

YOUR NEWS

APRIL 2021



Customer Connect

It's April already - and finally Spring, and after a tough year for us all, we'd like to start looking forward.

To do that, we're starting by sharing our brand-new way of connecting with you, our customers; Customer Connect.

What is Customer Connect?

Customer Connect is the umbrella term under which our promises, service offers, and engagement channels will sit. Our vision is to provide an easy and straight-forward process for you.

YOUR SERVICES

Ensuring we deliver our services in the right way and tailored to your needs

YOUR FEEDBACK

How we will learn from your experience and in particular when things go wrong

YOUR VOICE

How we will engage with you and put you at the heart of our business, allowing you to shape our services.

Continued on **page 6**

Get in touch



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0345 345 0272

WE'RE KEEPING OUR PROMISE

Last year, as part of our multi-million-pound re-investment plan, we shared that we would fit **1,130 new kitchens and bathrooms before the end of March** – and we are pleased to say we have achieved this and then some!

At the time of writing, **we have now fitted 1,598** and can only thank our teams who have worked so hard throughout the last eight months.

Lee North-Smith,
Your Housing Group's
Director of Property and
Building Safety, said,

“ The pandemic delayed the start by several months, so there was some concern as to when we could really get going on this. However, it is so rewarding to see the level of commitment the teams have shown in order to upgrade our residents' homes as promised. ”

WE ARE SPENDING
£219 MILLION POUNDS
ON UPGRADING THOUSANDS
OF HOMES OVER FIVE YEARS;
WHICH INCLUDES NEW
KITCHENS, BATHROOMS,
ROOFS, EXTERNAL DOORS
AND WINDOWS.

THE FIRST £25 MILLION WAS INVESTED
LAST YEAR, WITH A FURTHER £60 MILLION
COMMITTED FOR THIS NEXT YEAR
(UNTIL MARCH 2022).

Mr and Mrs Wilson were thrilled with their brand-new kitchen, which was also the **1000th kitchen we had upgraded since just last August!**

The couple have lived in Birchwood, Warrington, for over 20 years.



GARDENING AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Our Grounds Maintenance service covers grass-cutting, verges, shrubs, and hedges, as well as almost 30,000 trees, litter-picking and leaf blowing.

We also survey all our trees to ensure each tree is healthy and assess whether any work is required. At this time of year, we like to start cutting grass again but remember we don't collect grass cuttings, we use mulching mowers which are great for the lawns as the grass 'mulch' feeds them. The clippings, when left in place, will provide a ready source of fertiliser, helping the soil retain water. In spring, you may notice the grass clippings more as the grass grows the fastest and we have to cut quite a bit off, but in summer it shouldn't be noticeable at all.

Task	WINTER			SPRING/SUMMER								WINTER	
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	
Grass Cutting (March - Oct)			1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1			
Leaf Clearance	1	1	1										
Grass Edging	1											1	1
Litter Clearance	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	
Weeding Planting Areas	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	
Herbicide Application				1	1	1	1	1					
Hedge Maintenance													
Shrub Pruning						1				1			
Rose Pruning							1			1			
Birchwood Hedge Cutting			1										



How many times we do each task per month

NESTING SEASON

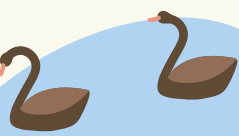
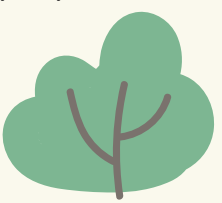
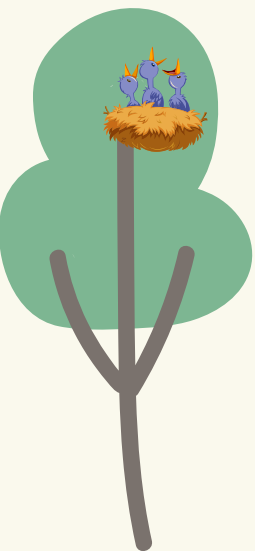
We don't cut hedges and trees between March and the end of June/early July as this is the main breeding season for nesting birds. It's actually illegal (under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981) to "intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built" or to intentionally kill, injure or take chicks or adults, or intentionally take or destroy any eggs.

Therefore, the only time we would cut a hedge during this time is if there is a health and safety implication, e.g. blocking traffic sight line or overgrowing a fire escape.

You may soon notice a new company cutting your grass. If you used to see a company called Sodexo, you will now start to see Tivoli!



Visit www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/repairsand-adaptations/grounds-maintenance-and-cleaning/ for all the latest on our services.



RECOVERING FROM STORM CHRISTOPH

Storm Christoph brought some exceptionally wet weather to Warrington and wider areas of Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire from 18 to 20 January.

It was one of the wettest three-day periods on record, with over a month's worth of rainfall during this 72-hour period.

The impact of Storm Christoph affected 26 of our properties and many of our residents were forced to evacuate and abandon their belongings.

We'd like to thank everybody involved in the immediate aftermath of the floods – our residents, colleagues and local partnering agencies – who worked around the clock to facilitate the relocation of households into emergency hotel accommodation and have since worked to support those affected, giving immediate and ongoing support.



MOVING ON

As well as our social housing and retirement living, we also support young people. These safe homes are called Foyers and we have four; **Coops Foyer in Wigan**, **Verve Place in Warrington**, **Bridge Foyer in Chester** and **Ravenhead Foyer in St Helens**.



Each foyer is a friendly, welcoming, and non-judgmental place for young people aged 16-25 to live for a set period of time. Here they can learn life skills as well as take responsibility for achieving their own goals. But, as with everything, there comes a point when our young people grow up...

My name is Elle-May Irvine, and I moved into Bridge Foyer in May 2018. I had only just turned 16 and had just left school, but despite feeling as though my life was going in the wrong direction, when I moved into the foyer, things changed for the better.

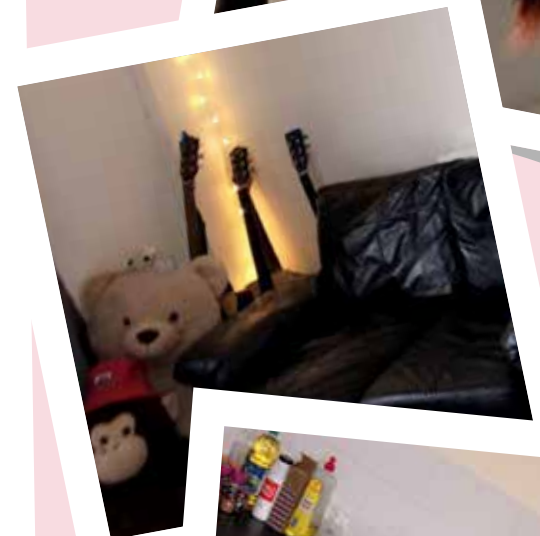
Living in the foyer really helped me with my mental health and I spent 2 years and 9 months there living with people who I now call family.

The Bridge Foyer staff and residents did everything and anything to ensure that I was always in a happy and safe environment, and to this day, they continue to support me through any issues I may have.

Through Bridge Foyer, I finally found my true passion for music and I've now moved out into my own flat and I've gone back to college too, with my main aim to be able to go to university to study criminology. I've even passed my driving test and bought my first car!

I cannot thank Bridge Foyer enough for the opportunities they have given me, and every little bit of support. I have grown into an independent adult with an unforgettable foyer family and a better perspective on the world.

Thank-you for the amazing memories. ”



CUSTOMER CONNECT

Continued from page 1

YOUR SERVICES



YOUR FEEDBACK



YOUR VOICE



YOUR SERVICES



Let's start with Your Services. We have created nine Service Standards. You can read these in full, and even download them if you wish, from our website.

YOUR SERVICES

SERVICE STANDARDS

Antisocial behaviour
Homeownership
Customer engagement

Allocation and lettings
Sales
Repairs and maintenance

Tenancy management
Paying your rent
Customer communication

These standards outline what will happen when you contact us. This forms our customer care promise. We will:



Aim to answer all your calls in person or with a message, and get the response right, first time



Provide a translation into whatever you need, as required



Listen, be polite, friendly, helpful, and understanding to your needs



Communicate with you in your chosen language



Provide a digital service for those of you who prefer this and support you if you wish to access this service



Ensure you know who to contact if you need to discuss things further

You can read this in full online too at www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/customer-connect-overview/

YOUR FEEDBACK



Next is Your Feedback; our new name for Compliments, Comments and Complaints. Our aim is to get things right first time whenever we deal with your enquiries. **And we really hope we will.**

YOUR FEEDBACK

COMPLAINTS

COMMENTS

COMPLIMENTS

However, we know that this isn't something that happens every time, so you need to be able to let us know.

We also want to know if you have something positive to share too or you just want to pass on some useful information.

SURVEYS

Surveys fall under Your Feedback too and as you know, we regularly ask you for your views on our services, one of which is the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR). Most recently, we found that:

OVERALL
CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION
15%

NEW
CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION
8 OUT OF 10
83%

REPAIRS
SATISFACTION
26%

We use a set of questions set by a national housing body which means we compare ourselves against previous years' results and others, and although we know we still have work to do, these results help us to see where we have improved too.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey this time; you were all entered into the prize draw to win a £50 Love 2 Shop voucher and our congratulations go to Lyndsey, who says this was "a great little bonus!"



YOUR VOICE



Finally, we always want you to be able to communicate with us using your 'channel of choice' but we also want you to have both formal and informal ways of engaging with us.

These channels will allow you to influence our work and decisions.



CUSTOMER SERVICES COMMITTEE (CSC)

This replaced the former Customer Operations Committee. We have now appointed five residents to sit on the CSC alongside four board members. The five residents are:

Beata Luczak

John Morris

Anver Zeria

Marlene West

Andrea Hampton

This group will work strategically looking at what we do and why. They will ensure your interests are a priority, kicking off with their first meeting in May.

CUSTOMER CONNECT PANEL (CCP)

The Customer Connect Panel is also a brand-new engagement group that will give more of you a platform to shape how we deliver on our promises.

We're recruiting now

If you fancy being a voice for your fellow residents, let us know!

For more information on this role, please contact Customer Engagement and Relationships Manager, Dean Slavin on **07785 405427** or email dean.slavin@yourhousinggroup.co.uk

DOWNLOAD
THE APPLICATION
PACK AT
[www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/
customers/connect/
your-voice](http://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/connect/your-voice)



RESIDENT SAFETY

Following the Grenfell fire in 2017, new regulations and laws have been introduced for all housing associations. All housing associations must adhere to these new and upcoming changes.

Whilst we haven't used the same cladding as was installed at Grenfell Tower on any of our buildings, we will always ensure we are fully in line with any new requirements. As such, we've since appointed a new Head of Resident Safety, Neil Wilmer.

We will soon be inviting residents who live in one of 14 specific buildings to join us on the Resident Safety Panel to help us better understand how we can build on the safety within your home.

You can see the list of buildings we will be working with initially at

www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/customer-connect/



CUSTOMER SCRUTINY PANEL

This is made up of several Customer Scrutiny Inspectors (CSIs), a group of trained residents, who volunteer to act as a critical friend to the business.

They scrutinise and review YHG services, listening to the lived experiences of residents and from a customer standpoint offer conclusions and recommendation for change.

For more information, please visit:

www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/customer-connect/customer-connect-overview/customer-scrutiny-inspectors/

And we won't stop there! As the world starts to open up again, we will resume our 'Out and About' visits once more to chat to you in your local area, as well as start to carry out doorstep surveys and attend resident meetings again too.

If you have any interest in joining us as a CSI or want to know more about our plans, please contact Chris Quigg, Customer Scrutiny Manager, on **07785 405427** or email yourvoice@yourhousinggroup.co.uk

www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/customer-connect

Going above and beyond

fix360 are the men and women who repair your homes – you name it, they can do it. During this last year, they've done more than that too, stepping up to deliver food medicines to those who had no other support or couldn't get out when lockdown has been at its worst.

But it was also last year that Ryan Beckett, one of our operatives, really did try to make a difference....

"I was travelling in St Helens, when I saw someone lying in the road and people standing around. My instincts just kicked in and I immediately blocked the road to stop traffic with my van. I was actually the first one there – along with my colleague, Chris – and we found a young lad who'd been hit by a car.

I checked his airways which were blocked, and as per my first aid training, I cleared these and started CPR. I did this until a doctor got out of his car and took over. I also had to stop him choking and supported him whilst the doctor continued to give mouth to mouth and CPR.

When the ambulance arrived, I shouted over to paramedic for some blankets to give him some privacy and we then had to wait for the police. It was hugely traumatising for all involved but I would do it again if it meant giving someone a chance."



fix360



In March...



92%

Over 9 out of 10 customers were happy with our operative on the day.

DOMESTIC ABUSE



ASK FOR ANI DOMESTIC ABUSE

At home shouldn't mean at risk

If you or someone you know is suffering from domestic abuse, isolation rules do not apply. If you are in immediate danger, call the Police on 999 straight away. If you're unable to talk, press 55. This will transfer your call to the relevant police force who will assist you without you having to speak.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse.

We are here for you

We work alongside the police, appropriate local authority departments and support agencies whenever we encounter domestic abuse, so that we can safeguard our residents and take the appropriate action against perpetrators. We will offer signposting, support and look at any additional measures we can implement to ensure everyone is safe in their home, so please talk to us in confidence.

DID YOU KNOW?

An estimated **2.3 million** adults experienced domestic abuse in the last year

The police recorded over **758,000** domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales - an increase of **9%** from the previous year

There was a **7%** increase in police recorded offences flagged as domestic abuse-related between March and June 2020

Ask for ANI

If you are suffering from domestic abuse, you can now go to a pharmacy and "Ask for Ani". This is a Government-backed scheme that provides anyone who needs immediate help or a safe space, to go into a pharmacy and ask for "Ani" which is the codeword to indicate they need help.

As soon as anyone asks for "Ani" they will be led into a private consulting room where they will be put in touch with the police, relevant support services or helplines.

#YouAreNotAlone

For more support please visit

www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help

COVID-19 UPDATE

Social Distancing
Keep 2 M Clear

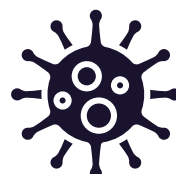


REPAIRS

From Monday 12 April we began taking appointments for all indoor repairs and non-emergency grounds maintenance once again.

We really appreciate your patience whilst we've temporarily paused this service in response to another national lockdown and although we anticipate that we'll be really busy over the coming weeks, we are confident that we will be able to get to you within a reasonable timeframe. Our teams are continuing to work really hard to ensure that we continue delivering a great service to you.

You can report a repair via the usual channels:
yourhousinggroup.co.uk/contact-us/
Or by calling **0345 345 0272**



COVID secure measures

Our operatives will continue to wear face coverings when inside your home and, due to the nature of their roles, have had access to the COVID-19 vaccine programme.

As always, you can find the most up-to-date information in relation to COVID-19 and how this may be impacted our service, via our website.

yourhousinggroup.co.uk/coronavirus/road-to-recovery



Universal Credit claimants



If your rent changed on April 5 or 12, you must update your UC journal. Simply head to your UC page and select the following:



YES

Select 'yes' if your housing costs have changed.



NO

Select 'no' if your rent has stayed the same.

DO THIS AS SOON AS YOU CAN!

SPRING CLEANING

Now the days are getting longer and lighter, you're no doubt ready to throw open the windows and start spring cleaning, Mrs Hinch style! Springtime is the perfect time to make sure you're hitting the hard-to-reach spots you may have missed or simply ignored during the winter months.

Mrs Hinch – in case you haven't heard of her – is now a social media sensation thanks to her fabulous cleaning tips and it's no surprise, as she always manages to make cleaning fun! The best thing about Mrs Hinch's cleaning tips is that they're easy, and the cleaning products are affordable.



Follow Mrs Hinch
@mrshinchhome

Mrs Hinch's top five spring-cleaning tips



1. SOFA - Remove all your cushions and throws and vacuum up any crumbs. Use a body brush and a lint roller to pick up fluff and hair. Mix some warm water with an upholstery cleaner of choice. Soak a cloth in your mix, wring out and then use it to scrub the seats, the arms, and the back of the sofa. Leave to air-dry.



2. BED – Strip down the bed and start by vacuuming it. Once vacuumed, use a sieve to shake a conservative amount of bicarbonate of soda evenly over the mattress – this little miracle-worker will get rid of any lingering odours. Leave for a few hours and then vacuum it up. Finish with a spritz of fabric scent spray (like Febreze).



3. KITCHEN CUPBOARDS - Empty cupboards completely and check the sell-by dates of any food. Spray the insides of the cupboards with diluted disinfectant (like Zoflora or Fabulosa) and wipe down.



4. FRIDGE - Take everything out so you've got a blank canvas. Remove shelves and drawers and soak with washing up liquid. Wipe the inside with your Minky and cleaner – Mrs Hinch recommends Flash Bicarb or Astonish Clear Disinfectant, but washing-up liquid works, too. Use a cotton bud to clean between the door's rubber seals.



5. OVEN - Remove all the racks, spray with Fairy Power Spray or Elbow Grease and leave them to soak. Get a tub of Pink Stuff and a Scrub Daddy and start 'Hinching' away all those stubborn marks on the inside of the oven and glass – sometimes a hob scraper works well if it's really burnt on.



Pen Pals



One of our fantastic Older People's Scheme Managers, Linda Leeming, shared the idea of trying out a pen pal scheme for our over 55s. It came off the back of COVID-19 and the loneliness that we know many people have struggled with over the last year and we just wanted to make a difference. It's still in the very early days but we are thrilled that it has already had an impact on two residents.



Hello, I'm Shirley

"I live at Clifton Gardens in Lytham St Annes. I joined the pen pal scheme because I was getting lonely due to lockdown and I want everyone to know that I've now made a lovely pen friend in Carole. We have exchanged letters and we both have a lot in common. This is one of the best things I have ever decided to do and it's so nice - even exciting - waiting to get a letter that's full of good news. I hope to carry this friendship on for as long as I am able."

"I live at Willowmere in Middlewich with my husband John. I am writing to my new pen pal Shirley, who lives in Lytham St Annes, which is where I grew up, which pleasantly surprised me. It brings back a lot of good memories for me. I am enjoying the letters I get from Shirley and very much enjoy writing in return. Shirley is a very nice lady to write to and especially as we have so much in common. I would highly recommend finding a pen pal through YHG's scheme to tackle loneliness, especially with the lockdowns. I hope you enjoy it as much as me!"

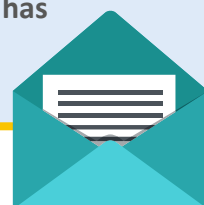


Hello, I'm Carole

The pen pal scheme is available to all over 55s' schemes, and one of the initiative's organisers, Older People's Services Scheme Manager, Ryan Lavin, says, "It's such a lovely idea and has obviously had a positive impact on both Carole and Shirley, which is wonderful."

GET INVOLVED

If you would like to know more, ask for a form from a YHG colleague on site. It's that easy to get started!



BBQ SEASON



Have you had your first BBQ of the year yet? Now we can mix a little again – all in line with the Governments's roadmap to COVID recovery, of course – it's time to fire up the hot coals (or gas!) and enjoy the warmer weather coming our way.

KEEP SAFE WITH OUR BBQ TOP TIPS

1. Only ever BBQ in a suitable area, such as a private garden. NEVER BBQ inside or on a balcony.
2. NEVER leave a lit barbecue unattended.
3. Ensure the barbecue is on a flat site, well away from a shed, trees or shrubs.
4. Keep children, garden games and pets well away from the cooking area.
5. Keep a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies.
6. Ensure the barbecue is cool before attempting to move it.

BBQ CHORIZO POTATO SALAD

Spruce up homemade potato salad with chorizo in this flavour-packed side dish that's a perfect accompaniment to a summer barbecue.



Ingredients

750g new potatoes, halved if large
4-6 large cooking chorizo (or 12 small ones)
150ml soured cream
1 tbsp mayonnaise
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 celery stalk, finely diced (optional)
1 tbsp dill, very finely chopped

Method

STEP 1: Put the potatoes in a pan of cold salted water and boil. Simmer for 15 mins or until tender. Drain the potatoes and return to the pan, then stand for 5-10 mins to steam dry. Cut into bite-sized pieces, season with salt, cover, and chill until cold.

STEP 2: Heat the barbecue. Halve each large chorizo lengthways and put them, cut side down, on the barbecue. Cook, turning once or twice, until they are crisp around the edges and cooked through. Slice the chorizo into pieces.

STEP 3: Combine the soured cream, mayonnaise, and mustard, then add to the cold potatoes with the celery and dill. Gently fold the potatoes into the dressing, taking care not to break up them too much. Scatter the chorizo on top to serve.

Ramadan Mubarak

Wishing all of you who are observing
a peaceful and hopeful Ramadan.

SPRING WORDSEARCH

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

SPRING
BLOSSOM
FLOWERS
CLEANING
DAFFODIL
NESTING
DAISY
EASTER
APRIL
FOALS
LAMBS
SUNSHINE

RECYCLING

As we're at home a lot more due to the ongoing pandemic, you'll probably find that more rubbish ends up in your household bins than normal, however, it's so important to separate plastics, cardboard, and glass bottles from your general waste bin. Enter your postcode into the link below to connect to your local council and find out how they collect recycling and what you can do to recycle more

www.gov.uk/recycling-collections

