

### Unity Estate Visits with Board Members and Tenant Panel!



Some of our tenant panel and board members got to visit a variety of sites, all of which are in different stages of completion. The newly completed scheme on Parkwood Road at Beeston. Lenhurst Avenue, which is a scheme very close to completion. Beckhill Grove, a development in the early stages with foundations still being laid, and the final site was Leopold Street, where the purchase is still to be finalised, so it wasn't possible to enter the site. Unity explained that with this future scheme, as with all other developments, a connection to the local community will be a requirement for anyone who may be interested in a new home when they are completed.



## Page 3: Fifty Three Weeks This Year

*The new financial year is upon us & Unity will charge you rent for 53 Mondays. Don't worry though, we've told you all you need to know!*

## Page 4: Maintenance March

*Check out our top Maintenance tips to help you with your spring clean ...*

## Page 5: Say No to Unwanted Guests

*A quick guide on how to deal with pests and infestation*

## Page 6: That doesn't go down there!

*How to keep your drains flowing and pipes clean*

## Page 7: Clear Drains and Odour Free

*Good practise of bath and shower use and top tips on cleaning hard services, even better, it's all free home remedies!*

## Page 8: Universal Credit

*A Guide to Universal Credit & how Unity can help you in applying for it*

## Page 10: What to do if you smell Gas?

*Find out what to do if you smell gas or have a gas leak ...*

## Page 11: Pension Credit or Universal Credit?

*Updates on all things Pension related, Universal Credit and Council Tax Support. We've even given tips to help with your Housing Costs!*



## Leeds Homes...

Leeds Homes have gone paperless and as of February 7<sup>th</sup>, no longer accept paper applications for properties or advertise properties through print.

This means that Unity, will no longer offer the "A3 Print of Advertised Properties" or accept paper applications for properties. As a result, all applications for Leeds Homes must be done via [www.LeedsHomes.org.uk](http://www.LeedsHomes.org.uk).



## Warden Call Systems

Important reminder to tenants whose properties have a **"Warden Call System"**. If you have this service, it is important that this line remains for reporting to the emergency call centre in case of emergency. This is NOT for day to days calls.

If you are changing your own phone line provider, this should NOT include the 'Warden Call Line'.



## We're on Social Media!



With something different from finance information and support, to handy household tips, we like to think at Unity we offer a bit of everything, and our social media pages are something you don't want to miss out on!

Follow our Facebook page **@Unity.Housing** and Twitter account **@UnityHomes** and join the fun!

## 53 Weeks This Year

And how it affects you...



The new financial year in 2019 starts on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 and ends on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020. This means that Unity charges you rent on 53 Mondays (53 weeks) in 2019/2020

- As a result of this, in 2019/2020, if you pay monthly, we ask you to calculate your monthly payment by multiplying your weekly rent by 53 and dividing that by 12 (**rent x 53/12 = monthly payment**).

However, if you pay by Direct Debit we have already done this for you.

- 2019/2020 is the last year that your weekly rent will decrease (by 1%), so it may be fortunate that this year happens to be the year with an extra week.
- You may have received a letter telling you that your weekly rent has reduced, and this is correct, but because this year has 53 weeks instead of the usual 52, your monthly rent payment will have gone up.

Please also note that if you pay service charges, they are based on the actual spend for the year and can go up or down.

### Who do I contact if I need help?



**Clive Greenwood**

Income Management Team Leader

☎ 0113 200 7753

✉ [clive.greenwood@unityha.co.uk](mailto:clive.greenwood@unityha.co.uk)



**Sam Mnyama**

Income Management Officer

☎ 0113 200 7737

✉ [sam.mnyama@unityha.co.uk](mailto:sam.mnyama@unityha.co.uk)



**Matthew Hull**

Income Management Officer

☎ 0113 200 7733

✉ [matthew.hull@unityha.co.uk](mailto:matthew.hull@unityha.co.uk)



**Russell Sergeant**

Income Management Officer

☎ 0113 200 7752

✉ [russell.sergeant@unityha.co.uk](mailto:russell.sergeant@unityha.co.uk)

## Maintenance March

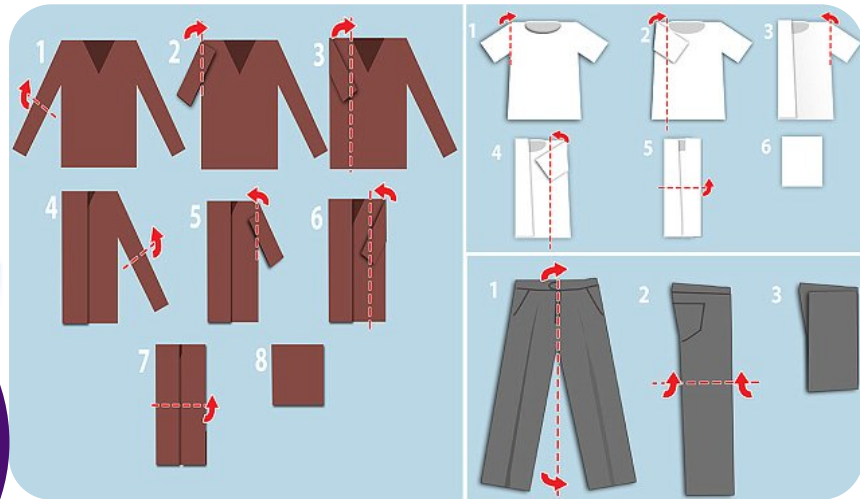
### Decluttering and spring cleaning your home

Spring is upon us and the days are getting longer and warmer, and with more hours of daylight there's more chances to be productive. So why not start spring in style and wipe away the gloom of winter with a good fresh spring clean.



#### TOP TIP!

Adopt these folding techniques to create more room and space in your drawers and home.



Drop the aerosols, open your windows and let the fresh air circulate through your home. The fresh air freshens up your home, getting rid of any damp and musty smells.

### 5 Ways to Spring Clean Your Home

1

#### Adopt the 'Top to Bottom' rule

Start from the top of your home and work your way down. This way you avoid making more mess by doing two rooms at a time.

2

#### Decluttering

This is such a good way to create more room and space in your home. Make the process a lot easier by adopting the 'Four Box Challenge'. Get four large boxes and label them: keep, bin, sell and donate. This way you can track which items you want to keep, donate or sell online and make a little money. Or donate to your favourite charity.

3

#### Gather Cleaning Supplies

Store all your cleaning products away in a safe place.

4

#### Tidy and Minimise

Pack up those random items that linger around the house and aren't ever used, put them in a box and store away. Making it easier to clean the house. The minimalistic look is very 2019!

5

#### Delegate

With holidays looming, bank holidays and even on weekends, if there's more than one or two of you get the kids involved with small safe jobs.

# Say No to Unwanted Guests

How to prevent them...

Infestation from pests and vermin is not only unpleasant to live with but can prove harmful to your health. Infestation can cause vomiting, diarrhoea and other allergic reactions.

## A Guide to Stopping Unwanted Guests Entering Your Home!



- ✓ **Don't let them in!** Ensure there are no gaps beneath external doors or voids and or holes around pipes, brickwork or skirting boards. Making sure voids and gaps are sealed will prevent infestation occurring.
- ✓ **Don't feed them!** Ensure your home is clean and tidy, especially in the kitchen area. Regularly clean work surfaces and floors using an antibacterial cleaner to remove any traces of food or germs. Traces and grains of food attract pests and vermin. So be sure no trace of food are left anywhere and all food items are never left open and are instead sealed in lock tight containers.
- ✓ **Don't attract them!** Dispose of food and other rubbish properly using sealed bags and secure rubbish bins. Ensure rubbish bins don't become overflowed or cluttered as this will appeal to the pests as a form of food and shelter. Feeding birds in your garden can also put your property at risk, refrain from putting bird food on the ground as it attracts rats and mice, so instead invest in a bird table and keep your garden clean and safe.

It's important to note  
that Unity Housing  
Association does not  
take responsibility for  
treating infestations!



### Problems with Pests?

Try **Axial Pest Control** on **07957 911030**

Unity cannot endorse any contractors or third parties. Always get a quote before any work is carried out.

# That Doesn't Go Down There!

## How to keep things flowing smoothly

Keep your water works flowing smoothly and avoid blockages and foul smelling drains by following this short and simple guide.

### Note

You will be recharged if a blockage occurs due to inappropriate waste being disposed of in your sink or toilet.

**A Helpful Daily Tip to Keep Your Drains Clear**  
Run hot water through the sink after each use. Hot water keeps oils in food products running down the drain, rather than building up on the interior surface of pipes, which can make drains sluggish and lead to clogs. It's the small things in life!



### Don't flush wipes down the toilet

Toilets are only designed to remove human waste and toilet roll. Other items like sanitary products, condoms, cotton buds, nappies and hair can block your pipes and could result in a flooded bathroom.



### Don't wash away fat, oil, and greasy sauces down your sink

It can solidify in your pipes like a block of lard, creating a blockage that stops waste water draining away, meaning it could come back up through your plug hole.



### Bin and wipe before you rinse

Let leftover fat, oil and grease cool, then pour into a suitable container and put it in the bin. Wipe pots and pans out with kitchen roll before washing up or placing in a dishwasher.

## Clear and Odour Free Drains

### Cost effective home remedies

A cost effective way you can do yourself at home, to prevent your drains getting blocked, in this simple 2 step process;

- 1) Pour a cup of baking soda down the drain followed by white vinegar
- 2) Let the solution bubble and leave it to set for 15 minutes, then just rinse down with hot water.



#### Extra Tip!

To clean tough areas, like your oven, sprinkle on some baking soda and scrub it with half a lemon and it's as good as new!

## Bath and Shower Use

### Good Practise of Bath and Shower Use

Bathrooms should be fully tiled in the shower and bath area and a shower curtain should be fitted and used at all times to avoid water spillage and water surging across the bathroom. Also investing in a waterproof bath mat can prove highly beneficial in avoiding damage to your floor and also keeping yourself safe in the bathroom.

### Shower Tap Adapters

Shower Tap Adapters may seem like a really good and handy idea but in the long run can end up being the most costly and disastrous investment. Shower Tap Adaptors are infamously known not only for the amount of mess they cause but the actual damage they cause to the taps when being installed. Use of the adaptors in your bathroom will not only lead to damage to your taps but also the walls and floors. Subsequently, a recharge being issued to you from Unity for the damage.

### 1) Should you claim Universal Credit for help with rent?

You may have no choice (if you don't already have any benefits), but if you are claiming for any other reason you should get advice first, to avoid being paid less than you already get. Unity's Benefits calculator [www.unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk) can help you decide.

### 2) Tell Unity when you are going to apply for Universal Credit?

Our Income Management Officers' may be available to help you apply online for Universal Credit. They also offer help completing online forms for Discretionary Housing Payments and signposting to debt advice.

### 4) Making a claim and how to claim

Visit [www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit) and complete the online form.

Universal Credit only starts on the day you submit and complete the application.

If you have no internet at home, nor a mobile phone with internet, use a computer at the job centre or library.

If you are have trouble using a computer, ask your job centre, library or us at Unity for help!

You will need your personal details, financial details and those of the other people in your home, including children.

Remember, even if you received housing benefit, or your landlord received it for you, you must tell them you pay rent.

### 3) To apply for Universal Credit you must:

- ✓ Be a UK Resident
- ✓ Be 18 or over
- ✓ On a low income or out of work
- ✓ Have access to a mobile phone
- ✓ Have an email address
- ✓ Have a bank account
- ✓ Have proof of ID



If you have a partner at home, they will also have to make a claim and add it to yours.

You will then wait 5 weeks for your first payment. If you struggle to pay bills, you can apply for an advance loan online, but be careful, do not borrow more than you need.

If you are in arrears already, you or Unity can apply for the housing costs to be paid to Unity. Ask your work coach about this at any time.

Whether Universal Credit is paid to you or your landlord, it is **your responsibility to ensure your rent is paid in advance.**

Whilst your claim is being decided and during the life of your claim, you will have to log into your online "journal". This is your Universal Credit claim website. You must look at this and do what you are told to do to receive your money.



## 5) What should you do now to prepare?

- ✓ Learn to use the internet on either a computer, a tablet or a smartphone;
- ✓ Create an email address for yourself and get used to using it;
- ✓ Open a basic bank account (not post office) if you don't already have one;
- ✓ Get used to paying bills by Standing Order or Direct Debit, so you can pay your rent in this way;
- ✓ Or download the ALLPAY app to your smartphone, you can use it to pay your rent, or register on the website [www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net) to pay your rent that way instead;
- ✓ Save a little bit of money from your current earnings or benefit each payday, so that when you are paid late you have some savings to use for essentials.
- ✓ Try budgeting monthly, imagining how much money you will get per month and spending from that budget each week. Try Unity's budgeting tool [www.unity.co.uk](http://www.unity.co.uk) to help you make a monthly budget. It will tell you how much your weekly spend is per month.

- ✓ Get debt advice now to help with any debts that will only get worse under Universal Credit.

### When your claim is active

Log into your journal regularly and do what it says

Use your journal to see the money you will receive and when;

Record any changes, things you can't do, problems or questions for your work coach on your journal

### How can we help?

**Unity's Employment Services** can help you learn to use the internet, learn English, look for work and apply for jobs, making it easier to claim.

**Unity's Income Management Team** will help you manage your rent and arrears payments.

Don't forget  
the  
following...

- **Roof comes first!** Remember that **paying rent is your responsibility** and that it has to be paid out of your Universal Credit.
- The first payment of Universal Credit to you should always include an amount for rent, which you need to pay to Unity. If you don't pay this to us, you could face legal action due to arrears. This is why it may be a good idea to set up a Direct Debit or Standing Order with your bank.
- In understanding your claim, it would really help us if you can show us your claim on your phone, tablet or computer. Unity does not get to see any information about your claim apart from that it has started. So this would really help us in understanding your case and helping you to ensure you are getting everything you are entitled to.
- If you are in arrears, discussing your arrears and situation with Unity can prove very worthwhile for you. Unity can help you with your arrears and help you come up with a **cost effective plan and arrangement in paying back your arrears**.
- In April your rent will change and it is your job to inform Universal Credit about this yourself. **You must inform them yourself using your online journal**. You will need to do this on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, don't leave it too late.

If you think you have a gas leak and can smell gas, then leave the property and call **"National Grid"** on **0800 111 999**

## **DO**

- ✓ Open doors and windows to allow fresh air to circulate
- ✓ Turn off the gas at the mains tap which is usually located near the meter. Move the handle a quarter until it at 90 degrees from the pipe to shut off the gas supply.
- ✓ Leave the property safely and wrap up warm if necessary.
- ✓ Wait outside or in a safe place for the gas engineer to arrive.
- ✓ If you are feeling unwell, visit your GP or hospital immediately. Tell them that you may have been exposed to a gas leak or carbon monoxide poisoning.

## **DON'T**

- ✗ Smoke, light a match or use any other naked flame
- ✗ Turn any electrical switches on or off
- ✗ Use doorbells, mobile phones or any other electrical switches which could cause a spark.

The first sign or symptom of a gas leak is the **smell of gas** but other symptoms include **feeling lightheaded, nauseous, headaches and dizziness**. If you feel any of these symptoms then leave the property straight away and seek medical attention urgently.



**DON'T FORGET...**

1. Once you have evacuated the property, do not re-enter until authorised to do so.
2. If you think your neighbours may be affected by the leak, make sure you tell them.
3. Once the Gas engineer has been out to visit and given your property the all clear, make sure you get a copy of his visit and pass this on to Unity as soon as possible.
4. **Always remember to test and check your fire alarm regularly.**

## Pension Credit or Universal Credit?

All you need to know...

- Currently, mixed age groups, where one is of working age and the other pension age, have a choice to claim Universal Credit or Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and/or Tax Credits instead. **However**, from May 15<sup>th</sup> 2019 mixed age couples will no longer be able to make claims for pension credit and/or Housing Benefit **unless** they are already getting one of those benefits.
- Instead, if you need a financial top up and/or help paying your rent you will need to claim Universal Credit.
- Any mixed age couple already on Universal Credit can (before May 15<sup>th</sup> 2019) end their UC claim and claim Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and/or Tax Credits to be better off!
- There are still pensioners who don't claim the Pension Credit/Housing Benefit they are entitled to.
- An award of just 50p a week could prevent you from having to claim Universal Credit in the future. Winner!

It is estimated that 4 in 10 households who could qualify for Pension Credit, fail to make a claim, which means around £3.5 BILLION a year in Pension Credit goes unclaimed!

### IMPORTANT!

- × Any **single person** who is approaching State Pension Age and on Universal Credit, should ensure they make an advance claim for Pension Credit!
- × If not, your Universal Credit may end before you reach Pension Credit Age **AND** you could lose out on up to one month's Universal Credit!

For more information visit

<https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>

## Council Tax Support

Universal Credit is **not** linked to Council Tax.

As a result, if you apply for Universal Credit you **must** also apply to the Council for Council Tax Support Universal Credit Scheme (there's a mouthful!) If not you may face a bill for Council tax which you should be getting help with.

When you move over to Universal Credit the amount for Council Tax you pay may change. The amount of Council Tax Support you could get will depend on your personal circumstances & income.

Leeds City Council also have a fund called the 'Discretionary Protection Scheme' to help if you are suffering severe financial hardship due to needing to pay council tax after moving to Universal Credit.

Go to <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/council-tax-and-benefits/universal-credit/universal-credit-and-council-tax-support> for more information.

## Extra Help with your Housing Costs- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

If your Universal Credit Housing element does not cover all of your rent you might be able to get help from Leeds City Council with a DHP.

You will need to show you have sought advice about how you can improve your situation. As well as:

- ✓ Details of your income including amounts you receive
- ✓ A breakdown of your expenses & how you spend your money each week
- ✓ Details of any arrears or debts you have & the repayment amounts
- ✓ Details of anyone who lives with you, including their income

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/council-tax-and-benefits/discretionary-housing-payments> for more information.

## Contacting Unity

**T:** 0113 200 7700

**E:** [uha@unityha.co.uk](mailto:uha@unityha.co.uk)

**W:** [www.unityha.co.uk](http://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](http://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 **General Building Repairs**. Press 2 for **Heating repairs**. This will connect you to the correct contractors call centre. Should you choose the wrong option, the contractors will pass the details of the call between one and other to ensure that it is attended to appropriately.

**Emergency Gas Repairs**  01274 603 333

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@unityha.co.uk](mailto:repairs@unityha.co.uk)

For information at your fingertips, visit our website at [www.unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk) for leaflets, latest news and community information.


For comments and suggestions about this newsletter please contact **Charlotte Crossman** on **0113 200 7751** or email [charlotte.crossman@unityha.co.uk](mailto:charlotte.crossman@unityha.co.uk)

## Leeds City Council Services

### Adult Social Care

 0113 222 4401

### Anti-Social Behaviour


 0113 222 4402

 [onestop@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:onestop@leeds.gov.uk)

### Children Social Care

 0113 222 4403

### Council tax and housing benefit

 0113 222 4404

 [lcc.benefits@leeds.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:refusecollection@leeds.gov.uk)

### Roads and pavements

 0113 222 4407

 [highways@leeds.gov.uk](mailto: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.

