



plusdane.co.uk

# unity

customer magazine

Plus Dane Housing

Issue 45 | Summer 2023

inside:



Meet CAP:  
our new  
customer  
panel

Tenant  
satisfaction  
How we  
are doing

Pocket  
Power  
Save on  
your bills

# hello and welcome to the summer edition of **unity** magazine

We hope you find the information in Unity useful and if there's anything you'd like to see in future editions, we'd love to hear from you. Get in touch at [communications@plusdane.co.uk](mailto:communications@plusdane.co.uk).

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### contacting us:

We understand that when you need to contact us, you might be feeling stressed, upset or under pressure. Our colleagues are well trained to deal with all kinds of issues and are committed to working with you to find the best solution. Unfortunately we are seeing an increase in some customers being aggressive or abusive – and although this is very much a minority, we would like to remind you that we expect everyone to treat our colleagues with respect and allow them to work with you to resolve your query. By working together we will be able to provide you with the best service. **Thank you.**

# A message from the chair of our Board



In April, we introduced a new governance structure to Plus Dane. Governance is an important function that provides independent oversight of the organisation and how it is performing. Our governance arrangements include a Board and a number of Committees that look in more depth at specific aspects of the organisation's functions. Board and Committee Members are made up of people with relevant skills and experience to support the work of Plus Dane.

There are three Committees in the new structure.

- Purpose Committee – focussed on housing management services
- Foresight Committee – focussed on looking at the future operating environment and assessing opportunities for change and innovation
- Audit and Assurance Committee – focussed on ensuring we comply with appropriate laws and remain financially strong

Sitting alongside this and reporting into our Board is our new Customer Assurance Panel, made up of customers from Plus Dane to ensure that the customer voice is reflected, valued and aligned to the work of the organisation.

I'm also really pleased to announce that we have just appointed three new Board members:

- David Parr who is a former chief executive of Halton Borough Council
- Earl Jenkins who is a head of year in a secondary school in Liverpool and a community activist
- Suzanne Horrill is a chartered accountant with housing experience

While these new Board members share our social purpose, they bring with them a wealth of different experience and will provide a fresh perspective to our decision making.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Fahy".

**Sir Peter Fahy, Chair,**  
Plus Dane Housing

Sir Peter Fahy was a police officer for 34 years, including five years as Chief Constable of Cheshire Constabulary and seven as Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police.





## changes to Tax Credit

**The government is replacing its Tax Credit system and starting to move people who claim them on to Universal Credit.**

If you receive Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit, on its own – with no other 'legacy' benefit like Jobseekers Allowance or Housing Benefit (see panel) – at some point over the next year you will receive a letter from the DWP inviting you to claim Universal Credit.

Please don't ignore this letter. This is called your Managed Migration notice.

When you receive this, you have 2 months to make your Universal Credit claim. **It is important to do this, as your Tax credits will end two months after the date on your Managed Migration notification.**

Even if you don't think you would qualify for Universal Credit, it is worth making a claim, as many customers could be entitled to Transitional Protection, but only if the claim is made during the migration period.

**If you don't make the claim for Universal Credit during the two month migration period your Tax Credits will end,** and you will lose any entitlement to any possible transitional protection.

You don't need to do anything unless you receive this Migration Notice, or have certain changes in your circumstances. If you are in receipt of other benefits and claim too early, then you may not receive the Transitional Protection you could be entitled to.

### What is UC Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a benefit for working aged people designed to simplify the welfare system. It combines the six 'legacy benefits' into one single payment. It is for people who are working, looking for work, or unable to work due to an illness, disability or caring responsibilities. It is replacing *Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance and Housing Benefit.*

**The government wants to complete the Managed Migration process by the end of 2029.**



## more power to your pocket !

**Did you know we could help you save money on your household bills with just one phone call?**

We have teamed up with a social enterprise called **Pocket Power**, which has so far **helped more than 80 Plus Dane customers save a total of more than £20,000.**

The service is free and over the telephone, so is great for those who are not tech savvy, don't have internet access, or don't have the time to look around for cheaper deals.

Customers referred to Pocket Power have a 30-60 minute phone call with someone from the team, who help them apply for discounts and switch to cheaper household bills like water, internet, phone, energy, banking and car insurance. **People have saved an average of £200 through the service, and some have saved more than £1000.** You can arrange an appointment with Pocket Power by contacting:

**engagement&partnerships@plusdane.co.uk**  
**or 0800 169 2988**



# Penny Lane partners

**We have worked with Penny Lane Builders on a wide range of projects over 20 years, including the regeneration of our flagship Welsh Streets development in Liverpool 8.**

This successful working relationship is set to continue, as we recently announced a new Strategic Partnership that could see us working together for another 10 years.

**Keeping a focus on delivering a quality and efficient service for you,** a number of services will be delivered as part of the new contract including general repairs, maintenance, empty property and planned replacement works, gas servicing, electrical works and associated compliance services.

**Penny Lane Builders has worked with us since 2003 and been a Strategic Partner since 2018.** The current agreement ended in June, and the organisation secured the new partnership following an open tender process.

**Both of our organisations will continue to support job creation and investment in local communities, as part of a shared social purpose.**

The Strategic Partnership will be reviewed every year. Any extension after 5 years will be based on performance and customer satisfaction.

## Summer holiday family support

The summer holidays can be a challenge for families. **Keep an eye on our website at [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk) for an up to date list of HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) provisions across Cheshire and Merseyside, from free fun events and activities to community food spaces.**





# complaints



## Housing Ombudsman Service

All local authorities and registered social housing providers, including us at Plus Dane, are required to be members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

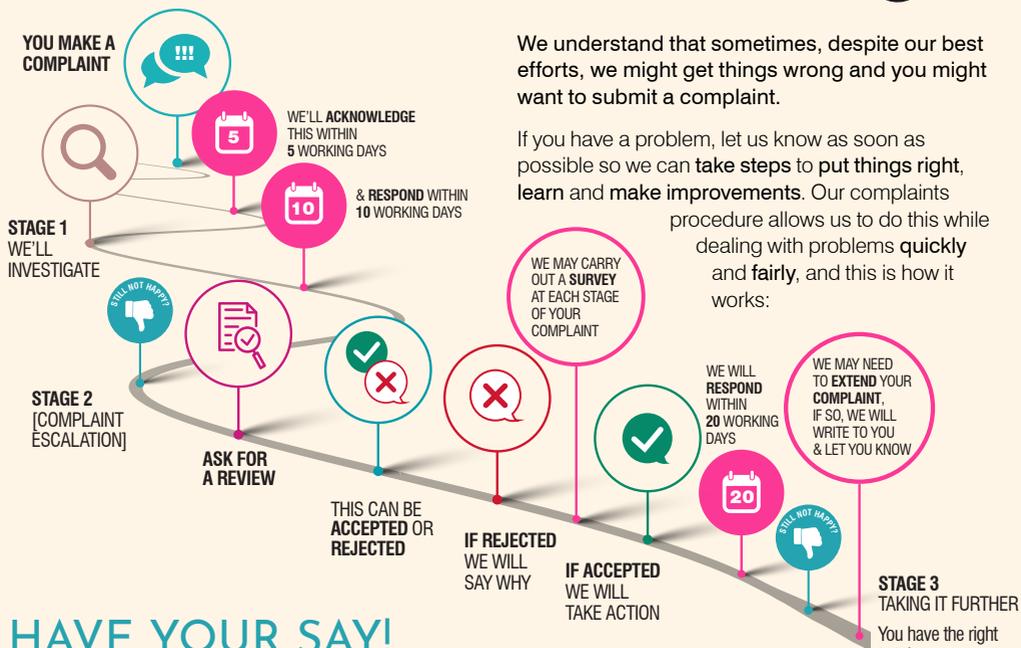
The Ombudsman works to **investigate complaints** and **resolve disputes** if you feel our process has not resolved your issue.

You can get in touch with them by:

-  completing the online complaint form on their website at [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
-  by telephone on **0300 111 3000**
-  emailing [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
-  or writing to **Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ.**



## the complaints process



We understand that sometimes, despite our best efforts, we might get things wrong and you might want to submit a complaint.

If you have a problem, let us know as soon as possible so we can take steps to put things right, learn and make improvements. Our complaints procedure allows us to do this while dealing with problems quickly and fairly, and this is how it works:

## HAVE YOUR SAY!

-  **Customer Portal**
-  **Online** [plusdane.co.uk](http://plusdane.co.uk)
-  **Phone** 0800 169 2988
-  **Social Media**
-  **Face to Face**
-  **customer@plusdane.co.uk**

You have the right to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, if so, they will take it up on your behalf



Regulator of  
Social Housing

# tenant satisfaction



## how are we doing?

The Regulator of Social Housing is creating a new system to see how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. This includes a set of tenant satisfaction measures that social housing landlords, including housing associations like us, must report on.

Here are our results from the first quarter of the year, which shows how we are doing and the targets set by the Regulator.





# go with **the flow**

**We all need to take care to avoid things that can cause blockages in our drainage systems. Putting the wrong things down your toilet or sink can cause serious problems in your pipes.**

Most people's homes are linked to a main sewer system. But some homes have private septic tanks, which are smaller systems that need to be properly looked after to avoid blockages.

If this happens, you might notice your toilet taking more time to flush, bad smells coming from your drains, water emptying slowly from the sink or bath, or even waste or sewage coming back up in the toilet or sink.

Tips to help keep your system clear, especially septic tanks:

- **Only flush toilet paper down the toilet** – never wet wipes, nappies, period products or any other paper.
- **Never pouring grease or cooking oil down the drain** – once it cools, it congeals and instantly clogs the pipes.
- **Don't use too much drain cleaner or bleach.** In a septic tank, the chemicals could corrode your plumbing, as well as killing the good bacteria that keeps the system working.
- **Don't flush away cat litter** – it can be very damaging to plumbing, and can result in a nasty clog. Cat litter is usually clay-based, and won't break down in a septic tank.

**Be aware that if we are called to fix a blockage in your home, you may have to cover the cost if it is a result of your actions, like those above. This is called a rechargeable repair.**



## Fire safety

**Barbecues and fire pits are great to make use of at this time of year – but please stay safe to avoid fire!**

- **Never** place fire pits, chimineas, barbecues or candles too close to gazebos, sheds, fences, trees or anything else that could catch fire.
- **Clear** out sheds and reduce clutter to avoid further fire hazards.
- **Never** use petrol or paraffin to start or revive a fire or barbecue.
- **Never** leave a barbecue unattended.
- **Always** Keep a bucket of water, sand or garden hose nearby for emergencies.



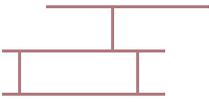
**Fires caused by items like e-bikes, e-scooters and hoverboards powered by lithium-ion batteries are on the rise.**

Take extra care charging and storing them in your home, and do not charge when you are asleep or go out. Do not cover the battery pack when charging, or store near things that could easily catch fire if overheated. If there is a fire, do not attempt to put it out.

**GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AND CALL**

**999**





# the customer assurance panel

## A word from our chair

**I am Mark Sumner – a customer of Plus Dane and the current elected Chair of the new Customer Assurance Panel (CAP). This new regular feature in Unity which will keep you, as Plus Dane customers, updated about what the CAP have been doing.**

**So, what is the CAP you may be asking yourself?**

**The role of the CAP is to give assurance to Board members**, and most importantly us as their customers, that **Plus Dane is doing what they say they are doing** with the services they provide.

**The CAP currently consists of nine voluntary members**, from across Cheshire and Merseyside and **we meet in our spare time for a couple of hours four times a year**. We have held three meetings since the start of the CAP and some of the recent topics we have looked at include;

- We heard about Plus Dane's approach to damp and mould and that all staff are now aware of their responsibilities for reporting problems when they come across them.
- The Housing Regulator has recently introduced Tenant Satisfaction Measures (see page 7) which we will be looking at regularly to make sure Plus Dane is doing what they should and that they are getting the service right.

- We have looked at Plus Dane's Corporate Plan and will be involved with shaping the new plan later this year.
- We are going to be involved in developing a new Customer Charter and will be responsible for checking Plus Dane are sticking to it.
- We looked at how Plus Dane communicates with customers. Although it is doing many good things, it was good to hear they understand the issues some people have and are looking at ways to improve.
- We understand how people have been affected by of the cost of living crisis and the importance of this in shaping services.

The minutes taken from all our meetings are available for everyone to look at and are on the Plus Dane website.

If you would like to be part of the CAP, we currently have a vacancy. So, if you are interested in joining us or would like any more information, please get in touch with **Irene Crone** at [irene.crone@plusdane.co.uk](mailto:irene.crone@plusdane.co.uk).





# out in **your** community

## Mount Pleasant **community garden**

In the village of Mount Pleasant, near Scholar Green in Cheshire, residents have been working to transform a disused park into a thriving community garden. A willow arch and new pathway now lead to a fantastic green space with picnic area, planters for growing food and lots of space for children to play. Volunteer Jacqui Edwards (*pictured*) is fundraising to keep improving the garden – **Plus Dane previously donated £500 to help get things started.**



**We were delighted to help customers and communities across Merseyside and Cheshire enjoy the King's Coronation celebrations with a range of special events.**

**We secured £6000 of funding from the National Lottery Awards for All** to help residents in our schemes and the wider community watch the historic event together or throw a party.

**Hundreds of Plus Dane customers took part**, with some scheme residents opting for a celebratory hamper to be delivered instead of an event.



**£6,000  
Funding  
Secured**



## Sign up to our customer portal!



**We have been visiting our schemes to introduce customers to the Plus Dane Portal, encouraging people to register and start taking control of their tenancy online. Nearly 2000 customers are now using the portal to do things like report a repair, make a rent payment and view tenancy information at a time that suits them. For more on signing up to the customer portal, visit our website.**



# Pinehurst

The area of Pinehurst in Anfield has been one of our largest communities since 1999, when we took ownership of more than 600 homes from Liverpool City Council.

Over the last year we have taken part in a major consultation to find out more about the needs of Pinehurst residents. We also engaged with our own Community Safety team and our Assets and Engagement team, local councillors, Merseyside Police, Liverpool City Council Safer Communities, MerseyCare NHS, and the local primary school.

As part of all this, we conducted a customer perception survey and held a neighbourhood engagement day to hear your views.

Now as a result, we have a full activity and action plan underway that includes everything from improving energy efficiency in our homes to helping customers with the cost of living crisis, working with the local primary school and offering support into employment and training.



## Pinehurst neighbourhood plan

You can read more about the full Pinehurst neighbourhood plan in the 'You and Your Home' section of our website at [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk).

Some of the big community projects that are underway as a result includes the recent opening of St Columba's pantry in St Columba's Church. The pantry has been co-ordinated by St Andrews Community Network, is supported by us, and run by 14 local volunteers.

It is open every Friday from 9.30am to 11.30am. Once you register with the pantry, you can pay £3.50 for ten food items of your choice.

We are also currently working on bringing some vacant land back into community use in partnership with a local charity – watch this space!

Over  
600  
Homes



In the next edition of Unity we will be turning the spotlight on Bromley Farm in Congleton, and how some of our fantastic partners and community organisations are making the most of the wellbeing hub in Parnell Square!





# new homes for you

## new extra care scheme takes shape

Work on our new supported housing development in Merseyside is progressing, and we recently celebrated the topping out of the building with our developers, **Countryside Partnerships**.

The scheme in **Halewood**, called **Arncliffe Gardens**, was designed by JDA Architects and includes **77 affordable apartments with facilities to support residents with care needs**.

Once complete the development will include a **guest suite, lounge, salon and bistro**.

Residents will also have access to **on-site security and maintenance, support and catering services**, as well as a **therapeutic sensory garden**.

**The scheme is expected to be completed by the end of the year with the first residents moving in early 2024.**



## beautiful shared ownership homes in Crewe



**Our brand new shared ownership development in Crewe, Alexandra Gardens, is coming soon.**

If you're looking for **peaceful, rural ambience** crossed with a perfect location for commuters, ideally suited for modern family living, then this could be for you! **Just 2km away from Crewe town centre**, Alexandra Gardens is conveniently located for everything the town has to offer, with a **major rail station** and **strong motorway links**.

These 2, 3 and 4 bed homes are being built to high-specification by award-winning developers Watkin Jones, and will be available to **buy through shared ownership**. Whether you're a first time buyer, a family or anyone looking to find a great home, **we can work together** to give you **the home you've always dreamed of**.

**Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to get on the property ladder! For more information or to register your interest, email us at [sales@homeshub.co.uk](mailto:sales@homeshub.co.uk)**



**TOWN CENTRE AND AMENITIES JUST 2KM AWAY**



## get in touch

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