

Unity News

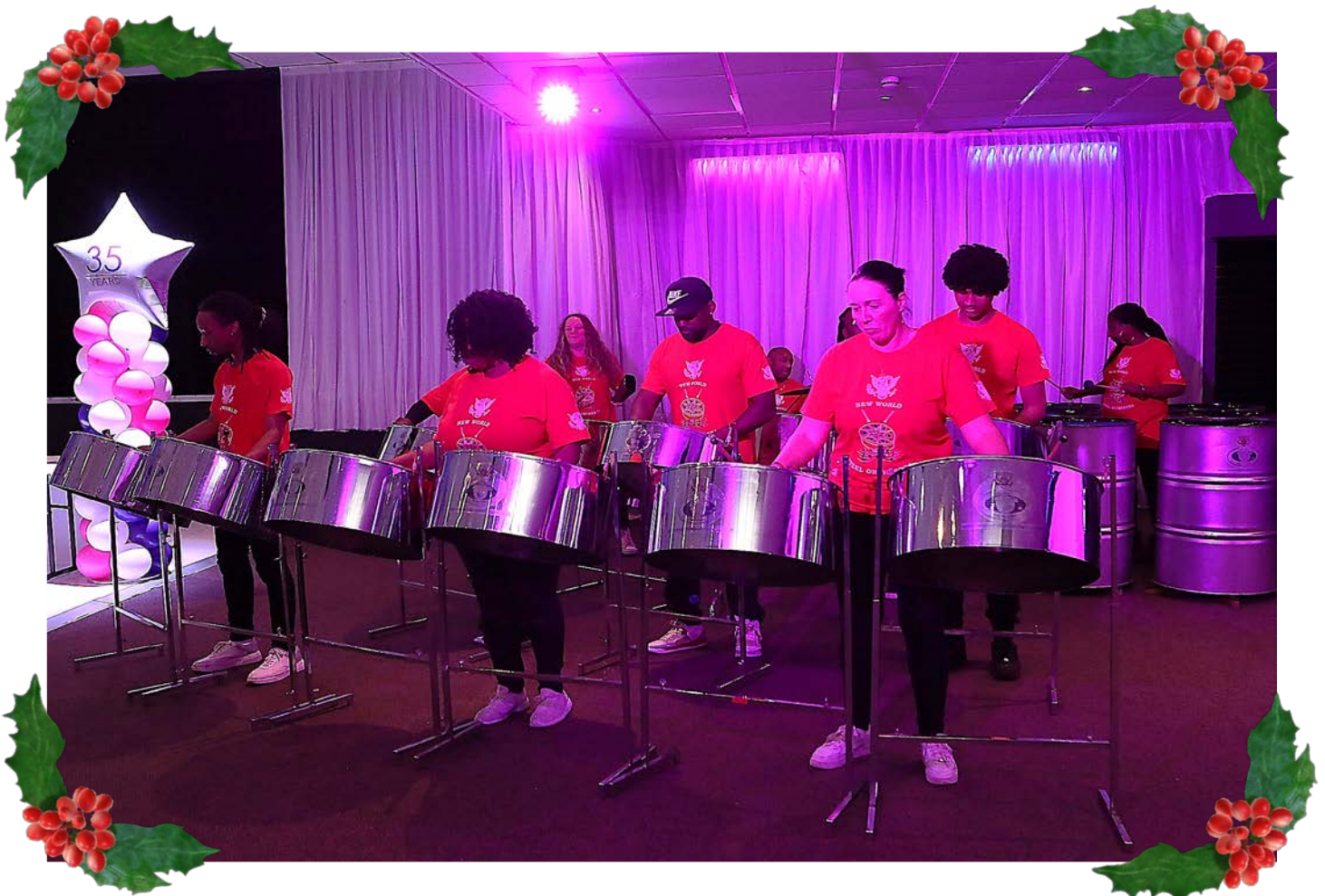
Winter 2022

Unity

Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

Merry Christmas to all our Resident's



See inside to see how Unity Housing Association
celebrated its 35th Anniversary

Our office will be
closed on 23rd
December and
re-open on 3rd
January

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Sim Cards With Data

Access the internet anywhere!

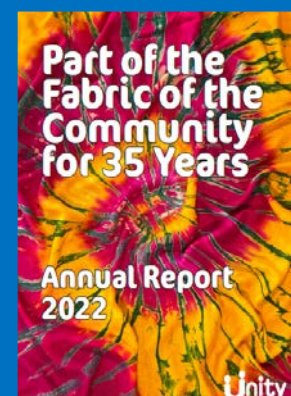
Unity have partnered with National Databank to provide our tenants and clients with the option of accessing the internet, anywhere at anytime! The Sim Cards are provided by O2, Vodafone and Three, so a device that supports one of these services will be needed in order to use the sim card.

Interested? contact our employment services team at employmentoutreach@unityha.co.uk



Unity Annual Report 2022

Want to know more about the work of Unity? our annual report 2022 is available to view on our website under the reports section. Find out about how Unity continues to develop new homes, how the business centre is providing support to local enterprises and how the employment services team are assisting people into work and training opportunities.



3. Cost of Living Support

We are aware that the cost of living is causing financial hardship to many people in the UK, and we want to ensure that you know what support you are entitled to.

Government Support

Energy Bill Support Households to start receiving £400 off their energy bills from October, the discount made in 6 instalments to help families throughout the winter period, this will be credited to your bill or smart meter, The only exception to this is for:

Traditional prepayment meter customers will be provided with Energy Bill discount vouchers from the first week of each month, issued via SMS text, email or post, using the customer's registered contact details. These customers will need to take action to redeem these at their usual top-up point, such as their nearest local PayPoint or Post Office branch.

£150 Council Tax Rebate - If you did not receive this payment earlier this year, you should contact your Council Tax department now. You are entitled to this payment, even if you receive full Council Tax Support

£650 Cost of Living Payments for people on low-income benefits and tax credits – If you receive eligible benefits such as universal credit during two assessment periods you will receive this. The payments will be made separate to your normal benefit payment. The second cost of living payment of £324 will have been paid by the end of November for most people. If you have not received your payment, you can report it missing by visiting www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment.

£300 or £150 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment – This amount depends on your circumstances. This will be paid to all pensioners as a top up to the Winter Fuel Payment in November/December 2022.

£150 Disability Cost of Living Payment - If you receive a qualifying disability benefit, this payment should have been made directly to you between 20th September and the beginning of October.

Household Support Payment - This funding is sent to your local authority to provide support where needed locally. Further information can be found on your local council website:

Benefits and State Pension to rise with inflation in April 2023, The National living wage will also rise.

Leeds City Council- Help with food and bills

Need support with food, gas and electric, call LCC Welfare Support Team – 0113 3760330

Kirklees Council- Local Welfare Provision

The LWP Scheme helps vulnerable people in short term crisis. Call 01484 414782 Email lwp@kirklees.gov.uk or apply kirklees.gov.uk

Universal Credit- You may be able to get help while you work, apply online.

Council Tax Support- If you receive Universal Credit apply for help to reduce your council tax bill, even if you work. Apply online with your local council.

Get Help with childcare costs- Up to 30 hours free and tax-free care of £200 per year. Get more info at www.gov.uk/get-childcare

Energy Grants – ask advice service such as CAB or Groundworks Green Doctor for help with a grant to pay energy debts.

Money Buddies- Leeds based advice service for any money or debt problems. Find a local surgery at www.moneybuddies.org.uk/outreach-timetable

Foodbanks- There are a number of foodbanks across Leeds to help you. Please see.

<https://leedsfoodaidnetwork.co.uk/find-emergency-food/>

4. The Customer Service Team

Meet The Team

The customer service team provides the frontline of Unity Services and are the people you will most likely speak to when you call the office, the team have been trained to deal with your enquiries at the first point of contact, they are working from our office as well as some home working.



Jamila Hussain
Customer Service
Assistant



Sanj Digwa
Customer Service Team
Leader



Nasreen Zaman
Customer Service
Assistant



Elisha Gibson
Customer Service
Assistant



Rahena Begum-Ali
Customer Service
Assistant



Jolene Pickles
Housing Assistant



Answering your Enquiries

We understand that answering the phones and dealing with customer enquiries is a key service for Unity residents.

We have recently introduced a new phone system, when you contact us, you will be directed to the correct department for your enquiry. We have introduced targets for answering the phone that we need to achieve, in the last 3 months 90% of calls received were answered, within 6 rings.

5. Life in Unity Customer Services



Elisha Gibson

Role: Customer Services Assistant

About me: I'm a mum of one born and raised in Leeds. I love working at unity because we share values and goals to make a positive difference in the local community where I spent part of my childhood. I started work with Unity in October 2022 as a customer service assistant.

My Working Day at Unity

A typical day rarely exists but generally starts with me checking my emails to see if any updates I've requested have arrived and whether I need to support contractors to get repairs booked in. As the first port of call for all enquiries throughout the working day a key aspect of our role in the CSA team is to support the reporting of all tenancy related issues and then co-ordinating an appropriate response which could be arranging repairs with contractors to making contact requests to housing or rent officers.

When I have a gap between calls and visitors, I use this time to make enquiries with other teams in unity, the contractors we work with and feedback to tenants for enquiries I have completed. We also offer support to the maintenance and housing teams by arranging inspections and logging jobs brought back from inspections and tenancy health checks.

I really enjoy the many opportunities I get each day to support people to be happier and safer in their home. The most challenging aspect of my role is not always being able to offer instant results for tenants.

Solving issues is a key part of my role

While I enjoy dealing with day-to-day enquiries and straightforward repairs my favourite days are those

where I can really make a difference and be creative in offering solutions to support our tenants. For example, I recently took a call from a ward nurse who was supporting one of our tenants to be discharged from their service. However, at some point during the hospital stay, support workers had misplaced the tenants' keys making coming home impossible. Working with the tenant, nurses, and our contractors we were able to come up with a quick solution which maintained the security of the property while ensuring access was possible by having the locks changed and a key safe installed. The tenant was happy to be able to get home, the nurses were happy with the speed at which our shared issue was addressed, and I was happy to have been involved in making it all happen.



6. Unity Stakeholder Event

In November Unity Homes and Enterprise hosted a special stakeholder event to celebrate 35 years of providing high quality homes, regenerating deprived communities and creating economic opportunities for people in Leeds.

Guests including Unity residents heard from a range of speakers, including Chartered Institute of Housing President Lara Oyedele, Corinna Lawrence, Chief Executive of Feel Good Factor, a registered charity based in Leeds and Pam Charles, an older person advocate for Leeds Black Elders Association. The night was topped off with a performance from The New World Steel Orchestra from Leeds.



Unity Chair Shruti Bhargava told the large audience that “two Asian women and two black men came together, ‘in unity’ to form this housing association, right here in the heart of Chapeltown.”

She said: “35 years later, we’re still here, and still making a difference to people’s lives. We now provide over 1300 homes, we run three business centres which provide workspace for more than 80 businesses, we help people into employment, we support BME entrepreneurs, and we do a whole lot more.”



Unity Chief Executive Cedric Boston said: it was now a “really important time for Unity.”

“We will go forward, we want to do more of what we do – providing a decent home and economic opportunities for people to improve their lives. But it is very challenging, so we need all the help and support we can get.”

Mr Boston said the event would be the first of many stakeholder gatherings, “where we meet, exchange information, collaborate and work out how we achieve the agenda we have set ourselves - to do more to help people living in our community.”



7. Unity Stakeholder Event



Pam Charles, an older person advocate for Leeds Black Elders Association, which is based in Chapeltown Leeds told guests that housing had become a very big part of her organisation's work.

She said: "The housing needs of older people vary. The fantastic partnership between Unity and ourselves means we can offer value and support to some of the most vulnerable in really desperate times."

Corinna Lawrence, Chief Executive of Feel Good Factor, has worked with Unity since 2003.

She said: "Unity was the lead and accountable body that enabled the set up of Feel Good Factor. We were looking to get £1 million of funding for the people of Chapeltown and Harehills, working around health and wellbeing. The pleasure of doing that work was how everyone came together, all the different groups of people and organisations that really believed in what we could do."



Concluding the evening, Lara Oyedele – who also serves as Chair of Bradford homelessness charity Hope Housing and Chief Executive of Black on Board which aims to increase diverse representation on boards - congratulated Unity on its achievements.

She said: "I think it's a fabulous organisation. It should be used as a model for BME housing associations. We house people, but then we take care of all the other needs that people have for a productive and useful life." Ms Oyedele added: "I am very proud to be associated with this organisation."



8. Unity On the Road Events



In November Unity started its On the Road Events, a series of estate consultation meetings held at various schemes around Leeds. The aim of the visits was to engage with residents at their homes, so residents had the chance to speak to members of our housing, maintenance, customer service, income, tenant involvement and employment services teams face to face.

At Unity we believe that it is important that we understand the issues that matter to residents and take action to address things such as repairs, environmental issues, value for money and service charge enquiries.

The information we received from the visits helped us formulate action plans of what we plan to do on each scheme, and these plans are to be populated on scheme noticeboards where applicable. Residents who attended will be written to with an outcome of their enquiries.

Customer service team leader Sanj Digwa summed up why it was important to be Out on The Road: "We often only speak to residents on the phone or deal with enquiries through emails so it was nice to actually meet residents where they live and get an understanding of the issues that matter to people, the staff at Unity all enjoyed the events and I hope this is something we can continue to do in the future."

We have offered the opportunity for over 250 Unity residents to speak to us at their homes, but we would like to engage with more residents.

Want Unity to visit your home?

Contact our customer services team on
0113 2007700

9. Black History Month and Unity



Black history month has been celebrated in the UK in October since 1987 to mark the contributions of black people throughout history and learn about and tackle racial inequality and injustice. At Unity we wanted to celebrate black history month and also educate our staff on the people who have been pioneers in black history. In October an exhibition of these pioneers was created at Unity by Dom one of our staff members. Dom's exhibition featured many prominent figures in black history such as Diane Abbott who is the first black woman elected to parliament and Gertrude Paul the first black head teacher in Leeds, we are thankful to Dom for promoting black history month.

We thought it would be good for you to hear from Dom and ask why Black History Month is so important

Why did you want to do an exhibition at Unity?

I wanted to raise awareness within Unity and to celebrate and reflect on the diverse history of those from Caribbean descent. It also gives us all the opportunity to acknowledge the achievements and contributions to the cultural and economic development of the UK.

Who is an inspiration to you?

My inspiration is Gertrude Paul. She was the pillar of the community, and she was a close friend of the family. She achieved so much in her time and didn't let her race stop her from what she loved. If anything, it has taught me that I can do anything as long as I set my mind to it and not to allow the colour of my skin to act as a barrier.

Would you do another exhibition?

For BHM next year, I would do something different. we could come together to make a video engaging with influential individuals within the community or organise a guest speaker.

10. Unity Christmas Collection

Every Year Unity organises a collection for a local charity. This year we have been collecting for Chapeltown Youth Development Centre, a local community organisation that delivers food parcels to those people in need across Leeds.

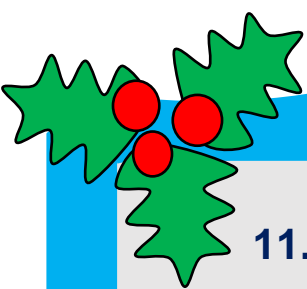


Chapeltown Youth Development Centre is A Charity Organisation That Transforms Youth's Lives For A Better Future. The sole purpose of CYDC's existence is to make a difference in young people's lives. It provides opportunities for young people to participate in a range of sports, self-development and educational activities. CYDC caters for young people and adults regardless of background, race, religion, ethnicity or gender. The centre is open to all regardless of ability or disability. It caters for children from all over the Leeds area but particularly those from the inner-city areas of north and north east Leeds.

The Centre is situated in the spacious grounds of the Prince Philip Centre just off Scotthall Road in inner city north Leeds. If you would like to know more about the great work that they do contact them on 0113 2623233 or at VFYDC.ORG.UK



Leeds City Council has produced a website to help people with the cost of living, the website offers help, support and advice on a range of financial issues, including housing, food, fuel, health and general finance. See website www.leeds.gov.uk/campaign/cost-of-living



11. Puzzle Corner



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

Test your knowledge by completing these puzzles. Send completed page back to Unity 117 Chapeltown Road Leeds Freeport NEA2498 LSY 3HY by 31st January all correct entries will be entered into a draw to win £50 in vouchers, please remember to enclose your name and address.



Wordsearch Clues

- Wrapping
- Pudding
- Presents
- Bauble
- Tinsel
- Santa
- Gift
- Elf



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

1.							2.
			3.				
	4.						
5.							
						6.	
7.							

Crossword Clues

Across

- Santas transport (6)
- Pulled at xmas dinner (7)
- Added to drinks to cool them (3)
- Santas little helper (3)
- Popular xmas movie with the song let it go (6)

Down

- Let it - - - xmas song (4)
- Xmas bird eaten for dinner (6)
- Hangs from a xmas tree (6)

Congratulations to Mrs A of Hilltop Mount who won the autumn competition!



Contacting Unity

Telephone: 0113 200 7700

Email: uha@unityha.co.uk

Website: 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 call our office number on **0113 200 7700** you will receive a number of options. Press 1 for **heating repairs**, press 2 for general **repairs**. This will connect you to our contractors GTD Maintenance call centre.

Emergency Gas Repairs 0113 200 7700

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

National Grid (gas leaks) 0800 111 999

Repairs by email Repairs@unityha.co.uk

For more information, visit our website at www.unity.co.uk for leaflets, latest news and community information.

For comments and suggestions about this newsletter please contact **Chris Whittaker** on **0113 2007751** or email chris.whittaker@unityha.co.uk

Leeds City Council Services

Adult Social Care 0113 2224401

Anti-Social Behaviour 0113 222 4402
onestop@leeds.gov.uk

Child Social Care 0113 222 4403

Council Housing 0800 188 4000

Council Tax 0113 222 4404

Environmental Health 0113 222 4406
refugecollections@leeds.gov.uk

Housing Advice 0113 222 4412

Roads and Pavements 0113 222 4407
highways@leeds.gov.uk

Universal Credit 0800 328 5644

Kirklees Council Services

Adult Social Care 01484 414933

gatewaytocare@kirklees.gov.uk

Anti-Social Behaviour 01484 221000
safer@kirklees.gov.uk

Child Protection 01484 414950

Council Tax and Benefits 01484 414950
Council.benefits@kirklees.gov.uk

Customer Service Centre 01484 221000
Customer.enquiries@kirklees.gov.uk

Housing Advice 01484 221350
Housing.solutions@kirklees.gov.uk

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 this.

