

# Unity News

Autumn 2017

Unity

Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities  
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



## Summer fun on the estates!

For our summer activities this year we decided to visit a number of our estates and do some gardening workshops with younger residents. We visited multiple estates, including our new development: Parkwood Road.

Our tenants were all prepared to get their hands dirty when Tenant Involvement Officer, Nathan pitched up his stall with an array of gardening supplies. Armed with compost, pots and a selection of bulbs, they got to work preparing their Autumn flowers for planting. (continued overleaf)

## Contents

### 3. Maintenance updates

More information regarding upcoming electrical tests, but make sure you ask for ID.

### 4. Fire safety information

A few ways to reduce the risk of fires in your property

### 5. How to take control of condensation

Take action to prevent the spread of condensation in your home

### 6. Taking care of your garden

What you can do if a tree is growing in your garden

### 7. Estate Visits

Find out when housing officers are visiting your area.

### 8. A new-look customer services

Meet the new team after a few staffing changes

### 9. Help shape Unity's services

Join our tenant panel and have your say!

### 10. The holidays are coming!

Start preparing early for the festive season

### 11. Avoid being bitten by a loan shark

Information on loan sharks and how to report them anonymously

## Messages

### Summer activities on our estates!

(Continued from front page) With the choice of tulips, snowdrops, daffodils or crocus species, everybody followed the instruction sheets and got to work preparing their pots and seeds to ensure their flowers grow.

The estates that Unity visited were: Leicester Close, Kimberley Place, Highfield Gardens, Parkwoods and the Stonegates. The aim of the activities is to encourage tenants to have more time in their gardens while keeping children busy over the school holidays.

All participants were able to take their free bulbs and pots home, to look after them and encourage them to grow.



If you would like activities to take place on your estate then contact our Tenant Involvement Officer Nathan

 0113 200 7751

 [nathan.dale@unityha.co.uk](mailto:nathan.dale@unityha.co.uk)





## Maintenance updates

### Electrical testing in our properties

Unity Housing Association has to undertake regular electrical tests on all of our properties, to ensure that your homes are safe and that there are not any electrical issues. All of our properties will now be tested **every 5 years**, with this year's tests set to begin in the coming months. You will receive a letter from Unity informing you of the testing, followed by a letter from the contractor to arrange an appointment date.

### Who will be doing the tests?

The contractors who will be doing the tests are:

- GTD
- HT Forrest
- Infinity
- Morgan Sindall

### Gaining access into your home

#### Gas servicing and electrical testing

Unity has a legal obligation to carry out the gas safety and electrical testing and it is for your own safety - faulty appliances can kill. If you do not allow us access, we will have to take legal action which could result in your eviction.

This work is essential for your own safety and cannot be completed without access to your property. You need to be aware that if we are unable to gain access multiple times, then you are in breach of the Tenancy Agreement between yourself and Unity which specifies at Part 4 Clause C1 that you agree –

**“You must allow our employees, or contractors acting on our behalf, into your home at reasonable notice.”**

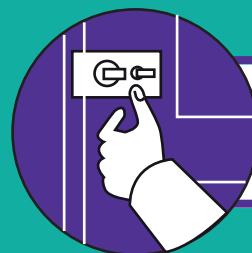
Failure to agree an appointment can result in legal proceedings, which you will have to pay for. Our priority is ensuring that your home is safe, so legal proceedings will occur as a last resort.

### Be aware of bogus callers!

We have had reports of numerous incidents of bogus callers trying to gain access into our tenant's homes.

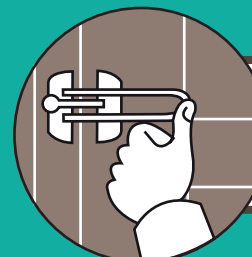
These are people who try to con their way into your home to steal or trick you out of money. They often pretend to be from a professional company such as your energy or water provider. However, they may pretend they need help, collecting for charity or say that they are conducting a survey. This type of criminal may work with an accomplice who sneaks in and searches your house for valuables while you are kept distracted.

Please ensure that if a contractor comes to your home and requires access, that you ask for official identification. If you have any concerns or doubts, do not let them into your home. Call our office on **0113 200 7700** and our customer services team can confirm if the contractor is indeed from Unity.



#### STOP

Is anyone **expected** ?  
Back door **locked** ?



#### CHAIN

Put the **chain** on  
before answering



#### CHECK

Ask for the caller's **ID**.  
Check it by **phone**

# Fire safety information

## Ways to reduce the risk of fires

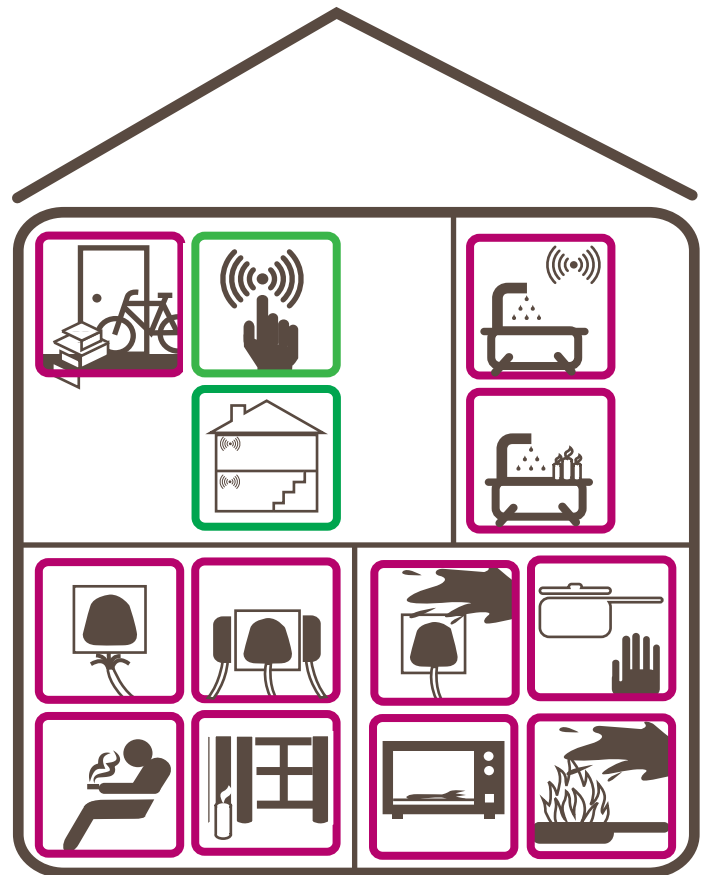
Fires do occur in flats and sadly fires in the home are a main cause of deaths. All of our apartment buildings have been designed or converted with fire safety in mind. Walls and doors between flats will hold back fire and smoke for a time but it is very important that you know what to do if a fire does break out in your home and what action you can take to prevent fires. We have recently reviewed our fire safety leaflets, and consulted with the tenant panel regarding the content. We have since created separate documents for fire safety in houses and fire safety in flats.

**If a fire breaks out in your home, alert people living in your home and leave in the safest way possible. Do not try to tackle to fire unless it is safe to do so. Once you are out of the building, call the fire brigade on 999 and give them the address.**

### How to reduce the risk of fires:

Here are some things that you can do to reduce the risk of a fire in your home and save your life and the lives of loved ones:

- Never leave children alone.
- Keep matches and lighters safe and out of reach of children.
- Don't smoke in bed. Always finish your cigarette before going to bed and make sure it is stubbed out fully.
- Never leave candles unattended. Make sure candles are put out.
- Check everything is safe before going to bed.
- Switch off electric blankets when in bed and have them checked regularly.
- Avoid the use of chip pans if you can.
- Don't overfill pans and deep fat fryers.
- Never leave a pan without turning off the heat.
- If a pan or deep fat fryer catches fire turn off the heat and leave it for at least half an hour. Do not throw water over the pan. If your safety is at risk leave your home and call 999.
- Check and clean tumble dryers or other electrical appliances.
- Do not overload electrical sockets or make alterations to the electrical supply to your property.
- Report any concerns to us about the electric supply.
- Do not carry out any alterations to you home without getting our permission first.



### How to prevent fires

We would encourage all residents to arrange a free Home Fire Safety Check. This is a check that is carried out by the Fire Brigade.

To arrange a check, contact the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service on:

 **0800 587 4536**

or book online [www.westyorkshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.westyorkshirefire.gov.uk)

## Smoke alarms

A smoke alarm is a warning device that detects smoke at the early stages of a fire. It will send out a loud piercing noise to warn you about a possible fire. A smoke alarm would wake you up and give you time to get out of your home.

Smoke alarms are fitted in your home. We know that smoke alarms save lives. You should test the alarm each week to make sure it is working properly. Smoke alarms are wired into the electricity supply and fitted with back up batteries. They should never be disconnected.

**Tell us immediately if you think there is a problem with your smoke alarm and we will replace it.**

## Don't block your escape route

Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows the quickest way to get out of your home. To ensure that all your household can leave your home don't block your hallway or other escape routes. The communal stairs and landings where you live are the main escape route if there is a fire. To ensure that all residents can leave the building safely don't place or store any personal belongings in common areas.

## How to take control of condensation It's your responsibility to prevent it

**One of the most common complaints Unity receives from people living in our properties is about 'damp', when in fact the problem is caused by condensation.**

Condensation occurs when warm air collides with cold surfaces, or when there's too much humidity in your home. This is especially common in winter, when your central heating system comes on in the cooler hours of the mornings and evenings.

As a tenant, you are responsible for ensuring there is no condensation in your home. Unity **will not** deal with issues involving condensation.

### Tips to avoid condensation during winter

- ✓ After a bath or shower, open a window and close the bathroom door
- ✓ Dry clothes outdoors or in dryer. If drying clothes indoors, open a window in that room and shut the door
- ✓ Never block, stuff or cover air bricks. You will almost certainly have problems with condensation if you do
- ✓ Never place wet clothes directly on radiators as moisture seeps straight into the walls behind it.
- ✓ Black mould feeds on residues from shampoos and soaps. Make sure that you clean the tiling, grouting and sealant in your bathroom at least once a fortnight
- ✓ Treat mould as soon as you see it to prevent it from spreading
- ✓ Don't push furniture against walls. Leave a gap for at least 5cm for warm air to get to the walls
- ✓ If you're doing something that produces steam such as cooking, or ironing) shut the door, use an extractor fan or open a window
- ✓ It's better to keep your heating on lower for longer, rather than higher for a short-time.



**Examples of condensation in Unity homes**

# Taking care of your garden

## Don't give up over the winter

### Do you have a tree in your garden?

We have been receiving numerous calls and requests regarding trees in tenant's gardens.

**Any trees in your garden are your responsibility, so that would mean pruning or clipping.**

The best way to deal with a tree is maintaining it to prevent it from growing excessively. If you are unable to maintain the trees in your garden, contact our customer services or your housing officer who may be able to advise you of a suitable contractor.

However, if you feel that a tree is causing structural damage to your home or is becoming an issue and would like it removed, **you must contact Unity first**. You **must not** attempt to chop down or remove the tree without discussing it with Unity and receiving permission. Some trees are protected and cannot be removed.



### Taking care of your garden

**The end of summer doesn't mean the end of caring for your garden.**

During this time of year, grass is busily absorbing energy, moisture, and nutrients in preparation for a long, dormant winter. Give it a little attention now, and you'll be rewarded with a lush, healthy spring lawn.

It's important you keep your garden tidy, cutting grass or hedges and removing litter.

Housing Officers will be looking at the standard of your gardens when they visit for HEALTH checks and estate visits. So please ensure they are kept well maintained.



**Amazing!**

**This is one of our tenant's gardens. They have their own fruit and veg allotment that they share with neighbours.**

# Estate visits

## When are you due a visit?

### Kamila's visits

Date	Areas
<b>October</b>	
Tues 5th	Hyde Park & Armley
Thurs 12th	Crossgates & Harehills
<b>November</b>	
Thurs 16th	Chapelton
Thurs 23rd	Harehills
Wed 29th	North Leeds
<b>December</b>	
Thurs 7th	Harehills
Thurs 14th	Beeston & Hunslet
Thurs 21st	Hyde Park & Armley
Thurs 28th	Crossgates & Armley



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**.

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

### Rashpal's visits

Date	Time	Estates
<b>October</b>		
Tues 3rd	10.00 - 12.30	Devon Close, Leicester Close, Holborn Court
Wed 11th	14.00 - 16.00	Cliff Terrace, Unity Close, Blackmoor Road, Fir Tree Approach
Tues 17th	10.00 - 12.00	Stainbeck Road/Ave, Bentley Gardens, Stonegates
<b>November</b>		
Fri 3rd	10.00 - 12.00	Haslewood Drive/View, Rigton Green, Leopold Street, Ashton Court
Tues 7th	10.00 - 12.00	Jackie Smart Court, Louis Street, Cowper Street, Dodgson Ave, Frankland Place
Fri 17th	10.00 - 12.00	Harehills Ave, Newton Grove, Pear Tree House
<b>December</b>		
Tues 5th	10.00 - 12.00	Spencer Place, Markham Ave, Gathorne Terrace, Pasture Road
Fri 8th	13.00 - 15.30	Harlech Park Court, Lodge Lane, Beverley's, Harding Villas, Brown Lane East

# A new-look customer services team

## Who are the new faces on the front desk?

### Meet the new team

Over the recent weeks there have been a couple of changes with our front desk customer services team. We have a couple of new faces on the front desk who you may or may not have met yet.

**Gordon** has been with us since August and is covering for Seh, who is currently on maternity leave. Gordon is a very experienced customer services worker and has worked in other housing associations in Leeds.

We have also recruited for the role of customer services officer. **Antony** has been with Unity for a number of years, working within the maintenance team. He has a wealth of housing experience and knowledge to succeed in his new role within

customer services.

Reception regulars, Jamila and Kam, are still working hard in their posts and remain vital cogs within customer services.

### What about Unity's handyman service?

Due to Antony's new role, the handyman service is currently under review. We have a new temporary maintenance officer in post, Terry, who will be available to cover the handyman service for the time being, however, all further handyman jobs will be reviewed.



**Gordon Drew**  
Customer Service  
Assistant

**Kamaldeep Singh**  
Customer Service  
Assistant

**Jamila Hussain**  
Customer Service  
Assistant

**Antony Wilson**  
Customer Service  
Officer



# Help shape Unity's services

## Join our Tenant Panel and have your say

### Do you...

... have ideas about how to improve Unity's services?

... want to represent your community?

... want to meet with friendly, like-minded people?

### If so, join our Tenant Panel!

Our Tenant Panel is a fun, friendly group of Unity residents that meets up bi-monthly to discuss issues affecting the business, our homes and our tenants.

As well as attending meetings, the Tenant Panel get involved with practical on-site inspections, mystery shopping exercises and interviewing and assessing our contractors to help us monitor their performance.

### What can you get involved with?

The Tenant Panel get involved with a wide variety of issues and services that Unity provides. It's a brilliant opportunity for tenants to meet with staff members and discuss important matters that concern them and their neighbours.

Tenant Panel members can share their opinions regarding housing and services, while having an involvement in key decisions such as our new maintenance contractor and policy making.

### Would you like to join the Tenant Panel?

If you like the sound of the Tenant Panel and would like to attend the next meeting, or maybe you want to find out some more information, get in touch with Nathan.

 **0113 200 7751**

 **nathan.dale@unityha.co.uk**

All opinions and experience is valued in our panel, and we would love for more tenants to get involved and have their say!

Free in-house training sessions are also available if you are unsure about certain aspects of housing and the organisation.

### Benefits:

- Activities in the daytime and in the evenings, to fit in with your lifestyle
- Develop your skills and interests
- Enhance your CV
- Free training, where required
- Influence the services you receive

All expenses covered covered plus **£5 shopping voucher** for every activity you attend/take part in and **FREE** pizza at meetings!



**Next meeting:**

**Tuesday 3rd October  
at 1pm**

Unity Housing Association  
113 - 117 Chapeltown  
Road  
LS7 3HY

# The holidays are coming!

## Start preparing for Christmas

With Christmas fast approaching it's important to start preparing for the holidays. Whether that be slowly buying presents in the coming months or waiting for the sales, avoiding last minute panic buys is a good way to manage your money. Here are a couple of ways to prevent getting caught out this year:

### Saving versus borrowing for Christmas

To begin your budget, make a list of family and friends you will be buying presents for and allocate an amount for each person.

If you are hosting dinner then consider how many people will be coming over and how much you will need to spend on food and drink.

From there, you should be able to work out how much money you would need to put away each month.

Online budgeting guides that may help you:

[moneysavingexpert.com/banking/budget-planning](https://moneysavingexpert.com/banking/budget-planning)

[citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/)

[moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/budget-planner](https://moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/budget-planner)

### Suggest a secret Santa

Having to fork out cash to buy gifts for family, friends, colleagues... the list can add up (as can the costs!). The key to ensuring you retain the festive spirit but aren't launching yourselves into serious Christmas debt is to suggest doing Secret Santa instead.

Agree amongst each friend/family group who wants to get involved, throw your names into a hat and decide on a budget.

### Shop ahead and online:

Don't leave everything till the last minute. To get the bargains, do your research early online – there will be discounts in the run-up to Christmas, and always seek out voucher codes as well.

Find the cheapest online prices using these websites:

[www.megashopbot.com](https://www.megashopbot.com)

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals)

[www.mysupermarket.co.uk/](https://www.mysupermarket.co.uk/)

If you need help creating a budget or you are struggling with your finances, our Income Management team can help. Give them a call and they can help you plan and prepare a budget


 **0113 200 7700**

### Free debt and budgeting advice:

#### Archway

 0113 200 7700

#### Better Leeds Communities

 0113 200 7700

#### Citizens Advice Bureau

 0113 262 2281

#### StepChange Debt Charity

 0800 138 1111

#### The Money Advice Service

 0300 500 5000

# Avoid being bitten by a loan shark! And how to report one anonymously

It is estimated that **250,000 people** may borrow money from an Illegal Lender to help with Christmas expenses, exposing themselves to extortionate interest rates, threats and violence.

England's Illegal Money Lending Team identified **750 suspected money lenders** in the last year, seizing nearly **£500,000 in cash**. They have supported **1650 victims** and saved customers a total of over **£1million**.

## Tips to avoid loan sharks:

- 1** If you have to borrow money - **Only borrow from legal lenders**. Ask for proof the lender has a Consumer Credit Licence.
- 2** **People lending without a licence are illegal**. You are not breaking the law if you borrow from someone without a licence but you are likely to be ripped off.
- 3** **Some loan sharks threaten you when you can't repay**. These kinds of loans are unenforceable without a court order.

- 4** **Most loan sharks don't provide paperwork**. You never know how much you have paid.
- 5** **You probably won't have to repay loans from an illegal lender**. Contact the helpline for guidance. Where loan sharks are caught and prosecuted, loans outstanding to the loan shark are written off and any victims who require it are offered support by the team.



Confidential Helpline: **0300 555 2222**



[reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk](mailto:reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk)

[www.gov.uk/report-loan-shark](http://www.gov.uk/report-loan-shark)

**STOPLOANSHARKS**  
Intervention . Support . Education

Have you been offered a cash loan without any paperwork?

Did they add huge amounts of interest or APR to your loan?

Were you threatened or intimidated?

Are you scared of people finding out?

You may have been bitten by a loan shark!



## Contacting Unity

**T:** 0113 200 7700

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

**W:** [www.unityha.co.uk](http://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](http://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**  01942 845 343

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](mailto:repairs@unityha.co.uk)

For information at your fingertips, visit our website at [www.unityha.co.uk](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:onestop@leeds.gov.uk)

### Children Social Care

 0113 222 4403

### Council tax and housing benefit

 0113 222 4404

 [lcc.benefits@leeds.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:refusecollection@leeds.gov.uk)

### Roads and pavements

 0113 222 4407

 [highways@leeds.gov.uk](mailto: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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SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE®



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national



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IN PEOPLE

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