

Unity's Affordable Homes Programme continues

Following the celebration of our thirtieth anniversary, Unity has started 2018 determined to provide more high quality affordable homes in Leeds and the surrounding areas. Last year we completed three new developments, which helped to provide 35 new homes and we're not going to stop there. We have numerous projects set to get underway in 2018 as our Affordable Homes Programme continues.

In our efforts to improve life opportunities and help regenerate our communities, all of our development sites will have a number of local labourers.

Find out more about our upcoming developments on page 8 & 9.



**Ancestor PH,
Wyther Park.**
8 flats & 6
houses



**Beckhill Grove,
Meanwood.**
Thirty 2 & 3
bed houses



**Quarmby Road,
Huddersfield.**
Nine 2 & 3
bed houses



**Unity has a
new maintenance
contractor!**
Find out who on
page 3



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4. Respect your community

A reminder of Unity's Good Neighbour Agreement

4. Universal Credit

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5. Avoid blockages in your pipes

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Make sure you let us know before making any changes

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Check your rent account, log repairs and pay rent on our online tenant 'hub'.

Leeds Compassionate City Awards 2017

On 7th December, Leeds City Council held its first Compassionate City Awards ceremony. The Compassionate City Awards were held to recognise and celebrate the work of the city's many unsung heroes and were an opportunity for Leeds City Council to recognise and value the important and positive work that individuals, community groups and organisations do to make their local communities and the City a better place.

Unity was nominated for two categories at the awards: Community Organisation of the Year and our Employment Services project was nominated for Inspirational Project of the Year.



Credit Referencing

Unity may shortly be trialling credit referencing for prospective, current and former tenants. We will be doing this to assist our efforts to prevent and collect rent arrears and former tenant arrears debt. Doing so is a legitimate business interest and allows us to recover more debt owed to us, which can be re-invested into the services Unity provides. Credit checking will allow us to identify where there is an unjustified debt risk, where unidentified support is required, where more realistic payment plans may be created and where there is a good prospect of debt being collected if it is pursued. To do so Unity may pass your information to a credit referencing agency in order to gain information on your credit profile and credit commitments.

Unity is required to notify you of our intention to use credit checking services. If you do not wish us to utilise credit checking services for your tenancy, you should inform us in writing of your reasons for this so that we can consider those reasons.



Unity's new maintenance contractor!

GTD Painting and Property Maintenance



GTD Painting & Property Maintenance Ltd

Unity Homes has appointed a new contractor tasked with ensuring that our highly-rated properties are maintained to the lofty standards tenants rightly expect.

GTD Painting and Property Maintenance, based in Crossgates, emerged successfully from a rigorous tendering process and will formally take up responsibility in April for repairs and upkeep of the more than 1,200 properties owned by Unity.

Gary Thewlis, GTD Painting and Property Maintenance managing director, said:

"We are thrilled to be selected as Unity's preferred repairs and maintenance contractor.

"We are looking forward to delivering our customer driven services which we are confident will surpass the expectations of Unity's tenants, staff and board members."

Guaranteed to Deliver!

GTD is a Leeds-based contractor covering all aspects of the built environment, delivering customer focused services to several well regarded public and private sector clients.

You may have already had work completed by GTD in recent months as they have helped cover the workload.

What's going to happen next?

- The new contract is set to go live on the 1st April
- A number of current operatives who work for Forrest will be transferring onto the new contract
- Further details and information will be sent out to all tenants in the post
- GTD will be introduced to the Tenant Panel



Respect your community

Unity's good neighbour agreement

As part of our fight against anti-social behaviour we ensure all new tenants sign our 'Good Neighbour Agreement,' which is an agreement between us (Unity Housing Association) and you (the tenant) that outlines what we believe to be acceptable behaviour. The goal of the good neighbour agreement is to promote community based on mutual respect on any of our schemes or estates.



Noise and Nuisance

Respect the peace and quiet of my neighbours at all times. Understand that this does mean keeping noise and music to a minimum.



Cleanliness

Keep your garden, driveway and pavement outside your property clean, tidy and litter free.

Dispose of your rubbish by placing it in your designated bin and bagged up securely. All large items can be collected through the bulk refuse department from the council.

Don't allow your children or any visitors to your home to deliberately litter.



Parking

Only park in your designated area, or directly outside your own home whenever possible. Always drive with due care and attention.



Children

Ensure that your children's behaviour will not be a nuisance to other residents, or allow them to play outside on the estate very late at night.

Be responsible for your children's behaviour and any other child who visits your home.

Encourage your children to play in an area that will not cause a nuisance to your neighbours.



Good Neighbour

Try to get to know your neighbours and try to support them whenever they need your help.

If disputes arise between you then you need to talk to your neighbour about the problem first, if possible.

Ensure that your children are made aware of the commitment you are giving in promoting a better environment for everyone to live in.

Universal Credit

Whilst roll out of Universal Credit starts in October, meaning there will be no new claims in Leeds until then, it is worth noting that there is now a **shorter 5 week wait for the first payment**. Advance payments of 100% are now available by **week two after application**, and Housing Benefit will run-on from **11 April** – anyone already receiving Housing Benefit who transfers onto Universal Credit will receive an **extra two weeks' pay** to help with rent over the first Universal Credit assessment period.

Despite all of the above it is worth preparing now by

learning to get online, learning to budget monthly or perhaps signing up for an ESOL course. Call us today if you would like to find out more about the free courses Unity offers - **0113 200 7700**.

Alternatively, contact your Income Management Officer for advice.

| | | |
|---------|---|---------------|
| Clive |  | 0113 200 7753 |
| Sam |  | 0113 200 7737 |
| Matthew |  | 0113 200 7733 |
| Russell |  | 0113 200 7752 |

Avoid blockages in your pipes and avoid a hefty fee too...



Don't flush wipes down the toilet

Toilets are only designed to remove human waste and toilet roll. Other items like sanitary products, condoms, cotton buds, nappies and hair can block your pipes and could result in a flooded bathroom.



Don't wash away fat, oil, and greasy sauces down your sink

It can solidify in your pipes like a block of lard, creating a blockage that stops waste water draining away, meaning it could come back up through your plug hole.



Bin and wipe before you rinse

Let leftover fat, oil and grease cool, then pour into a suitable container and put it in the bin. Wipe pots and pans out with kitchen roll before washing up or placing in a dishwasher.

“Flushing wipes blocks pipes”

Wipes are the most convenient way to remove make up and clean up after a dirty nappy, however disposing of them in the toilet rather than the bin can lead to nasty consequences. Although some are labelled as flushable, wipes which contain plastic do not break down in the sewers like toilet paper, meaning they can cause pipes to block and waste water to come back up through toilets and sinks.

DO NOT flush any type of wipe down the toilet.

Your responsibilities

The responsibility for this type of repair lies with the tenant. This is explained in your tenancy agreement (**section 5, F3 'Blocked drains' and F2 'Repairing damage'**): 'You must clear any blocked drains and pipes which have become blocked through your neglect'. 'You must repair, at your expense, any damage to or neglect of the property caused by you (or anyone living with you or visiting the property)'

Where you do not carry out repairs resulting from your neglect or misuse we may carry out these repairs ourselves and charge you for the work.

Estate Visits

Find out when you're next due a visit

Unity's Housing Officers Kamila and Rashpal visit each of our estates on a three monthly basis, to make sure that everything is in good order.

If you'd like to request a visit from your Housing Officer when they're next in your area, please call **0113 200 7700**.



Kamila's Estate Walkabouts

April

Thursday 19th April - Beeston

Wednesday 25th April - Hyde Park & Armley

May

Wednesday 2nd May - Crossgates & Harehills

Thursday 10th May - Chapeltown

Thursday 17th May - Harehills

Thursday 24th May - North Leeds

Wednesday 30th May - North Leeds

June

Thursday 7th June - Beeston

Wednesday 13th June - Hyde Park & Armley

Thursday 21st June - Crossgates & Harehills

Wednesday 27th June - Chapeltown

Please note that these dates are subject to change without any prior notice.

Rashpal's Estate Walkabouts

April

Friday 6th April - Devon Close, Leicester Close

Thursday 12th April - Cliff Tr, Unity Close, Deighton View, Blackmoor Road, Fir Tree Approach

Friday 20th April - Stainbeck Road/Avenue, Stonegates, Bentley Gardens

May

Friday 4th May - Haslewood Drive/View, Rigton Green, Leopold Street, Ashton Court

Thursday 10th May - Jackie Smart Court, Louis Street, Cowper Street, Frankland Place

Thursday 17th May - Harehills Avenue, Newton Grove, Pear Tree House

June

Thursday 7th June - Spencer Place, Markham Avenue, Vicars Road, Gathorne Terrace, Pasture Road

Thursday 14th June - Harlech Park Court, Lodge Lane, Rington Road, Beverley's, Harding Villas, Brown Lane East

Are you thinking of making some alterations to your home?

You must not make any structural or building alterations, any adaptations or any improvements to the property or its boundaries without getting our permission, in writing, first.

These are examples of the kinds of things that you must not do without getting written permission first:

Build an extension/conservatory
Install a gas fire
Replace or paint tiles
Fit new doors or remove existing ones

Put in new light fittings or other electrical fittings
Remove, paint or decorate kitchen units
Replace kitchen units, bathroom fittings or taps
Put in a shower

If something is not on the list, this does not mean that you can do it without written permission – check with us first.

Protect yourself before making alterations to your home

If you decide to have some alterations made and have written permission from Unity, it is vital that you locate a reliable builder.

'Cowboy Builders'

When you first employ a builder it may be difficult to tell if they are trustworthy and reliable. However, there are some things that you can look out for to make you more aware of who may be a cowboy builder:

They may offer a cheap quote for the job - this could also mean that they are just inexperienced

They are unwilling to put a quote in writing

They will not provide any references for previous customers

They will be very keen to start the job straight away - cowboy builders tend to work within one area and then move away leaving the poor and unfinished work behind. This makes them difficult to track down.

They will be unwilling to give details about their business - address, landline etc

They won't offer you a contract, or refuse to sign a contract you give to them

They could ask for payment upfront. Reliable builders don't tend to do this as they should have access to materials.

They might request to be paid in cash, with a promise of no VAT to be paid. Legitimate businesses will not work like that.

Any of these characteristics should be a warning before hiring a builder. Make sure you protect yourself by having everything in writing and ask for a contract. Speak to people who've had similar work done and ask for recommendations. Get several estimates and don't forget, cheapest will not always guarantee savings.

What to do if you've been affected

If you feel that you have been caught out and defrauded by a cowboy builder, your initial response should be to **phone the police** with as much information about the builders as possible and to **contact Unity**.

If the builder then refuses to put the job right at no extra expense you should inform Trading Standards. Call the Citizens Advice consumer helpline, **03454 04 05 06**, and tell them you want to report a trader to Trading Standards. The consumer helpline will assess your problem and pass it on to Trading Standards if it's appropriate.

Make sure you contact Unity before you make any alterations to your home!

Unity's Upcoming Affordable Homes 2018

Development continues on our new homes

Key:

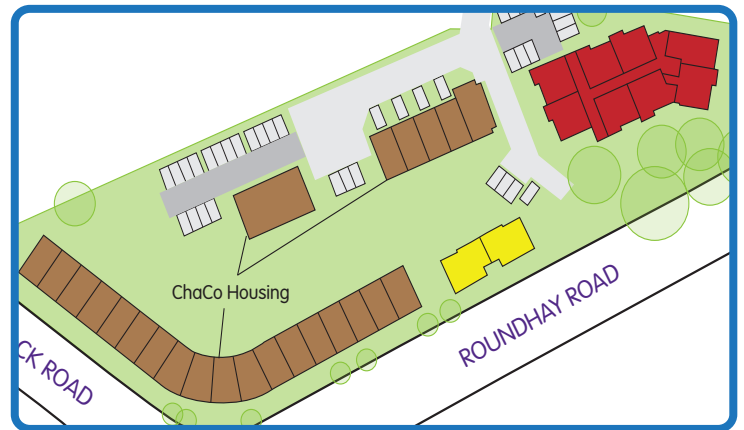
| | | | |
|---|-------------|---|----------------|
|  | 2 bed house |  | 1 bed flat |
|  | 3 bed house |  | 2 bed flat |
|  | 4 bed house |  | 2 bed bungalow |

Leopold Street, Chapeltown

Thirty 1 & 2 bed flats

The proposed development is a joint venture between Unity Housing and Chapeltown Co Housing Group (Local Interest Company).

Unity's properties will be a mix of 1 & 2 bedroom flats for over 55's. ChaCo will be building thirty four new homes consisting of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses and flats. Extensive negotiations are on-going between all parties and the development is due to start on site in March.



Beckhill Grove, Meanwood

Twenty eight 2, 3 & 4 bed houses and 2 bungalows

After marketing the site to all Registered Providers across the city, the Council have confirmed UHA as the preferred partner to develop this site. The proposed properties will complement the 125 homes the association already owns and manages on the Stonegates estate.

Unity received planning permission in March 2018 and are due to start on site imminently.

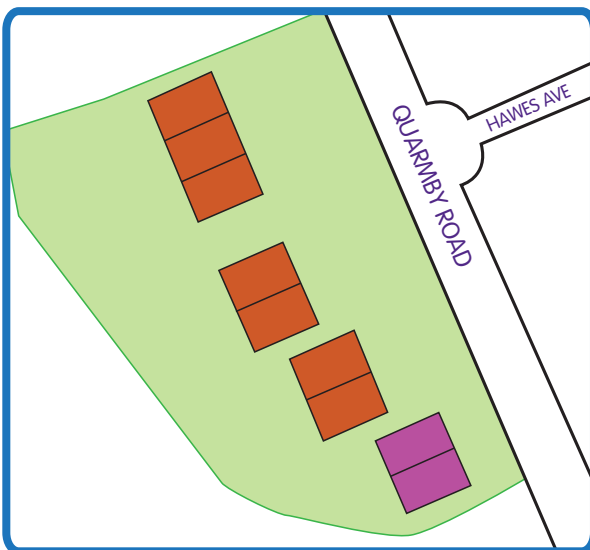
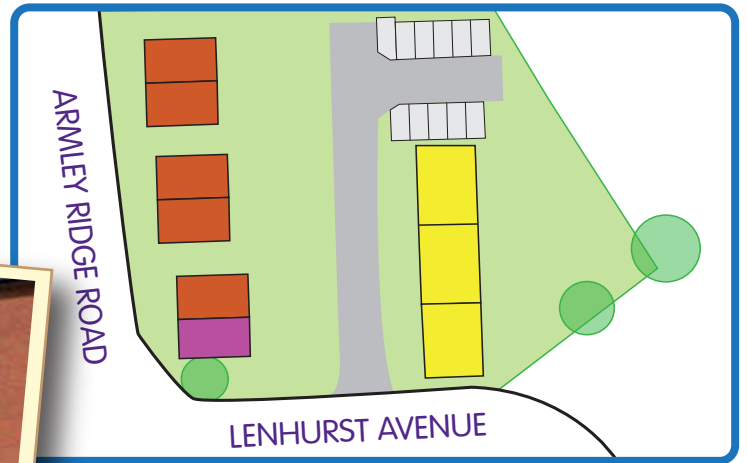


Ancester PH, Wyther Park

8 flats & 6 houses

This area of previously owned Council land was competitively marketed and the Association was successful in being chosen as the preferred developer.

ESH construction began on site in October 2017 and have made good progress. Practical completion is due to occur in December 2018



Quarmby Road, Huddersfield

9 houses

Planning for our second development outside of Leeds was agreed in December 2017. Jack Lunn Construction were awarded the contract and have started work on site.



Construction vacancies

Opportunities on our new developments

We are currently looking for general labourers to work on our developments in 2018.

Applicants must have a CSCS card. Find more information on our website:

<http://unityha.co.uk/careers>

Noma Moyo

Employment Outreach Officer

☎ 0113 200 7746 📞 07714 134 531

✉ noma.moyo@unityha.co.uk

Kelly Jennings

Outreach Support Worker

☎ 0113 200 7738 📞 07730 870 810

✉ kelly.jennings@unityha.co.uk

Paid positions!



Mutual Exchanges

Find your perfect new home

Do you have spare bedrooms in your house ?

Are you struggling to afford the 'bedroom-tax'?

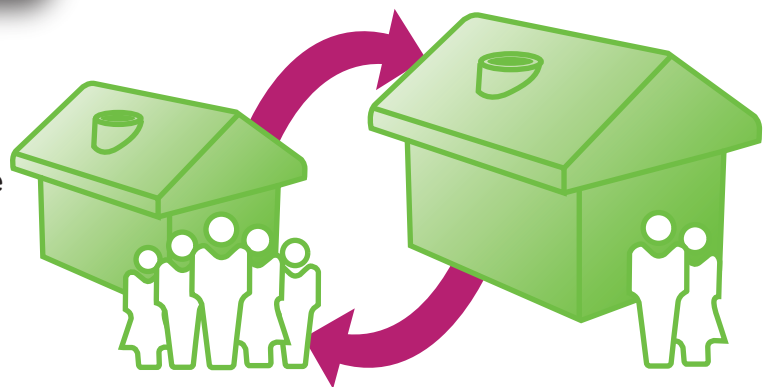
Are you struggling to look after a property that is too big for you?

Is your family overcrowded in your homes and do you need more bedrooms?

Would you like to live in a different area or in a different type of property?

If you would like some more information about mutual exchanges, get in touch with your Housing Officer.

If you answered yes to any of these questions, maybe you should consider a mutual exchange! Unity Housing Association will only accommodate direct exchanges. A direct exchange is a mutual exchange between two parties. Exchanges don't have to be between Unity tenants, you can swap with any other housing association or council tenant.



You can now swap your home online!

The Government have set up a national mutual exchange scheme called 'Homeswap Direct' which means you can look for families to swap with not only in Leeds, but in any part of the country. Visit www.houseexchange.org.uk

You will need to complete the online registration form to receive your ID number and password. Within a few days of registering you will be able to:

- Advertise your home online
- Get in touch with other tenants wanting to swap their homes, locally, regionally and nationally.





Check your rent account, log repairs and pay rent online!

'My Unity' is an online resource that allows Unity tenants to:

- Report repairs and see your repairs history
- View and print up-to-date rent statements
- Monitor your rent charges and make payments online

How do I register?

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

- 1** Go to www.unityha.co.uk
- 2** Click the link to 'MyUnity' on the homepage
- 3** Register your details. You will need your tenancy reference number and an email address.



Need help signing up?

Our IT team will be happy to help you sign up to 'MyUnity' and will be able to explain the features of the new website. Just call our office if you need some help.

Are you on social media?

Unity is keen to engage with residents via Facebook and Twitter so that we can keep you up to date with news and events.

Our social media pages allow us to share important information quickly and effectively, and the service is free. It also allows us to respond to any queries quickly and can be passed onto the relevant member of staff so that they can help.



Search 'Unity Homes and Enterprise'



Search '@UnityHomes'

Do you need help getting online?

**UK Online Centre - Unity Business Centre,
26 Roundhay Road, LS7 1AB**

If you do not have a social media account or don't feel comfortable using computers, our Employment Services team run FREE UK Online Centre training. For more information, call **Noma** on **0113 200 7746**

**Modern Technology Club - Feel Good Factor,
53 Louis Street, LS7 4BP**

Feel Good Factor host technology training every Tuesday from 10am-12pm. Drop in and find out more about using your laptop, phone or tablet. Sessions cost 50p. For more information, call **Esther** on **0113 350 4200**

Contacting Unity

T: 0113 200 7700

E: uha@unityha.co.uk

W: www.unityha.co.uk

Publications

You can access any of Unity's publications, including leaflets, newsletters and reports, for free on our website:

www.unityha.co.uk/publications

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

Emergency Repairs  01757 244 510

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

Emergency Gas Repairs  01274 603 333

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

Transco (gas leaks)  0800 111 999

Repairs by email: repairs@unityha.co.uk

For information at your fingertips, visit our website at www.unityha.co.uk for leaflets, latest news and community information.

For comments and suggestions about this newsletter please contact Nathan Dale on

0113 200 7751 or email


nathan.dale@unityha.co.uk

Leeds City Council Services

Adult Social Care

 0113 222 4401

Anti-Social Behaviour


 0113 222 4402

 onestop@leeds.gov.uk

Children Social Care

 0113 222 4403

Council tax and housing benefit

 0113 222 4404

 lcc.benefits@leeds.gov.uk

Complaints and compliments

 0113 222 4405


Environmental health

Contact the Council's environmental services to get bulky items taken away for free.

 0113 222 4406

 refusecollection@leeds.gov.uk

Roads and pavements

 0113 222 4407

 highways@leeds.gov.uk

Registrars

 0113 222 4408

Planning

 0113 222 4409

Minicom

 0113 222 4410

Problems understanding?

If you need any of our information translating or if you need an interpreter, please contact us. We can also provide this information in large print or on CD if you need us to.



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