

Unity News

Winter 2017

Unity

Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

Season's greetings
from everyone
at Unity

Unity
Homes & Enterprise
Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

30
YEARS

Providing choice, improving
life opportunities and
addressing inequalities

www.unityha.co.uk

Our 30th Year!
Read about our
30th Annual General
Meeting
(page 10)

Christmas Opening Times

Fri 22nd December - **9.00am - 5.00pm**

Mon 25th December (Christmas Day) - **CLOSED**

Tue 26th December (Boxing Day) - **CLOSED**

Wed 27th December - **CLOSED**


Thur 28th December - **CLOSED**


Fri 29th December - **CLOSED**

Mon 1st January (New Year's Day) - **CLOSED**

Tue 2nd January - **9.00am - 5.00pm**

Out of Office Numbers

 **Emergency Repairs - 01942 845 343**
(e.g. serious floods and leaks, total loss of
water, the only toilet is blocked.)

 **Emergency Gas Repairs - 01274 603 333**
(e.g. total heating or hot water failure when
Unity's office is closed the next day.)

 **Transco (gas leaks) - 0800 111 999**

3. Keep warm this winter

A quick guide to cutting bills and staying warm during the cold weather

4. Housing bulletin

Make sure you let us know of any changes in circumstances

5. Universal Credit

A reminder of the upcoming changes to benefits and how you should prepare.

6. Employment services

Are you seeking new employment in 2018? Find out how we can help!

7. Construction vacancies

Find out about the employment opportunities at our 2018 developments in Chapeltown and Armley

8. How to leave a Unity property

Don't leave your property in a mess, or you will be charged

9. Contents insurance

Cheap home contents insurance to keep you protected over winter

10. Unity update

Keep up to date with what's been happening at Unity.

New maintenance contract update

As you may be aware, Unity is currently in the process of selecting a new contractor to take over the repairs and maintenance work. We would like to give a brief update as the process is close to being finished.

Four contractors have had bids for the work evaluated including checking price, undertaking site visits and being interviewed by officers and members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

We are currently undertaking financial checks on the highest scoring contractor and will make an announcement on the replacement in January 2018.

We know that the service from Forrest has dipped in recent months and are very grateful for the patience of our customers during the transition to a new contractor. We are currently using a number of other contractors to support the service until the re-tendering is completed and the contract with Forrest ends.

If there are any issues with Forrest in the meantime please speak to our Customer Services team: **0113 200 7700**

Community contribution from our paint supplier

Our main paint supplier, Crown Paints, have donated a bench made out of recycled materials for us to use at one of our developments. Up to 4,000 litres of products have been recycled and converted into the bench. The process started with the containers being collected in the Crown Paints branch and then being reprocessed at a social enterprise within their headquarters. The recycled materials were then turned into furniture and donated to Unity.



Congratulations to Ms A, Chapeltown who is the winner of the £50 repairs satisfaction survey prize draw!

Keep warm this winter

A guide to cutting bills and keeping warm

With the winter weather comes a few challenges for you and your home. As the temperature drops it is important that you keep yourself warm without breaking the bank on heating bills. Here are a few tips to keeping warm this winter:



Don't cover your radiators. If your couch is pushed against your radiators, move it away slightly so that more heat can escape and heat your home.



Wrap up warm, both inside and outside of the house. Jumpers, blankets and slippers can keep you warm without turning up the heating.



Keep an eye on your thermostat. Set the heating to come on automatically for whatever suits you.



Keep doors closed. Don't let heat escape by keeping doors open and allowing draughts to pass through.

Avoid damp and condensation

One of the most common complaints Unity receives from people living in our properties is about 'damp', when in fact the problem is caused by condensation.

Tips to avoid condensation during winter:

- After a bath or shower, open a window and close the bathroom door

- Dry clothes outdoors or in dryer. If drying clothes indoors, open a window in that room and shut the door
- Never place wet clothes directly on radiators as moisture seeps straight into the walls behind it.
- It's better to keep your heating on lower for longer, rather than higher for a short-time.

Could you benefit from a Green Doctor visit?

Green Doctors are offering local residents a completely **FREE OF CHARGE** service that can help you to save money and keep your home warm and cosy. If you're eligible, the service can:

- Install **FREE**, simple energy saving measures.
- Give you day-to-day energy efficiency hints and tips
- Help check if you are on the cheapest energy tariffs

If you would like this service you can contact them directly at **0800 060 7567** or book online **www.applyforleap.org.uk**. Or you can contact our customer services team who will advise you **0113 200 7700**.

Switching energy supplier

Why switch?

- It may be the only way to get the best possible deal
- If you have never changed payment method or supplier, you are probably paying more than you need to
- Fuel prices tend to rise as the weather gets colder
- You need to be able to afford to heat your home for your household's health and wellbeing
- Fewer and simpler tariffs mean it is a good time to switch.

How do I switch?

Visit an accredited switching site bearing the Ofgem 'Code of Confidence' label, such as:

Money Supermarket

www.moneysupermarket.com

Energy Helpline

www.energyhelpline.com

uSwitch

www.uswitch.com

If you decide to switch, your new chosen supplier will contact your current supplier and let them know you're leaving.

Housing team bulletin

Key information for tenants

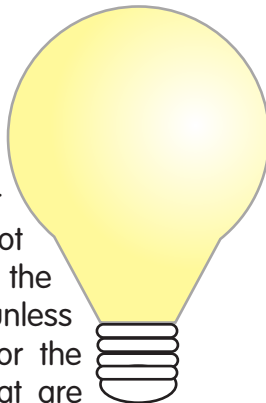
Changes to your household

If there is a change in your household, it is important that you let Unity know. **Tenants must get permission from Unity to allow someone to move into their homes.** Having another person live in your home can have an impact on your benefits and also on your housing priority.

If you think you are over-crowded or under-occupying and believe that you are entitled to a priority award, could you please let us know. You will need a Leeds Homes application to gain the priority award. If you think this relates to you then please pass your details onto our Customer Services team or email uha@unityha.co.uk

Changing lightbulbs

Our customer services team regularly speak to tenants who claim that they cannot buy the lightbulbs which are fitted in their home from the shop. Unity will not send out a contractor to change the lightbulbs in your property; unless there are accessibility issues for the tenant. All of the lightbulbs that are fitted are available from a vast majority of electrical



shops.

If the lightbulb in your property has a case on, you will have to unscrew the case before changing the lightbulb. Once again, Unity will not send somebody to assist in changing the lightbulb unless the tenant has accessibility issues. This decision will be made at the discretion of the housing team.

Do you need free housing advice?

Unity Housing is pleased to offer free housing advice to tenants, their families and the general public. If you have any queries about any of the following our Housing Team may be able to help you:

- Applying for a home
- The bidding process
- Mutual exchanges
- Obtaining priority
- Homelessness
- Hate crime

Pop into our office between 2pm and 4pm on the first Wednesday of every month if you'd like to speak someone. There is no need to book, but please bear in mind that you may have to wait to be seen to during busier periods.

Permission to keep pets

We understand that pets can be a positive attribute to any family home. Unity Housing Association may give you permission to keep pets in your home, but you will have to request permission in writing. However, permission will only be given based on certain conditions (you must agree to) and the type of home you live in (i.e. house, bungalow or flat).

If you would like to get a pet, you need to let us know so we can remind you of your responsibilities. It is stated in your tenancy agreement:

'You must get our permission, in writing, to keep any animal, bird, insect or reptile in your home.'

If you have a pet when you are assessed, and declare it, you could be given permission to keep it but you will be informed of what Unity expect of all our families.



Universal Credit

We have been talking about Universal Credit since 2013 and it has now been introduced to some single people in Leeds. Even though the full roll out has been delayed, it is important to be prepared for the changeover.

What can I do to prepare?

- 1 Get a **BASIC BANK ACCOUNT** if you don't already have one, as you can't be paid Universal Credit without one.
- 2 If you have any outstanding **DEBTS, GET HELP NOW** and **REDUCE OR CLEAR ANY RENT ARREARS**
- 3 **SAVE FOR EMERGENCIES.** Universal Credit is first paid five weeks after you apply, and you don't want to have no money at that time.
- 4 Get an **EMAIL ADDRESS** and familiarise yourself with using the **INTERNET.** Contact Unity's Employment Team on 0113 200 7738 if you could benefit from some free training.
- 5 Can you **BUDGET MONTHLY?** Your benefits will come all at once, each month, and you don't want to run out of money halfway through the month or get into debt.
- 6 Pay your rent and bills by **STANDING ORDER** or **DIRECT DEBIT** as long as you can avoid going overdrawn. This will help if you are the type of person who forgets which bills to pay and when.

How can we help?

All you have to do is call us and ask to speak to your **Income Management Officer**:

Sam: 0113 200 7737

Matt: 0113 200 7733

Russell: 0113 200 7752

Clive: 0113 200 7753

If you're unsure who your Income Management Officer is, call our office 0113 200 7700

Other useful contacts:

Step Change Debt Charity

 0800 138 1111

www.stepchange.org

Leeds Citizen Advice Bureau

 0113 223 4400

www.leedscab.org.uk

Leeds City Credit Union

 0113 242 3343

www.leedscitycreditunion.co.uk

Money Buddies

 0113 235 0276

leedsmoneybuddies.weebly.com



Overview

A quick reminder of Universal Credit:

- Gives you the money once a month, into your bank account;
- It includes the money for rent called housing costs, which is also paid to you;
- It is much more strict than old benefits;
- Pays you while you work, up to a limit;
- It is applied for and managed online.

Which benefits does it replace?

- Job Seekers Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credits
- Working Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit

When will it arrive into Leeds?

It has already been introduced into Leeds in 2016, but only for some single people. The intended roll out date for the rest of claimants is late 2018. Although this seems far away it is important to start preparing now.

Are you seeking a new job in 2018?
Give the UK's most powerful jobsearch a go!



Unity's Employment Services can give you a free login to a fantastic job searching tool called 'MyWorkSearch'.

- ✓ It is an easy to use and friendly online service that you can use in your own time at your own speed
- ✓ It will walk you through finding out the skills you have and creating the best possible CV
- ✓ It will give you 24 hour support, alongside all the tools and expertise you need to land the right job fast!

MyWorkSearch helps you get the job you want!

How many people we have supported into:

	14/15	15/16	16/17	Total
Employment	60	77	95	232
Training	61	120	149	330
Voluntary	20	15	26	61

FREE!

If you would like your own free login then contact Noma or Kelly on 0113 200 7700. They can provide you with a login so that you can start job searching. If you need some assistance, you can attend a UK Online Centre/Job Club session for advice and support (see below).

More classes from Unity's Employment Services

UK Online Centre/Digital Inclusion

Our Job Club/UK Online Centre is a drop in session where Unity's Employment Services staff will help you find work opportunities and help you to use computers, including MyWork Search.

- Where:** Unity Business Centre,
26 Roundhay Road, LS7 1AB
- When:** Monday 10.00 - 12.00
Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00
Thursday 10:00 - 12:00

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

Unity Housing has partnered with Leeds City Council and Learning Partnerships to provide free English classes for speakers of other languages, to tenants and their relatives. The courses take place term time, contact one of our Employment Services team for more details.



For more information or to book a place, please contact:
Noma: 0113 200 7746
Kelly: 0113 200 7738

Construction vacancies in Leeds

New sites in Chapeltown and Armley

Do you want experience in construction?

We are currently looking for general labourers to work on our Chapeltown and Armley developments in 2018.

Applicants must have a CSCS card.
Find more information on our website:
<http://unityha.co.uk/careers>

Register your interest for vacancies by contacting:

Noma Moyo
Employment Outreach Officer

☎ 0113 200 7746 📱 07714 134 531

✉ noma.moyo@unityha.co.uk

Kelly Jennings
Outreach Support Worker

☎ 0113 200 7738 📱 07730 870 810

✉ kelly.jennings@unityha.co.uk

Paid positions!



How to leave a Unity property

You will be recharged for any cleaning/repairs

Moving home can be a stressful time; packing up your things, organising information and arranging removal services. However, there have been a number of cases where tenants have left their home in a very unclean state, which has cost Unity a lot of money to clean up.

Unity also loses more money due to a loss of rent for the time spent cleaning instead of moving somebody in. Unity would like to remind tenants that if you would like to leave one of our properties, or transfer to another Unity property, your home must be left clean and tidy with all rubbish removed, otherwise you will be recharged for any further works.

It's important to leave the property tidy, if you leave anything inside (belongings or rubbish) we will get rid of it but you will be charged for the cleanup service. When you leave your home, you must ensure the property is empty.

Your Tenancy Agreement

It states in your tenancy agreement (page 19, section 6, C):

At the end of the tenancy, you must leave your home empty, secure, clean and tidy. You must also leave our fixtures and fittings in a good condition. If you leave any of your belongings or any rubbish in the property, we will get rid of them and charge you for doing so.

Damage

When you leave your home, you will be charged for any repair work or replacements if:

- There is any damage to the fixtures and fittings
- There is any damage to the structure of the property caused by negligence
- You take anything with you

You break it, you pay for it!

Examples of bad practice from Unity tenants



Don't leave any locks on internal doors. You could be charged for a new door.

Make sure all surfaces are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, including skirting boards & bannisters.



Remove all rubbish from the property and clean up any mess that you have made.



Clean and tend to condensation within the property



Things to do when leaving your home

In the weeks before you move out:

- ✓ Make sure the property is clean
- ✓ Remove all rubbish and personal possessions from the property including sheds/garages and lofts.
- ✓ Organise collection and disposal of large unwanted items by Leeds City Council
- ✓ Make sure you pay off any rent owed.
- ✓ Contact the Post Office to have your mail redirected to your new address (there is a charge for this service)

The week before you move out:

- ✓ Store important documents like driver's license, passport, etc in a safe place
- ✓ Contact the utilities (gas, electric & water) companies and tell them you are moving.
- ✓ Double check that your rent account is clear; call 0113 200 7700

On the day you move out:

- ✓ Do one final clean up and check the property is in a good condition, with all rubbish and unwanted items removed
- ✓ Read all the meters and phone the utility companies to tell them the final readings
- ✓ Return your keys to Unity's office by 10:30am the Monday following your tenancy end date

Unity's trial approach to void properties

We are trialling a new procedure where a member of Unity staff, either from the housing team or maintenance team, will meet the outgoing tenant on site to accept the keys and do a walk-through when its empty. This is to prevent tenants from moving out of their properties and leaving it in poor condition.

This is a relatively new trial, but so far we have seen noticeable improvements on the condition that properties are being left. This prevents leaving tenants from incurring a large charge. It also saves Unity money that can be invested elsewhere.



If you cause any form of damage or leave the property in poor condition, you will be charged.

ARE YOUR HOME CONTENTS PROTECTED THIS WINTER?



Available to all tenants is a **Home Contents Insurance scheme** that gives you the chance to insure the contents of your home in an easy and affordable way. There are many benefits and it's so easy to apply.

Ask your local housing officer for an information pack or call My Home on 0345 450 7288 .

Website: www.thistlemyhome.co.uk

Email: myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk

Limits and exclusions apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

What's been happening at Unity?

From minister visits to fundraising

Unity's 30th Annual General Meeting

In September of this year Unity hosted its 30th annual general meeting. The event was an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and successes from the previous year and to discuss our ambitions for the future.

We were also joined by some very special guests, including: Baroness Brenda Dean; the Lord Mayor of Leeds, Councillor Jane Dowson and the founder of the West Indian Carnival, Arthur France MBE.

Shruti Bhargava, chair of Unity Homes and Enterprise, thanked everyone who had been "an integral part of Unity's journey over the last 30 years, whether it's as founders, shareholders, supporters, residents, staff, board members and, indeed, former chairs."

She said: "In these challenging times – with increases in inequality, division and race hate in our society – we all

know that our social purpose is more important than ever. Our commitment to improving lives in areas with high BME populations, and turning them into vibrant multi-cultural neighbourhoods is what drives everything we do."



Housing Minister visited Unity's new developments

The Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Alok Sharma, came to Leeds to see the work Unity Homes and Enterprise is doing to provide high quality affordable homes across the city.

The minister visited Holborn Court in Woodhouse then made the short journey across the city to Chapeltown to see an exciting new Unity project, 146 Chapeltown Road: which includes the refurbishment of a derelict property and a new-build extension to adjoining land in a conservation area, creating 6 flats.

Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma said: "I am delighted to be in Leeds today to discuss with Unity Homes and Enterprise how they are delivering quality affordable homes in the area.



Wayne's World!

On Yer Bike

In September, our Regeneration Director Wayne and 10 friends did a Charity Bike ride from Leeds to Holland via the ferry at Hull; covering over 200 miles!

Thanks to everyone's donations, Wayne raised a total for **£370**, which when you add the Gift Aid to it gives a total of **£462.50**. All money that was raised was donated to St Gemma's Hospice. A massive congratulations to Wayne!

A guided tour for University students

At the end of November, Wayne gave planning students from Leeds Beckett University a guided site visit of our new development, 146 Chapeltown Road. The students were studying heritage works in Victorian terrace conversion to high quality affordable rented flats.



Thank you again, Wayne. It was inspiring to see such a degree of care going into affordable housing development and a wonderful example of the role of a community housing associations investing in regeneration.

Dr. Quintin Bradley, Senior Lecturer in Planning & Housing, Leeds Beckett University

Breast Cancer Now - Wear it Pink fundraiser

In October, Unity hosted its very own 'Wear it Pink' event in aid of Breast Cancer Now. All of this event was down to the hardwork of one particular member of staff, our Customer Services Advisor Kam. Kam organised the whole event, from start to finish, ensuring everyone was informed and involved with the day.

Thanks to everyone's generosity we managed to raise **£276** for Breast Cancer Now.



wear it
pink

breast cancer
now

Unity staff
looking good in
pink!

Contacting Unity

T: 0113 200 7700

E: uha@unityha.co.uk

W: 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 ring our emergency repairs number (see below). If we have to change our emergency repairs number for any reason you can get the new one by phoning 0113 200 7700 and listening to the message.

Emergency Repairs  01942 845 343

e.g. serious floods and leaks, total loss of water and electricity, the only toilet is blocked.

Emergency Gas Repairs  01274 603 333

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

Transco (gas leaks)  0800 111 999

Repairs by email: repairs@unityha.co.uk

For information at your fingertips, visit our website at www.unityha.co.uk for leaflets, latest news and community information.

For comments and suggestions about this newsletter please contact Nathan Dale on

0113 200 7751 or email


nathan.dale@unityha.co.uk

Leeds City Council Services

Adult Social Care

 0113 222 4401

Anti-Social Behaviour

 0113 222 4402

 onestop@leeds.gov.uk

Children Social Care

 0113 222 4403

Council tax and housing benefit

 0113 222 4404

 lcc.benefits@leeds.gov.uk

Complaints and compliments

 0113 222 4405

Environmental health

Contact the Council's environmental services to get bulky items taken away for free.

 0113 222 4406

 refusecollection@leeds.gov.uk

Roads and pavements

 0113 222 4407

 highways@leeds.gov.uk

Registrars

 0113 222 4408

Planning

 0113 222 4409

Minicom

 0113 222 4410

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 us to.

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national



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IN PEOPLE

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