

plusdane.co.uk

unity

customer magazine

Plus Dane Housing

Issue 53 | Spring 2026



inside:

f  in

Meet our
Welfare
Team

Customer
forums
Hearing
your views

Anti-social
behaviour
Tackling
the cause

Welcome to the Spring edition of Unity

In this edition you can read about the great work our Welfare team is doing to support customers and how they may be able to help you, and our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and its root causes.

Last month we welcomed feedback on our Unity Magazine from our customer communications group. The group has given us some really useful feedback on what they value most about the magazine and areas for improvement.

One of the requests from the group is to read more about what our customers are getting up to, so we would love to hear from you if you have an interesting hobby, are doing great things in your community or have any particular interests that other readers may enjoy reading about. If you'd like to feature in one of our future editions of Unity, please get in touch using the email

communications@plusdane.co.uk



Max Steinberg
Chair, Plus Dane Housing

inside,



5 Meet our welfare team

- The friendly faces here to help with benefits and money advice



7 Anti-social behaviour

- How we work with others to get to the root cause of ASB



9 Our new customer groups

- How your involvement is shaping our services





fabulous 50th year fund!

We set up our Golden Community Impact Fund last April to celebrate our 50th year, and over the last 12 months it has been brilliant to see how you have made the most of it.

We offered 50 grants of up to £1000 to customers, or anyone living and working in our neighbourhoods, with great ideas to make their area better.

The application process was kept simple so as many people as possible had a chance to apply.

And we were blown away by the response!

From youth clubs to older people's hubs, community gardens to book clubs, men's mental health activities to sports, festive events, baby care and much more, every penny went to a wide range of good causes across Merseyside and Cheshire.

We will have a full round up of stories from the Golden Community Impact Fund in the next edition of Unity. Thank you to everyone who applied and who marked our 50th year with us.

From the lifelong friends who met in care leaver's accommodation and the colleagues who have gone above and beyond in their roles, to the importance of our thriving community hubs and supported schemes, you can read more about how we celebrated our big anniversary and the stories we have shared on our website.



The Plus Dane Portal

Are you using the Plus Dane Customer Portal?

Plus Dane Housing

Our digital portal makes it easier than ever to pay your rent and keep an eye on your rent statements whenever you need to.

You can also do things like report a repair or change your personal details.



Registering is really easy, you just need your tenancy reference number and a unique activation code which you can get by calling our customer team on 0800 169 2988 - then go to our website to sign up.

After that you will be able to access your account anytime from the website, and can also download a link to your mobile's home screen to take you straight there from your phone.

Thousands of Plus Dane customers are already using the portal. Why not try it out?



UC Universal Credit rollout completes



Department for Work & Pensions

Universal Credit roll out completes

The roll out of Universal Credit will be completed this month (March 2026), which means the final payments of 'legacy benefits' like Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits, and Housing Benefit for working-age people. While most people will now have moved over to Universal Credit, a small number may still be in the process of migrating. If you haven't done this, your payments will stop.

If you need help, contact our Welfare team.



The end of the two-child benefit cap



From April, the government will remove the two-child limit on Universal Credit, so that families can receive the child element of Universal Credit for all children regardless of family size.

This should be done automatically, but check your Universal Credit journal to make sure your details are correct.

Income increases



Universal Credit, state pension, and the minimum wage will all increase from April, which is the start of the new financial year.

The Universal Credit **standard allowance for a single person aged 25 and over** will go up to **£424.90 a month** (up from £400.14). **Couples aged 25 and over** will receive **£666.90 a month** (up from £628.10).

The full 'new' **State Pension** (for those who reached State Pension age after April 2016) is rising to **£241.30 per week**, while the 'basic' State Pension will increase to **£184.90 per week**.

The **National Living Wage**, the minimum wage rate for all workers aged 21 and over, will rise to **£12.71 per hour**. The minimum wage for 18-20 year olds will increase to **£10.85**, and for 16-17 year olds to **£8**.



meet the Welfare team



Plus Dane's Welfare team is here to make it easier for you to understand and access financial help that could be available to you. We know benefits can feel complicated, so we offer clear advice and practical support to help you get what you're entitled to.



How we help:

- **Benefit checks and applications** - We help you find out if there are benefits you may be able to claim, and support you with applications.
- **Support with existing claims** - If you're already receiving benefits and something changes or goes wrong, we can help you sort it out.
- **Working with partners** - We can link you with other helpful services, including our Engagement & Partnership team, Pocket Power, employment support and wellbeing services.

We're here for anyone facing financial difficulties, making sure you get the right support at the right time.

The Welfare team has its own direct phone number
0151 459 6255
or you can fill in a referral form on our website.



Plus Dane **voices** Welfare Service Satisfaction Survey



70 customers who received support shared their experience to help us understand what's working well and where we can improve.

What you told us about our service

- **Our people matter** - you described our welfare colleagues as Caring, Efficient, Understanding
- **94%** of you rated colleagues knowledge as good or very good
- The biggest difference we made was improving your **general wellbeing** and providing helpful benefit advice
- **90%** of you said you were satisfied or very satisfied with the support you received
- **66%** of you felt no changes were needed to improve the service for others

You said

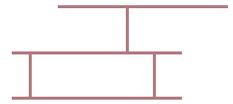
- Some customers felt that **face-to-face contact** could have made a difference to their experience.
- Support expectations weren't always clear from the very first contact.
- There's more we could do to raise awareness and make support easier to access.

We will

- ✓ By **October 2026** we will:
 - Offer appointments in your preferred way e.g. Video call, Telephone, Face-to-face (at home or in an office)
 - Promote our **direct Welfare number: 0151 459 6255**
 - Highlight our **self referral option** on the customer portal
- ✓ Review and update our **Customer Access Team knowledge base** to ensure you receive **clear, accurate, and consistent information** from the start.
- ✓ Plan a **full year of engagement activities**, including:
 - Targeted campaigns for pension age and working age customers
 - Drop in sessions with older customers to review benefit entitlement
 - Regular text messages promoting available support

One new way the Welfare team is reaching out to customers is with face-to-face drop-in sessions across our communities. The first of these are monthly sessions at the FireFit Hub on Upper Warwick Street, Toxteth, with the next events on April 23, May 5 and June 18, all from 1pm to 3pm. Look out for more to come!





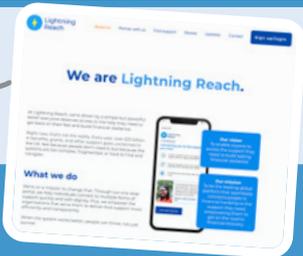
We've been **working with** **Lightning Reach** for over a year now – **have you tried it yet?**

Lightning Reach is a free and secure online platform that makes it easier for people to find and apply for the help they're eligible for, all in one place. This can include benefits, help with bills and more.

It helped **Plus Dane customers secure more than £20,000 in financial gains in 2025**, as well as energy and debt advisory support, and **identifying almost £30,000 in unclaimed benefits.**

You can **sign up for a Lightning Reach profile** in around 12 minutes, and then are quickly able to **see the help you are able to apply for**, which could include help with your **rent, council tax and household bills**, support for **energy costs and home improvements**, and **funding for food, clothing and daily essentials.**

Lightning Reach is one element of a wide range of support we can offer customers struggling with money worries and wellbeing issues.



For more information and to sign up to Lightning Reach, there is a special referral link for Plus Dane customers or contact our Engagement & Partnerships team.



Memory loss help and support

The Alzheimer's Society describes dementia as a group of symptoms caused by different diseases that damage the brain. The symptoms get worse over time and include memory loss, confusion and changes in behaviour.

People with dementia can still live independent lives - finding ways to keep active, and staying involved and connected with others are all really important, and there is lots of support and advice out there.

The Alzheimer's Society website is full of guidance on living with dementia and is really good for finding local groups, activities and support services. Their Dementia Support Line on 0333 150 3456 is available every day (times vary) for helpful, friendly advice.

Dementia UK runs the Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline, where you can talk to a trained dementia nurse for tailored advice. You can reach them **on 0800 888 6678 or by emailing helpline@dementiauk.org.**

Age UK provides advice on everything from benefits to choosing a care home, as well as activities and services in your local area. Their **Age UK Advice Line is free to call on 0800 055 6112.**

For those **looking after someone living with dementia**, the **Carers Trust** and **Carers UK** are there for you too.



partnership working to tackle anti-social behaviour

If left untackled, anti-social behaviour (ASB) can have a devastating impact on communities and individuals. We know it is a serious issue for customers, and we are keen to protect communities from perpetrators who can make the lives of those they target a misery.

Anti-social behaviour is defined as “acting in a manner that causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household”.

When you report ASB to us, we may ask you to also report it to others - like the police when a crime has been committed, or to your council if the alleged perpetrator isn't a Plus Dane customer. We may also ask you if we can share your report with other agencies who could help.

This partnership approach is essential, as no single agency can tackle ASB alone. Partnership working means bringing together councils, police, charities, and victim support services, as everyone has a role and should be accountable for tackling ASB.

Tackling The Root Causes of ASB

As well as protecting victims, we have a responsibility to make sure support is offered to those being accused of anti-social behaviour too, to look into any reasons for their actions.

Research has identified seven risk factors that are root causes of ASB, which include poverty, mental health issues, substance misuse, trauma, unstable home environments, poor engagement with education, and peer pressure.

While it's not our role as a landlord to directly address all root causes, we can alert specialists who can work with our customers and other family members to address behaviour that causes ASB.

We do have our own teams including our in-house Floating Support team and our Welfare teams who look at benefit maximisation and debt advice too.



It takes co-ordinated, multi-agency intervention



Collaboration with agencies like the police, probation, and social services allows us to share information and agree on joint action while considering how we can best manage risks to victims.

If you are affected by ASB, you do not have to suffer in silence and there is help and support available. The charity ASB Help is a great source of information, and they recommend talking to **Victim Support on 0808 1689 111** if you are not online.

You can report ASB to us via our website or calling **0800 169 2988**





safety checks in your home

Why it's important to let us in

As your landlord, we're committed to keeping your home safe. By law, we must carry out regular safety checks - including an annual gas safety check, a full electrical inspection every five years, and, where required, annual checks of your front door if you live in a communal building.

When any of these inspections are due, we'll arrange an appointment at a time that suits you so we can access your home. It's important that we can get in to complete these checks, as allowing access is part of your tenancy agreement.

For electrical safety checks, our electrician will need access to your fuse box, sockets, and light switches. This inspection takes around 2-3 hours, and your electricity will be off for about an hour.

Gas safety checks usually take around an hour and involve checking your gas appliances, pipes, and fittings.

If you live in a communal building over 11 metres high, we are now legally required to check your apartment's front door every year.

When it's time for any of these checks, we'll send you a letter with a date and a morning or afternoon appointment slot. If you can't make it, please let us know so we can arrange a more convenient time.

There may also be times when we need access to carry out repairs or inspections for issues such as asbestos, damp, or mould. Allowing us in for regular checks is the best way to make sure your home stays safe and to identify potential problems before they become more serious.



In the meantime, if you have any concerns about the gas or electrics in your home, please get in touch. You should never attempt to carry out any work involving your gas or electricity supply yourself.



Customer Assurance Panel (CAP) update

At our away day in February we welcomed three new members who we are looking forward to working with to help us work with Plus Dane to improve services and give assurance to Board. We had quite a lot of interest from customers wanting to join CAP and now feel, that with ten members, we have a good balance from across the areas Plus Dane operates.

The **focus of the away day** was looking at how customers can be involved with procurement and we agreed that it would be best to develop the approach slowly to get it right. We also looked at how we work as a team and how we can build on our skills and strengths going forward.

At our CAP meeting in January we looked at our Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct as well as Plus Dane's performance with a focus on repairs. **For more information about CAP please take a look at the Plus Dane webpage.**

Rachael Johnston Chair



Listening to your voice

As part of our **Customer Voice Framework**, we have developed some new forums and groups to give customers the chance to join in open discussions about subjects that are important to you.

Our **Leaseholder Forum** is now up and running, and will meet twice a year. It recently had its first meeting, and talked about how Plus Dane communicates with leaseholders and changes in the law that may affect customers. The group will meet again in May.

We are also setting up a **Service Charge Forum**, which will be holding its first meeting in the next couple of months.

The **Customer Communications Group** was set up nearly 12 months ago, and members have

already reviewed our residents engagement strategy for building safety, the contents of Unity magazine, and the annual report, as well as discussing the best ways to share information about Awaab's Law. They have made some fantastic suggestions on how we can improve our communication with you - including on the pages of this magazine - and we are looking forward to incorporating them into our work.

The **Customer Sustainability Group** also meets regularly and helps Plus Dane understand what matters most to customers around sustainability and environmental issues.

For more information about any of the groups above please contact Irene Crone - irene.crone@plusdane.co.uk or have a look on our website.





complaints



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



by telephone on **0300 111 3000**



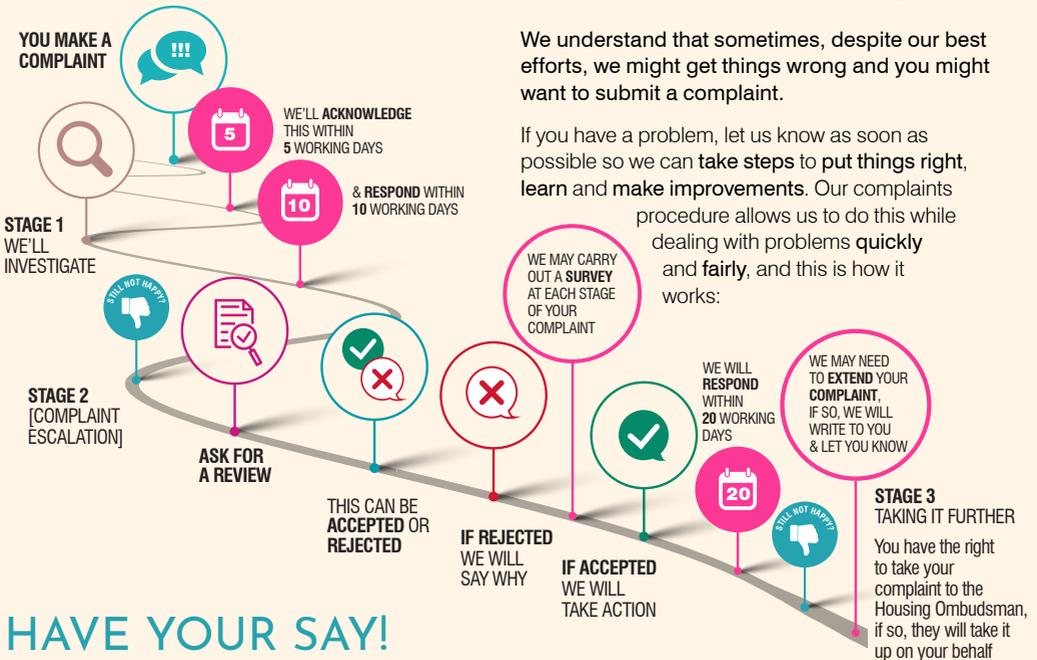
emailing info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk



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



the complaints process



HAVE YOUR SAY!

online



www.plusdane.co.uk

portal



live chat



email



customer
@plusdane.co.uk

whatsapp



0151 351 4747

face to face



phone



0800 169 2988



Did you know?

We work with a handful of employment support partners who can help our customers unlock their job potential. You can read more about it on our web page helping you into work. It really works and can make a huge difference. Here is an uplifting story of one of our work placement customers who has successfully secured a job through this support...



Dinah's journey back into work

After a period of unemployment, **Dinah attended a work hub session at Springboard**, who we work with in the Cheshire East area, to talk about her work experience so far and the challenges she faced in returning to work.

This helped her realise her key strengths: conscientiousness, compassion, a strong work ethic and a passion for supporting and helping others.

From there, **Springboard was able to help Dinah get the funding** to complete a four day introductory course on working in the care sector. She also strengthened her CV with new qualifications in infection control, safeguarding, and skills for employment and personal development.

Springboard encouraged Dinah to take part in Plus Dane's work experience programme at Heath View in Congleton. John, our Older Persons' Team Leader, gave positive feedback: *"Dinah was great. She made a strong contribution and had a good rapport with the residents."*



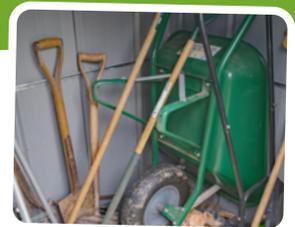
With renewed confidence and practical experience, Dinah applied for a housekeeping role in a care home Congleton. She listed Emma from Springboard and John from Plus Dane as referees, both of whom recommended her for the role.

Following the completion of mandatory DBS checks, Dinah was offered the position. She began her new role at the start of the year - a significant and positive step back into employment!

The end of our personal gardening service

We made the difficult decision to end our personal gardening service at the end of March. We know this will be disappointing news if you use the service or have been on the waiting list. Despite our best efforts over the past few years, we have not been able to reduce that waiting list or provide the service fairly to all customers. It has also required ongoing subsidy, and the rising cost of delivery means it is no longer sustainable.

We have written to all affected customers with help on how to find alternative local gardening services.



If you have not received your letter or need further support, please get in touch with our customer access team on 0800 169 2988, who will be happy to help.



H HomesHub

by Plus Dane

A new collection of modern homes at Foundry Lane, Widnes

HomesHub by Plus Dane is excited to bring **30 brand new homes to Widnes**, available through **Shared Ownership at the Foundry Lane development**.

Offering a selection of well-designed 2- and 3-bedroom houses, these homes are ideal for modern living, with bright interiors, contemporary kitchens, stylish bathrooms and practical layouts designed to work for everyday life. Each home also benefits from a private garden, parking and energy-efficient features to help keep running costs lower.

With Shared Ownership shares available from 10% up to 75%, this development offers an affordable way to buy a brand new home. Whether you're buying for the first time, looking for more space or ready for your next move, **Foundry Lane could be the perfect place to start your home ownership journey**.

Register interest now on our website.

  @homeshub

