

Unity News

Winter 2021



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



MERRY XMAS
AND A HAPPY
NEW YEAR



Read about the new Leopold Street Development that Unity has completed in Chapeltown, bringing much needed affordable homes to the community



Xmas Opening Hours our office is closed from 12.30am Friday 24th December 2021

We will be open from Tuesday
4th January 2022

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Keeping us Updated If the number of people living in your household changes or if you have a new telephone number or email address, please contact customer services on 0113 2007700 and we will update your details on our computer systems. This will make it easier if we need to contact you regarding repairs or rent enquiries.

Also, if you are moving out of a Unity property, please can you ensure you set up a forwarding address, Unity cannot forward on mail.

Get Your Rent Account in Credit A condition of your tenancy agreement with Unity, is to be always in credit on your rent account in the month. If you go into debt with us and clear this debt each month, this is not the correct way to pay. We will be in contact if your rent account goes into debt before it is paid. This includes tenants who receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. We will work with you to clear the debt either in one go or over a manageable period of time. Being in credit has a number of advantages.

If you are unable to pay your rent in the month for any reason, you have already built up a credit to stop any sudden debt and debt recovery action. You will also have a credit that we can refund to you if you move to a new landlord.

3. Leopold Street Development

Welcome To Leopold Street

In December we finally finished our Leopold Street development which is a scheme of 30 one and two bedroomed homes for people aged over 55. Situated over 2 blocks the Leopold Street scheme forms part of a larger development of homes that are being built on the site by Chapeltown Co-Housing. Unity hopes to have the properties occupied by the Spring 2022.



The Leopold Street development has 2 blocks of flats. There are 24 flats in Gertrude Paul Court which features a communal lift and wet floor showers. There are 6 flats in Leopold Park Court, both blocks have a communal garden which can be accessed by residents.

We are proud to name one of our buildings after Gertrude Paul, she was the first black teacher in Leeds and was one of the founder members of Leeds West Indian Carnival

4. Kickstart Trainee Programme



The Kickstart Journey Begins

Since October 2021 Unity has employed 2 kickstart trainees who will be developing their skills in housing administration as well as enterprise administration. Unity's initial 6-month job placements are designed to support the trainees to develop the skills and experience they need to find work after completing the programme. The trainees will be shadowing Unity staff, working in various departments. They will be working in the office and with housing officers on tenancy visits.

Shannon is currently working with the housing administration team. She is accompanying housing officers on routine visits. Shannon's experience with unity:

"Working with the regeneration team has shown me how Unity goes through the process of acquiring new properties, I enjoy being on site and meeting with the construction teams".

"I have learned a lot so far, i really enjoy shadowing the housing officers seeing the wide range of work that they do".

Ben is currently working with the housing regeneration team. This involves site visits to new developments and learning how unity develops new homes for the community. This is what Ben has to say about his experience with unity so far:

Unity will be looking to employ more applicants into the kickstart scheme. If you are between 16-24 and currently unemployed and receiving universal credit and are interested in applying, please contact a member of our Employment Services team on 0113 200 7738.

5. Resident Service Reviews



**Sandra Swanston Unity
Scrutiny Chairperson**

Sandra has been a resident of Unity for 19 years and has led Unity's scrutiny group for the past 5 years attending 4 Unity annual general meetings and has recently met with our new chief executive Cedric Boston. Sandra states "I am happy to part of resident scrutiny as it gives me and the other residents that attend the group an opportunity to see how things are run. It is a pleasure to be involved with Unity and offer my views as a Unity resident, with the governments social housing white paper identifying that landlords need to be more accountable to their residents, it is more vital than ever that residents views are taken into account".

In November 2020 the UK Government published its Social Housing White Paper. The paper aims to raise the standard of social housing and ensure that residents' concerns are addressed and listened to by their landlord. At Unity our scrutiny group has been reviewing the services that Unity provides to residents to see where they can be improved, topics discussed include how we deal with complaints, how our repairs service operates and how our contractors deliver services to your home that are chargeable via the service charge.

Scrutiny Group Recommendations to Unity

**Improve the complaints
process answer residents
concerns in a shorter
timescale.**

**Give residents better
information on services
provided.**

**Residents should have more
involvement in inspecting the
areas where they live.**

At Unity we value the input our residents have on the services we provide. We hold regular meetings on Unity services which are held in our office and online. If you want to take part and have your say as a Unity resident contact:

**Chris Whittaker Tenant Involvement and
Communications Officer on 01132007751
or at chris.whittaker@unityha.co.uk**

**CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE®**



Following a visit by an independent assessor Unity has maintained its customer service excellence award. All aspects of our business from our customer service, to repairs and

maintenance were reviewed. Unity residents were consulted on opportunities they have had to shape service delivery.

6. Gardening Services

Unity Housing work in partnership with Leeds Federated Housing Association to maintain our communal gardens and areas. A team of fully trained gardeners/grounds maintenance staff are employed as part of Leeds Federated wider Community Spaces Team to undertake this work.

The Services Standards you can expect

The Leeds Federated Community Spaces Team has a responsibility to manage your communal gardens to an agreed contractual standard. In meeting this objective the team will aim to visit your scheme on a regular scheduled basis. Ideally this will be fortnightly during the periods between April – October but is also dependant on suitable weather conditions. From November through to March the team visit monthly as growth generally slows during the colder months. When the team visit they will ensure that all designated communal grassed areas, shrubs and flower beds are well maintained.



Gardening Services work Specification

- Carry out a visual risk assessment on site to ensure a safe working environment
- Carry identification at all times
- Work within Health and Safety guidelines and safe working practices including wearing correct Personal Protective Equipment for all tasks
- Pick up litter from lawns, pathways & shrub areas & dispose of this responsibly each visit
- Works involving machinery will not be started before the hours of 08:00am
- Cut grass during the growing season as required. This is generally mulched on site to lower our carbon footprint with regards to tipping transportation and associated costs.
- Remove or spray weeds on a regular basis (weather permitting for spraying & in line with COSHH regulations)
- Make sure hedges and shrubs are kept neatly trimmed
- Prune shrubs at least twice yearly or more frequently when necessary, depending on the growth rate, flowering times and bird nesting
- Walkways & pathways - Make sure all external communal areas are kept clean and tidy. Sweeping or cleaning external stairwells, walkways, car park areas and bin storage areas. Strim and edge pathways, which are then blown so they are free from debris
- Carry out leaf blowing & collection on scheduled visits during Autumn months
- Replace any dead or dying shrubs and trees within the year if appropriate to do so
- Liaison with Unity Housing Officers on fly tipped waste offences
- Complete a record of attendance

Tree Maintenance. Please note that tree maintenance work is not part of this agreement. If trees in your communal area are causing problems, please speak to your housing officer in the first instance.

7. Cleaning Services

Unity employs Higher Purpose Cleaning to carry out weekly cleaning at schemes with a communal entrance. Each week they maintain cleaning standards by completing a set schedule of works for each scheme. When they have completed their cleaning, they will record their visit on the noticeboard.

The service standards you can expect

The cleaning team will complete the specification listed below they will also report to Unity any issues with security or fly tipping that need attending to.

Higher Purpose Cleaning Services Ltd Communal Cleaning Specification

- Vacuum all carpeted areas paying particular attention to edges and corners
- Spot clean spillages or stains where applicable
- Sweep/ vacuum and mop clean all hard surface floors paying particular attention to the edges
(always ensure that the caution wet floor signs are in use)
- Remove finger marks from internal glass partitions/ light switches and door vision panels
- Dust and/ or damp wipe ledges/ skirting boards and window sills
- Dust and or damp wipe handrails and bannisters
- Clean down walls of marks and dust to a height of 2 metres
- Dust & Remove cobwebs
- Clean stair treads and risers
- Wipe down main entrance door/ removing any cobwebs, marks etc.
- Clean & disinfect sink unit/ surrounding areas etc. & wipe down exterior of white goods
- Clean and disinfect hand basin/ toilet inc. seat/ cistern etc.
- *Report any items causing an obstruction in the hallway and/ or stairwells and report any damage such as broken windows, light fixtures or fittings etc.*

Unity inspects the work completed by our cleaners and gardeners on a regular basis but If you feel the standards of the cleaning and gardening have not been delivered where you live or you have any comments or suggestions on how these services can be improved please contact our customer services team in the first instance at CustomerService@Unityha.co.uk or call 0113 200 7700 to speak to them. We genuinely appreciate your feedback.

8. Managing Your Energy Costs

Prices for the supply of fossil fuels are rising globally and this will have the effect of increasing the energy bills of customers in the UK. In order to limit excessive charges UK energy regulator Ofgem sets an energy price cap this regulates the maximum price energy suppliers in England, Wales and Scotland can charge customers on a standard - or default - tariff. That includes the fixed daily amount customers pay, plus the price per unit they pay for electricity and gas. The cap was increased on 1st October 2021 with about 15 Million customers facing a 12% rise in energy bills.



How To Manage Your Energy Costs

The costs of energy will increase no matter what supplier you use for your energy, however you still maybe able to get a better deal that is more affordable to you by looking at what energy tariff you are on. Contact your current supplier and see what tariff you are on. Most suppliers will offer different rates depending how you pay for your energy, for example whether you pay by direct debit or bills per quarter. The price you pay for energy is also affected if you are on a prepayment meter. To compare prices and learn about energy deals look at internet sites such as [moneysavingexpert.com](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com)



The British Gas Energy Trust is an independent charitable trust which helps individuals and families who are struggling with energy debts. There are grants available to assist people see more at [Britishgasenergytrust.org.uk](https://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk)

Warm Discount Scheme

The government operates a Warm Discount Scheme whereby you could receive £140 off your electric bill for winter 2021-22. There is an eligibility requirement to be able to apply for this scheme, please contact your energy supplier for more details.

Top Tips To Reduce Your Costs

1. Shower with a timer
2. Un plug chargers not in use
3. Dry clothes outside
4. Boil kettle for cooking
5. Use economy setting on washer
6. Turn off Tv from standby mode
7. Only heat the rooms you use
8. Don't dry clothes on radiators



9. Resident Satisfaction with Unity



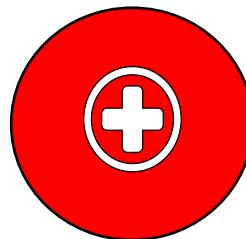
In April this year Unity employed Callerz an independent market research company to carry out a telephone survey of all Unity residents asking people to rate whether they are satisfied with Unity services. Callerz are ringing 100 Unity residents each month and so far 800 residents have completed the survey. The results of the survey will give Unity the insight into whether people are satisfied with the services we provide and identify where we need to make improvements. If you are called by Callerz please take time to complete the survey your views are important to us.

Satisfaction Results April – October 2021



Q1: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Unity Housing?

83.7% Satisfied



Q2: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that UHA provides a home that is safe and secure?

96.8% Satisfied



Q3: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?

78.4% Satisfied



Q4: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that UHA is easy to deal with complaints & concerns

81.4% Satisfied



Q5: On recent repairs carried out, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the repairs service?

77.3% Satisfied



Q6: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your rent provides value for money?

87.4% Satisfied



Q7: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your service charge provides value for money?

58.4% Satisfied

If you would like to keep up to date with the latest survey information results, please see the performance section of our website Unityha.co.uk

10. Homeless Street Angels



Every Year Unity organises a collection for a local charity. This year we have been collecting for Homeless Street Angels, a charity who assist homeless people in Leeds. Unfortunately homelessness is a challenge nationally and regionally and the pandemic has made it very difficult for charities like Street Angels to reach the most vulnerable people in Leeds and provide crucial support to them.



What Homeless Street Angels Do?

Volunteers from Homeless Street Angels go out every Thursday night and hand out over 100 hot meals and desserts as well as sandwiches and snack packs, warm clothes, toiletries, sleeping bags, tents, and other essentials to the homeless people of Leeds

As well as walking around town handing out the supplies the Homeless Street Angels have regular chats with people out on the street as often all they want is a chat and someone to talk to. They look forward to seeing the Homeless Street Angels as their service is a major help and support for them.

Homeless Street Angels also assist people with rehousing once they are off the street and go along with them on a regular basis to meetings with the council and housing options. Once they have secured a forever home the Homeless Street Angels set it up for them often decorating it and doing a shout out on facebook for any donations of furniture and white goods.

Homeless Street Angels offer continual support once they are settled and often take food parcels round and help out in emergencies when they are struggling.

If you want to find out more or wish to donate please contact www.homelessstreetangels.co.uk

Contacting Unity

Telephone: 0113 200 7700

Email: uha@unityha.co.uk

Website: www.unityha.co.uk

Publications

You can access any of Unity's publications including leaflets, newsletters and reports for free on our website:

www.unityha.co.uk/publications

Office Hours:

Monday: 9am -- 5pm

Tuesday: 9am – 5pm

Wednesday: 10am – 5pm

Thursday: 9am – 5pm

Friday: 9am – 5pm

If you have an emergency repair when the Office is shut, please call our office number on **0113 200 7700** you will receive a number of options. Press 1 for **heating repairs**, press 2 for general **repairs**. This will connect you to our contractors GTD Maintenance call centre.

Emergency Gas Repairs 0113 200 7700

E.g. total heating or hot water failure when Unity's office is closed the next day.

National Grid (gas leaks) 0800 111 999

Repairs by email Repairs@unity.co.uk

For more information, visit our website at www.unity.co.uk for leaflets, latest news and community information.

For comments and suggestions about this newsletter please contact **Chris Whittaker** on **0113 2007751** or email chris.whittaker@unityha.co.uk

Leeds City Council Services

Adult Social Care 0113 2224401

Anti-Social Behaviour 0113 222 4402
onestop@leeds.gov.uk

Child Social Care 0113 222 4403

Council Housing 0800 188 4000

Council Tax 0113 222 4404

Environmental Health 0113 222 4406
refugecollections@leeds.gov.uk

Housing Advice 0113 222 4412

Roads and Pavements 0113 222 4407
highways@leeds.gov.uk

Universal Credit 0800 328 5644

Kirklees Council Services

Adult Social Care 01484 414933

gatewaytocare@kirklees.gov.uk

Anti-Social Behaviour 01484 221000
safer@kirklees.gov.uk

Child Protection 01484 414950

Council Tax and Benefits 01484 414950
Council.benefits@kirklees.gov.uk

Customer Service Centre 01484 221000
Customer.enquiries@kirklees.gov.uk

Housing Advice 01484 221350
Housing.solutions@kirklees.gov.uk

Problems Understanding?

If you need any of our information translating Or if you need an interpreter, please contact us. We can also provide this information in large Print or on CD if you need this.

