

**Unity News**

**Spring 2022**



# Celebrating 35 Years of Unity Housing



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## Celebrating 35 Years of Unity Housing Association

Unity began life in the Chapeltown area of Leeds in 1987 working with the Black Caribbean community and then spread into the adjoining area of Harehills which has a large mixed Asian community. Unity quickly broadened its focus to tackle the full range of housing needs of the BME communities across the city as a whole, with the aim of extending housing choice and improving integration.

In 2000 the association established a subsidiary company, now called Unity Enterprise. We are driven by offering both housing and business tenants a responsive and high level of customer service.



In 2021 led by our new Chief Executive Cedric Boston, Unity formulated a Corporate Plan with the vision: “We want to be known as an excellent service provider that meaningfully engages with and involves its tenants, while actively growing and strengthening the business.

Just as importantly we want to do a great deal more to enhance and develop our social purpose, creating opportunities for people to make lasting improvements in their lives.” Unity is unique among housing associations, having employment, training, and entrepreneurial services, we will develop these services to improve the prospects of local people.

By 2022 Unity has added over 1300 affordable homes to local housing stock, we have expanded our property base by developing homes in Kirklees. Today Unity is a thriving organisation totally committed to building strong sustainable communities through the delivery of the very best housing, social and employment opportunities. Our tenants play a growing role in everything we do. we look forward to the future whilst celebrating our past.

### 3. New Playground at the Beckhills



Unity developed 30 new affordable homes at the Beckhills in Meanwood Leeds in June 2020. As part of this development Unity contributed £10,000 towards Leeds City Councils refurbishment of the local playground. Unity is pleased to announce this has now been completed.

**Do you speak Ukrainian and would like to  
become an interpreter for  
Leeds City Council?**



Leeds City Council are trying to source Ukrainian interpreters to join their register for freelance interpreters to help with Ukrainian citizens who may arrive in Leeds.

Would you like to join their register of freelance interpreters to take on paid work?

For more information, please contact 0113 3367800 or email at [interpreting@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:interpreting@leeds.gov.uk)

## 4. Tenancy Health Check



To be able to improve our services and understand your needs better we will be visiting all our tenants in their homes over the coming months to conduct a Tenancy Health Check.

A Tenancy Health Check involves a visit from one of our staff who will check that our records about your household are up to date. They will also check the condition of your property and give you the opportunity to discuss any queries about your home, your tenancy, or your neighbourhood.

We aim to visit around 50% of our properties each year so you can expect to have a tenancy health check visit at your home at least once every 2 years.

Household circumstances often change from the start of a tenancy, and it is important that we keep our records up to date. Having a better knowledge of the diversity of our tenants allows us to tailor the service we provide to meet all our residents' needs.

The tenancy health check allows you the opportunity to meet and get to know Unity staff and talk to us about:

- How best we can communicate with you
- What additional support you may need
- Your priority for future property improvements

We will write to you in advance of the Tenancy Health Check visit with an appointment. The member of staff visiting you will introduce themselves, provide identification and explain why we are visiting you in your home.

### Visiting Estates

As well as tenancy health checks Unity housing officers will be conducting a number of estate inspections over the coming year to identify whether we can improve the environment. The housing officers will be inspecting for issues such as parking, overgrown trees, and litter, as well as looking at the standards of communal cleaning and gardening.



## 5. Income Management Strategy

### **In February Unity Board members approved our first ever Income Management Strategy.**

The aim of this new strategy is to ensure resilient arrangements are in place to maximise rental income and minimise arrears. This strategy and our action plan recognise the financial challenges faced by our residents and the importance of putting income collection at the centre of all our activities.

The vision for our income management service is to work together with our residents to prevent arrears, provide support and improve the information available to tenants to who need access to welfare benefits and financial services. Becoming ever-more efficient in the collection of income is crucial to ensure that our ambitious plans to invest more of our income in our homes and services can be achieved.

A full copy of our Income Management Strategy can be found on our website.



We are aware that the cost of living is rising for energy bills, fuel, and everyday items and that people are worried about getting into debt. At Unity, we can help you if you are struggling with your finances, our income officers can do an assessment of your finances over the phone in the office or at your home to identify if you can claim any additional benefits to which you are entitled to. As our Income Officer Russell Sergeant explains



**Russell Sergeant Income Officer**

“We are aware that the cost of living is increasing & will impact a large section of society, and many of us will feel the pinch. However, it is important that your rent remains a priority, and this is the first bill that needs paying.

We recommend that you contact our income management officers to ensure that rent is covered, and payment plans are put in place. The team is open-minded & approachable, and we are here to advise on all aspects of income. We can assist you with benefit claims and budgeting advice.

Please ensure that you keep in contact with your income management officers if you require any advice.

Our first aim is to ensure that your priority bills are sustainable. So, if you feel you need some assistance or struggling financially. We are one call away.”

**Council Tax Rebate – The government has introduced a council tax rebate of £150.00, if you pay by direct debit this will be refunded to you, if you do not pay by direct debit you would need to complete an online form for Leeds see [Council Tax Rebate – Leeds.gov.uk](https://www.leeds.gov.uk) for Kirklees see [Kirklees.gov.uk](https://www.kirklees.gov.uk)**

## 6. Decarbonisation

Decarbonisation is the name given to the process of reducing and ultimately eliminating the emission of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

The Earth needs some carbon dioxide, but when there's too much it acts like an extra-thick blanket; It traps more of the sun's heat and makes the planet get too hot. This is what's happening right now.

The burning of fossil fuels in industries has seen increased levels of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere. We've also burnt more and more fossil fuels to run cars and planes, power technology and heat our homes. But here's the problem – when you burn fossil fuels, it releases harmful gases into the atmosphere. This is one of the main causes of climate change.

Climate change affects us all. As the Earth warms, we're getting more unpredictable and extreme weather. Big storms and heavy rainfall cause flooding. Record high temperatures trigger droughts and wildfires. Melting ice caps make sea levels rise. Even the seasons are changing, and wildlife is getting confused by warmer winters and earlier springs

If global warming continues to accelerate then there will be further damage to the world.



For this reason, governments around the world are implementing policies that aim to reduce the amount of carbon that is produced. The UK government has set a target for the country to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

To achieve decarbonisation there are changes that we all must make in our daily lives. Our living environment will change in many ways including our forms of transport and the way we heat and power our homes.

There are targets set for the changes that need making to our homes. In 2008 landlords were tasked with providing EPC (Energy Performance Certificate)'s to all tenants prior to starting their tenancies. To acquire an EPC an independent engineer must undertake a series of checks on a property to obtain its RDSAP rating (which indicates how energy efficient the property is). The EPC also gives recommendations on how efficiency can be increased.

EPC's have ratings from A to G, A, being the highest rating would be the cheapest to run. Since 2018 the government have set a target for all properties to have an RDSAP rate of at least Band C (69-80) with an average of 73 by 2030. If a property does not have a C rating by 2030 the landlord will not be able to rent it out to tenants. EPC's must be carried in a 10-year cycle though some properties that have not had a change of tenancy have never had one.



# 7. Decarbonisation

The EPC will include ways to improve the energy efficiency of the property. Its then the landlord's responsibility to ensure that any work to the property improves its efficiency rating.

The government has introduced a Green Homes strategy that sets rules which landlords must follow to take measures towards decarbonisation. These rules include properties reaching a band C EPC rating, The timescale for doing this is 2030. If landlords do not adhere to the rules and meet the deadlines, they can expect to face serious fines.

Unity have planned works scheduled in order to achieve the RDSAP C rating target by 2030. These planned works range from minor to substantial changes to your homes.

These minor changes include:

- **Changing to energy efficient light bulbs**
- **Wall and floor insulation**
- **Roof and loft insulation**
- **Double glazing windows**
- **Installing high performance doors**

Then there are the more substantial changes,

- **Upgrading heating controls**
- **Hot water cylinder installation**
- **Replacing boiler and heat recovery**
- **Solar water heating**

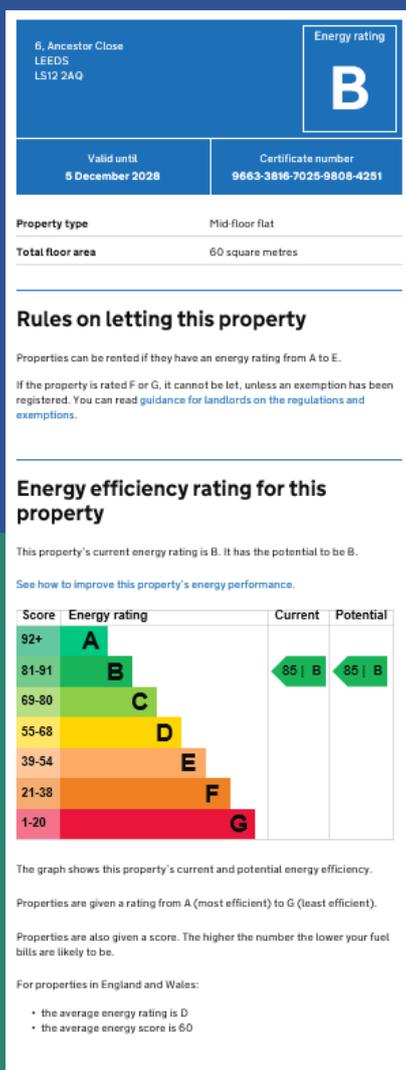
These planned works will depend on the properties current EPC rating. Unity is, at present, aiming to collect up to date EPC ratings for all properties. This includes the properties that have never had an EPC completed.

If you are interested in knowing what your property's EPC rating or want a copy of the certificate, you can contact your landlord/ your housing officer and they will provide you with that information.

Along with these changes, alternative options to powering our vehicles have already been introduced with electric vehicles becoming more popular. They are better for the environment as they do not emit carbon dioxide.

The way we travel is changing as we speak, and the Coronavirus Pandemic propelled us into some of these changes quicker than anyone had anticipated. A lot of us were prompted to work from home, reducing carbon emissions through not travelling to work. Reducing car use is a massive part of the government's plan of action. Nonelectric vehicles will be regulated in Leeds City Centre creating a "Clean air zone". There will also be a rearrangement of the city to create a "20-minute Leeds" in which all amenities will be no more than 20-minute walking distance from every home in the city. All these changes will contribute to the planet's growth and preservation.

The changes that we will face on the journey to decarbonisation will not only be to our homes and travel. With change there will come a lot of new opportunities. This includes the 77,000 new Green Jobs the government envisage in West Yorkshire alone. With the prospect of these new Green Jobs coming to West Yorkshire we want to prepare people for the arising opportunities. To do this, we need to break down the barriers people face. Starting with the providing you with the knowledge that these jobs are going to be available to you.



6, Ancestor Close  
LEEDS  
LS12 2AQ

Energy rating  
**B**

Valid until  
5 December 2028

Certificate number  
9663-3816-7025-9808-4251

Property type  
Mid-floor flat

Total floor area  
60 square metres

**Rules on letting this property**

Properties can be rented if they have an energy rating from A to E.

If the property is rated F or G, it cannot be let, unless an exemption has been registered. You can read guidance for landlords on the regulations and exemptions.

**Energy efficiency rating for this property**

This property's current energy rating is B. It has the potential to be B.

See how to improve this property's energy performance.

Score	Energy rating	Current	Potential
92+	A		
81-91	B	85   B	85   B
69-80	C		
55-68	D		
39-54	E		
21-38	F		
1-20	G		

The graph shows this property's current and potential energy efficiency.

Properties are given a rating from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient).

Properties are also given a score. The higher the number the lower your fuel bills are likely to be.

For properties in England and Wales:

- the average energy rating is D
- the average energy score is 60

## 8. The Queens Jubilee Celebrations

In 2022, her Majesty The Queen will become the first British Monarch to celebrate a platinum jubilee after 70 years of service. If you and your neighbours want to join the celebrations from 2<sup>nd</sup> June to the 5<sup>th</sup> of June and want to put on an event such as a big lunch, then why not contact us at Unity to see if you can qualify for our community fund?



**Funds of up to £250.00 could be awarded to your community for:**

- Activities that involve your neighbourhood such as a street event or coffee morning
- Improvements to your environment such as funds for setting up a gardening group or installing new flower beds or providing garden furniture
- Funding to support children's activities in the summer holidays
- Improvements to the safety and security of your home

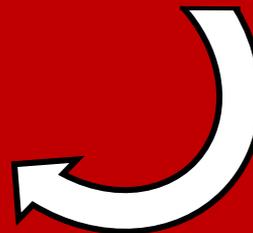
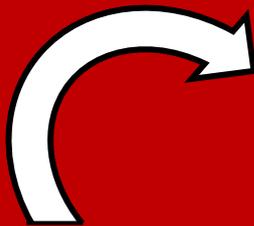
This is only some of the things that we could provide funds for, but if you have an idea that you think would benefit your community then get in touch.

**Who can apply?** Any resident of Unity Housing Association can apply to receive funding

**How can I apply?** Contact our Tenant Involvement Officer Chris Whittaker on 0113 2007751 or at [Chris.whittaker@unityha.co.uk](mailto:Chris.whittaker@unityha.co.uk)

## 9. Mutual Exchange Advice

Are you needing to downsize your current home? Are you currently overcrowded? Are you struggling with the government under occupation charge? If you have answered yes to any of these questions and you have been a Unity tenant for over 12 months, you may wish to consider a mutual exchange.



Unity will only accommodate direct exchanges. A direct exchange is a mutual exchange between two parties. Exchanges do not have to be between Unity tenants, you can swap with any other housing association or council tenant.

In order to exchange you would need to get Unity's written permission. The person you want to swap with must also get their landlords permission.

You will need a bidding number if you do not already have one, from Leeds Homes or Kirklees Choose and Move websites. You and the person you want to swap with will also need to complete our mutual exchange form. You can either download one from our website [Unityha.co.uk](http://Unityha.co.uk) or contact us on 0113 2007700 and we will send one to you.

Before any move we would have to inspect your home to ensure that it is in good condition, and we would arrange gas and electric checks.

Unity has the right to refuse and exchange application if either tenant has a court order of a notice of seeking possession against them, if either party would be overcrowded or under occupying as a result of a move or if the property did not meet either tenants medical needs.

### Finding Someone to swap with

The government have set up a national mutual exchange scheme called 'Homeswap Direct.' The scheme allows you to look for families to swap with. Not only in Leeds and Kirklees but also in any part of the country. To register, visit the website [www.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.houseexchange.org.uk)

## 10. Healthcare Job Opportunities

### Looking to work in Healthcare?



- Are you 16-25 years old?
- Are you unemployed or looking for a career change?
- Have you considered working in the healthcare sector?

If your answer is **YES** to any of the above questions...

**Unity Employment Services can support you with:**  
*Job searching, CVs, job application forms, interview preparation, confidence building, accredited training and much more.*

**FOR MORE INFO PLEASE CONTACT :**



**Kelly Jennings**  
07730 870810 /  
kelly.jennings@unityha.co.uk



**Lorraine Charlton**  
07714 134531 /  
lorraine.charlton@unityha.co.uk

**West  
Yorkshire**  
Combined  
Authority

  
**UK Government**



## Contacting Unity

**Telephone:** 0113 200 7700

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

**Website:** [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 **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](mailto:Repairs@unity.co.uk)

For more information, visit our website at [www.unity.co.uk](http://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](mailto:chris.whittaker@unityha.co.uk)

## Leeds City Council Services

**Adult Social Care** 0113 2224401

**Anti-Social Behaviour** 0113 222 4402  
[onestop@leeds.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:refugecollections@leeds.gov.uk)

**Housing Advice** 0113 222 4412

**Roads and Pavements** 0113 222 4407  
[highways@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:highways@leeds.gov.uk)

**Universal Credit** 0800 328 5644

## Kirklees Council Services

**Adult Social Care** 01484 414933

[gatewaytocare@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:gatewaytocare@kirklees.gov.uk)

**Anti-Social Behaviour** 01484 221000  
[safer@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:safer@kirklees.gov.uk)

**Child Protection** 01484 414950

**Council Tax and Benefits** 01484 414950  
[Council.benefits@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:Council.benefits@kirklees.gov.uk)

**Customer Service Centre** 01484 221000  
[Customer.enquiries@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:Customer.enquiries@kirklees.gov.uk)

**Housing Advice** 01484 221350  
[Housing.solutions@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto: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.

