

Unity: delivering high quality, affordable housing and related services which promote sustainable neighbourhoods, choice and the wellbeing of Black & Minority Ethnic communities in Leeds.



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities

# News

## Winter 2012/13

# Watch out for welfare!

The government's 'bedroom tax' kicks in this April, along with other changes to the benefits system. Don't get caught out.

### Claiming Housing Benefit?

- Got part-time access to your children?
- Got a boy and a girl who are nearly 10?
- Living in an adapted home?
- Close to retirement age?



If you're at risk of housing benefit reductions because you're classed as under-occupying your home, but fit into any of the above categories, get in touch! We may be able to help you to claim a **Discretionary Housing Payment** to cover your full rent.

If you claim through Unity, our specially trained staff will get it fast-tracked and processed within 10 working days.

If you're at risk of losing Housing Benefit and don't know how you'll afford it, turn to page 8 for more information.

**Full benefits update on page 8 - see all the latest changes and check how they affect you.**



*Don't lose out on Housing Benefit - contact us to get help.*

## New website

[www.unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk)

Our brand new website is much easier to use and navigate. You can interact with our online services **24 hours a day**.



Pay Rent



Report Repairs



Rent a Home



Buy a Home



Get Support



Help with Jobs

## What needs replacing in your home?

For our last 5-year planned maintenance programme, our tenants said, "Kitchens! Kitchens! Kitchens!" But what do you say now?

Our present 5-year maintenance programme is coming to an end this year, so we need to plan ahead for the next 5 years. We also want to find out who still hasn't got a shower, so that we can fit one as part of the programme.

**Surveys page 3**

*Need a shower?*

*Put in your own shower and want Unity to repair it for free?*



*Send your survey back!*

Do you find it difficult to read all of *Unity News*? To help you, we have put the most important points on this page so that you do not miss them. To find out more, please turn to the page and read the article.

Do you need this page translating? Please call us on (0113) 200 7700 and let us know what language you speak. We can also send you a large print newsletter.

## Planned maintenance survey (page 3)

We want to know what you think needs replacing in your home.



## Online services (page 5)

Unity has launched its new website, with lots of interactive features. Register for 'My Unity' and you could win a **flat-screen TV**, an **MP3 player** or **£30!**

## Housing officer visit dates (page 9)

If you want to know when your housing officer is next in your area, you can find out here.



## Easy ways to pay rent

Affected by the 'bedroom tax'? Find the best way to pay.

You'll need an Allpay card to pay over the internet, by text or at PayPoint outlets. Please call us on **0113 200 7700** to order one.

- **Direct debit.** Weekly, fortnightly, monthly - whatever suits you the best. It changes automatically when your rent changes, so it's the easiest method. Call us to set one up.
- **Standing order.** You're in control with this method, but you have to change it every time your rent or benefit levels alter.
- **Paypoint outlet:** Use your Allpay card to pay by cash or card.
- **Online:** Use your Allpay card at [www.allpay.net](http://www.allpay.net).
- **By phone:** Call us to pay by debit or credit card.
- **At our office:** Pay with cash, cheque, debit card or credit card.
- **Mobile text:** Register on the Allpay website at <https://www.allpayments.net/textpay>



## Do you work full-time?

Find it hard to get time off work for repairs?

Ask for a 'first call' appointment to get the earliest visit of the day.



## Want to have your say about what gets replaced in your home? Fill in this page and send it back.

### Repairs & replacements

Unity's Maintenance team is working with our Tenant Panel to set a new 5-year planned maintenance programme. This is our plan for which homes are getting new items, like kitchens or windows. We base our plan on how old items are, what condition they're in and how important they are to the people who live there.

We cannot promise that we will be able to replace the things you want, but we will take your opinions into account when deciding what work to do to your home. Please note, if your home is less than 10 years old it is unlikely that we will replace anything in the next 5 years, as older homes will be in greater need.

### Showers

We know that some of our homes have showers, but a lot don't. Showers are quicker, more convenient and cheaper to run, so we want to make sure that all our homes have one by the end of our next 5-year plan.

If you have put in your own shower, we would like to offer to repair or replace it for free when it breaks down. Our Maintenance team will be more than happy to do this as long as it has been installed correctly, on the understanding that if it is uneconomical to repair, we will replace it with a Unity standard shower.

### Q1. What is your top priority for your home? What wants renewing the most urgently?

Please tick one box only, or else your answer will not count.

- Kitchen       Bathroom       New shower       Windows       External doors
- Insulation       Boiler       Other (please say what).....

### Q2. What would be your second priority? Tick one box only.

- Kitchen       Bathroom       New shower       Windows       External doors
- Insulation       Boiler       Other (please say what).....

### Q3. Do you have a shower? If you tick 'no', we will put your home on our showers programme.

- Yes - Unity fitted it.
- Yes - it was fitted by the council with a Disabled Facilities Grant.
- Yes - I fitted it myself. I would like Unity be responsible for repairing and replacing it.
- Yes - I fitted it myself. I don't want Unity to repair or replace it.
- No



### Q4. Are you interested in working with our Maintenance team to set the new programme?

- Yes       No

Name:..... Address:.....

Please return this questionnaire now. Just detach the page, fold it up (instructions overleaf) and pop it in the post. **Freepost - no stamp needed.**

**4.** Tuck into flap A

Emma Oates  
Tenant Neighbourhood & Involvement Officer  
Unity Housing Association  
FREEPOST NEA2498  
Leeds LS7 3HY

**Flap A**

**1.** 1st fold



**2.** 2nd fold



**3.** 3rd fold



Follow the instructions from 1-4,  
then pop it in the post box.

Freepost - no stamp needed.

Thank you for your help.

At [www.unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk) you can:

- Report repairs
- Get help from our dedicated employment team
- Find out about opportunities to get involved
- Comment on the latest news and events
- Get help with benefits and budgeting



## Home Is Where The Heart Is

**This Valentine's Day, our 'Home is where the heart is' event attracted over 50 people to our latest development, 'The Beverleys'.**



The celebration welcomed the new residents and gave them the opportunity to meet neighbours and local councillors.

Upon arrival, residents were given Valentine's themed treats. Unity's Chief Executive, Ali Akbor, and Amanda Garrand from Together Housing Group welcomed them to their new homes, followed by a buffet at Rowland Road Working Men's Club.

Residents are delighted with their new homes. *"I'm loving the house, the area is really nice and neighbours are friendly. I can never imagine leaving!"*

The development brought more than just new homes to Beeston. It also brought economic opportunities. Construction company *Bramalls* (part of *Keepmoat*) hosted work experience placements and took on apprentices from the local area, leading to six people getting full-time jobs.



## Register today! to enter FREE prize draw

With 'My Unity' you can:

- Report repairs and see your repairs history
- Get help from our dedicated employment team
- Find out about opportunities to get involved
- Comment on the latest news and events
- Get help with benefits and budgeting

You could win:

- an LCD flat screen TV
- a digital MP3 player
- a £30 Argos voucher!

Signing up to 'My Unity' couldn't be easier! Just follow these simple steps:

- 1 Go to [www.unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk)
- 2 Click the link 'My Unity' at the top of the page (you will need your tenancy reference number)
- 3 Access your account online!

### Need help signing up?

Our IT team will be happy to help you sign up to 'My Unity' and will be able to explain the features of the new website. Just call our office and ask for the IT department.



Win top prizes!



## Fridge broken? Washing machine on the blink?

**Don't use expensive weekly payment companies - look at your local credit union deals.**

With the demise of the crisis loan, many people on low incomes are going to find it difficult to replace essential household white goods if they break suddenly. We say **AVOID** payday loans, **AVOID** doorstep lenders, and **AVOID** weekly payment stores like *Brighthouse*, as you'll end up paying far more than you should do.

If you go for an ethical organisation like *Co-operative Electrical* or *Smarterbuys* and access cheap loans from your local credit union, you'll be saving yourself £100's.

### Fantastic deals on electrical goods

From Leeds City Credit Union and Co-operative Electrical



**Leeds City Credit Union has teamed up with Co-operative Electrical to provide high quality electrical products at affordable prices.**

Why pay the high interest rates charged by the weekly repayment stores and door step lenders? LCCU and CO-OP electrical work in partnership to ensure that there is a cheaper and more ethical way for you to purchase electrical goods.

#### The Essentials Package – Fridge freezer, Washing Machine & Cooker



The essentials Package consists of...

- 1000 spin washer
- Electric cooker
- A rated fridge freezer in white

Price includes free delivery & removal of your old appliances

**£499** Normal Price £523.97 when bought separately

£500 Loan over 33 weeks  
£17 per week  
Total repay £540.19

**26.8%**  
Representative  
APR

For all other electrical goods please see [www.coopelectricalshop.co.uk](http://www.coopelectricalshop.co.uk)

Make the smart choice and come to the LCCU for an electrical goods loan. Here's how we compare.....

Lender	Loan Amount	No. Of Weeks	Weekly Repayments	APR Representative	Total Repaid	Saving
Lender 1	£500	31	£25 per week	<b>365.1%</b>	£775.00	£0
Lender 2	£500	33	£25 per week	<b>433.4%</b>	£825.00	£0
LCCU	£500	33	£17 per week	<b>26.8%</b>	£540.19	£248.81

### Leeds City Credit Union branches

**City Centre One Stop Centre, Great George St**  
Monday – Friday 9.30am – 5.00pm

**South Seacroft One Stop Centre**  
Monday to Friday 9.00am – 3.00pm

**Dewsbury Road One Stop Centre**  
Mon, Wed & Friday 8.30am – 3.00pm

**Kirkgate**  
Mon, Tues, Wed, Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm  
Thursday 8.30am – 6.00pm

**Armley One Stop Centre**  
Monday to Friday 9.00am – 3.00pm

**The Reginald Centre**  
Wednesday 1.30pm – 4.30pm

**Compton One Stop Centre**  
Wednesday & Friday 9.00am – 12.30pm

**T: 0113 242 3343**

[www.leedscitycreditunion.co.uk](http://www.leedscitycreditunion.co.uk)



**Wish you could get big product discounts and low interest finance deals?**

*Smarterbuys is an exciting website that makes white goods, furniture, electrical products - and much more - available to you at massively discounted prices.*

It is with sadness that we announce the death of Mr Thomas Woodburn, Unity's longest-serving tenant.

Even at 87, Mr Woodburn was a cheerful and active man, who would often engage Unity staff in conversation when out on Chapeltown Road. Once he started talking about his family, it could be a long chat, as he was equally proud of each of his six daughters and his only son.

We will remember Mr Woodburn as a warm and humorous man, whose strong devotion to his family was inspiring.

His sudden parting was a real shock and he will be missed by us all.

Mr Woodburn is pictured, right, with Unity's Chief Executive, Ali Akbor, cutting the birthday cake for Unity's 25th birthday celebrations last year.



## Repairs round-up

### Tony's tips

Maintenance man Tony has a word

#### Change your bulbs!

Unfortunately, some people are still ringing our reception and expecting someone from Unity to come out and change their bulb or striplight tube for them. We can't say this often enough - **if a bulb or fluorescent tube stops working, it's your responsibility to replace it.**

If you're elderly or disabled and have no family or friends living nearby who can help you, we may be able to send someone down to do it for you. However, you still need to buy a new bulb or tube first. We will not buy one for you.

I know that some of these new energy-saving bulbs seem expensive, but they last for years, so they're saving you money in the long run.

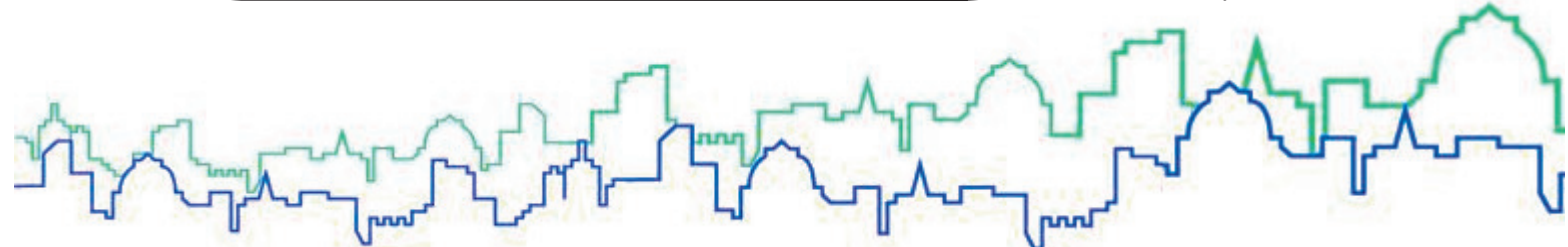
Tony



This issue's **£50** repairs satisfaction slip **prize draw** winner is Ms Potter from Moortown.



If you have a repair, send your slip back and you could win **£50!**



# 08 Clive's welfare rights update

Worried about changes to the benefits system? Our Financial Inclusion Officer, Clive Greenwood, tells you what you need to know.



## Housing Benefit under-occupancy reductions - getting help

From April, tenants who have more rooms than they need under government guidelines will start having to pay either 14% or 25% of their rent themselves.

Please remember this Housing Benefit reform only affects working age tenants. Tenants who get Pension Credit will not be affected by this change.

The Government has announced increased funding for **Discretionary Housing Payments** to help tenants affected by the "bedroom tax". Priority will be given to the following people.

- **Older people** approaching pension age where work is not a realistic option
- **Disabled people** living in properties with significant adaptations
- **Foster carers** and kinship care arrangements (council supported)
- **Single people** who need an extra room for **child access**

If you believe you fall into one of the groups of people listed above, tell Unity as soon as possible. We can help you to apply for a discretionary payment.

Please also contact us if you need a bedroom for **a carer who does not live with you**, but stays regularly overnight to care for you or your partner. Please also contact us if you have a bedroom that **a student studying away from home** uses in the holidays. In both of these circumstances you may not have to pay for the spare bedroom.



*Children at university? You might avoid the 'bedroom tax'.*

**Money worries?**  
**Call Clive on 0113 200 7753**

## Many people on low incomes will have to pay council tax - but some won't

People who previously claimed Council Tax Benefit, will be able to claim Council Tax Support. However **Council Tax Support for working age people will be reduced by 19%**. This means that many people will have to pay some Council Tax when they didn't have to before.

The following people can still get 100% council tax support: **Pensioners, lone parents with children under five, Severe or Enhanced Disability Premium claimants, carers, and war widows**. Let the council know if you qualify.

## No more crisis loans or community care grants - new council scheme

From April, crisis loans and community care grants will be abolished. Instead, the council will operate a voucher scheme. They will not be issuing cash. Instead, they will give out vouchers, which do not have to be repaid.

The council expects Unity and other support organisations to make referrals for awards on behalf of clients. For things like food or household goods, they will give out vouchers for supermarkets. For bigger items like household appliances and furniture, they will deliver the item(s) direct to the homes of successful applicants.





Our housing officers check all our homes every three months. They'll be happy to call in on you or to do a joint inspection of where you live - please call us to arrange.



**Rashpal Sahota**

Additional languages:

- Hindi
- Punjabi

<b>Friday 15th February</b>	<b>Burmantofts &amp; others:</b> Haslewoods, Rigton Green, Glenthorpe Crescent, Leopold Street, Ashton Court
<b>Friday 22nd February</b>	<b>Chapelton:</b> Jackie Smart Court, Louis Street, Cowper Street, Dodgson Ave, Hillcrests, Frankland Place
<b>Friday 27th February</b>	<b>Chapelton:</b> Harehills Ave, Newtons, Pear Tree House, Windrush Court
<b>Friday 8th March</b>	<b>Chapelton:</b> Spencer Place, Markham Avenue, Vicars Road, Gathorne Terrace, Pasture Road
<b>Friday 15th March</b>	<b>Beeston:</b> Harlech Park Court, Beverleys, Joy Roaw, Rington Road, Burlington Road, Lodge Lane, The Grange
<b>Friday 5th April</b>	<b>Little London:</b> Devon Close, Leicester Close
<b>Friday 12th April</b>	<b>Woodhouse &amp; North Leeds:</b> Cliff Terrace, Unity Close, Deighton View, Blackmoor Road, Fir Tree Approach
<b>Friday 19th April</b>	<b>Meanwood:</b> Stainbecks, Bentleys, Stonegates

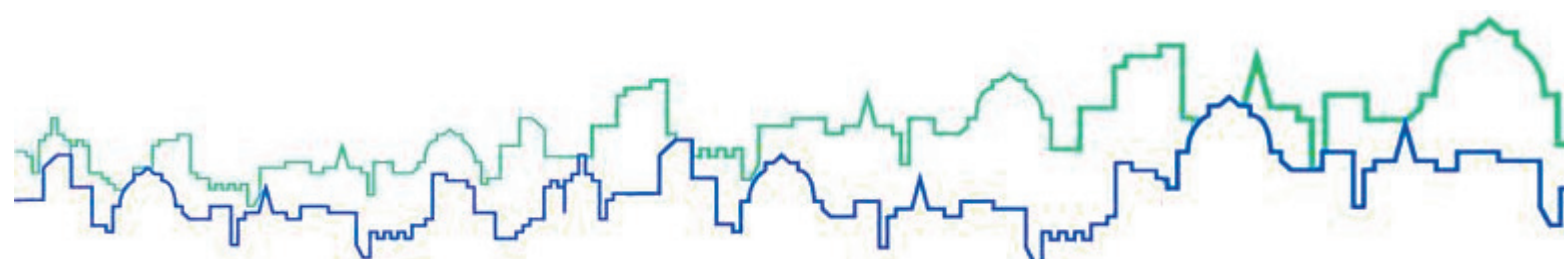


**Kamila Maqsood**

Additional languages:

- Urdu
- Mirpuri

<b>Tuesday 12th February</b>	<b>Harehills:</b> Copgrove Road, Ryan Place, Upland Gardens, Fearnville Road, Montague Avenue, Lawrence Gardens, Dorset Road, Ruthven View, Luxor Road, Cowper Grove
<b>Wednesday 13th February</b>	<b>North Leeds:</b> Scott Halls, Fieldhouse Drive, Pennythorne Drive
<b>Wednesday 6th March</b>	<b>Harehills:</b> Ponderosa Close, Hill Top Mount, Ellers, Alcesters, Bayswaters, Bexleys, Elford
<b>Tuesday 12th March</b>	<b>Beeston:</b> Parkwoods, Stratforde, Sefton Terrace
<b>Thursday 4th April</b>	<b>Hyde Park &amp; Armley:</b> Rosebank Crescent, Hessele Road, Royal Parks, Tagore House, Mitford Road, Model Avenue, School Mews, Wesley Road, Fielding Gate, Mistress Lane, Highfields, Reyden Mews
<b>Thursday 11th April</b>	<b>Crossgates &amp; Harehills:</b> Thorn Drive, Briarsdales, Nowells, Kitcheners, Kimberleys, Pooles, Maryfields, Thornfield Way
<b>Thursday 18th April</b>	<b>Chapelton:</b> Sholebroskes, Mandela Court, Olrika Court, Chapelton Road
<b>Thursday 25th April</b>	<b>Chapelton:</b> Mexboroughs, Reginalds



## Your opportunities to get involved February - April 2013

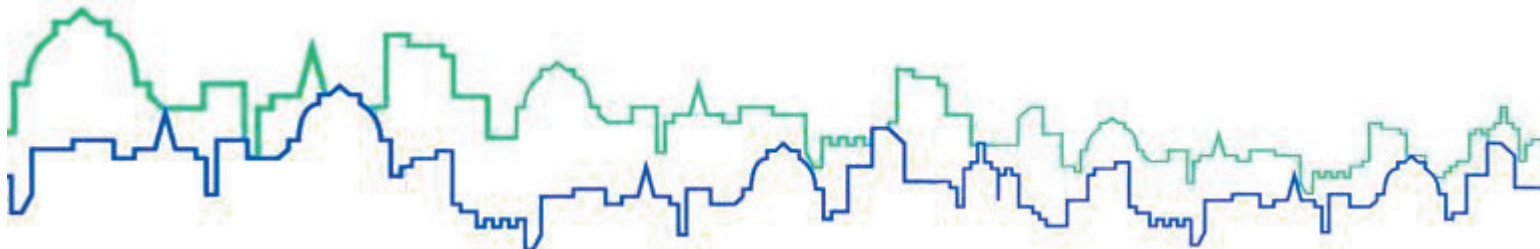


If you want more say in where you live and the services you get, join Unity's Tenant Panel!

Our friendly, informal meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month - they're your chance to meet with managers, influence strategy and change things where you live.

To find out more, contact **Emma Oates**, Involvement Officer, on **(0113) 200 7743** or at **emma.oates@unityha.co.uk**.

Date	Time	Type of event	What's it all about?
<b>Tuesday 5th March</b>	<b>1 - 2.45 pm or 5 - 6.30 pm</b>	<b>Tenant Panel meeting</b>  <b>Focus on: Contractor reviews</b>  <b>Planning ahead for the summer</b>	Meet up with Unity staff and other tenants every month. You get to find out more and to use that knowledge to influence and change the service you get.  <b>This meeting:</b> Focus on - <b>contractors, planning ahead</b> Tenants have been taking part in contractor reviews - meeting with them, and challenging them on their performance. How did it go? Also, what do we want to achieve in 2013?
<b>Friday 15th March</b>	<b>11 am - 1 pm</b>	<b>Leeds Collaborative Group</b>	Active tenants from six different Leeds housing associations meet up to share experiences, work together and raise standards for tenants across Leeds.
<b>Tuesday 2nd April</b>	<b>1 - 2.45 pm or 5 - 6.30 pm</b>	<b>Tenant Panel meeting</b>	<b>This meeting:</b> Focus on - <b>looking back, out on site</b> We'll be doing a quick review of what the Tenant Panel's done over the past year. What's worked? What hasn't? What do people want to do more of?  Also, what activities do we want to see on Unity's estates this summer? What do Tenant Panel members want to inspect?
<b>Tuesday 7th May</b>	<b>1 - 2.45 pm or 5 - 6.30 pm</b>	<b>Tenant Panel meeting</b>	Come to our friendly meetings for tenants who want to have their say on how Unity is run.  They're on the first Tuesday of every month. Call us for more information.



## Unity's 2013-2014 new homes programme

Keep your eye open for these new homes coming up in the Leeds Homes flyer. If you're interested in transferring to one, get in touch with our Housing Team and let them know.

### Umoja House, Chapeltown

This building started off as 12 bedsits with shared living space, but Unity is converting it into accommodation to match modern expectations.

**What:** Three 1-bed and three 2-bed flats for rent.

**When:** Already on site. Ready in May 2013.



*Umoja House, boarded up and awaiting refurbishment.*

*Far left: Unity properties at Olorika Court and Sholebroke Avenue*

### Stratford Court, Chapel Allerton

Redevelopment of an existing complex of bedsits and shared living space.

**What:** 30 two-bedroomed flats for rent and low cost sale.

**When:** Start on site Nov 2013. Ready in Dec 2014.



*Before: out-of-date bedsits.*



*After: attractive 2-bed flats to rent or buy at low cost.*

### Brown Lane East, Holbeck

The previous homes on this land were demolished to make way for housing that would meet modern standards.

**What:** A mixed development of 41 houses and flats.

**When:** Start on site Oct 2013. Ready in Nov 2014.



*Before: derelict land left after demolition of poor-quality homes.*



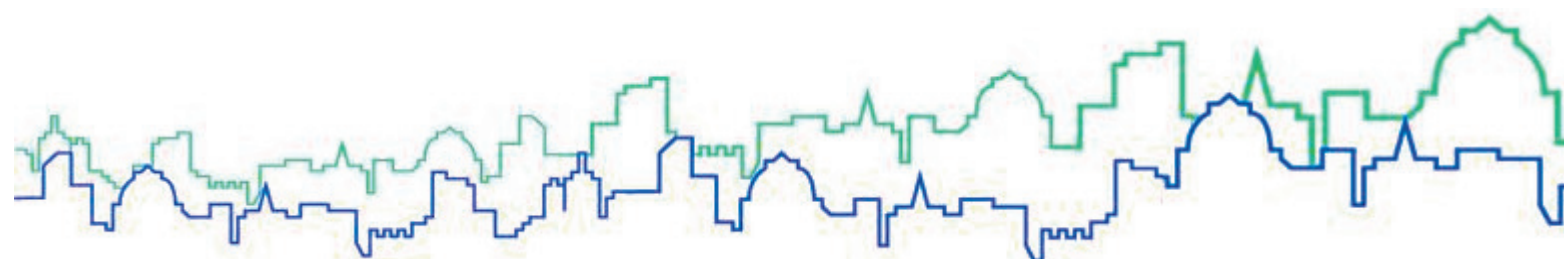
*After: modern houses and flats to suit a wide range of local people.*

## Want to move?

## Make a bid!

If you want to move, look in **Leeds HOMES magazine** every week and bid for the home you want. We advertise all our available homes there. You can also look and bid at [www.leedshomes.org.uk](http://www.leedshomes.org.uk).

To bid, you need to be on the **Leeds Housing Register**. If you need an application form, please call us on **(0113) 200 7700**.



# Useful information

## Contacting Unity

T: (0113) 200 7700

F: (0113) 200 7701

E: [uha@unityha.co.uk](mailto:uha@unityha.co.uk) (general)  
[repairs@unityha.co.uk](mailto:repairs@unityha.co.uk) (repairs)

W: [www.unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk)

### Office hours:

Monday 9am - 5pm  
Tuesday 9am - 5pm  
Wednesday 10am - 5pm  
Thursday 9am - 5pm  
Friday 9am - 5pm

If you have an emergency repair when the office is shut, please ring our emergency repairs numbers (see below).

If we have to change our emergency numbers for any reason, you can get the new one by phoning (0113) 200 7700 and listening to the message.

**Emergency repairs** ☎ 0845 634 2766

(e.g. serious floods & leaks, total loss of water and electricity, only toilet is blocked)

**Emergency gas repairs** ☎ 01757 244 510

(e.g. total heating or hot water failure when Unity's office is closed the next day)

**Transco** (gas leaks) ☎ 0800 111 999

## Leeds City Council services

These are the contact numbers for the council services that you are entitled to.

Adult social care ☎ (0113) 222 4401

Anti-Social Behaviour ☎ (0113) 222 4402  
[onestop@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:onestop@leeds.gov.uk)

Children social care ☎ (0113) 222 4403

Council tax, housing benefit ☎ (0113) 222 4404  
[lcc.benefits@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:lcc.benefits@leeds.gov.uk)

Complaints & compliments ☎ (0113) 222 4405

Environmental services ☎ (0113) 222 4406  
Refuse collection, recycling, noise nuisance, pest control, grass cutting, graffiti removal, dog wardens  
[refusecollection@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:refusecollection@leeds.gov.uk)

Highways ☎ (0113) 222 4407  
Street cleaning, street lighting [highways@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:highways@leeds.gov.uk)

Registrars ☎ (0113) 222 4408  
Births, deaths & marriages

Planning ☎ (0113) 222 4409

Minicom ☎ (0113) 222 4410

Contact the council's environmental services on (0113) 222 4406 to get bulky waste items taken away for free - old furniture, carpets, boxes, bagged rubbish.



**Unity's office is a Hate  
Incident Reporting Centre**

Unity Housing Association  
113-117 Chapeltown Road  
Leeds LS7 3HY

