

YOUR NEWS

Welcome to the new-look Your News

Autumn 2021



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HOUSING GROUP

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0345 345 0272

Creating more places for people to thrive and be recognised as a sector leading landlord

CHANGING LIVES

When we found out that one of our residents was living with acute Multiple Sclerosis (MS), our Aids and Adaptations team stepped in to help.

The man in his 40s and who lives with his parents, needed their home transforming, to better support him to live more independently as his condition becomes progressively worse.

So back in June, we got cracking. The Aids and Adaptations team supported the family to temporarily move out of their home, and together, with funds from ourselves and Halton Borough Council, we carried out extensive works to their home.

What changed?

We included a new bedroom and wet room downstairs as well as ramp access to the front and back of the house. An open-plan living space was created, along with preparation for a ceiling track hoist, plus a new specialist bed. Downstairs doorways were widened, and new front and back doors fitted.

Whilst the family are very private and wish to remain anonymous, Victoria Quellin, one of our Aids & Adaptations Coordinators, said:

"Providing our residents with a safe place to live is our top priority, and for this family that meant some significant changes were needed to ensure that they could support their son to live as independently as possible. There are so many things that we take for granted in our day to day lives at home, and I hope the changes the team has made will enable them to enjoy their home and spend quality time together."

Thank you to Wright Build for their work too!

For more information, please visit

www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/home-improvements/repairs-maintenance/aids-and-adaptations



Congratulations

to our Aids and Adaptations Team, Lynn Tomlinson and Victoria Quellin!

Over a period of 12 months, they have received

100%

Customer Satisfaction.

SUPPORTING HOMELESS PEOPLE IN WARRINGTON

We're proud to be helping those who are at risk of becoming homeless, or already are, in Warrington.

This year, we have joined up with Warrington Borough Council (WBC) to support those most at risk by providing services for rough sleepers in the town, alongside Cheshire Police, The Salvation Army, Forum Housing and Room at the Inn.

Vulnerable Tenant Support Service (VTSS) Operations Manager, Cath Collier said,

"Homelessness in 2021 is unfortunately still very much a reality. People without a home need our help and support, and through this contract and working with our partners, we're able to play a vital role in supporting those who need us most."

If you see someone who is sleeping rough in Warrington, you can now call or email our dedicated contacts on 01925 592800 or roughsleepers@yourhousinggroup.co.uk

Our team will go out to them and offer them accommodation and/or wider support services. This is funded by the Rough Sleeper Initiative, set up by the government.

WHO'S WHO AT YHG?

Vicki Maguire Research and Policy Manager



1. How would you describe your role at YHG/fix360 to friends and family?

I coordinate Your Housing Group's policy framework making sure that everyone who works for us and who we are a landlord for, is fully up to date with the latest news and regulations that may affect them.

2. What are you currently watching on TV?

Elite (season 4 just out!). Halston - worth it for the dresses. Great British Sewing Bee - very happy that all series are now on iPlayer!

3. Tell us your top three TV show picks.

- Mad Men. Nashville. Friday Night Lights.

4. If you could invite five celebrities (dead or alive) to a dinner party who would they be?

- Elvis Presley
- Dolly Parton
- Andy Warhol
- John Prine
- John Steinbeck

5. What is the best gift you've ever received?

Not a gift as such - but my nan's sewing table and machine - lots of lovely memories.

6. What is your biggest achievement?

My PhD in Art History (a biography of Jamie Reid who did the artwork for the Sex Pistols), and building my career in social housing.

7. What is your favourite song?

Rose of my Heart - Johnny Cash

8. What's your favourite decade, and why?

1960s, for the fashion and optimism.

9. What's the farthest you've been from home?

A month-long Trek America trip from LA to New York.

10. What fictional place would you most like to go to?

Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, as long as I was still alive at the end of it.

11. Would you rather go back to the past or into the future?

The past.

12. What is one piece of advice you'd give to your younger self?

To have more confidence, and to remember that the loudest people often have the least to say!

13. What is your favourite season and why?

Summer, as long as I can enjoy it from the shade.

14. What is your favourite takeaway food/fast food restaurant?

Thai. And anything involving milkshakes, waffles or pancakes!

STAY WARM AND WELL THIS WINTER

A broken boiler is a nuisance, especially at this time of year, as being chilly is horrible! So, to keep things ticking over, here are some useful tips!

Carbon monoxide

A faulty boiler can produce carbon monoxide. You can't see it, smell it, or taste it and it can kill, so you should seriously consider getting a carbon monoxide detector. Seek advice for proper fitting and check it every month.

Annual service

Your boiler should be serviced once a year by an engineer listed on the Gas Safe Register, even if it seems to be in working order. We will contact you if you rent from us, but if you're a leaseholder, you must arrange this yourself.

Blue flame

The flame in your boiler should be strong and clear blue. If it appears yellow or smoky, there could be something wrong and you should call a gas engineer immediately.

Turn the heating on

Even if it's just for 10-15 minutes a day as boilers can seize up if they are not used regularly.

Bleed the radiators

If your radiators are colder at the bottom than the top, this means there is air trapped in the system. To release the air, you need to 'bleed' the radiators using a radiator key. It's really easy – simply switch the heating off, slot the key into the valve at the top of one end of the radiator, then turn the key. When you hear a hissing sound, this means the air is escaping. Stop when water starts to drip (have an old towel or some kitchen paper to hand!), re-tighten the valve and that's it!

Lag the pipes

Your boiler's external pipe can freeze. Simply melt the ice by pouring warm water over the pipe or prevent the boiler from freezing by insulating the pipes or by keeping the heating on a constant low.

Do you know where the stop cock is?

If the water in your pipes freeze it could cause them to burst. It's important to know where it is so you can shut off the mains in an emergency. It's normally under your kitchen sink.





CONGRATULATIONS BOB!



Our wonderful resident **Bob Marais** has been honoured with a Highly Commended award at the Tpas Awards 2021.

Tpas is England's leading tenant engagement organisation which promotes, supports and champions residents being involved with their social housing landlord, and Bob certainly fits that bill!

Robert "Bob" Marais is 81 years old and has been a resident with us at Brompton House in Sefton Park, Liverpool for over 36 years. To be recognised at a national level is a wonderful testament to all he does for his community in Sefton Park, as he singlehandedly runs the Sefton Park Community Centre and is the Secretary of the Sefton Park Community Association.

Bob is the epitome of a community leader, and his commitment to always doing the right thing and standing up for those less fortunate than himself is what makes him such a housing hero!

On his win, he said,
"I've always enjoyed working with the residents and the company. I'm not afraid to speak my mind but thank you. Doing this keeps me out of mischief!"

Congratulations to all Tpas Award Winners 2021

POLICIES

We regularly **update and share our policies** that are relevant to you on our website.

Policies are there to ensure that we, as a business, are being open and honest about what we do, how we do it and what's expected of us as employees. However, they also ensure we are following all relevant laws and regulations and give guidance for decision-making.

Where can I find Your Housing Group policies?

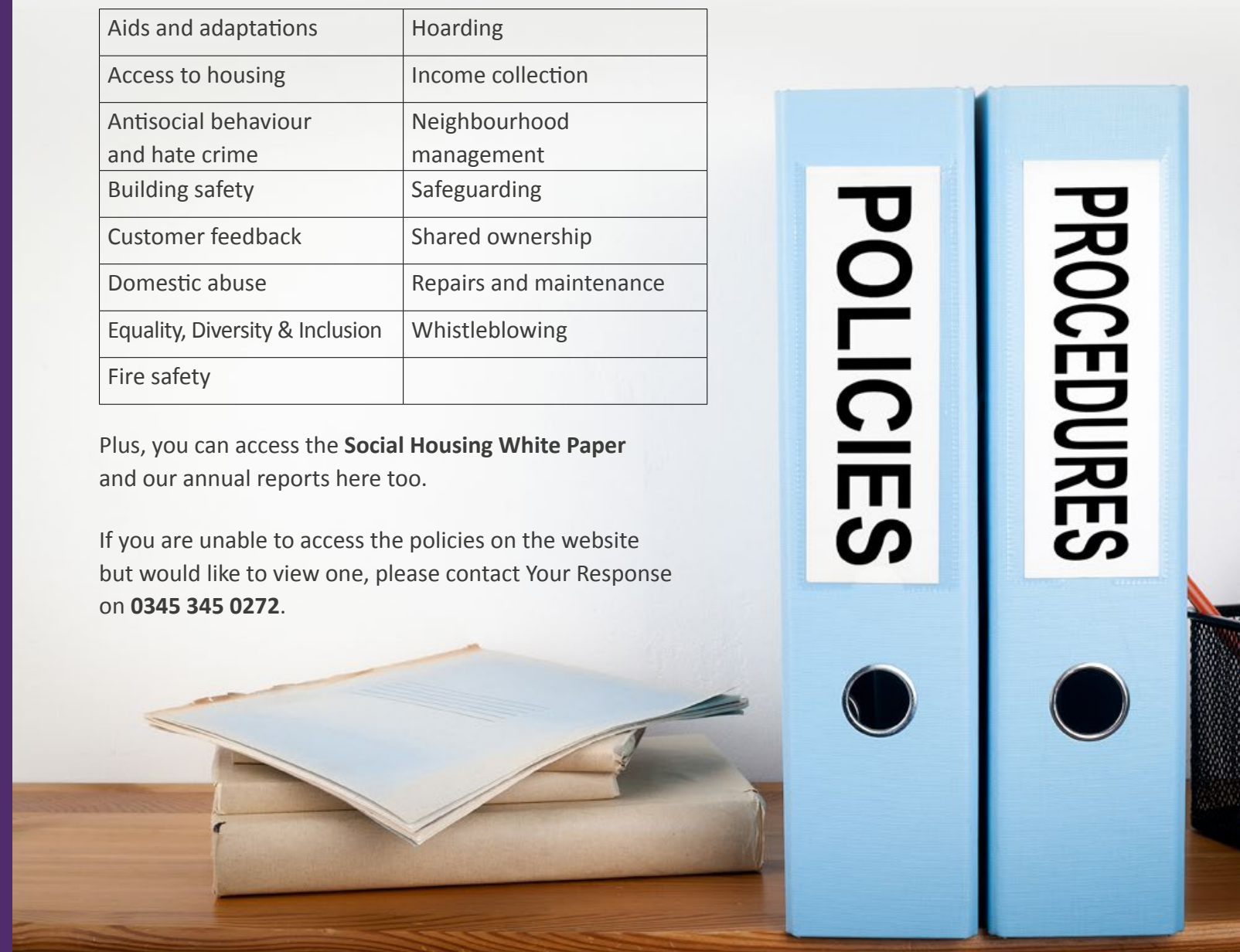
www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/customer-connect/

Which policies are currently available?

Aids and adaptations	Hoarding
Access to housing	Income collection
Antisocial behaviour and hate crime	Neighbourhood management
Building safety	Safeguarding
Customer feedback	Shared ownership
Domestic abuse	Repairs and maintenance
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	Whistleblowing
Fire safety	

Plus, you can access the **Social Housing White Paper** and our annual reports here too.

If you are unable to access the policies on the website but would like to view one, please contact Your Response on **0345 345 0272**.



We know that many of you will have been affected by the recent loss of the temporary £20 uplift that had been added to Universal Credit (UC) during the pandemic.

We're also aware that this has come at a time when furlough - the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - has ended, and the energy price cap has increased.

If you want to look at how these changes may impact you, we now have an even better Budget Calculator available for you.

It allows you to:

- complete an online benefits check
- look at benefits, including Council Tax exemptions/Warm Home Discounts etc.
- use the budgeting tool to review your spending and see where you may be able to reduce expenditure... plus much more!

Give it a try at www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/money-advice/ - we'd love your feedback!

Council Tax Support

Do you know about the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme?

Exemptions and partial reductions are available for those eligible and you may be already getting one of the discounts available automatically deducted from your council tax bill.

If you're not sure whether you're eligible or already getting a discount, visit

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/council-tax/check-if-you-can-pay-less-council-tax/

Based on an average bill size for a medium energy user on a dual fuel prepayment plan (gas and electricity from the same supplier), the average bill will go up £153 per year.

Try our new and improved Benefits Calculator



It's just over a month now until the big day, but we all know the cost of Christmas can really put a dampener on things at times - but don't let it!

The biggest thing you can do, is be with your loved ones and be happy, which after last year, I'm sure we're all looking forward to. But, if you want to get a few gifts in, here are some top tips to save money.



1. Budget

First things first. You need to know who you are buying for and how much you want to spend so you can come up with a realistic budget to avoid over-stretching your wallet. Sit down and make a list.

Write down everyone you plan to buy a present for, even if the gift is part of a small Secret Santa at work. Include the maximum amount you plan to spend on each person to make sure you aren't facing the January Blues when you see your bank balance after the holiday season!

Use our Christmas Present Planner as a guide!

2. Book train tickets in advance

We know many of you will be travelling to see your loved ones over the festive period. Train companies usually make tickets available a few weeks before the date of travel at a lower price for advance booking. But don't leave it too late, as these cheaper tickets are snapped up quickly.

3. Use old gift cards

Think about all the money you have left on old gift cards, as well as the cards you'll never use because they're to places you never shop, eat or visit. Why not put it towards buying your Christmas presents.

Also, don't forget about your store loyalty cards, there may be more money on them than you think!



4. Sell your unwanted items to raise funds

Everybody has things in their homes that they no longer want or have use for. So, why not sell your clutter to raise some cash to put towards your Christmas budget? List your unwanted items for free on eBay, Facebook Marketplace or attend local car boot sales to find a new home for your stuff. We could all do with a few extra pennies for the holiday season and as the famous phrase goes, "One man's trash is another man's treasure".



5. Don't buy food that won't get eaten

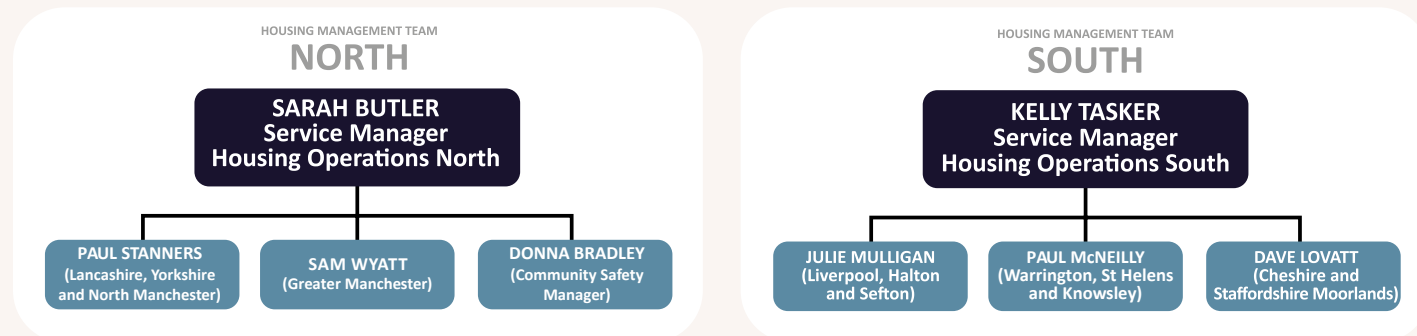
We're all guilty of over-indulging at Christmas, but so much of this food can go uneaten, so be more careful when filling up your supermarket trolley with that fourth box of biscuits. Not only will it save you money, but it will reduce wastage too.



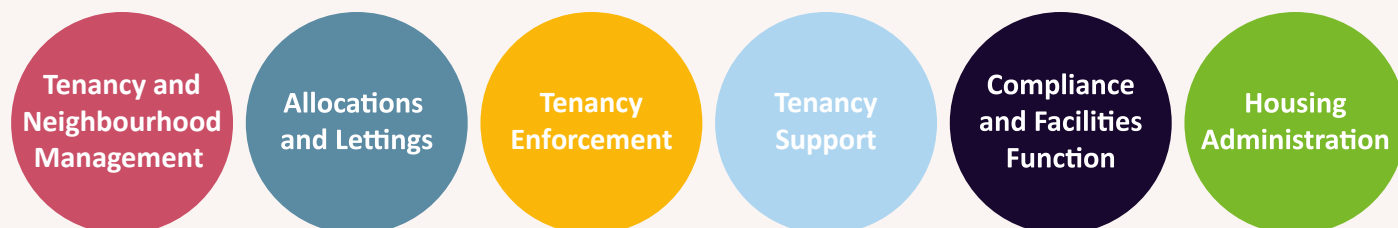
OUR NEW WAY OF WORKING WITH YOU

We're pleased to share our brand-new way of working with you and your communities. It means:

- A **dedicated** regional manager for your area
- **More colleagues** out and about in your community
- A new **Community Safety Manager** to focus on antisocial behaviour, safeguarding and domestic abuse
- A more **personal approach** to how we keep in touch with you and work with you.



These five new regional roles (light blue rectangles above) led by the two Operations Managers for North and South, will look after:



We worked very closely with our Customer Services Committee (CSC) to ensure that this new structure would work for you. We have increased the number of our teams who will work directly with you, our residents, and changed a few things too.

- **Property Agents** are now known as **Tenancy Management Officers**
- **Legal Coordinators** are now known as **Antisocial Behaviour & Legal Officers**
- **NEW Gas & Housing Admin Team** – to support with gas safety access to homes and processing lettings
- **NEW Tenancy Support Keyworkers** who will support our more vulnerable residents



Paula Marshall, Director of Housing & Customer Service, says,
"This new way of working will allow us to build better relationships with more of you, ensure a single-point of contact for each area for residents and partners, such as local councils, and personalise our approach to any issues that may rise. We really hope you start to see, and benefit from, the changes very soon!"



CUSTOMER CONNECT Visits



WE'RE COMING TO SEE YOU

As part of our commitment to get back out and about, we're coming to see you!

We value our communities and in order to better understand what you need and expect, who better to tell us, than you!

We'll only be visiting you on your doorstep to chat so don't worry about letting us in and to assure you, we will all have photo ID badges.

WHAT WILL WE TALK TO YOU ABOUT?

We want to make sure we have all your most up to date contact details, chat about any issues you may have with your home or community and tell you about things that we are working on that will benefit you as a Your Housing Group resident.

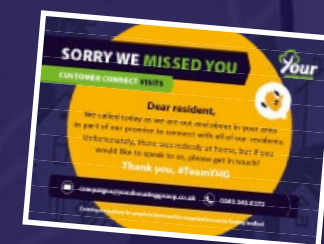
We look forward to seeing you soon and in the meantime, we will share more details on our website at www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/customer-connect/

WHEN WILL YOU BE COMING?

We will be starting to visit you this Autumn and it will take us several months as we have around **25,000 homes** to visit!

WILL YOU LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE COMING?

We will just turn up but again, don't worry if you're not home, as we will leave contact details for you to come back to us.



Blooming LOVELY GARDENING COMPETITION

We ran a wonderful gardening competition this summer for all our over 55s schemes' residents to enter.

There were 10 categories with first, second and third prizes awarded for each category, however, in the Be Artistic category, six prizes were awarded as the entries were so good.

MOST CREATIVE



Ray and Sandra Bradley
BRUNSWICK GARDENS



EAT ME



ABBOT'S WOOD



BEST DRESSED SMALL SPACE



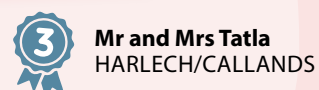
Betty Gibbon
HAZELMERE



COLOUR ME BEAUTIFUL



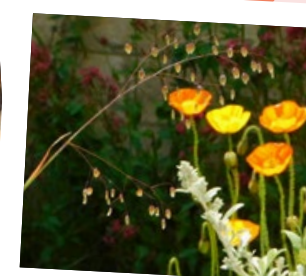
Land Girls
HAZELMERE



BE ARTISTIC



Francis Brizland
RYFIELDS



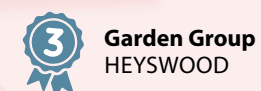
Iris Smith
ORCHARD HOUSE



BEST RECYCLING IDEA



Land Girls
HAZELMERE



MOST IMPROVED COMMUNAL GARDEN



ABBOT'S WOOD



LOOKING AFTER WILDLIFE



Cath Creswell
BRUNSWICK GARDENS



MOST INTERESTING HOUSEPLANT



Margaret Alton
WILLOWMERE



TALLEST SUNFLOWER



Charlie Fishwick
REEVE COURT




WHAT MATTERS TO YOU, MATTERS TO US

As part of our work to ensure we are delivering the services you need, we carry out surveys throughout the year.

As one of our residents, you may have already done one or two, or none at all yet, but we want you to know that your voice matters, and the more of you who do this, the better we can do for you.

What surveys do we do?



**HouseMark
STAR**

(Survey of Tenants and Residents)
This gives us our annual customer satisfaction results

Monthly, quarterly, or seasonal 'transactional' surveys

This is a survey about a specific item such as repairs, grounds maintenance or cleaning etc.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) surveys

For Grove Village, Hollymere, Oakmere, Hazelmere, Willowmere, Maple West, Oak Priory and Willowbarns as they are funded differently

Other surveys

Other neighbourhood-focused surveys or specific project surveys

We have to carry out some surveys as part of our responsibility as a landlord, but we go above and beyond this too to ensure that we are including you in part of all our decision making and we keep learning about what matters to you.

THANK YOU!
In 2020 we received 17,180 completed surveys

How do we know the surveys are fit for purpose?

We use the same standard surveys as other housing groups, as well as proven statistical methods which allow us to compare our performance with other housing providers. Survey results are properly analysed so that we can see what's working and what needs improvement. These reports are also shared with our Customer Services Committee (CSC) and Customer Connect Panel (CCP) involved customers who are able to influence how improvements are made to our services.

How do you send surveys out?

Surveys are, in the main, sent via email to all residents whose email address we have. We also call additional residents to ensure we have a more balanced view. We are working on ways to get in touch with more residents by using the post or, now we can, face-to-face surveys, too.

YOU SAID, WE DID...

Introducing you to our new 'you said, we did'!

This section shows you that we are listening to your feedback, and acting on what we can, as quickly as we can.

 **ISSUE**  **RESOLUTION**



ACTING ON FEEDBACK



Our results for listening and acting on customer feedback only increased by 4% so we recognised work needed to be done.



This! Showing you that we are listening and acting will now be included in every seasonal Your News (four times a year) AND in our over 55s customer meetings.

- We've also increased, via Customer Connect, our customer engagement framework, and started engaging with more residents than ever before.
- We are currently working on neighbourhood plans to really help us focus on what our communities need.
- We have introduced new customer surveys to enable you to provide feedback on different services across the business, such as our new Your Response satisfaction survey, and the new antisocial behaviour (ASB) survey.
- Your Voice customer meetings have now been resumed face-to-face in our villages and schemes.
- 'Scheme Walkabouts' will pick back up too, at least twice a year, to review internal and external communal areas. We would welcome customers getting involved and helping us to identify what is important to you.

If you want to get your voice heard and become involved with any of our customer engagement methods, please email yourvoice@yourhousinggroup.co.uk or call **07917 087732**.

You can also speak to one of our colleagues on site.

REPAIRS



Repairs satisfaction increased by 26% BUT a fifth of you said you still had issues with communication, and not enough time given to complete a job, resulting in multiple visits.



We have now started using brand new system called 'Dynamic Scheduling'. This means that when you book a repair, the system will automatically select the most suitable operative for the job, based on their location that day, their skillset and availability to complete the job in one go (if possible).



COMMUNICATION



20% of those of you who responded to STAR, said that you have had difficulties in dealing with YHG, with 'communication' being a recurring theme. One in twenty of said that they didn't know who their Housing Officer is or had a named contact within YHG.

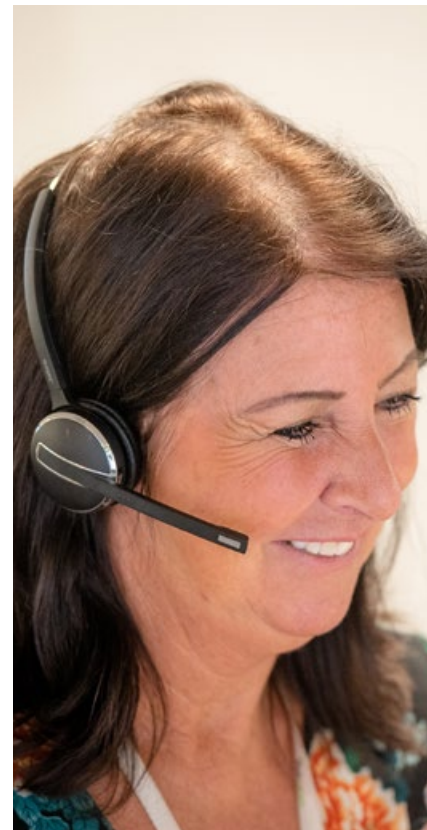


We have now introduced our new way of working with you which you can read all about on page 10. This should mean that in the coming months, you will see us more, know who we are, and have better engagement with us.

We have also been looking at how we can make our services more accessible, similar to what we have done in Partington, where we now have an office open to customers, two days a week.

We have improved training for our colleagues, focussing on customer service.

Plus, we have improved our complaints process by speeding up response times, simplifying the steps, improving communication, and investing in a programme of training for our colleagues who deal with complaints.



INVESTING IN OUR HOMES



Over one in 10 of you told us that your home needed improvements, such as new windows or a new bathroom.



We have committed to investing over £269 million in your homes over five years.

We are also working on large-scale projects in a number of our retirement living schemes;

- Daisy Haye in Leek in Staffordshire
- Ryfields Village in Warrington and
- Brunswick Gardens Village in Sheffield.

This is an investment of around £15 million.

We are also going to spend over £20 million in environmental improvements over the next five years. More details on this soon!



LETTINGS



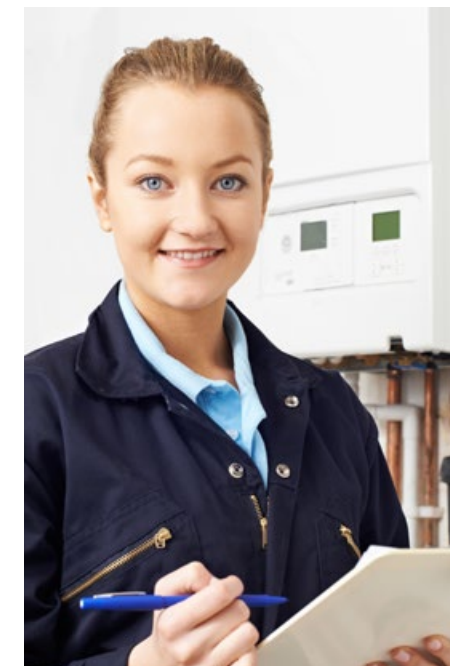
New customers tell us they are 'very satisfied' with the lettings process and the quality of their new home: **83% for Over 55s services and 81% of all other customers.**

However, some told us they had issues with their heating when first moving in.



We now ensure that within 24-hours of a property becoming vacant, our gas contractors will carry out an inspection and testing of all gas installations and appliances in the property.

This means new residents will have a fully operational heating and hot water system the minute they walk through the door.



MUSTARD CHICKEN WITH WINTER VEGETABLES

This is a great way to make a chicken go further!

Prep: 40 mins
Cook: 2 hours

INGREDIENTS

Serves: 4-6

- 1 chicken (about 1.8kg/4lb in weight)
- 2 onions
- 6 celery sticks
- 6 carrots
- 2 bay leaves (optional)
- 2 thyme sprigs (optional)
- 1 tsp black peppercorn
- 50g butter
- 100g smoked bacon lardons (optional)
- 3 small turnips, peeled and cut into wedges
- 1 tbsp plain flour
- 2 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 3 rounded tbsp crème fraîche
- 1 good handful parsley, chopped (optional)

METHOD

- Put the chicken in a large pot. Halve 1 onion, 1 celery stick and 1 carrot. Add to the pot with the herbs, peppercorns and a sprinkling of salt. Add water to come halfway up the chicken, bring to the boil, then cover tightly and simmer for 1½ hrs. Cool slightly, remove the chicken to a dish, then strain the stock into a bowl.
- When the chicken is cool enough to handle, strip the meat from the bones and tear into pieces with your hands.



Mustard Chicken with Winter vegetables

- Chop the remaining onion, and cut the celery and carrots into thick slices. Heat the butter in the same pot, add the onion and lardons, then gently fry for 5 mins until just starting to brown. Add the remaining veg, then fry for 2 mins. Stir in the flour, then cook for 1 min. Measure 900ml stock (if you don't have enough, make it up with water), then gradually add to the pan, stirring. Cover, then simmer for 20-25 mins until vegetables are tender.
- Return the chicken to the pan with the mustard and crème fraîche, then return to a simmer, stirring gently. Season and sprinkle with parsley.

www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/mustard-chicken-winter-vegetables

QUIZ TIME

- In which part of your body would you find the **cruciate ligament**?
- What is the name of the **main antagonist** in the Shakespeare play **Othello**?
- What element is denoted by the **chemical symbol Sn** in the periodic table?
- What is the name of the **1976 film about the Watergate scandal**, starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman?
- How many of **Henry VIII's wives** were called Catherine?
- What was the **most popular girls name** in the UK in 2019?
- Which **popular video game franchise** has released games with the subtitles World at War and Black Ops?
- In what US State is the city **Nashville**?
- What is the **currency of Denmark**?
- Which Tennis Grand Slam is played on a **clay surface**?

1. Knee joint 2. Iago 3. Tin 4. All the President's Men 5. Three 6. Olivia
7. Call of Duty 8. Tennessee 9. Danish krone 10. The French Open Grand Slam

The Post Office card account is closing.

If your benefits or pension are paid into a Post Office Card Account, please contact the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) by calling **0800 085 7133**.

You can also contact Your Housing Group's Money Advice Team on **0345 345 0272** or by visiting www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customers/money-advice



Department for Work & Pensions



ESSENTIAL WINTER PROTECTION

NHS



There are two essential vaccines that you may need this winter – flu and COVID-19 booster. Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself, friends and family from these dangerous viruses.

Find out if you're eligible now at nhs.uk/wintervaccinations

**NEED A
TRANSLATION?**

需要翻译文本？

Czy potrzebują Państwo
tłumaczenia?

تحتاج إلى ترجمة؟

ترجمے کی ضرورت ہے؟

Braille and audio
versions also
available

Call Your Response
on 0345 345 0272