housing and neighbourhoods

- **We needed to review our Antisocial Behaviour service**
- ✔ Feedback from customers helped improve our Housing Services team structure which resulted in us establishing a dedicated Safeguarding and Antisocial Behaviour team.



How we communicate with you

- **We needed to improve communications with customers as a whole**
 - ✔ We improved how we communicate with you about the progress of your repair by implementing a text message service to confirm and remind about appointments. We also implemented a process for trades operatives to call before setting off to your property to carry out a repair.
- We also reviewed our website and put procedures in place to keep information relevant and up-to-date.



Tenant involvement, engagement & feedback

- **We needed to engage with you better and provide more opportunities for you to have your say on how we deliver services**
 - ✔ Your feedback helped us to create a new Tenant Voice Strategy and Tenant Voice Model. These set out our commitment for you to have greater influence over the way decisions are made about your homes and the services we provide. You can find more info at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/get-involved/tenant-voice-strategy/
- We also set up a new One Voice Forum where tenants are involved in reviewing all policies and strategies. This launched in March 2023. You can find out more at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/get-involved/one-voice-forum/
- **You wanted to be consulted on how we handle complaints**
 - ✔ We reviewed the way we handle complaints, and the involvement of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel helped make sure we were compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint code. This means that complaints procedures are easy for our customers to access.

Did you know?

Whether it's a compliment or complaint, it's easy to give us feedback - and it helps improve our services. Just go online to www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/your-feedback-matters





Celebrating 10 years of helping people into work

Our World of Work scheme has reached its 10th anniversary!

The scheme was originally set up in partnership with Doncaster College and the Department of Work and Pensions to help tenants get into employment and training. Over the years we've supported many tenants into work or training, either through our in-house 'support and learn' courses or with external employers.

Those participants who chose to attend the four week cleaning or multi skills courses have had the opportunity to come and work for St Leger Homes in a six months paid role. This has helped many people go on to secure a permanent role with us.

As the scheme has developed, it now also offers general employment help in the form of job searching, completion of applications forms and CVs, and interview preparation.

Our new multi skills cohort (who you can see pictured) recently started their six months work at

St Leger Homes in the role of External Property Maintenance Operatives. Here they have been helping to improve paths and walkways around tenants' properties.

Simba, one of the new starters, told us: "The World of Work scheme has been brilliant. You learn so much at Doncaster College, and now me and my new work mates are able to put these skills into good practice whilst helping individual tenants and communities."

Want to get involved?

The World of Work scheme is free, voluntary and it could be just what you need to help you get back into employment.

If you are interested, or you want to find out more about the opportunities available, you can contact the World of Work team on **01302 734384** or complete the short application form on our website at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/careers/world-of-work-academy

Did you know?

What you say makes a difference! Following a rise in complaints about damp and mould in 2022, we held consultations with tenants that led to a dedicated team being set-up to tackle these issues.



Heatwave advice

In recent years we have seen more and more heatwaves (periods of very high temperatures) happening during summer. For many the higher temperatures can seriously affect their health and be potentially dangerous, however there are things you can do to help stay as cool and safe as possible.

Drinking plenty of fluids is important, as is putting on lots of

suncream with a sun protection factor (SPF) higher than 30 and wearing a hat to keep the sun off you. You can keep your home cool in hot weather by closing windows and curtains in rooms that face the sun, and you should stay in shade when the sun is at its hottest between 11am-3pm.

For more advice on staying safe in the heat, go to www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/health-wellbeing/summer-health

Helping you take pride in your local area

Over the last twelve months we have been proud to help community groups who have big plans to improve their local environment!

The Environmental Pride programme offers funding for community-led projects that aim to make a difference in our local areas. It is led by St Leger Homes and City of Doncaster Council, along with support from Get Doncaster Moving and other partners.

So far we have supported more than 30 community groups, enabling them to run some fantastic projects. These have included communal food growing to provide healthy food for people; lunchtime litter-picks to improve the appearance of estates; planting trees, hedgerows and wild meadows on disused areas of land; and more!

Environmental Pride is currently in its fourth round of funding and this time we have been hearing from groups with projects to help the natural

environment; host events in public open spaces such as parks; and starting planting orchards.

To find out more about the good work we are supporting across the borough, and for information on the next round of project funding, just go to www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/environmental-pride.



Put a spring in your step – let's #GetDoncasterWalking!

Spring is in the air, so with the arrival of the brighter weather – and to celebrate National Walking Month in May – Get Doncaster Moving are encouraging all residents to enjoy the benefits that a good walk can offer.

Being active through activities such as walking releases the body's own 'feel good' hormones which are called endorphins. These boost your self-esteem and aid your concentration as well as helping you to sleep well and feel better.

Walking groups are really popular in Doncaster, with many groups meeting regularly for local walks and a chat. Walking groups are a great way to meet people and get to know your community

- lots of people in Doncaster join walking groups for this reason, as well as to feel a little fitter!

Local Doncaster resident, David, said "There are so many benefits of walking. It improves your wellbeing, gets you out in nature, and it's completely free. All you have to do is put some footwear on, get outside and take that first step."

Get Doncaster Moving has a Walking Calendar on their website, which lists all the community group-led walks taking place across Doncaster every day. There are walks and groups suited to all ages and abilities, so why not take a look and see what's on near you? Just go online to getdoncastermoving.org/walkingcalendar

Did you know?

Some customers told us they wanted support for mental health issues, so we gave extra training to our customer-facing teams and created a specialist Mental Health Navigator Team to offer more help.



Guidance about XL Bully dogs



The Government has now added XL Bullies to the list of dogs which are banned in England and Wales. This means it is illegal to own an XL Bully unless your dog has a Certificate of Exemption.

It is also a criminal offence to:

- Sell an XL Bully dog
- Abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray
- Give away an XL Bully dog
- Breed from an XL Bully dog
- Have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle

If you aren't sure if your dog is an XL Bully, you can find a helpful guide by visiting the Government website www.gov.uk and searching for 'official definition of an XL Bully'.

If you live in a council property and own an XL Bully, we will expect you to fully comply with all these requirements and we will ask for proof of this. You will need to provide St Leger Homes

with a copy of your Certificate of Exemption and if you can't provide this we will report it to the relevant authorities to enforce this. If you need advice on how this may impact on your tenancy, call **01302 862862**.

You can also contact us if you believe one of our tenants has a dangerous or banned dog – but please note that you must always inform the Police about this first. After that we will work with the Police to investigate and see if any action needs to be taken. You can find more information about dangerous dogs on City of Doncaster Council's website www.doncaster.gov.uk

Further advice and information

If you are concerned about your dog's behaviour – whatever breed it may be – you can speak to your vet to get support, and they can refer you to a registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist who can provide further help if necessary.

Did you know?

We have a new Customer Charter that sets out our customer service promises and the standards tenants told us were important to you? You can find it at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/about-us/our-service-standards/



Please don't abuse our staff

Our staff are here to help and support customers with any problems they may be facing. Most of the time when we meet face-to-face with tenants or talk on the phone people remain calm, fair and reasonable while they tell us about their issue.

However, there have been

instances where people have been abusive or threatening to members of staff. We would like to politely remind everyone this sort of behaviour is totally unacceptable and when it happens we will always take action against those responsible.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Award success!

Apprentice Building Surveyor Jack Aston recently picked up the Apprentice of the Year trophy at the Doncaster Business Awards.

Jack said:

“Not only does this award highlight my development as a surveyor and as an individual, but it also recognises the continued support and hard work I receive from everyone around me at St Leger Homes”.

This success follows his win in the Apprentice of the Year category at last year's Direct Works Awards, so Jack definitely deserves a huge 'well done' for his hard work!

We're also thrilled to have been named Large Employer of the Year at the Doncaster College Apprenticeship Awards in February. We are proud to help people from our local communities build their knowledge, skills and experience as they take the first steps in their career. Well done to all of our apprentices and the mentors who support them.



What are Consumer Standards?

St Leger Homes has to meet standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing which help make sure that tenants receive high quality homes and services. These are called Consumer Standards and they are made-up of four parts:

- **Safety and Quality Standard** – Providing safe, good quality homes with good quality services
- **Tenancy Standard** – Providing fair allocation and letting of homes, and management of tenancies

- **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** – Treating tenants with fairness and respect so they can access services, raise concerns, influence decision making and hold landlords to account
- **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – Landlords engaging with relevant parties so tenants can live in safe, well-maintained neighbourhoods, and feel safe in their homes

You can read more about the standards tenants can expect from social housing at www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards

Information at your fingertips

If you're looking for information about your tenancy, need to report a repair or just want to make a rent payment - then our website www.stlegerhomes.co.uk is the place to go!

Our website was created in consultation with customers to make sure that it is easy to use and has everything you

need. The useful My Access section gives you a quick and easy way to access our services at a time that suits you.

Whatever you need to support your tenancy, you can find it on our website – www.stlegerhomes.co.uk

Did you know?

We asked tenants at Jubilee Court how we could help them feel safer in their homes. Their feedback led to many building safety improvements including new fire alarms, new doors and a new fire monitoring system.



Tenancy Support Update

Move to UC

Since February, people who claim only Tax Credits have received letters from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) advising their Tax Credits will be ending and they need to claim Universal Credit (UC).

From April, they will be contacting working-age people claiming other legacy benefits to advise them of the same. It is important you do not make a claim until asked to by the DWP via an official

'Universal Credit Managed Migration notice' – or you might lose out financially.

Unsure if you're affected? You can contact DWP UC Migration Notice Helpline on 0800 169 0328. You can also get free support from Citizens Advice on 0800 144 8444 or visit their website to calculate how much UC you are entitled to – it's worth checking as you might be entitled to more than you think.

Universal Credit – think you know how many weeks in a year?!

When calculating UC, the DWP work out monthly rent by multiplying your weekly rent by 52 (weeks) and dividing by 12 (months). This is the case even when there is an extra 'week' in the year.

You won't normally notice this except for every few years when the extra day falls on a Monday, which it does in 2024. As rent is charged every Monday, this effectively makes 2024 a 53-week rent year and will show on the rent account as a full week's debt.

The DWP does not change the way it calculates UC payments on a 53-week year, which means your monthly payments won't cover the monthly rent in 2024. You will need to work out the shortfall and pay this – the example below is based on someone paying £100 rent per week.

53-week year rent calculation:

weekly rent £100 × 53 ÷ 12 = £441.67 per month

53-week year UC calculation:

weekly rent £100 × 52 ÷ 12 = £433.34 per month

So, in this example the tenant would have a shortfall of £8.33 per month to pay.

Spring Budget

The Government's Spring Budget had some benefits announcements which may be useful to know:

- The Household Support Fund will be extended until the end of September 2024
- For UC claimants, the Budgeting Loan repayment period will be extended from 12 months to 24 months for budgeting loans taken out from December 2024
- The Child Benefit Higher Earners Threshold is increasing from £50,000 to £60,000.

Family M.O.T – Moving On Together

Family M.O.T is a free 8-week group programme to help families affected by parental or carer drug and alcohol misuse. The programme offers the opportunity for families with children aged 8 and above to explore their own thoughts and beliefs about drug and alcohol use, as well as looking at how to communicate effectively as a family, and how to make small but positive changes.

To take part in the Family M.O.T you can refer yourself by calling 03000218997, or ask a professional you are working with to refer you.



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