

plusdane.co.uk

# unity

customer magazine

Plus Dane Housing

Issue 48 | Summer 2024



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our  
corporate  
plan

community  
safety

volunteers'  
stories

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standards

# Welcome to the summer edition of **Unity**

We hope you find the information on these pages useful, and if there's anything you'd like to see in future editions, we'd love to hear from you.

Get in touch at [communications@plusdane.co.uk](mailto:communications@plusdane.co.uk).

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## Tell us WhatsApp!

**You can now contact us through WhatsApp to report a repair or to talk to us about any query you may have.**

It's a simple way to message us, at a time that is convenient to you. We will respond as quickly as possible during office hours, and messages received outside of office hours will be prioritised and responded to as quickly as possible the next working day.

If you have WhatsApp downloaded on your smartphone, **all you need to do is add our new Plus Dane WhatsApp number - 0151 351 4747 - as a contact.**





## A message from the chair of our Board

In the last edition of Unity, I outlined that we were working on a new Corporate Plan to take us through to 2027. I am pleased to confirm that Board approved this plan in March, and we are in the early stages of delivery.

We spoke with 1,600 customers to develop the plan and this insight has very much directed our objectives and informed our investment decisions over the next three years. You can read more about this on page 5.

Following this listening exercise, one of the biggest shifts that we are already underway with is increasing planned investment in our customer's homes. There has been considerable pressure on our repairs service since the pandemic so by investing more and looking at our approach to planned investment in a different way, we are hoping that we can reduce the demand on repairs over coming years, while providing a better and more proactive service for customers.

Alongside investment in kitchens, bathrooms and windows, we are also investing in making our homes warmer and utilising government funding where we can to support this. We have successfully bid for the first two rounds, or 'waves' of Social Housing Decarbonisation funding and have begun working on a bid for Wave 3. We have match funded what we received from government which will enable us to improve the thermal efficiency of 612 of our homes, with hopefully more to come.

We have also been working hard to reduce the number of repairs jobs that are currently sitting outside of our published timescales. We have experienced some challenges with contractor availability, but we are working to resolve this and have managed to reduce the outstanding jobs by a quarter. This continues to be a high priority for us and we hope to bring all waiting times down within the next few months.

In July and August, we will be inspected by the Regulator of Social Housing to determine how we are performing against the regulatory standards. A new regulatory framework was introduced in April 2024, which alongside Governance and Financial Viability will also include the new Consumer Standards.

You can read more about the new Consumer Standards on our website, in the 'our performance' section. Myself, the Board and Executive will be working with the Regulator during this time to make sure it has an open and transparent insight into how the organisation operates. We will keep you updated on what it means for you once the inspection is completed.

Sir Peter Fahy, Chair,  
Plus Dane Housing





## Moving over to UC *Universal Credit*

We are currently in the transition period from benefits to Universal Credit, called Managed Migration. Everyone of working age who receives benefits will have to move over to Universal Credit by the end of this year.

The government will send you a UC migration notice letter when it is time for you to move – or you can apply to move over sooner if you would be better off. In this case, be sure to get advice before you switch, as you can't go back once you have moved across.

There is lots of help available to support you with a Universal Credit application. You can ask for advice from our Income or Welfare teams, or from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) before you apply.

## Debt advice



RAISE is an independent charity providing high-quality support and advice to those struggling with debt. Its team of experienced professionals offers a safe and supportive environment for you to seek help and develop the skills to take control of your finances.

Visit [www.raiseadvice.org.uk](http://www.raiseadvice.org.uk) or call 0151 459 1556 for more information.

### Summer holiday support

The **holiday activities and food (HAF)** programme provides healthy meals, activities, and **free childcare places to primary school-aged children from low-income families in the school holidays.**

Your local authority will have a page on its website with information including how to book a place if you are eligible, or you can find a link to these on our website, [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk), in the 'supporting you' section.

### Dangers of doorstep lenders

If you, or someone you know, feel under pressure to borrow money, turning to doorstep lenders and loan sharks can quickly become a serious problem.

**Loan sharks can offer you cash but demand huge amounts of interest** on your repayments, and **may threaten you or take other valuable items from you** if you don't keep up.

**Stop Loan Sharks** is a government agency that can investigate, prosecute and even put them in prison. You can report a loan shark or illegal money lender in complete confidence – you don't even have to leave your name.

Call them any time on **0300 555 22 22** or report online at [www.stoploansharks.co.uk](http://www.stoploansharks.co.uk)

Live chat is available on the website 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.



## Plus Dane Housing

Our new Corporate plan  
2024|27

Quality homes,  
great services,  
vibrant communities



# How your help is **shaping** 😊 our future

**A commitment to quality homes, great services and vibrant communities is at the heart of our latest three-year plan.**

**We developed our new 2024-2027 corporate plan with the help of 1600 customers**, and are grateful for how that has given the organisation a clear insight into what matters to you, and what to prioritise while shaping our future.

You told us that transforming your customer experience, investing in our colleagues, and meeting the housing need of our communities as a sustainable organisation needed to be central to the plan.

**Major goals include a £62m investment in existing homes, including works to make them warmer and more cost efficient, and an aim to build 730 new homes across Merseyside and Cheshire over the next three years.**

### **Our chief executive Ian Reed said:**

*"We are excited to launch our new corporate plan and we have already started delivering the improvements customers want to see and that our communities need. A big thank you goes to the hundreds of customers who took part in helping us develop the plan, giving us a valuable insight into the things that matter to you."*

The new corporate plan was developed over the last 12 months with Plus Dane colleagues, Board and other stakeholders, as well as our customers.

At the same time, we have restructured our leadership team and have undergone a period of change in our key services - with a focus on tenant satisfaction measures, complaint handling and repairs delivery.

**You can read the new corporate plan on our website now, in the 'about Plus Dane' section.**

**£62M**  
investment  
in existing  
homes



## tenant satisfaction measures

Last April, the Regulator of Social Housing brought in a new system to see how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

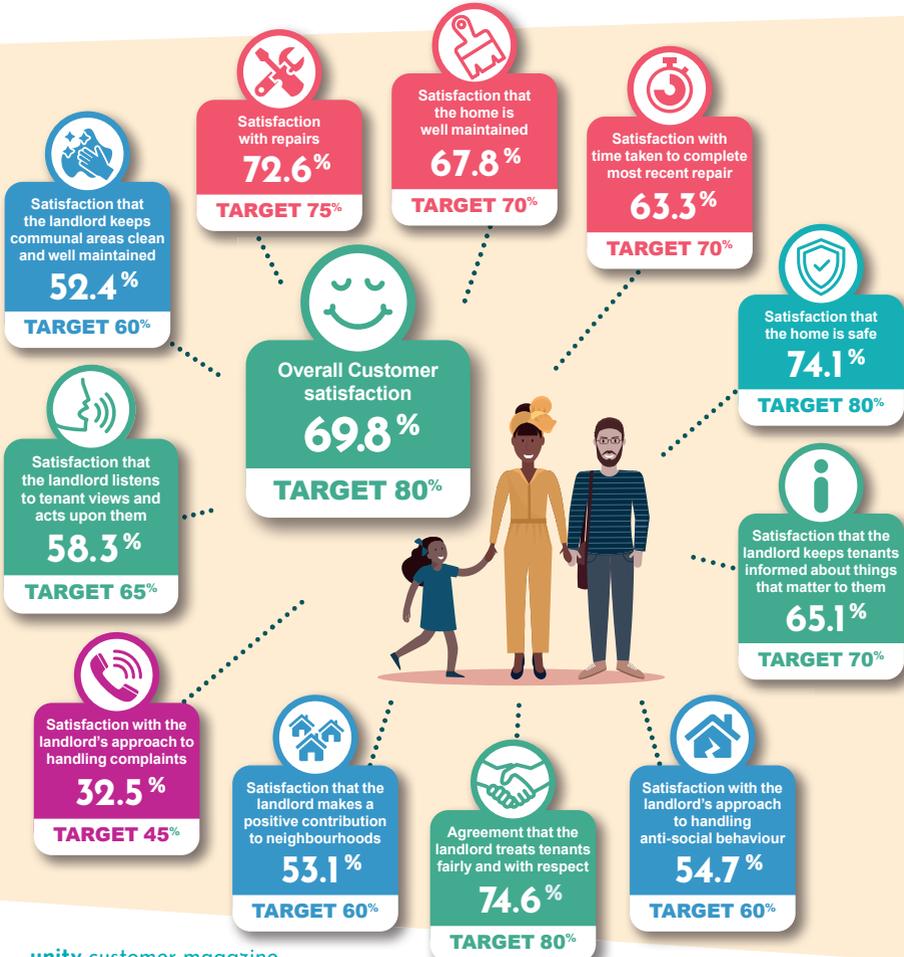
This includes a set of **tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs)** that housing associations like us must report on.

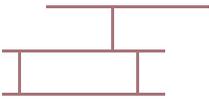
We have **published our TSM results every quarter on our website**, and our most recent

graphic, that you can see below, features our results for these first full 12 months.

As you can see **we still have a lot to do to get to target in most of these measures, but we have already put in place seven taskforces that will help us to improve in these areas, including complaints, damp and mould, restructure, innovation, and a repairs catch-up taskforce.**

For more on TSMs and our year's performance, visit the 'you and your home' section of our website.





## a word from our customer assurance panel

Since the last edition of Unity, I am pleased to introduce myself as the new deputy chair of CAP and Angela Needham has been officially elected as the CAP Chair. The election took place at our face-to-face panel meeting at Atlantic Pavilion in April. The focus of our April meeting was to discuss and gain our thoughts on Plus Dane's business plan, budget and repairs responsibilities.

There are a couple of members who have joined external committees which include;

### A HACT/Shelter research project,

which is looking at the impact of moving into a social tenancy; and the Housing Ombudsman's Residents Panel, which has been set up to help shape the service and share experiences.

Angela has been able to attend the Plus Dane Purpose Committee and Board meetings which

allows her to seek further clarity and hold the board to account for decisions or ask for further information to be shared.

Plus Dane is carrying out an engagement review and CAP will be part of this, to make sure that Plus Dane know "who's behind every door" and all customers feel valued and listened to.

**Rach Johnston**  
Deputy Chair, CAP

Rachel Johnston, Deputy Chair, CAP





## safety checks - let us in



As your landlord, we are committed to keeping your home safe. As part of this we are required by law to carry out regular safety checks – including a gas safety check every year, a full electrical safety inspection every five years, and, where necessary and if you live in a communal building, checks to your front door for fire safety reasons.

When it is time for any of these inspections, we will make an appointment at a time to suit you so we can get the access we need to carry out the work.

**It is really important we can get into your home to do this – it is part of your tenancy agreement that you let us in.**

When it is time to complete electrical safety checks, **Our electrician will need to be able to get to your fuse box, sockets and light switches**, and the job will take around 2-3 hours to complete. During this time your electricity will be off for about one hour.

Our gas safety checks should take about an hour, as **our operative will look at your gas appliances, lines, and fittings.**

If you live in a communal building more than 11 metres high, it is now the law for us to check the front door of your apartment every year.

When it is time for any of these checks, **we will send you a letter with a date and time (morning or afternoon) for you to be there to let us in.** If you can't make it, let us know so we can arrange another appointment that works for you.



In the meantime, if you have any concerns about the gas or electric in your home, get in touch with us. You should never try and do any jobs involving your gas or electricity supply yourself.



There are other times we may need access to your home, including to carry out repairs, and inspections for asbestos, damp and mould. Allowing us in to do regular checks is the best way to be sure that things are safe, and to spot potential problems before it is too late.



## Housing Ombudsman Service

All local authorities and registered social housing providers, including us at Plus Dane, are required to be members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

The Ombudsman works to **investigate complaints** and **resolve disputes** if you feel our process has not resolved your issue.

You can get in touch with them by:

completing the online complaint form on their website at [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

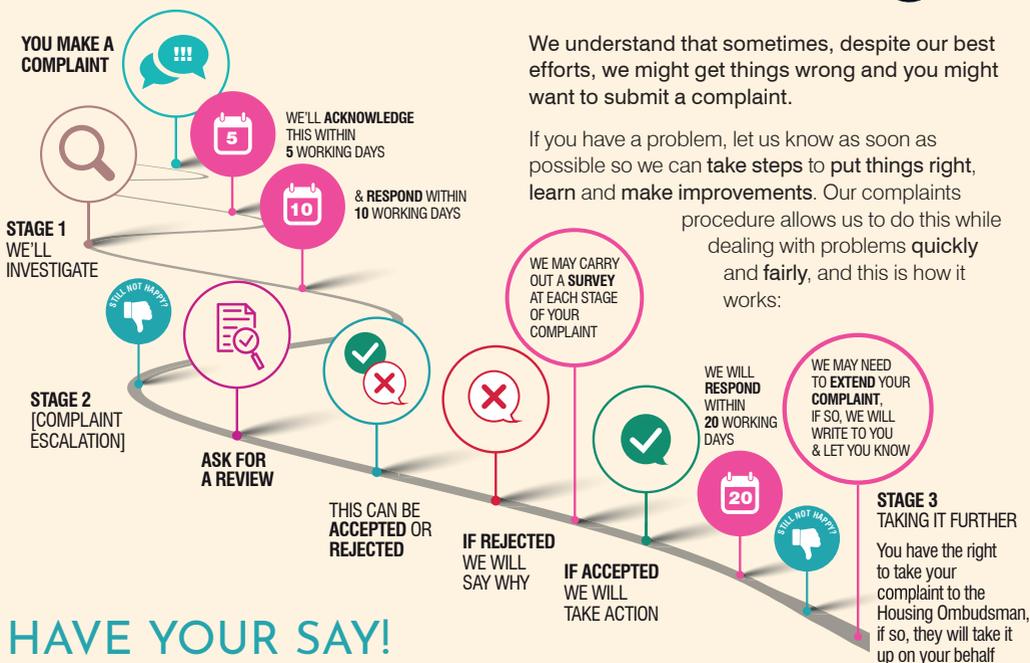
by telephone on **0300 111 3000**

emailing [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

or writing to **Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ.**



## the complaints process



We understand that sometimes, despite our best efforts, we might get things wrong and you might want to submit a complaint.

If you have a problem, let us know as soon as possible so we can take steps to put things right, learn and make improvements. Our complaints procedure allows us to do this while dealing with problems quickly and fairly, and this is how it works:

## HAVE YOUR SAY!

online



[www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk)

portal



live chat



email



customer@plusdane.co.uk

whatsapp



0151 351 4747

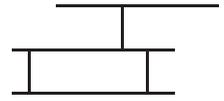
face to face



phone



0800 169 2988



# community **safety** cuckooing: know the risks



**Cuckooing is the term for when someone's house is taken over by others for criminal purposes.**

Those who resort to cuckooing will pretend to make friends with their victims, before putting pressure on them to move in, or to use their home for illegal activities. They may take advantage of the person's trust to take their money and valuables. Victims can find themselves exposed to all kinds of abuse from gangs or individuals, and the anti social behaviour that comes with cuckooing can blight communities.

It is something that can happen anywhere, in any kind of home. If you think this may be going on near you, please tell us so our community safety team can investigate and tackle the problem.

Signs of cuckooing can include:

- a home having lots of visitors at odd times
- not seeing your neighbour for long periods of time, and noticing them being anxious or distracted when you do
- an increase in anti-social behaviour, litter outside, and noise from a property;
- curtains always closed so neighbours cannot see activity inside
- suspicious or unfamiliar vehicles outside an address.

We have recently been working on the **Radway estate in Alsager, taking action including successful evictions** of customers who were involved in knife crime, drug dealing and intimidating the community.

## community day

**We recently held a community day at the Quarry Green Club in Kirkby, Liverpool. Colleagues from our housing, engagement and community teams, and partner organisations, visited customers in their homes and held a drop in event at the club to offer support and advice.**

## everybody needs good neighbours



Our **Good Neighbour Guide** is now available to read on the anti-social behaviour pages of our website.

Through the summer months we spend more time outside and do more socialising in our gardens. This can include things like noisy games and music. Whether you are having a gathering yourself, or concerned about noise of others, **we ask our customers to be tolerant, considerate, and understanding of your neighbours** and their circumstances before making an ASB report to us.



Contact our Community Safety team or visit the Anti Social Behaviour pages on our website for more information on how to report any kind of ASB to us.



## community picnic brings people together

**We joined some of our partner organisations and volunteers at the Bromley Farm big community picnic for a fantastic free event full of food, music and fun!**

The Bromley Farm Hub hosts a range of free activities all year round, from friendship groups to stay and play for parents and children, and is the home of the Bromley Bloomers, the fantastic group behind the Friendship Garden on Hillary Avenue.

**They say: “Together, we can make a difference to Bromley Farm for everyone’s benefit”**

**Visit the Bromley Farm Hub for more information, email [bromleyfarmhub@gmail.com](mailto:bromleyfarmhub@gmail.com) or call 07873 653408**



**For National Volunteer Week we threw the spotlight on some of our customers who are giving their time to make a difference.**



**Peter has volunteered in the communal garden at Dennis Round Court since March,** and along

with a few other residents has already made a tremendous difference, power-washing pathways, walls and patios areas, removing weeds and getting rid of areas which could cause residents to slip in bad weather. He has weeded flower beds, shaped edges, purchased pots and planted areas with shrubs, focusing on areas residents can sit and enjoy a little quiet or some company. Another big job completed was sprucing up the greenhouses to enable other volunteers to use them to grow vegetables and also get the benefits of being outdoors.

**He says:** *“It lifts my mood and gives me a sense of meaning and a reason to get up in the morning...it’s like medicine”.*

**Peter is an amazing volunteer and his enthusiasm for getting on with it and making a difference is just amazing – thank you, Peter!**

**Gina Jacobs has made national news this year** with the moving story of her quest to find the grave of her stillborn son Robert after more than 50 years.

Gina, from Wirral is now a busy and devoted great-great-grandmother. But in 1969, her third child was ‘born sleeping’. She was not allowed to see him – a practice that was sadly normal even into the 1990s. He was not even given a name. Bereaved families were just expected to carry on as if nothing had happened.

Two years ago, she saw a news story that inspired her to find her son. She shared her story on social media and has gone on to help other bereaved mothers find more than 60 babies.

Where Robert lies is now marked with a headstone, and Gina fundraised for a memorial to all babies in unmarked graves at the site. She has since been awarded the Wirral Award, and has lobbied with her MP for the government to formally apologise for the suffering caused to bereaved families like hers.



**Gina says:** *“I want people to know their babies can be found, and they should be found, and the more people that know about it, the better.”*



## We're your homebuilder

**Our HomesHub team has been established across Cheshire and Merseyside for 15 years;** our approach to delivering the very best possible service to customers looking for affordable home ownership is unrivalled across the region.

Visit the 'find a home' section of [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk) for more information, call us on **0800 917 1066**, or email [sales@homeshub.co.uk](mailto:sales@homeshub.co.uk)

  @homeshub



## mutual exchange

**Are you looking for a home that suits you better without the waiting lists? Mutual exchange could be an option for you.**

You can find someone to swap with using the national **HomeSwapper** scheme. Simply set up a profile, browse thousands of homes and start up a conversation with those you're interested in. Hundreds of homes are swapped every month across the UK.



If you find an exchange partner using Home Swapper, or any other means, please contact us to start the application process. **You must not swap homes until permission has been given; or make or receive any payment or gift in consideration of an exchange.** This will be a breach of your tenancy agreement and you could lose your home.