

house proud

Summer 2024

The magazine for St Leger Homes' tenants



Tenant Voice Special



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Message from the CEO

Hello everyone and welcome to the summer 2024 issue of HouseProud.

This is the first issue of HouseProud since I took over as Chief Executive, so the first thing I wanted to say is how much of a pleasure and privilege it is to be here serving our customers. Having a safe, secure, comfortable home for ourselves and our families is such an important part of life.

With the launch of our new Corporate Plan, which sets out our plans and what you can expect from us over the next five years, I know that we are all ready to keep providing you with these essential high-quality, value for money housing services that you need.

In this issue of HouseProud we have a special focus on our communities, so on page five you can hear from the leaders of our tenant involvement groups – the One Voice Forum, Tenant Scrutiny Panel and Building Safety Forums.

These groups are all made-up of tenants and they play a vital role in representing your views and helping shape our services so they meet peoples' needs.

On pages six and seven you can read about some of the community groups who are making a difference for people living in our estates across Doncaster. We also have information on the ways we have responded to the helpful feedback we have had from customers about our services.

We are always keen to hear your views, including from diverse groups as this helps us improve and keeps customers at the heart of everything we do.

I hope you enjoy this issue of HouseProud.

Chris

**Chris Margrave,
Chief Executive**



Our new Corporate Plan is out now!



We have published our Corporate Plan for 2024-29 which sets out how we will keep improving our services for you over the next five years.

We want to prioritise the things that you have told us matter most to you, so we have split the plan into four main themes – People, Homes, Communities and Partnerships.

- **People** focuses on 'getting it right for our customers and staff'.
- **Homes** focuses on 'providing good quality, safe homes at a rent you can afford'.
- **Communities** focuses on 'helping to build communities, not just houses'.
- **Partnerships** focuses on 'working with others to deliver Doncaster's "thriving people, places and planet" ambitions'.

We've also made a number of commitments that we are going to achieve by 2029. These include making 94% of our homes thermally efficient with

an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C or above; improving home safety with no home having the highest level 'category 1' damp and mould hazards; and, having at least 80% of customers who make complaints about antisocial behaviour satisfied with the way their case is handled.

The aim is to ensure all our homes stay safe, comfortable, well maintained and energy efficient well into the future, and that all of our customers continue to enjoy the highest possible standard of service from us.

Did you know?

You can read more about our commitments to you over the next five years in our Corporate Plan at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/about-us/from-here-to-2029/



Tenants Take Over

Hello everyone – my name is Mo Tennison, I'm Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) and I will be the new writer of the Tenants Take Over column.

It has been my pleasure to follow Betty Clayton as Chair of the TSP. Betty will be a hard person to live up to, but as a group dedicated to challenging things on your behalf, we will follow her lead in making tenants' lives better.

I would also like to welcome Chris Margrave to his new post as CEO and we look forward to working with him.

The TSP is made up of 10 tenant volunteers from all ages and walks of life. We are very proud of their work and the reports they have presented so far to St Leger Homes. We recently completed a scrutiny review of Void Recharges which is when a tenant leaves a St Leger Homes property in a state where it

needs repairs before the next tenant moves in or leaves household goods behind which need removing, often in a skip.

These Void Recharges can often be in the hundreds of pounds – and the cost of putting it right could be much better spent on more repairs and services.

We know you care about your home and neighbourhood, and its only fair to expect tenants take care of their home and pass it on to the next tenant in good clean condition.

If you are interested in joining the Tenant Scrutiny Panel contact **tenantscrutiny4slhd@gmail.com** to find out more.



Secure Tenancy Agreement review

Earlier this year, we wrote to you all with some proposed changes to the Secure Tenancy Agreement – this was called **Tenancy Agreement – Preliminary Notice**. We received feedback from our tenants in response to these proposed changes and have taken this into account.

The intention was for the proposed changes to come into effect from 2 September 2024, and all tenants would receive a further communication by letter by way of a Final Notice of Variation letter letting you know about the changes being made.

We are continuing with these changes, but this will now happen later than 2 September

due to some further changes that are being considered around flexible tenancies and successions. Should we propose to make any further changes, we will advise all tenants of this and provide another period of consultation and the opportunity to give feedback.

The proposed changes to the tenancy agreement are designed to improve services and information for tenants and is nothing at all for anyone to worry about.

If you would like to discuss your tenancy agreement or the proposed changes, please contact us on **01302 862862**.

Did you know?

Over 170 tenants volunteer with our Get Involved Group to have their say on our services – email **customer.involvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk** or call **01302 862743** to join!



New Property Services Director announced



We're pleased to tell you that Lee Winterbottom has been appointed as our new Director of Property Services. He will start in the role in August this year.

Lee has worked in social housing for over 25 years and has lots of experience in managing highly successful repairs and maintenance services for tenants. This includes serving as Head of Planning and Delivery at Together Housing Group, where he was in charge of repairs, maintenance and investment work for 38,000 properties across the North of England; and his most recent position as Managing Director of Construction Services at Berneslai Homes.

"I'm really excited to be joining St Leger Homes", said Lee. "I know this is an organisation that cares

greatly about looking after its customers and providing the best possible services for everyone – and I am looking forward to playing my part in this."

Chief Executive, Chris Margrave, said: "We are delighted to welcome Lee. With his appointment and the recent launch of our Corporate Plan, which sets out our big priorities over the next five years, I believe we are in a great position to continue improving and making a real difference for all our customers."

Preventing condensation

Condensation in the home is particularly common during colder months, however you can still face issues in summer. Condensation develops from water droplets in the air, so reducing the amount of moisture going into the air and providing ways for moist air to escape will help deal with it. Here's some tips to reduce condensation:

Reduce moisture in the air

- Cover pans with a lid whilst cooking
- Close the door when cooking or bathing
- Dry clothes outside if possible. If drying clothes inside, keep the room door closed
- Cover your fish tank if you have one

Let air circulate

- Open a window and use the extractor fan when cooking or bathing
- Open your windows for a short while two or three times each day
- Do not block any air vents in your home
- Avoid placing furniture tight up against external walls, instead leave small gaps so air can flow behind it

Dealing with condensation

- If you get condensation on your windows or walls, wipe it off straight away
- If mould does start to appear, use a fungicidal wash to clean the affected area – just be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions on the bottle.

We have more information on our website which you can read by going to www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/repairs/stop-condensation-in-the-home/ or clicking the link in the banner on the home page. You can also find a handy video showing the ways to deal with condensation on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@stlegerhomes

Did you know?

In June 2024 we completed **94.3%** of repairs we attended on the first visit.





Tenants' Celebration Awards 2024 – nominate now!

The amazing work you do to support your neighbours is being celebrated in this year's Tenants Celebration Awards – and nominations are now open!

We're inviting you to nominate people who you feel have made a real difference for others in the community over the last 12 months. The different award categories recognise the time and effort people from across the city have given to improve their local environment, look after those in need and help build stronger communities. Those shortlisted will then be invited to a celebration awards ceremony later in the year.

To nominate, just go to www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/get-involved/tenant-celebration-awards/ and click the link. The closing date is 1 September 2024.

You can nominate people for an award in one of six different categories:

- **Good Neighbour** – Someone who, with no fuss or expectation of reward, will go out of their way to help a neighbour. They give support above and beyond what might be expected – such as helping with shopping, sorting out difficult situations or just being a caring person.
- **Newcomer of the Year** – Someone who started getting involved in their community within the last two years and has helped to make a real difference. This could be as part of a community group, starting their own project, or through their work with St Leger Homes, for example.
- **Community Warrior** – Someone who supports tenants and residents through the cost-of-living crisis and champions the needs of the community to improve people's quality of life. This could be providing warm spaces, foodbanks, low-cost food supply or giving support and advice.
- **Heart of the Community** – For a community group (including Tenants' and Residents' Associations and Tenants' Clubs) that works to improve their area by making estate improvements, providing services to the community, or running their local communal hall or community house.
- **Cleaner Communities** – For a group that works to support a cleaner and tidier community, looking after our green spaces and making them something to be proud of.
- **Community Wellbeing Project** – For a group that works at a grassroots local level to provide tenants and residents with a space to promote physical, emotional or social wellbeing.

This year we're also introducing the Betty Clayton Inspirational Young Person Award, which honours the work done by a young person aged under 25 years old.

Betty sadly passed away earlier this year after many years of supporting people in her community. She was a key figure in our tenant scrutiny and involvement groups since we started in 2005 and helped improve things for the benefit of all tenants. The nominees for this award will be chosen by our staff, in partnership with Betty's family.

So don't delay, nominate your local hero today!

Did you know?

For help making your Tenants' Celebration Awards nomination or finding out how you can get involved in your community, call us on **01302 862743** or email customer.involvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk

Focus on Communities

Our Customer Involvement Team support tenant and resident groups all across Doncaster that are doing great things for their communities. These groups help to make our local communities lively places that always have lots going on throughout the week!

One place you can find fun activities and friendly conversation is Skipwith Communal Hall in Rossington, where crochet and knitting group The Chain Gang hold their regular sessions. It's a great chance for people of all ages to get out of the house, socialise and enjoy some needlework.

Julie, who runs the group, said: "We have had an 11 year old girl who came here to learn how to crochet with her mum, and then we've got an 83 year old lady who has knitted all of her life and is now doing really well with crochet. She has

made some lovely blankets and really enjoyed herself!"

The activities they do in the group have a big positive effect, not just for the members but also for the wider community!

"Over the years we've done a lot to brighten up the community as well", said Julie. "We did a post box topper of the Queen for our village, we crocheted bunting to hang for the Royal Jubilee, and we also made some lovely roses that we posted through the letterboxes of people living locally as part of the Jubilee celebrations. People seemed to really love those!"

"It's a bit of a social club as well. We all have a chat, share our problems – we've made some really good friends here."

That's a sentiment that is felt by the others in the group too. Another member, also called Julie, said: *"Crocheting and*



Julie, Leader of The Chain Gang group

knitting are very good for your mental health. You totally focus on what you are doing and forget all about your worries, and we have such a laugh together in the group while we're doing it!"

The Chain Gang meet at Skipwith Communal Hall every Monday from 6-8pm, and Tuesday from 9:30am-12 noon. If you are interested and willing to learn then do come along, they just ask that any children are accompanied by an adult.

Dog Daisy craft fayre

The Dog Daisy Community Group recently held their first ever craft fayre! Lots of people turned up to get involved and have fun with their friends. The group made some lovely items including handmade necklaces, D-Day commemoration badges, toys and more.

They're all being sold to raise money for craft materials so they can make even more

fabulous creations! We have also been supporting their good work through our Positive Activities Fund.

If you missed the craft fayre, you can still buy something and find out more about the group by dropping in to see them Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm at Derwent Road Communal Hall – or visit their Facebook page by searching for 'Dog Daisy Community Group'.

Did you know?

In June 2024 we helped **29 tenants and residents** into training, education or employment



Tpas training sessions



Our One Voice Forum and Tenant Scrutiny Panel groups play an important role by giving us feedback and helping make sure our services meet customers' needs.

The work they do supports other tenants, so it's only right that we give these groups some extra support too – which is why we arranged training sessions for them hosted by tenant engagement experts, Tpas.

Tpas are a national, not-for-profit organisation who promote, support and champion the involvement of tenants in social housing. Their training sessions empower people by building up their

knowledge and skills so they can be even more effective in what they do.

The Tpas training for our One Voice Forum was about helping improve their skills in decision making and understanding the government's new Consumer Standards regulations which all social housing providers must meet.

Tpas also held a session with our Tenant Scrutiny Panel which focused on helping them become even more effective in what they do.

This included exploring the best ways to examine all of our services and policies, and the different steps that

can be taken to carry out a thorough scrutiny review of the services we provide.

Everyone found the training really helpful, with our groups now feeling even more confident about representing your views and making sure we are delivering the very best service possible for you.



A Tpas training session in progress

You said, we did!

When you give us feedback, we listen whether this is through a compliment, complaint or through our wide range of involvement and engagement platforms. Take a look at all the things 'You Said' about our services and how we responded below:

Through the One Voice Forum and Get Involved Group:

- Your feedback helped inform a new policy that sets out St Leger Homes commitment to ensuring that damp, mould and condensation issues are always be taken seriously, and that these are dealt with in true partnership with tenants, with each party having their own responsibilities and roles to play.
- You helped inform a new Housing Management Policy which makes sure that St Leger Homes carry out a robust, effective, and inclusive housing management service.
- You had your say on the new revised Letter Writing Guidance which is in in place to ensure tenant easy read language and layout is used.
- Your feedback helped inform the Key Performance Indicators which are used to

measure how well our services are performing. Here people had the chance to tell us which services mattered most to them (such as repairs for example) and then help us decide what the targets should be.

- You had a close look at our investment priorities, where we heard your views about the services we deliver which you feel need greater investment from us.
- The Tenant Scrutiny Panel have been involved in the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's complaint code. They are now involved in scrutinising how we handle and learn from complaints.

Read more on our website at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/your-feedback-matters/you-said-we-did/

Did you know?

98.9% of people our Tenancy Support Team helped in June 2024 were able to sustain their tenancy after support ended



Tenant Scrutiny Panel

By Mo Tennison, Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel have a membership of 10 tenants and residents, and as an independent group we provide St Leger Homes with a tenant's view of its services and policies. Our aims are to challenge the organisation with a view to making a tenant's home, street and environment safer, stronger and a decent place to live.

As a result of issues raised by you, the tenant, we reviewed and made recommendations that have made a difference in many service areas, including:

- Estate Inspections
- Antisocial behaviour reforms
- High Rise cleaning standards
- Cleaning of communal areas
- Recharges for property damage

The TSP can seek information from any part of the company for clarification about services.

We can also spot trends by using Tenant Satisfaction Surveys which highlight any service areas of concern, as well as those which are meeting their targets.

I know it can sound a little formal, but it isn't! We meet on the third Wednesday of each month for two hours – we're a friendly bunch who are totally focused on your tenancy and neighbourhoods.

Like you, we want better services that reflect your day-to-day lives and which we can all be proud of.



One Voice Forum

By Sharon Hart,
Chair of the One Voice Forum

I joined the One Voice Forum last year in 2023 after I moved into my home because there were a couple of things I wasn't sure about and I wanted to find out what happens in St Leger Homes.

I went along to join a One Voice Forum meeting and I was quite impressed really, I thought it was something I would like to be involved with. The group is very much 'for the tenant' and it's great that we, as tenants, get a chance to put our views together and perhaps do some influencing and make everything gel a bit better for the tenants.

I think it's really important that tenants have a say in their own life. The thing is if we only rely on the organisation to do things for us, then they are not hearing from tenants what we want and what we need.

Whilst we might not always have all of the information at hand we can put our views forward and give our opinion, and I think that is really important.

We'd love you to get involved, especially people from diverse groups - just call **01302 862743** or email **customer.involvement@stlegerhomes.co.uk**



Did you know?

Our One Voice Forum played an important part in shaping our new repairs policy which is **improving the service for customers**.



Building Safety Forum

By Rodger Haldenby, Chair of the Building Safety Forum

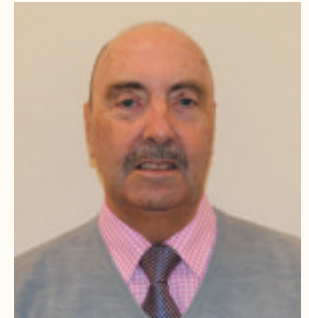


Due to regulatory changes and the outcomes from the Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017, the format for the meetings for the High Rise buildings has changed. This is to ensure that tenants have a forum where they can discuss any concerns they may have over safety within their building.

The monthly meetings held at Balby Bridge and Intake are informal, and the Building Safety Team are able to answer any questions tenants may have about their safety. The meetings are also supported by members of the Customer Involvement Team and Housing Team who listen to, and act on, any concerns that a tenant may have about general matters to their tenancy/ neighbourhood.

St Leger Homes, in partnership with City of Doncaster Council, have a regulatory duty to keep High Rise building tenants informed.

They also make tenants aware of the support that is available to them from staff in all High Rise Buildings. There is a named Building Manager who is responsible for the maintenance of each building and each structural aspect of the buildings as well as their doors, windows, lifts, and communal areas.



The quarterly full forum meeting held at Balby Bridge is an opportunity for residents of the high rise buildings at Intake and Balby Bridge to all come together to discuss issues. This meeting is more formal and data driven, which is in compliance with the requirements of the Building Safety Act.

We look forward to seeing you!!

Join us on an Estate Inspection

If you've been looking forward to getting outside and enjoying the summer sunshine, then why not join your local Estates Team on one of their regular Estate Inspections?

Estate Inspections – or Estate Walks as they are sometimes called – help to make sure that our neighbourhoods are looking their best. They are a useful way of finding out about any issues that we need to address, and they give you another opportunity to make your voice heard about the things that matter to you on your estate.

Tenants and residents are always welcome to come along with us and we are also joined by partners from the Police, City of Doncaster

Council, local ward Councillors and tenant groups. If any issues are highlighted then we work together with our partners to deal with it as quickly as possible. This could be anything from littering or issues with garages, to antisocial behaviour, noise nuisance or crime – if it's causing concern on your estate, we can help.

You don't need to tell us you are coming in advance, simply be at the meeting place at the right time and you can join us!

You can find the schedule at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/my-home/estate-inspections/



Involvement Groups

We value the input and opinions of ALL tenants, especially when it comes to your lived experience. That's why we have involvement groups for various communities – so if you have a disability or are from the BAME or LGBTQ+ community, we'd love you to be involved.

Find out more at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity/involvement-groups/

Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures results

Last year, some of you took part providing feedback on some of the services we provide using the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM).

To ensure compliance with the Regulator's guideline and trust in our data, we independently asked over 1,000 tenants how satisfied they were with the services provided. This means that the results we got back are reliable, plus or minus 3%.

Satisfaction surveys, asking the same questions, have been undertaken by all social housing providers in England. The Regulator of Social Housing will be publishing the scores for all providers later this year and we let you know how we compare.

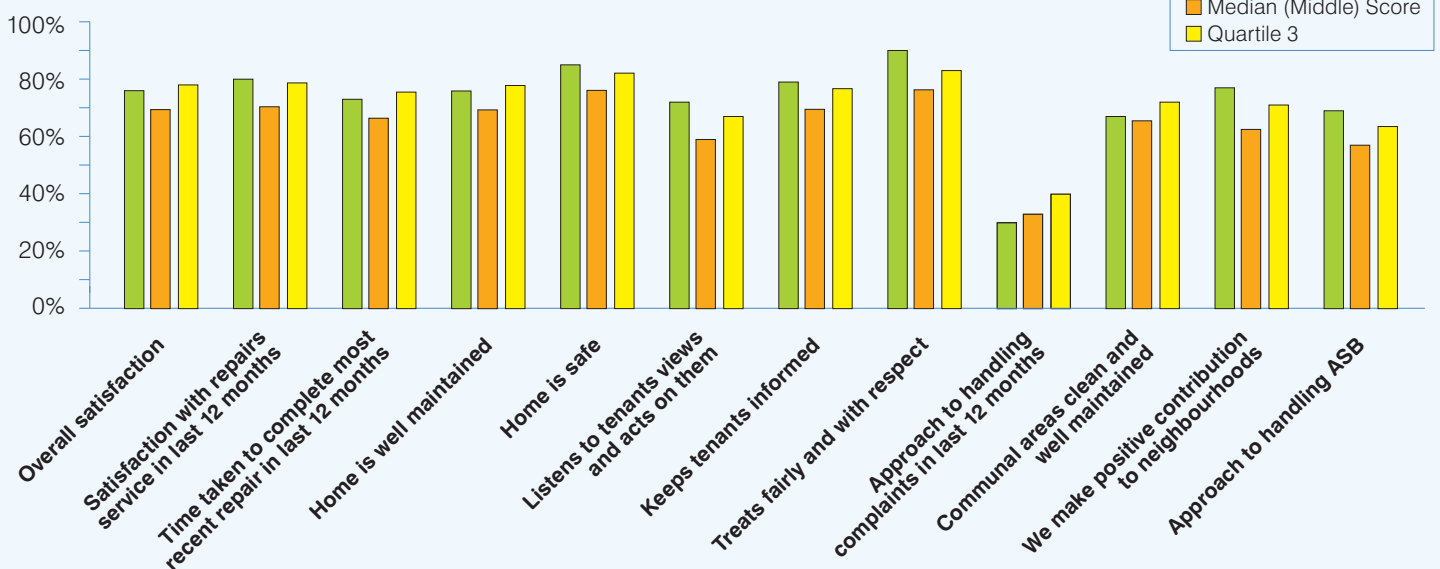
The surveys covered the following themes:

- Keeping properties in a good state of repair
- Maintaining the safety of buildings
- Engaging with customers in a helpful and respectful way

- Managing neighbourhoods in a responsible way
- Handling complaints effectively.

We and 220 other housing organisation submitted year end results to an independent organisation called HouseMark. This means we know how well we are doing compared to a sample of organisations, prior to the full national data for all housing organisations being available from the Regulator. Our scores and the median/middle and Quartile 3 scores from the 220 other organisations is below. The top performing quartile, Quartile 3, is highlighted yellow on the graph below. If our feedback score is above this, it means we are in Quartile 4 and are one of the best performing organisations who have submitted data. Where our score is between the median/middle value shown and the Quartile 3 value shown, we are in Quartile 3.

How we compare - Tenant Satisfaction Measures



Overall, when looking at this data we are performing really well. We are in the top performing quartile for 7 of the 12 TSMs, outperforming Quartile 3, this includes satisfaction with repairs, treating tenants fairly and with respect, handling ASB and contributing positively to neighbourhoods. We are in Quartile 3, for 4 of the measures, again, good performance.

We are lower than Quartile 3 and the median/middle value for how we handle complaints and

have already started work to improve in this area. Examples include, streamlining our processes for dealing with complaints resulting in 100% of Stage 1 complaints responded to in target in April 2024, and the recent introduction, using a sub-group of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, of a process to independently check a sample number of complaints throughout the year. This will improve the service and ensure we are more effective when handling complaints.

Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman Service published a new Complaints Handling Code in April 2024. It aims to make sure landlords handle customer complaints in the best possible way, leading to an improved service for all tenants.

The new Code sets out how we should be dealing with customer complaints – from the point at which we log a formal complaint; to the response we make following an investigation; and, lastly to the learning points we can take from the outcome to help improve our service.

In addition, we now have to complete a self-assessment which we must submit to the

Housing Ombudsman Service every year to see how we have been performing against the Code.

We have also appointed Cllr Glyn Jones, Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Business, as our Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). The role of the MRC is to champion a positive complaints culture. This will help to ensure that our main focus stays on our customers and their needs are always at the heart of everything we do.

For more information on the new Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code visit www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/

Your feedback matters!

We have published our Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report for 2023/24. This looks at the way we handled your complaints and listened to and learned from your feedback by using it to improve our services.

- We received 1,007 Stage 1 complaints from tenants in 23/24, only 98 of these were considered at Stage 2 of our complaints procedures.
- We responded to 91.86% of Stage 1 complaints and 86.9% of complaints at Stage 2 of our process, within the target timescales in Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code;
- The main reasons for complaints were about time taken to respond, policies and staffing issues.
- We have focused on improving how we handle complaints. This has resulted in improvement

in how quickly we respond to complaints, with 100% of complaints acknowledged and 97.20% responded to at Stage 1, within the Housing Ombudsman's target timescales.

We have learned a lot and made many improvements following these complaints. For example, we no longer provide a scheduled repairs service, merging this team with our responsive repairs team to make better use of resources and improve communication. We set up a new team to specifically deal with all damp and mould requests. We also implemented staff training for the whole organisation which focused on improving the level of customer service we all provide.

You can read the full report at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk - or call **01302 862862** to request a copy.

Did you know?

It's easy to send us a comment, compliment or complaint – and we will listen to what you say. Go to www.stlegerhomes.co.uk and search for 'your feedback matters'.



Tenancy Support Update

Move to UC reminder

At the start of this year, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) sent letters to people who only claim Tax Credits advising them that these will be ending, and they would now need to claim Universal Credit (UC) instead. From April, DWP then began contacting working-age people who claim other legacy benefits to tell them the same.

If you are affected by this it's important you do not make a claim until you are asked to do so by DWP through an official 'Universal Credit Managed Migration notice'. If you make a claim before DWP ask you to then you could lose out financially.

If you are unsure whether this affects you, contact the 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 it might be more than you think.

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

Universal Credit – there are 53 rent weeks this year

When calculating Universal Credit, the DWP work out the 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 your UC payments on a 53-week year, which means your monthly payments won't cover the monthly rent in 2024. You will instead 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.

Need advice and support?

We have lots of helpful information about UC and other benefits that may be available on our website at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/advice-and-support/benefits

Our website has even more support on a wide range of issues including paying household bills, money advice and links to places where you can get extra help which you can find at www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/advice-and-support



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