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Ikea supports foyer residents with design flair

Verve Place in Warrington, one of our four foyers, has opened three repurposed welcoming, warm spaces for the young residents to use designed by Ikea.

Read more on pages 6 & 7

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The Social Housing (Regulation) Act became law at the end of July and came about as a direct result of the Grenfell disaster.

Its main purpose is to give YOU better support with any serious issues that may arise with your home due to landlord error.

This is not something we ever want to see for you, but we know we don't always get things right, and will continue to drive the change within our business that you deserve.



What's changed?

This new law will ensure you, as a resident, have enhanced support should your home be unsafe or unfit to live in. **The landmark law's changes include:**

- 1** Strengthening the **Regulator's powers** to carry out regular inspections of the largest social housing providers and giving them the power to issue unlimited fines.
- 2** Giving the **Housing Ombudsman** the power to share useful guidance to landlords following investigations into complaints from residents.
- 3** Giving the **Regulator** the power to insist upon a set time limit for social housing landlords to deal with issues such as damp and mould.
- 4** **Awaab's Law** – a clause named after two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who tragically died from prolonged exposure to mould in a social housing flat. This law requires social landlords to respond to, and investigate, repairs within certain timescales (*which are yet to be set*).

We currently have timescales for repairs but will change these if required. We're also already working on how we would do this to ensure we can make any changes as quickly as possible.

- 5** New **qualification requirements** for social housing managers.
- 6** Introducing **stronger economic powers** to follow inappropriate money transactions outside of the sector.

The Regulator will also be able to **enter properties** to carry our repairs they deem to be an emergency and risking a resident's health and wellbeing by providing landlords 48 hours' notice. This was previously only possible with 28 days' notice. In this case, works would also be at the landlord's expense.

Finally, social landlords can be issued with **Performance Improvement Plan Notices** if they fail to meet standards or fail to provide documents or information that has been requested by the Regulator.

Your safety is our number one priority



What's Your Housing Group doing?

We have already created a dedicated team to enable us to better manage any issues or complaints you raise, which is now called the **Customer Resolution Team**.

Our work around **Damp and Mould** has been a priority for some years and continues to be the case. We have written to all of you asking you to tell us about anything we were unaware of, or may have missed, so that we can ensure all of your homes are both comfortable, and most importantly, safe.

We have also now grown the team to enhance the service and efficiency of our damp and mould support service.

We are working behind the scenes to improve the efficiency of our repairs service including new technology to avoid appointment issues and material shortages.

Jacque Allen, Chief Executive Officer, said,

"We welcome the new law which provides clear guidance for those working in the social housing sector to help ensure the safety of our customers which remains the number one priority for YHG."

Useful Websites

Regulator of Social Housing
[gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing)

Housing Ombudsman
[housing-ombudsman.org.uk](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

YHG's Service Standards
[yourhousinggroup.co.uk/service-standards](https://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/service-standards)

Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
bills.parliament.uk/bills/3177

High-rise safety

November marked National Social Housing Safety & Compliance Week, and this year was themed Together for Safety, to highlight the role we all play in keeping everyone aware and safe in their home.



This includes us as landlords, you as residents, plus local authorities, contractors, material suppliers and beyond.

As part of that week we held our latest high-rise forum for residents and we continued with our high-rise safety days, which include safety drop-in sessions and on-the-day repairs.

What happens on a high-rise safety day?

On the day, we visit one of our high-rise residential buildings, and we:

Carry out & book repairs

We're available throughout the day to both carry out quick repairs there and then, and book others in at a time and date that works for you.

Do a building safety walk

We'll walk around the building and check and assess all communal areas for safety, and you can join us to point out anything that concerns you too.

Have a building safety drop-in

For a few hours, you'll be able to raise any other safety issues with us either about your home, or the building itself.

So far this year, we have visited:

September

Adlington House	Liverpool
Rutland House	Liverpool
Northpoint House	Manchester

October

Faulkner Court	Manchester
Aytoun Court	Manchester
York House	Liverpool

November

Princess Court	Manchester
Park View	Birkenhead
River View	Birkenhead

December

Buckingham House	Liverpool
Stanlo House	Manchester

In 2024, we'll visit:

Tuesday 16 January
Canal Court, Manchester

Tuesday 23 January
Thorngrove House, Manchester

Tuesday 30 January
Sydenham House, Liverpool

Tuesday 6 February
Brompton House, Liverpool

We've carried out:

139
Flat repairs

50
Communal repairs

41
Large repairs booked

High-rise forum

Our fourth high-rise forum which we hold at our office in Warrington for residents living in high-rise flats is a day for asking questions, learning about important legal safety updates, finding out what we've been working on most recently to enhance safety across your homes and what's coming up!

It's always a great day as we also offer the day multi-lingually, so that our Cantonese speaking residents can comfortably follow the day through a headset too!

Want to know more or maybe come along next time? Email YourVoice@yourhousinggroup.co.uk or visit www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customer-engagement



Welcome to
歡迎來到 **Youggle** HOUSE

Thank you for joining us!
感謝您的參與!

Ikea supports foyer residents with design flair

Continued from the front page

Our foyers offer a safe home, as well as training, support and services for young people aged 16-25 who are facing homelessness, so to be able to provide something the “residents told us they wanted” ensured we could help to give “them the opportunity to have both a healthy body and mind, and these rooms reflect that” shared **Paul Storey, Verve Place’s Manager.**

The rooms have been carefully designed, in partnership with Ikea, to ensure the most useable areas for studying, relaxing and working out and it was wonderful to be able



to welcome **Councillor Maureen McLaughlin** to officially open the spaces.

A relaxation room in calming colours and soft furnishings



A study area to read, work and have a quiet, dedicated place to focus



A gym for our young residents to focus on their fitness, mental wellbeing, without the cost of a gym membership

Maureen said, “I am very pleased to be able to visit Verve Place today and officially open these wonderful spaces. I first visited Verve Place for its 10th anniversary, and it is so wonderful to see this for young people in Warrington who are at risk of homelessness. These spaces are fantastic, and I think it is a really lovely project that the residents will be able to enjoy for many years to come.”

Thank you,



Contents insurance

Home insurance is so important.

As with most rentals, YHG doesn't insure your contents so don't forget to insure all your possessions, otherwise you may not be covered for things such as:

- Damage caused by flood
- Damage caused by fire
- Stolen items (burglary)
- Accidental damaged



We've teamed up with **Thistle My Home** too, who offer insurance designed for tenants.

Visit yourhousinggroup.co.uk/movingin or call 0345 450 7288

From around **£1.50** per week

Visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk/calculator to get a personal quote.



Skills & work clubs

Across Partington and Staffordshire we support and hold work clubs that can help anyone who may be out of work, looking for a new role, wanting to find suitable training and education or never been in work and feel now is the right time.

Staffordshire

EVERY WEEK 10AM-12NOON

Wednesdays

Haregate Community Centre,
46 Queens Drive, Leek, ST13 6DJ

Thursdays

The Learning Curve,
St John's Road, Biddulph, ST8 6LL

Fridays

The Community Room, Cheadle Fire
Station, Ashbourne Road, Cheadle
ST10 1HF

Trafford

EVERY WEDNESDAY, 1-3PM

The Annex, Wood Lane,
Partington M31 4LW



Our work club drop ins are free to attend and open to anyone, not just YHG residents. We know it's not always easy finding employment, so each week we help with:

- CV support
- Job applications
- Interview tips

Not only do residents seek advice with employment, we also offer a variety of training courses such as:

- Basic IT
- Maths and English
- Food Hygiene

Already this year, we have helped 34 people find ongoing employment.

Digital poverty – how we're trying to help

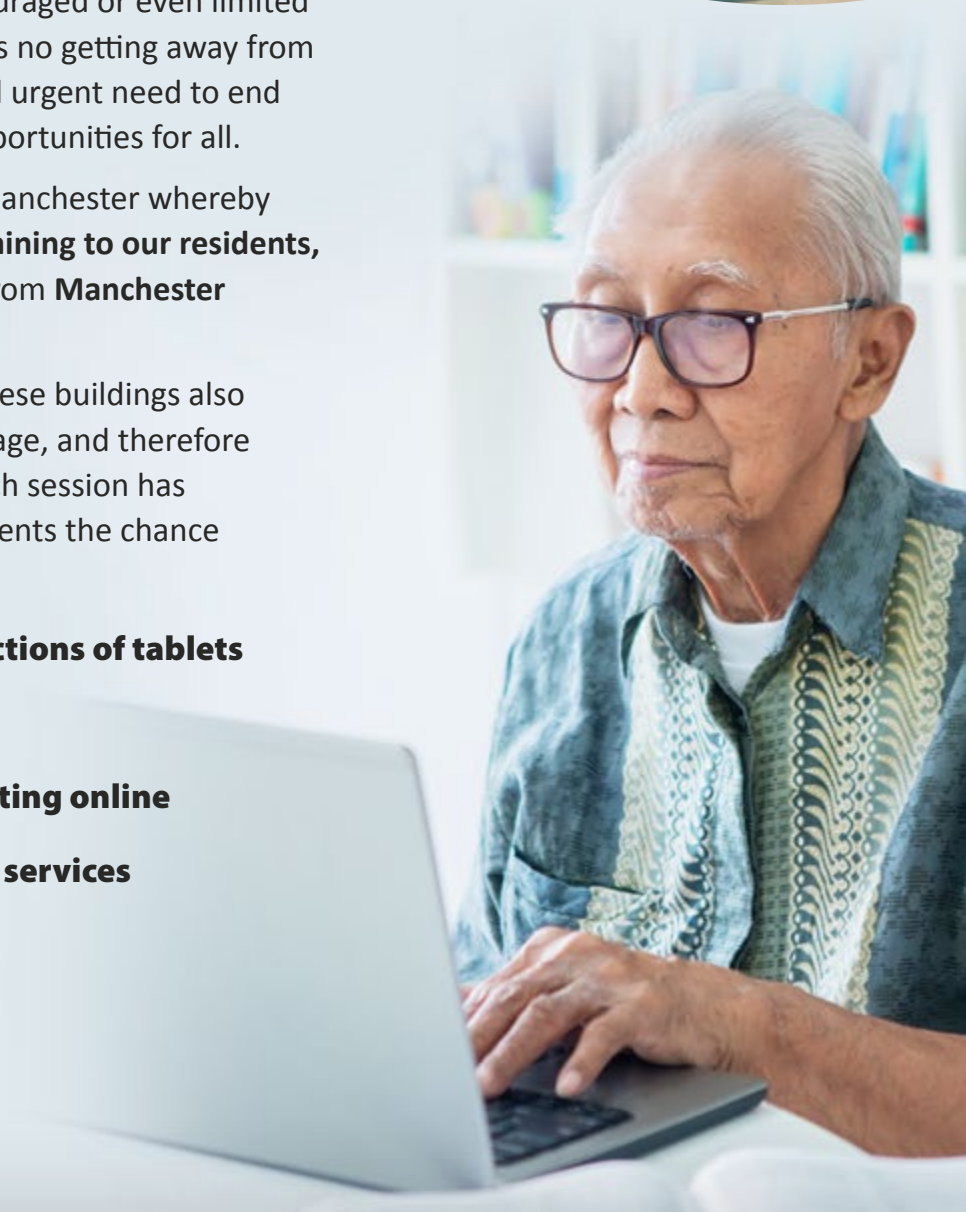
Digital poverty is when someone can't confidently use and interact with the online world whether for communication, socialising, or practical activities such as banking, or booking events and tickets.

Using a mobile phone, tablet or computer can be daunting for so many, but in the world we live in today, the majority of tasks are often encouraged or even limited to being carried out online so there's no getting away from the fact that there is an ongoing and urgent need to end digital poverty and ensure equal opportunities for all.

We recently launched a project in Manchester whereby we are offering **tablet and digital training to our residents**, thanks to the funding we received from **Manchester City Council**.

Many of our residents who live in these buildings also speak Cantonese as their first language, and therefore the challenges are often greater. Each session has a different objective giving our residents the chance to learn a variety of skills, such as:

- **Understanding the basic functions of tablets**
- **Online safety and security**
- **Social media and communicating online**
- **Online banking and financial services**
- **Online shopping**



Boosting energy efficiency in Manchester

We recently upgraded two blocks of flats at Chomlea Manor in Manchester, to help to save our residents' money, and maintain heating efficiency within their building.

This was partly funded by our successful bid for support from the **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)**, which is government funding that helps landlords like us upgrade social housing homes that may still sit below **Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C**.

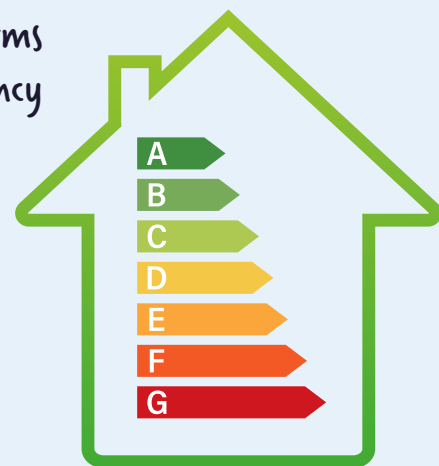
The works carried out included:

- External wall insulation
- New windows
- New communal entrance door
- Facias, soffits and rainwater drains and pipes

We also fitted new garage doors, replaced metal railings and fitted new extractor fans in the kitchens and bathrooms.



'A' is the best in terms of energy efficiency



Improved warmth & comfort

Reduced energy bills

Improved ventilation so reduced risk of damp & mould

Improvement to appearance of the outside of the building

You can read more about EPCs here

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/guide-to-energy-performance-certificates-epcs

Dog safety

There has been a lot in the media recently about an increase in dog attacks, and we have been seeing similar issues locally too, but the main thing is to keep you, your beloved pets and our colleagues safe.

Dogs are often seen as man's best friend and we know they are usually a part of the family, but regardless of breed, size and previous manner, the possibility that any dog may react badly is always there. Especially around people they don't know or situations that may cause them stress.

We would like to ask that, in the future, if we are coming to see you, or you are having pre-planned work carried out in your home, that you secure your dog in a separate room.

This protects both your pet and our colleagues.

XL Bully Dogs

As you may be aware the government is adding XL Bully Dogs to the list of banned dogs in England and Wales. Please ensure you apply for a **certificate of exemption** by no later than **1 February 2024** to legally keep your dog.

Visit www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs for more information on how to do this.

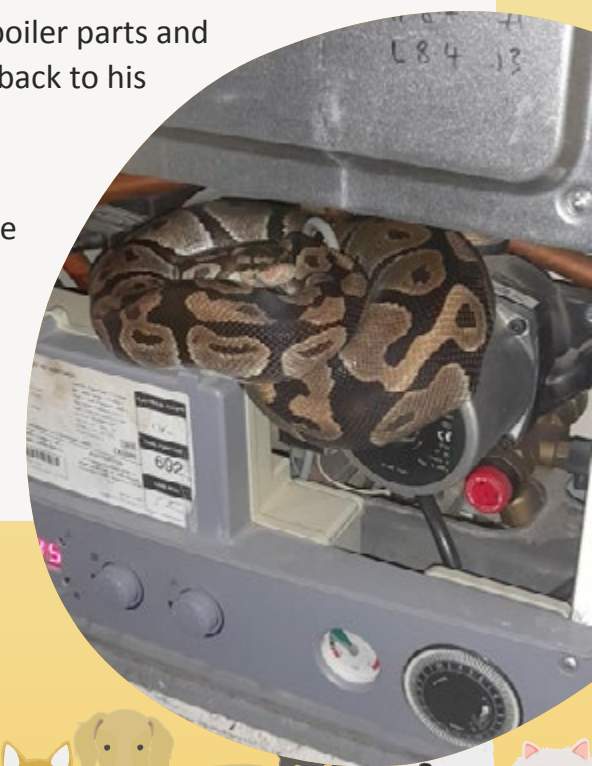
But it's not just dogs we need to watch out for...



When we arrived to carry out a service, a snake was found in a boiler in a home in Preston, luckily this snake was a pet - in fact our resident's son's pet that should have been safely secured in his tank!

Our resident had been working nights and had no idea it had escaped, but it didn't faze **Mike**, our operative, who acknowledged that **"you don't see this every day!"** Mike gently coaxed the snake out from around the boiler parts and hurried him back to his tank.

Please keep snakes secure too please as I'm not sure we'd all be as calm as Mike!



You said, we did

! Repair waiting times for smaller jobs

✓ We are now trialling 'Repairs Days' at various sites, where we can carry out small fixes there and then. These days also allow you to get quick answers to questions regarding existing booked in repairs and confidently book in new ones at a time to suit you.

🕒 ISSUE ✓ RESOLUTION



! Getting to job centres and job hunting due to increased travel costs or reduced transport services is a challenge

✓ We set up work clubs in Moorlands, Staffordshire and since April 2023 we've helped:

- 34 people into sustainable work
- 75 people completing accredited training
- 31 people completing regular volunteering

We are also looking into how we can replicate this offer to other areas, and have already set up another club in Partington!



**WE VIEW FEEDBACK AS A GIFT -
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY.**

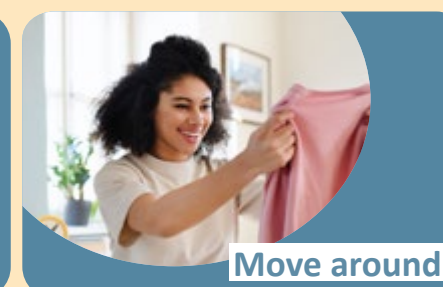
Keeping warm and well this winter

As the weather starts to drop cooler again, we know that putting the heating on 24/7 just isn't an option these days.



However, there are ways to stay warm if you

heat the person, not the home



And if you want to save more money...



Wash your clothes at 30 degrees



Reduce your time in the shower



Dry clothes on a heated rail



Use LED energy saving light bulbs



Only put the water you need into the kettle



Don't put TVs etc on standby - it still costs money!



Fully load your washing machine and dishwasher each time

Useful websites

National Energy Action www.nea.org.uk/get-help/
Energy Saving Trust www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/

Have you looked into the Household Support Fund?

The Household Support Fund has now been extended until the end of March 2024.

Help for Households

£842 million of government funding has been given to local councils to distribute to those who need real help with essential costs.

This could help if you're struggling to afford things like:

- energy and water bills
- food
- essential items

Your council may also offer food vouchers to families during the school holidays.

Funding is aimed at anyone who's vulnerable or cannot pay for essentials but all councils run their schemes differently so there may be differences in:

- eligibility criteria
- if, or how you need to apply
- who money is given to

For example, some councils share out money through local charities and community groups and some limit household applications to one per year.

You don't need to be on benefits already but if you are, they won't be affected if you get a payment from a **Household Support Fund** scheme.

Visit your local council's website for more information. If you're not sure who your council is, you can search for it using just your postcode here www.gov.uk/find-local-council



Run a community group?

Fancy up to £2,000 to use to help your group improve your neighbourhood?

Criteria

We have made a pot of cash available to support you, but to be eligible to apply, your group must be constituted with access to a bank account. A **'constituted group'** is an informal group that has a written list of rules and guidelines.

Examples of what the funding can pay for include:

- Equipment hire or purchase
- Information technology equipment (computers etc.)
- Publicity materials for use in your project (flyers, posters etc.)
- Sectional workers (those who work only as and when required)
- Training
- Venue hire
- Volunteer expenses

Moorlands Voluntary and Community Transport, who are a registered charity, successfully bid for funds for a new shed to store items safely. They help residents within Staffordshire Moorlands who are struggling to get out and about; whether that's to meet friends, or get to a medical appointment.



Visit www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/iiyh for more information and how to apply!

Are you interested in making a difference?

If **equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is something you're passionate about**, especially when it comes to how we at Your Housing Group can make changes and improvements to our way of working,

We try to do everything with an inclusive heart and our values promote care, fairness and respect, so if this sounds like something you can help us with, please email yourvoice@yourhousinggroup.co.uk to register your interest.

www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/customer-engagement

then we would love you to consider joining our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) group!

This is a dedicated EDI group for residents to chat about, research and recommend great ideas and ways we can strengthen our actions and behaviours to benefit everyone.

Homelessness and how you can help

There's never a good time to be homeless. It's not a choice.

And this time of year is not only cold but potentially dangerous for anyone sleeping on the streets.

If you live in **Warrington** and see someone who is sleeping outdoors or homeless, please email us at roughsleepers@yourhousinggroup.co.uk and we will help.

For **anywhere else**, please visit thestreetlink.org.uk or visit our website at www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/homeless



Listen, translate, change and simplify our website so that it suits you!

Reachdeck is a great tool that allows you to access our website in a variety of ways - to better suit your needs.

Simply click on the **white man in the orange circle** at the **top right of any page** of the site and it will open up a menu.



Hover over each icon to choose options such as:

- The website being read out loud to you
- Easy read picture options for certain words
- Translating to another language
- Highlighting sections as you read.



www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk

