



unity

plusdane.co.uk

Customer Magazine

Plus Dane Housing Issue 39 | Summer 2021



inside:

Welcoming
customers
into their
NEW HOMES

Our first
residents
to ever get
ENGAGED

Welcome to this summer edition of **Unity** magazine

We've come a long way from how things were last summer, spent in lockdown – but we are still committed to keeping you safe and supporting you should you need any extra help or advice. From money matters or finding a new home, to how you can make a difference to the way we do things, you'll find it all in these pages.

Email us at: communications@plusdane.co.uk

Inside this edition



4 MONEY MATTERS

- Our promise to help
- Support after lockdown



5 TOP TIPS FOR YOU & YOUR HOME

- Safety checks are vital



6 IMPROVING OUR SERVICES FOR YOU

- We want your feedback
- Scrutiny panel look at the complaints process
- Seeing STARS



10 MORE THAN JUST A LANDLORD

- On Target with our partners



11 NEW HOMES FOR YOU

- Welcoming customers into new homes
- Changes to Property Pool Plus

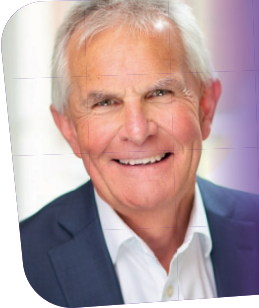


12 OUT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Love me do



We continue to follow the latest government advice to keep you safe during COVID-19, and remain committed to keeping you safe even as lockdown precautions may ease. Don't forget, check out our website www.plusdane.co.uk for the latest updates and any changes to our services.



Working together to keep our neighbourhoods safe

As Chair of the Board at Plus Dane, I will be writing in each edition of *Unity* to give you some insight into the big challenges facing housing associations and our communities more widely and how Plus Dane and the Board are working to address these, often in close partnership with you as tenants and customers.

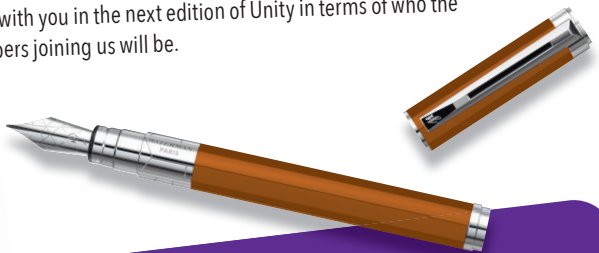
Plus Dane housing is not a business, in fact we are a charity set up to provide decent housing to folk, some of whom might not be able to get it by other means. So we don't have shareholders, we have a board of trustees accountable under the law for making sure the organisation is financially strong and meets all the standards required of us.

You might have seen on our website and social media channels in recent weeks that we are currently looking for a new board member. Being a trustee carries certain legal responsibilities as of course, Plus Dane deals with important issues. We own and manage more than 13,000 houses, employ nearly 600 people and must make best use of our budget. We are supported in doing this by the skills and expertise of the senior team of Plus Dane as well as our own collective experience and knowledge. So in looking for a new board member, skills and experience in managing an organisation and getting the best for customers and colleagues are important. We feel experience of living in social housing is also really important, as it can provide valuable insight in terms of some of the challenges and priorities tenants may have – so we included this in our advertising of the post.

In December, we appointed Ian Reed as our new chief executive and as part of our continuous drive for efficiency, Ian is making some changes in his executive team, reducing it from three members to two. We are currently advertising for a deputy chief executive and a chief operating officer. We are keen to hear from anyone who has the right skills and experience for these roles – you can view them on our website.

I will hopefully be able to share more with you in the next edition of *Unity* in terms of who the new Board and executive team members joining us will be.

Sir Peter Fahy, Chairman,
Plus Dane Housing



Sir Peter Fahy was a police officer for 34 years, including five years as Chief Constable of Cheshire Constabulary and seven as Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police.



Money Matters

Our PROMISE to help

One of the big issues for a lot of people during the pandemic has been the worry of losing their home, and the government's eviction ban came in early on in lockdown to help with this.

This ban recently came to an end, but the National Housing Federation has pledged that no-one will be evicted from a housing association home as a result of financial hardship, as long as they are working with us to get their payments back on track.

We are a member of the NHF, which represents all housing associations in England and helps them to deliver their social purpose.

So as part of this pledge, we have made a commitment to keep you secure in your home, help you get the support that you need, and to act quickly and compassionately where people are struggling.

Support AFTER LOCKDOWN

If you are worried this might affect you, please get in touch with our friendly Welfare Team

As we continue to ease out of lockdown, some of other things put in place to help people through the pandemic will also coming to an end.

The furlough scheme – put in place to help organisations keep paying staff even if there wasn't work for them – and the £20 'uplift' to help those on Universal Credit are both likely to finish this autumn. Again, if you are worried this might affect you, please get in touch with our friendly Welfare Team for support and advice.

If you have a problem, our Welfare Team is able to help and can work with you to get you the benefits you're entitled to, or help you if you have worries about falling into arrears. Contact *welfare.team@plusdane.co.uk* and we'll get right back to you.



WATCH OUT for loan sharks online



Loan sharks are turning to social media and dating sites to hook people into a dangerous cycle of debt.

They may appear friendly at first but their behaviour can quickly change, with some resorting to intimidation, threats and blackmail if payments are not made – often demanding huge rates of interest on top of the loan.

Students are particularly at risk, as under 25s are more likely to meet a loan shark on social media than any other age group.

The England Illegal Money Lending Team also warns of criminals setting up online dating profiles and taking advantage of people who go on to tell

them about their money problems. Other victims have reported being blackmailed over personal photographs or their LGBTQ+ status.

If you think you could be the victim of a loan shark you can contact the Stop Loan Sharks 24-hour confidential helpline on 0300 555 2222, email reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk, or report online at the Stop Loan Sharks website, where live chat is available between 9am and 5pm every weekday.

If you're struggling with your finances, as well as speaking with our Welfare Team you can get free, confidential debt advice from organisations such as the Money Advice Service, StepChange Debt Charity and Citizens Advice.



SAFETY CHECKS ARE VITAL



Allowing us into your home to do these checks is so important, and is a part of your tenancy agreement.

LET US IN

In the UK, hundreds of deadly fires are started by faulty electrics every year; faulty gas appliances can lead to leaks or even explosions, which can also be fatal.

As your landlord, we are legally responsible for the safety of your gas and electrics, and carry out regular checks to make sure everything is working as it should be.

When your electrical inspection or gas service is due, we will get in touch by letter to let you know a date and time for you to be there to let us in. If you can't make it, let us know so we can come another time.

When we come to carry out this essential work we are still doing everything we can to keep you and our colleagues safe, including social distancing, wearing face masks, and using hand sanitiser before we enter and after we leave your home. If you have any worries about this, let us know.

In the meantime if you have any concerns about the electric installation or gas appliances in your home at any time, get in touch with us straight away.



We hope there's plenty of opportunity for you to make the most of the summer this year – *and for many people, that means getting together over a barbecue!*

Keep safe and avoid fire with the following tips...

- **MAKE SURE** your barbecue is in good working order
- **MAKE SURE** the barbecue is on a flat site, well away from a shed, trees or shrubs
- **ALWAYS** keep children, garden games and pets well away from the cooking area
- **NEVER** leave the barbecue unattended
- **ALWAYS** keep a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies
- **MAKE SURE** the barbecue is cool before attempting to move it.
- **DO NOT** use barbecues on balconies – fire can easily spread to other flats.

You can visit www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/barbecue/ for more fire safety advice.



Improving Our Services For You

We want
YOUR
feedback

As part of our commitment to improving services, we want to hear your views and improve your experience when contacting us.

We recently launched a new customer satisfaction survey to find out how we are doing and if you're happy with the service you receive when you call our **Customer Access Team**. If you contact us via telephone or email, you may receive a text afterwards, asking you to rate the service you received and add comments if you wish.

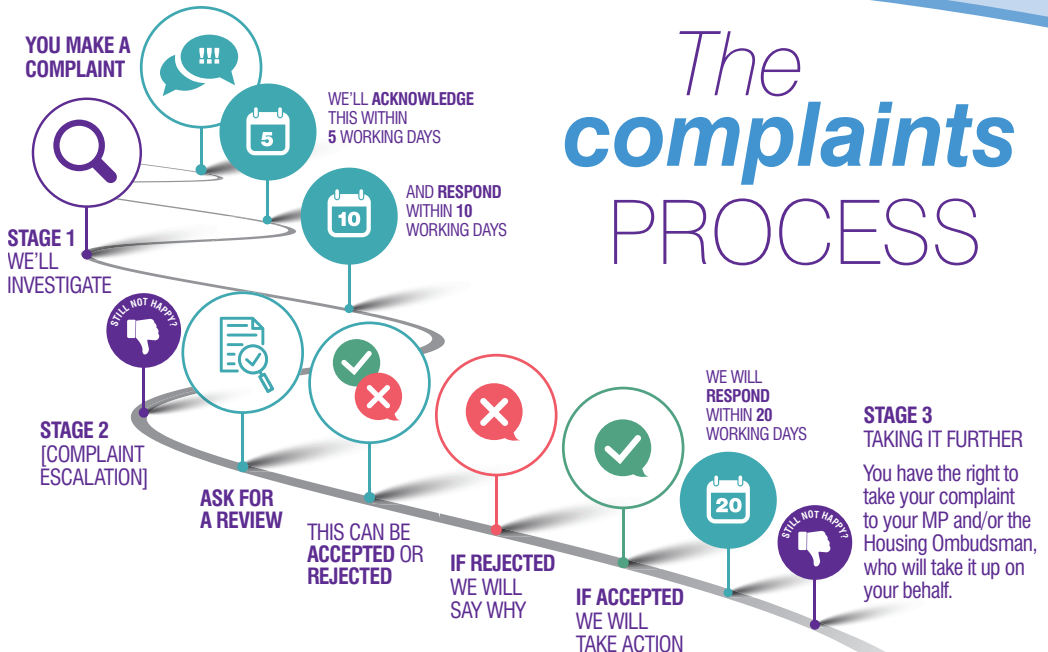
This has replaced the automated telephone survey we used to use to gather feedback, as this new service offers you the opportunity to provide more information.

We have been getting more than 100 responses a week, which is great and helps us to continue to understand what you want from us. We also want to contact any customers that have stated they are dissatisfied, to see how we can improve their experience and resolve any issues.

Thank you to everyone who has responded, your feedback makes a difference!

If you contact us via telephone or email, you may receive a text afterwards, asking you to rate the service you received and add any comments if you wish.

The complaints PROCESS



Scrutiny panel look at the complaints process

**Our scrutiny panel
has just completed its
fifth review, this time
on the effectiveness
of our complaints
process.**

The nine panel members, all Plus Dane customers, worked alongside us over six months to produce a report with 26 recommendations.

The report has now been presented to our Board, along with an action plan of how we are going to act on the panel's recommendations, and a video summarising their findings - which can all be found on the scrutiny panel page on our website.

The step-by-step guide to the complaints process you see on page 7 is a result of the panel's report.



“ We need to examine the culture around complaints, so that colleagues see them as an opportunity to learn and improve. **”**

WHAT THE PANEL SAID

- We need to examine the culture around complaints, so that colleagues see them as an opportunity to learn and improve.
- There was a difference between what the complaints policy says, and the customer experience of it.
- Training is key to delivering a successful complaints process, and getting the customer-centred culture right.
- We should set up a new customer complaints panel to work alongside customers - to look at what improvements are needed, what works well, and to see how changes improve the complaints service for customers.
- We need to make sure we do what we say we will to resolve complaints and keep customers informed throughout the process.

If you would like to find out more about the scrutiny panel, contact irene.crone@plusdane.co.uk

Seeing **STARs**

We recently asked all our customers to take part in a STAR survey and *4000 of you replied!*

STAR is the...

SURVEY of
TENANTS
AND
RESIDENTS

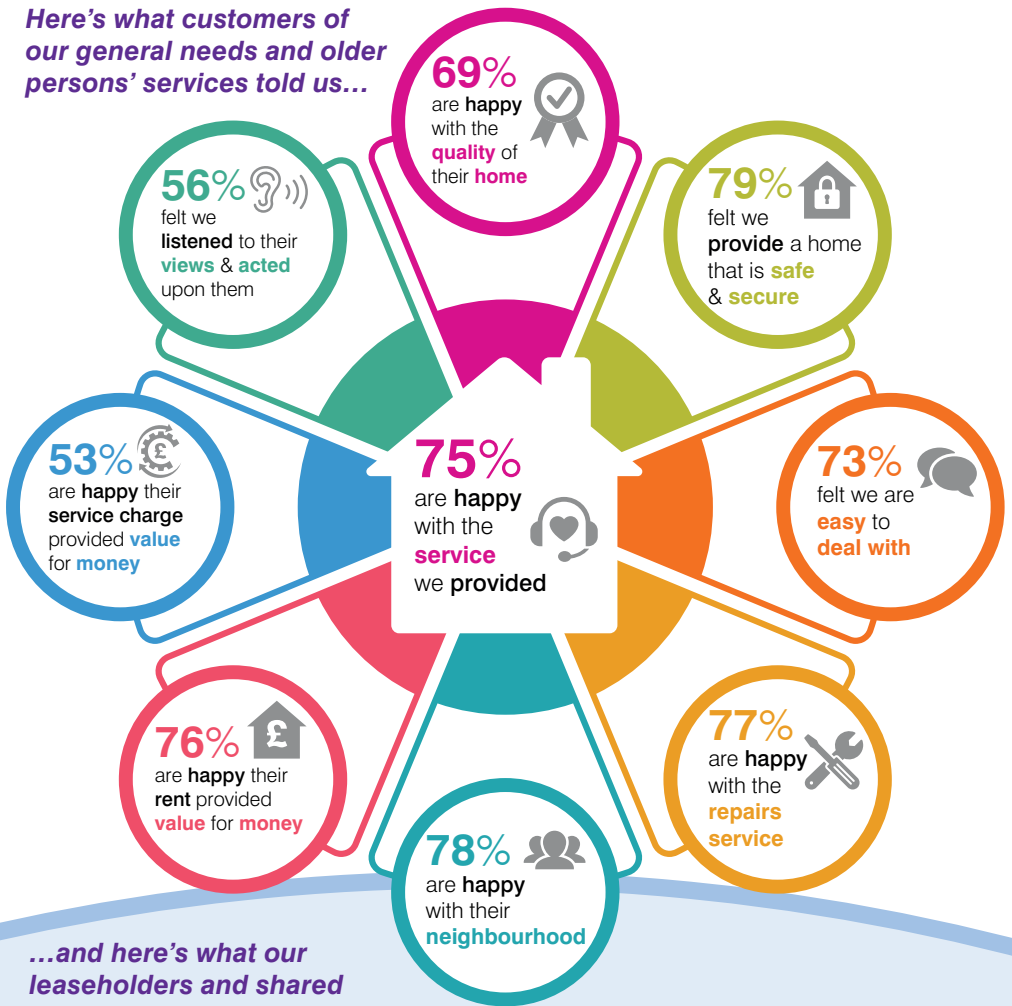
A customer satisfaction survey specially created for social housing providers.

This is fantastic

It gave us a real insight into what you think of our services, and highlighted areas where you feel we could improve what we do.

We'll be analysing what you told us through the survey to identify any trends and see if there are areas where we could **do things differently.**

Here's what customers of our general needs and older persons' services told us...



...and here's what our leaseholders and shared owners said...





More Than Just A Landlord



On *Target* with our partners

Plus Dane is an organisation with a social purpose, and it is important to us that our contractors and partner organisations are committed to providing social value to our customers and communities.

Liverpool's Frank Rogers Building Contractors have recently been carrying out upgrades of some of our customers' windows and doors, but have also demonstrated their complete commitment to social value.

The family-run company donated £3,000 to our Winter Appeal last year, in addition to donating 10 Samsung tablets to enable some of our customers to access online services and connect with family and friends during lockdown.

They have also created several apprenticeship roles within their organisation to help Plus Dane customers and other members of the community who are looking to develop their skills, and get valuable training and employment.

In addition to all of this, Frank Rogers worked with their partners, Walker Engineering, to install a new access ramp at Target Football, a Community Interest Company in Toxteth. Target Football

provides the local community with a wide range of football activities and outreach support, while also providing quality sporting opportunities for young people. They have also delivered meals and supplies to people isolating throughout the pandemic, and are aiming to open a community hub and café space in future.

Plus Dane's strategic partnership manager **Sian Martin-Baez** said: *"It has been brilliant to be work with partners who share our commitment to delivering social value for local communities. We'd like to thank Frank Rogers and their team for their contribution towards Target Football and their fantastic new facilities, which is a real asset right in the heart of one of our communities."*



The work we do in the community has been recognised in **Cheshire** with a special award

The **Social Value award** – created by Cheshire East Council, Social Value Business and Merseyside Health Care Partnership – aims to help organisations achieve their social value goals, set a standard and highlight the places doing things well.

The award lasts for five years, and recognises a lot of the work of our engagement and partnerships team, including our food poverty support, wellbeing support for older people, community centre refurbishments and more.



Welcoming customers into **NEW** homes

Part of a **£17m project** to transform **127 existing terraced properties** into **99 affordable homes.**

We've been busy welcoming customers into new homes across Merseyside and Cheshire, and we're very proud of the high quality developments that we are bringing to the heart of our communities.

Customers old and new came back to the revitalised Welsh Streets of Toxteth in Liverpool, when the second phase of our major regeneration project completed at the start of the summer. Some 44 families have moved in in this latest stage.

It's all part of a major £17m project to transform the 127 existing terraced properties into 99 modern, contemporary affordable homes.

A small number of homes have been expanded by converting two properties into one – *one of these has been specially adapted to meet the needs of a family with a disabled son.*

The ambitious project is being delivered with the help of a range of partners including **Liverpool City Council, Homes England, Penny Lane Builders** and the **Halsall Lloyd Partnership.**

The third and final phase of the Welsh Streets regeneration is on schedule to complete in March 2022.

In Runcorn, we have been delighted to be able to finally transform a derelict site in Tanhouse into 16 brand new homes. In June, just before the first residents moved in, we celebrated by renaming the area **Cole Court** – *after the late councillor Arthur Cole, who served the community for more than 40*



years. His wife Teddie came along for a tour of the area, and said "he would never in a million years imagine he would have part of an estate named after him, but I think he would really like it."

Plus Dane appointed **John McCall Architects** and **Engie** to deliver the design and construction of Cole Court. **Homes England** provided grant funding through its Affordable Homes Programme.

And in Congleton, customers have been collecting their keys to make the move to **Larch Place**, part of a brand new development.





Property Pool Plus is the website for anyone looking for affordable housing to rent – including Plus Dane homes – in the areas of the Liverpool City Region, including Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral, Runcorn or Widnes.

Housing associations list their properties there each week, with new homes advertised every Tuesday. New homes are now added on Wednesdays and Thursdays too – so keep looking throughout the week and you could find the place that is right for you sooner than you think!

The way you login to Property Pool Plus has also changed recently, and you will now need a password and memorable date to access your account.

Visit www.propertypoolplus.org.uk for more information.



Out in Your Community

LOVE ME DO

Love is in the air at one of our sheltered schemes, where they are celebrating the first couple of residents to ever get engaged.

Maureen & Billy, who live in Colwell Court in Liverpool, had been good friends for years before making things official. Maureen spent most of her adult life in Canada, before moving back to her home town when her late husband Tom's health began to fail.

Billy's companionship and the support of their circle of friends at Colwell Court helped her through a very tough time. Now the happy couple hope to start planning their wedding for next year.

Scheme manager **Joan Santangeli** said: "We're a very sociable bunch at Colwell Court and we can't wait to celebrate with a big party."



Get in touch

 www.plusdane.co.uk

 facebook.com/plusdane

 [@plusdane](https://twitter.com/plusdane)

Download our FREE App by searching Plus Dane in the App Store or Google Play.



If you do not wish to continue receiving Unity magazine please let us know by emailing: communications@plusdane.co.uk or calling **0151 728 2974**