

Unity News

Autumn 2021



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



**Read about how Gtd Maintenance are providing
Unity's repairs service**

+ See inside for details of our new Chief Executive

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Check your rent account, log repairs and pay rent online!

- Report repairs and see your repairs history
- View and print up-to-date rent statements
- Monitor your rent charges and make payments online

How do I register?

Signing up to 'MyUnity' couldn't be easier! Just follow these simple steps:

- 1** Go to www.unityha.co.uk
- 2** Click the link to 'MyUnity' on the homepage
- 3** Register your details. You will need your tenancy reference number and an email address.



Need help signing up?

Our IT team will be happy to help you sign up to 'MyUnity' and will be able to explain the features of the new website. Just call our office if you need some help.

3. Unity Appoints New Chief Executive

Welcome Cedric Boston

Unity Homes and Enterprise is pleased to announce that In September following an extensive recruitment process Unity has appointed Cedric Boston as our new Chief Executive. Cedric joins Unity having had over 30 years of housing experience. He is a former Chief Executive of Arhag, a BME association based in London and joins Unity following the departure of former Chief Executive Ali Akbor who left Unity in January 2021. Cedric is looking forward to ensuring Unity continues to be a leading Bme Focused organisation.



Cedric in his own words

I am very pleased to be taking on this role at Unity, and proud to be leading such a well-established local organization that has for decades aspired to provide a good housing service to the people in this part of Leeds. My challenge will be to build on Unity's legacy. Although we are a relatively small organization, we have always had huge ambitions and I am sure that will continue.

Unity's Board has put making our housing service the best in Leeds, at the top of my priority list. This means we will have to make changes and over the next few months we will be reviewing our services to see how we can make them even better. I will like customers to join in our reviews, to tell us what you think are the areas for improvement and what we should be tackling first. Going forward I would like more tenants and residents to be engaging with us, helping us to identify problems early and fix them, helping us to find the best way to meet the needs of local people and getting involved in designing the housing service of the future.

Some of you will know that Unity is not just a housing association. Our social purpose is to provide opportunities for local people to improve their lives and we do this by helping people set up and run their own business; finding jobs for tenants, especially those who have been unemployed for a long time and enabling tenants who want to improve their career prospects to undertake training and education opportunities to boost career prospects. The Board wants us to help more people and have more local people taking up these opportunities. I want Unity to be especially good at helping people overcome barriers preventing them from working or pursuing training right now. For example, childcare, language difficulties, individual anxieties or simply the lack of encouragement and support. So, my second priority will be working with local people and agencies to see how we can work together to expand these services.

Under my leadership Unity will remain committed to increasing the choices and opportunities available to people in this community. Housing will always be our core business but in addition we want to play a major role improving the economic and social conditions for local people.

4. The Customer Services Team

The customer service team provides the frontline of Unity Services and are the people you will most likely speak to when you call the office, during the pandemic the team have continued to provide a service whilst working from home, but are now working from our office.

Meet the Team



Sanj Digwa
Customer Services
Team Leader



Sue Pennock
Customer Services
Assistant



Jamila Hussain
Customer Services
Assistant



Shahzad Ahmed
Housing
Administrator



Tracy Place
Customer Services
Assistant



Callum Paul
Customer Services
Assistant

KICKSTART SCHEME

Unity is supporting the governments Kickstart scheme by creating five new six-month job placements for young people who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. We have created roles in our housing, finance and regeneration teams, these job placements will support the participants to develop the skills and experience they need to find work after completing the programme.



Lorraine Charlton
Employment
Services
Outreach Officer

The Kickstart scheme is a great way of introducing young people to the workplace and giving them skills and knowledge to seek future employment. If you need help in finding work or training opportunities please contact employment services on 0113 2007746

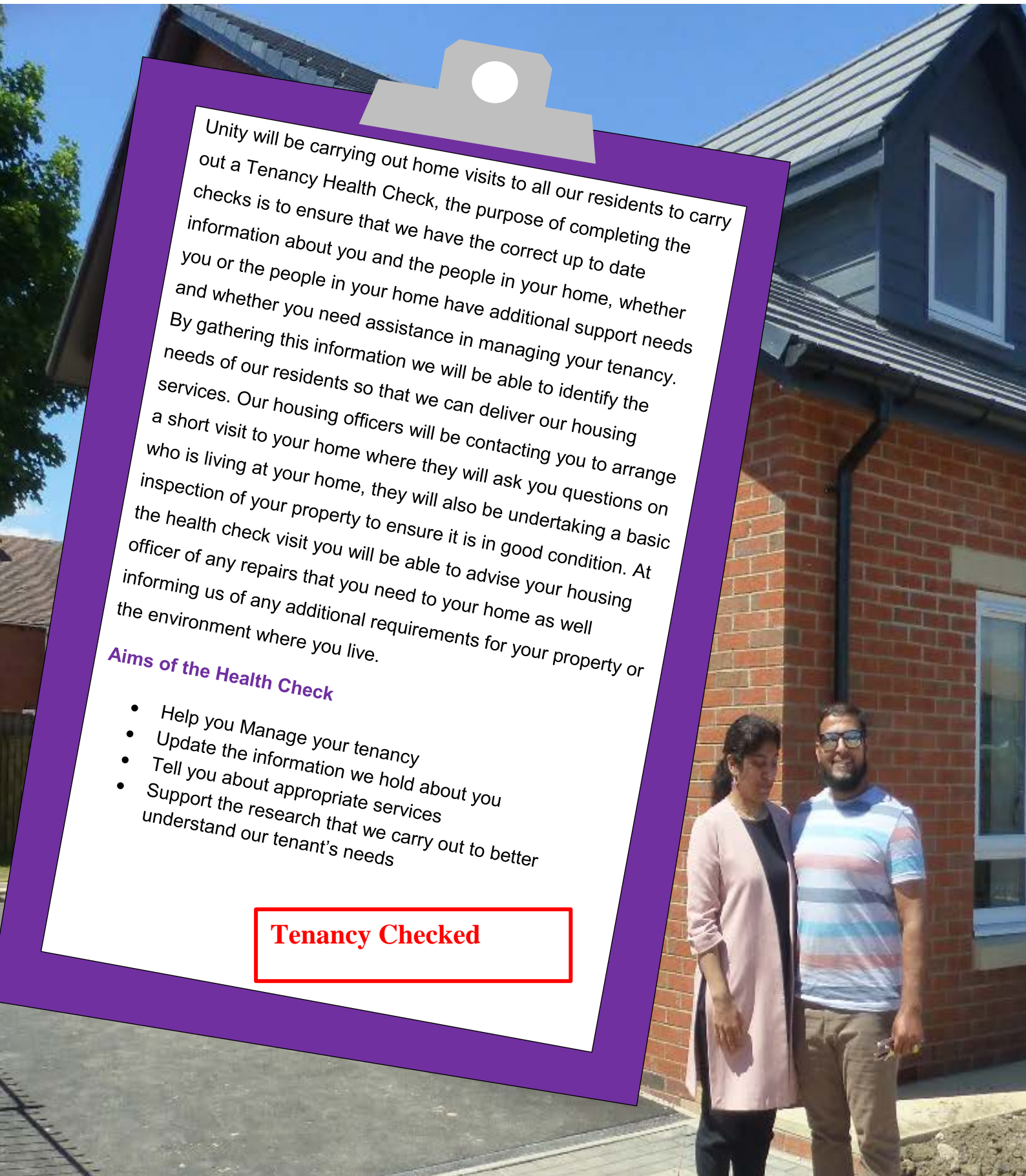
5. Tenancy Health Checks

Unity will be carrying out home visits to all our residents to carry out a Tenancy Health Check, the purpose of completing the checks is to ensure that we have the correct up to date information about you and the people in your home, whether you or the people in your home have additional support needs and whether you need assistance in managing your tenancy. By gathering this information we will be able to identify the needs of our residents so that we can deliver our housing services. Our housing officers will be contacting you to arrange a short visit to your home where they will ask you questions on who is living at your home, they will also be undertaking a basic inspection of your property to ensure it is in good condition. At the health check visit you will be able to advise your housing officer of any repairs that you need to your home as well informing us of any additional requirements for your property or the environment where you live.

Aims of the Health Check

- Help you Manage your tenancy
- Update the information we hold about you
- Tell you about appropriate services
- Support the research that we carry out to better understand our tenant's needs

Tenancy Checked



6. GTD Maintenance Contractors

Guaranteed to Deliver (GTD) Painting and Property Maintenance Ltd are the contractors that have been responsible for carrying out repairs to Unity's Properties since 2018. They are a local company formed in 2011 and are based in Cross Gates



What Services GTD Provide for Unity

Repairs service – GTD provides a repairs service for the residents of all Unity's rented homes. When you report to Unity that things are either no longer working or not working as well as they should in your home, GTD receive notification from Unity that you have reported a repair. Unity will indicate to GTD when repairs need to be completed, whether this is an emergency, urgent or routine repair. GTD will contact you and make an appointment for one of their team to visit you, wherever possible they will arrange the appointment which is suitable to you.

Voids – GTD work with Unity to ensure properties that have become empty are brought back to the standards set by Unity for a new tenant to move into as quickly as possible. GTD aim to complete all repairs to void properties in 20 days.

Planned Programme - Each year Unity identifies properties that need major works such as new bathrooms, kitchens and roofs, based on the age of the components in your home, this is called the planned programme. Unity will decide what works are required and then request that GTD contacts customers in order to make arrangements to complete the works.

Governance - GTD works with Unity to ensure all properties have an up-to-date Electrical Safety Certificate in place and that electrical upgrades are carried out where required.



Gary Thewlis
Managing Director
GTD

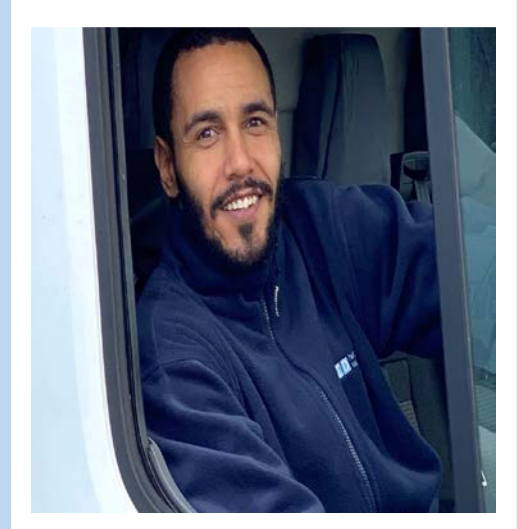
GTD and the Pandemic

We have had to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic to ensure the safety of our staff and customers when working in Unity properties. Following a risk assessment, we revised our working practices. All our operatives were equipped with extra personal protection equipment (PPE). When booking appointments, we asked customers about Covid infections in households and requested that wherever possible customers ventilated their property before and after our visit. That they vacated the work area and maintained as much distance as possible. When we were advised customers were vulnerable, we asked that they stayed outside of the property whilst we were on site wherever possible or to ask someone in their support bubble to be in attendance instead. We have faced challenges in ensuring work has been completed in timescales with customers isolating, staff illness and supply issues, we will continue to work with Unity and yourselves to overcome these issues and provide a quality tenant led service.

7. GTD Maintenance Contractors

Employment News – a local success story

Hello! my name is Ashanti; I am both a current tenant with Unity HA and an employee of GTD. I had been trying post qualification without success to land my dream job of becoming a full-time plumber. I was stuck in a rut as I did not have the necessary on-site experience required to land a role. Once GTD found out about this they created an improver role within the Planned Maintenance Team which I have been part of for the last 7 months. I have successfully completed my probationary period and have started to carry out Day to Day responsive repairs. This is allowing me to build on the skills and knowledge that I am developing during my employment with GTD. I look forward to continuing working for GTD and hopefully I will get to meet some more of you soon.



GTD Service Standards

- We will always make an appointment prior to visiting. Wear clothing identifiable with the contractor,
- Show identification and have a big smile – even if not requested.
- Provide and use dust sheets and protective covering to prevent damage to customers' homes and clean up after works have been completed.
- Exercise great care when work is being undertaken in the vicinity of children, with particular emphasis on sharp tools and toxic substances.
- GTD will not enter or remain in a home or dwelling where children under 16 years old are unaccompanied by an adult, except in the case of an emergency when staff will enter in pairs (staff may enter if accompanied by Police or Social Services).
- Care and consideration will be required when working in the homes of the elderly/vulnerable or customers with disabilities. This will include the possible restriction or impeding movement around the home, tools and materials lying on floors and monitoring acceptable levels of warmth and comfort.
- Care must be taken to ensure the comfort, safety and security of customers and adjoining householders during work activity. • GTD Operatives will not smoke in or around our customers' homes.
- In the interests of all concerned, if GTD encounters a particularly difficult or a potentially violent situation, they must leave the property immediately and contact Unity without delay, with details of the incident.
- GTD will give due notice whenever it is necessary to disconnect services or interrupt the use of access or amenities and such interruptions shall be kept to a minimum. GTD is responsible for ensuring that, where appropriate, any statutory consents (i.e. scaffolding on pavement) are obtained before work commences, and that any statutory notices (i.e. building regulation notices) have been applied for and obtained where appropriate.

Want to work for GTD? Do you have what it takes to become a maintenance Operative, All operatives at GTD generally have a primary trade with multi-skill capabilities. All our jobs are advertised on INDEED and we are currently looking for a Joiner with multi-skills for our day-to-day responsive repairs team. If you are interested in applying, contact us at info@gtdmaintenance.co.uk or apply through indeed.

8. Leopold Street New Development



Leopold Street Development nears completion

The first part of an innovative combined project to build 63 new affordable homes at Leopold Street in Leeds is due to be completed later this year. Unity is on course to deliver 30 one and two bedroom flats for people aged over 55 by November 2021. The scheme is part of a combined project with Chapeltown Cohousing who are building 29 houses and flats, a 'common house' and space for three self build units – is expected to be ready in March 2022.



**Unity Chief Executive
Cedric Boston**

“The concept behind this scheme is to connect residents to the community even when they are inside their home by having the ability to look out to the shared space, keep in touch with the lives of their friends and neighbours and come out to join them.



What is Cohousing?

Cohousing is a means of bringing individuals and families together in groups to share common aims and activities whilst enjoying their own self-contained accommodation. As well as their own private homes, everyone has the use of shared facilities in the 'common house' which includes washing machines, guest rooms and a large kitchen and dining room where everyone can eat.

9. Dealing with Rat Infestations



We have seen more enquires how to deal with rat infestations. If you have rats at your home it is your responsibility to ensure they are removed by contacting a pest control company to attend your home. There will be a cost in doing this of approximately £100. Leeds City Council Leeds.gov.uk and Kirklees council Kirklees.gov.uk both have pest control services but you may wish to organise a visit by an alternative company.

Tips to Stop Rats

Ensure there are no gaps in between external doors

Ensure that there are no holes surrounding pipes

Damaged or old air vents with holes larger than 2.5cm should be replaced.

Do not leave food out for wild animals this will only attract rat's only feed birds from a raised bird table

Ensure that rubbish is collected and your bins are not overflowing

Environmental Concerns

If you are concerned that local businesses near to you are not responsibly disposing of their waste, or that dumped rubbish near to your home is causing a problem. You can report this to your Council through their environmental health departments. **Leeds City Council, 0113 222 4444 Kirklees Council 01484 221000**

Waste Recycling Centres

The council waste recycling centres are open but during the covid-19 pandemic you may need to book a slot online in order to dispose of your waste. Bulky waste collection services are currently not being carried out in Kirklees but are still available in Leeds.

Your Housing Officer

As a Unity resident you have a dedicated housing officer who is responsible for ensuring that your area is clean and tidy. If you would like them to visit your area please contact them on 0113 2007700

10. Rent Arrears Collection

Ways to Pay

Direct Debit

Standing Order

Debit Card

All Pay App

Cash at the Office

Universal Credit

Smartphone

Text



Unity needs to collect rent in order to provide housing services and ensure your property is maintained.

How we collect rent

Unity charges rent on a weekly basis, and it is a condition of the tenancy agreement that the rent due is paid in full, the role of the income management team is to ensure these payments are made. If you are unable to pay your full rent, then it is important that you contact your income management officer. The income management team are there to assist you, they will be able to advise you on the benefits you can claim, facilitate affordable payment plans if you have got into debt and signpost you to any support services that can help you to manage your debt.

The income team will contact you via phone, text, email, letters or can facilitate home visits to assist you in managing your rent account. If after several attempts to assist you to clear your debts has failed and there are debts outstanding or increasing Unity has the option of taking action against your tenancy in order to recover the debt. In all instances taking tenancy action is only taken where we have exhausted all options on helping you clear your debts.

Court Applications

Unity has the option of applying for a court hearing to obtain a judgement from the court ordering you to pay your arrears or face possession of your home. There is a fee of £355 for court hearings and we will ask for this to be added to your account as costs. A court hearing is the last opportunity to agree to repay your debt, and Unity would prefer to arrange a payment plan with you rather than apply to court.

Unity has the option of applying for an eviction. An application for an eviction has to be made at a court hearing and Unity would only apply for this where all options to resolve debt have been exhausted.

Contact Your Income Officer

Unity income management team will always try to help anybody who is struggling with debt. If you need to talk to them, they are able to discuss your rent account. Our office is now open if you need to discuss matters face to face, they are also able to carry out visits at your home if this is your preferred option.

To find out who your income management officer is see contact the team on 0113 2007700 or email rents@unityha.co.uk

11. Puzzle Corner



Test your knowledge by completing these puzzles. Send completed page back to Unity 117 Chapeltown Road Leeds Freepost NEA2498 LS7 3HY by 31st October 2021 all correct entries will be entered into a draw to win £50 in vouchers, please remember to enclose your name and address.

Wordsearch Clues

- Marathon
- Javelin
- Boxing
- Hockey
- Rowing
- Rugby
- Judo
- Golf



M	A	R	A	T	H	O	N	P
A	X	J	P	E	O	B	T	H
J	T	K	A	V	C	G	L	U
U	L	C	A	V	K	G	D	B
D	O	D	E	L	E	O	S	O
O	R	U	G	B	Y	L	M	X
F	S	W	H	G	N	F	I	I
R	O	W	I	N	G	H	E	N
Y	I	X	C	R	J	B	O	G

1.			2.					
								3.
	4.							
					5.			
	6.							
7.								
					8.			

Crossword Clues

Across

- 1. Type of Milky Coffee L- - - (5)
- 4 First name of UK Prime (5) Minister
- 6. Type of travel luggage (8)
- 8. - - - and chips popular food (4)

Down

- 2.Slow reptile with a shell (8)
- 3.River flowing through London (6)
- 5.Pet with whiskers (3)
- 7. Place to see exotic animals (3)

Congratulations to Miss D of Unity Close who won the summer competition

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@unityha.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.

