

unity

plusdane.co.uk

customer magazine

Plus Dane Housing

Issue 43 | Winter 2022



inside:



cost of
living
support

our winter
campaign

annual
report
highlights

hello and welcome to the winter edition of **unity** magazine

As thoughts turn to Christmas and the weather gets colder, we know the festive season could be a challenge for many this year. Inside is a leaflet full of helpful advice on where to find support if the cost of living is making things difficult for you.

We hope you find the information in Unity useful, and if there's anything you would like to see featured in future editions, let us know at communications@plusdane.co.uk.

inside this edition

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 - Follow us on Instagram



HomesHub
by Plus Dane



Don't forget, check out our website

www.plusdane.co.uk

for the latest updates and any changes to our services.





A message from the chair of our Board

In October the Plus Dane Board had its annual planning session, which is a day where we come together with senior managers to look at particular issues in detail and make decisions around the future direction of the organisation.

During the day we took a tour of some of our supported housing. Supported housing is where we not only provide accommodation, but where there are colleagues from Plus Dane or one of our partner agencies who can help residents with everyday needs and where there are some communal facilities. This may be for people later in life, people who have been previously homeless, or people who have health issues which mean they need some assistance. It was good to have some time talking with them about their experiences and the areas where we could improve.

It's clear that the need for supported housing is huge and growing. One of our new developments is extra care accommodation in Halewood in Knowsley that will provide 77 one- and two-bedroom homes for over 55s. There will be onsite care services provided for residents as well as a resident's lounge, dining area, salon and private gardens – so it will be a great addition to our extra care offer in Knowsley, which is very popular and in demand. It is also so important that people can stay in their own community close to the shops, parks and transport that they are familiar with.

So from our discussions on the day and our conversations with colleagues and residents, our medium-term plan will include how and where we are able to offer new supported housing accommodation and services and continue to maintain and improve what we already have. Plus Dane cannot compete with the huge national housebuilders in providing thousands of new homes, but we can work with local people, local councils, charities and community groups to provide purpose built accommodation which helps those who need additional assistance to feel safe in their own home and lead fulfilling lives. It is a key part of our social purpose.

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.





moving on to **UC Universal Credit**

Universal Credit is a monthly payment to help with your living costs. You may be able to get it if you're on a low income, out of work or unable to work, or depending on the make-up of your household.

We are currently in the transition period from benefits to Universal Credit, called Managed Migration. Everyone of working age will have to move over to Universal Credit by the end of 2028. However, you can move over sooner if you are better off on UC.

If not we advise you to wait for your UC Migration Notice Letter from the Government.

Some people or households will be better off when they move across, but some people will not. Be sure to get advice before you switch as you can't go back once you have moved across.

There is a lot of help out there to support you with a Universal Credit application. Please ask for advice from the Plus Dane Income or Welfare teams or from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) before you apply.

feed your family for a fiver

Many of the big supermarkets now have a wide range of tasty and affordable recipe ideas available for free. Check out Sainsbury's 'feed your family for a fiver', Tesco's easy meal plans, and Aldi online. Search BBC Food for its vegetarian £1 family meal plan among other budget recipes, or check out Love Food Hate Waste. And don't forget Jack Monroe's Cooking on a Bootstrap website, which makes use of all sorts of ingredients, including common items from food bank parcels.

warm home discount

You could get £150 off your electricity bill for winter 2022 to 2023 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill.

You may be able to get the discount on your gas bill instead if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity and you're eligible. Contact your supplier to find out.

The discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment if you're of pension age.

You qualify if you either get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit, or are on a low income and have high energy costs.

don't take that loan!



In the run up to Christmas and with the cost of living crisis, if someone offers you an easy loan it may be tempting – but it is usually too good to be true. Loan sharks may offer you cash, with no paperwork, and lots of interest to repay. They might threaten you if you can't keep up, leaving you with no-one to turn to.

This kind of money lending is illegal, and Stop Loan Sharks is an organisation that can help.

You can call anytime on 0300 555 222 or live chat on their website stoploansharks.co.uk.

You can report loan sharks and get confidential support to keep you safe.

debt advice experts

StepChange is a dedicated debt advice charity that can help if you are worried about money. Visit their website at stepchange.org, or call them on

0800 138 1111

for free help and support for as long as you need it.





damp and mould

Please call us if you have damp or mould in your home. It is better to catch it early, than let it build up and spread.

Call us on: 0800 169 2988

how does it happen?:

When warm air hits a cold surface, it causes condensation. You can see it when it steams up windows or leaves walls looking shiny and wet. If that moisture doesn't dry out, it can cause black mould.

The cost of living crisis is hitting us all. This winter you might be thinking about keeping your heating off altogether, but as well as leaving you dangerously cold it can cause extra problems to your home, your belongings and the health of you and your family.

Not only does it damage walls, furniture and even your clothes in the wardrobe, but it can also cause health problems or make existing conditions like asthma worse.

how much **electricity** are you using?

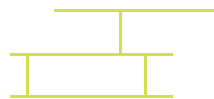
The **Citizens Advice website** is one place you can **check which items are using the most electricity in your home**. They have a **calculator that will work out how much it costs** to run different items for the amount of time you use them. Search 'electrical appliances' on **citizensadvice.org.uk**.

how to help stop mould spreading:

- If you can, you should try to keep the temperature of your home steady and not let it drop below 15°C (59°F).
- Keep air flowing by opening a window for a short period once a day; keep window vents open.
- Wipe down any wet windows and windowsills each day.

more tips:

- **Close the kitchen door and keep pan lids on when cooking.** This will help reduce condensation in the kitchen. Use an extractor fan if you have one.
- **Close bathroom doors when showering or having a bath and open the bathroom window to allow the steam out.** Always use the bathroom extractor fan if you have one, and wipe down excessively wet walls if you can.
- **Move large furniture away from external walls** if possible.
- **Dry clothes outdoors if you can.** If not, try to dry them in a well-ventilated room and keep the door shut.
- **Keeping your curtains closed all day can cause problems around your windows,** so open them for at least a few hours in the daytime if you can.
- **Small patches of damp can be treated and removed with products like mould and mildew remover.** Don't brush or vacuum mould as that can distribute it around the room where it can be breathed in.
- **Do a quick check on the outside of your home.** If you spot any leaking pipes or gutters, please contact us so we can put it right before it causes any long-term damage.



Our 2021/2022 annual report is out now!

Our annual report shows our performance over the last financial year and showcases how we have strived to achieve for our customers. It has been a year of mixed performance for us as we began the recovery from the Covid pandemic. The full report is available on our website at www.plusdane.co.uk, and here are some of the highlights.

turnover

target

21|22

£76.8M

actual

21|22

£77.8M

last year

£76.1M



we spent

£3.48M

on **repairs**
in total



97.6%

were **satisfied**
with their **new**
build home



we completed

35,172

repairs in total



here when you need us

we responded
to over

152K

customer contacts



we completed

9,191

emergency repairs



we supported

1,458

customers with their
benefit claims



we processed

1,282

referrals
to our
welfare team
with a financial
outcome of
£1.73M
for our customers



our **floating support team**
have worked with

396

customers across
Cheshire & Merseyside,
who were in need of
more in-depth assistance



we were able
to support

41

refugees
with our **refugee**
resettlement service



85.3%

were **satisfied**
with our **repairs**
service

[our target was 91%]

0.77%
of repairs
resulted in a
complaint

98.4%

were **satisfied**
with **planned**
investment works

[our target was 98%]

LAST YEAR
98.6%

on average it took us

26.6 days



LAST YEAR
19 days

to **complete** a routine **repair** from
the time it was **reported** to us

[our pre-pandemic target was 14 days,
currently it is within 28 days]



keeping you **safe**

we completed

330

Fire Risk
Assessments



we serviced

181

fire
alarms



we serviced

58

fire
extinguishers



we completed

99.94%

of gas safety
checks



we managed

260

separate
ASB cases



LAST YEAR
154

our **winter**
campaign helped



over **800** customers
to manage **another**
tough winter





new customer assurance panel will help us improve

We have just set up our new Customer Assurance Panel, which has replaced our previous scrutiny panel.

The new CAP is made up of the four members of the former panel and six new customers, as well as a member of the Neighbourhood Committee and Board. This mix of tenants, leaseholders and shared owners will work with Plus Dane and our Board to help us look at how we can improve our services for customers - to make sure they are the best they can be, as well as improving the customer experience.

The **CAP will hold Plus Dane to account** by looking at how we are performing, how satisfied customers are, and providing **suggestions for improvement**.

By **carrying out in-depth service reviews**, the CAP will be able to see what is working well and what needs improving. They will be able to **feed recommendations directly to our Board**, to help them **make informed decisions** based on the needs and priorities of customers.

Mark Sumner, who is chair of the panel and a Plus Dane customer, said:

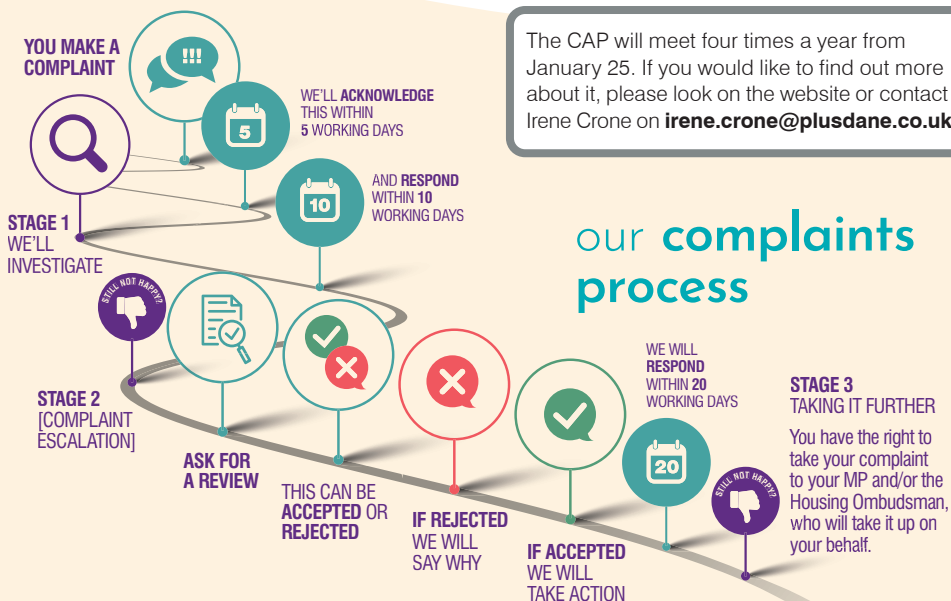
"I'm very excited about what we will be able to do to improve services for everyone. It's all about us working together so we can really investigate and challenge how Plus Dane is performing.

We are here to give assurance to Board about Plus Dane's services and satisfaction, and what better way to do that than for us as customers to investigate and analyse how things are working.

We will also make sure that we let you know what we have been doing – so watch out on the website for updates."

The CAP will meet four times a year from January 25. If you would like to find out more about it, please look on the website or contact Irene Crone on irene.crone@plusdane.co.uk

our complaints process





Mental health support

The festive season is not always a happy time for everyone. If you're struggling, free support is available to Plus Dane customers through our partnership with some specialist mental health services.

In Cheshire, we have teamed up with healthcare charity Making Space for our new Wellbeing First project. If you are worried about depression, stress, anxiety, worry, or low mood, they will be able to provide friendly, one-to-one support.

This early intervention project is designed to help you take control of your life, feel confident, and build on your self-worth in a safe and supportive environment.

Wellbeing First is open to all our Cheshire customers, and referrals and enquires can be sent to engagement&partnerships@plusdane.co.uk.

In the Liverpool City Region, we have teamed up with First Person Project to deliver bespoke mental health support to our customers. First Person Project is a Community Interest Company, which means it invests in communities by providing specialist, accredited mental health training, education programmes, coaching and support workshops. Its aim is to create stronger communities and improve mental health and wellbeing for all.

They are currently running **free sessions at the Irene Milson Resource Centre in Kelvin Grove, Liverpool 8 every Friday. Fill Your Cup** is a drop-in session between 11.45am and 1.15pm. The Resilient Minds course covers different subjects every week and takes place from 9.30am to 11.30am.

For more information, visit their website at www.firstpersonprojectcic.co.uk or email community@firstpersonprojectcic.co.uk

Emma Sneyd, Head of Engagement and Partnerships at Plus Dane said:

"We know with the cost of living crisis, among many other things, there is a lot going on for people to worry about and this can really have an effect on mental health. Opening up about it really is a good place to start, and these projects help us to reach out to customers and enable us to provide meaningful support to help build positivity and resilience"





winter campaign

spreading some Christmas cheer

The focus of our winter campaign this year is on supporting people through the challenges of the cost of living crisis. We know that some customers are already struggling, and our campaign looks to reduce some of the pressures they are facing.

We are working in partnership with our community partners, contractors and colleagues to **provide a range of support including food parcels and help with energy costs and toy appeals** for families that otherwise would go without.

After a few years of not being able to get together, we are delighted to be working in partnership with residents living in our sheltered housing schemes to hold events that bring people together for some festive cheer.

Our supported housing team will be making sure that customers living in our temporary accommodation will enjoy a festive lunch.

Like other housing associations and organisations, **we will be opening up some of our buildings as warm hubs**, for anyone who may be struggling in a cold home or feeling lonely over the Christmas period. **Hot food and beverages may be available at some sites**, and we will be able to signpost help and advice on everything from applying for benefits to friendship groups. **Keep an eye on our website and social media for more information about opening hours.**

If you are struggling, or concerned about a neighbour, let us know. We may be able to help.

Call us on 0800 169 2988



You can also **contact our Engagement and Partnerships team** all year round for more information on the support available, from access to food bank vouchers to help getting back into work and training.

To find out more, please email **engagement&partnerships@plusdane.co.uk**.





charity coffee morning

Residents of Christopher Taylor House in Maghull raised more than £500 for cancer support charity Macmillan, as part of their annual coffee morning. Well done!

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT



community safety day

To spend a day speaking to residents in the Brunswick Street area of Congleton, about how we can work together to improve the local community.



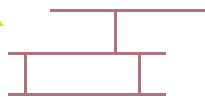
watch **this space** !

Our environmental services team has been out clearing a site in Anfield that hasn't been used in more than 10 years. We hope for community group Sports Alive to begin making use of it in future.





new homes for you



Kings Moat

HomesHub
by Plus Dane

Kings Moat, from HomesHub by Plus Dane, is a beautiful development of 3 bed homes located in the sought-after Westminster Park area of Chester. **Built by award-winning developers Redrow**, these homes are **available to buy through shared ownership** and come complete with modern bathrooms and kitchens (with integrated oven and hob). **With Chester Business Park only a 2 minute walk away**, the picturesque Chester city centre within easy reach, and a whole host of local attractions and amenities on your doorstep, you'll be perfectly located for work, rest and play.

Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to take a step onto the property ladder! Visit our website for more information.

LOCAL
ATTRactions
AND
AMENITIES
ON YOUR
DOORSTEP

HomesHub by Plus Dane is now on Instagram!

Follow us to find out more and take a look through the eyehole at some of the fantastic homes we have available for shared ownership across Merseyside and Cheshire.

Find us @homeshub

Instagram



happy holidays

Our offices will be closed over the Christmas break from December 24. We will open again on January 3, 2023.

Keep an eye on social media for our opening hours, and in an emergency you can call our out-of-hours service on 0800 169 2988.

get in touch  @plusdane

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