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plusdane.co.uk

unity

customer magazine

Plus Dane Housing Issue 51 | Summer 2025



inside:

50
Years

50 years of
Plus Dane
Our story

Wellbeing
Support
on offer

Good
neighbours
Help to
get along

Unity is our magazine for all Plus Dane customers

Welcome to our summer edition, where you will find a wide range of information about our services, our communities, and how we can support you and keep you safe in your home.

Get in touch at communications@plusdane.co.uk

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WhatsApp us!

Did you know you can contact us through WhatsApp to report a repair or to talk to us about any query you may have?

It's a simple way to get in touch and send us a message at a time that works for you. We will respond as quickly as possible during office hours, and messages received outside of office hours will be prioritised and responded to as quickly as possible the next working day.

If you have WhatsApp downloaded on your smartphone, all you need to do is add our Plus Dane WhatsApp number - 0151 351 4747 - as a contact.

8

50 Years
Plus Dane Housing

5



5



7

Vibrant Energy is an organisation that is currently helping us inspect our homes to check their energy efficiency.

They may get in touch with you to arrange an appointment. Vibrant Energy is a trusted provider to us, but if you are worried about anyone contacting you who says they are from or working with Plus Dane, contact us on 0800 169 2988 and we can verify their identity.

Vibrant
Your Property Partner



A message from the chair of our Board

Welcome to the latest edition of Unity and my first as Chair.

I took over as the Chair of Plus Dane in April having joined the Board in September 2024. I have a long history in housing having spent 25 years in the early part of my career working for the Housing Corporation. From there I led organisations focussed on regeneration and economic development and was also the Chair of Riverside Housing for a period of time. Since taking a step back from my full-time career, I have been busier than ever chairing organisations such as the Walton Centre NHS Trust, Shakespeare North Playhouse as well as being the Deputy Lieutenant for Merseyside.

I am a firm believer that everyone has a right to a good quality, decent and safe home, so I am excited to be back supporting the housing sector in an organisation like Plus Dane that has a real commitment to social justice and doing the best it can for its customers.

We are now in year two of our corporate plan, so I want to reflect on what we achieved in year one.

- Through services designed for those struggling with the cost of living, we have been able to support customers bring in additional income totalling £3.4m.
- We invested £18.7m in our existing homes.
- We invested £8m in more than 400 homes across Liverpool to make them warmer and cheaper to run.
- We established an in-house team to undertake our stock condition surveys. These surveys determine our replacement programmes for kitchens and bathrooms etc.
- We established a central-led complaints model, and we are seeing satisfaction with complaint handling increase as a result.
- We have made big changes to our structures, systems and processes in our repairs service and have introduced a dedicated damp & mould team. We continue to complete more than 97% of emergency repairs within 4 hours.
- We restructured our debt to reduce interest costs to enable us to invest more in our homes and services.
- Delivered face to face equality, diversity and inclusion training to almost 500 colleagues.

I am looking forward to working with the Board, Executive and the whole Plus Dane team on the successful delivery of the remainder of this three-year corporate plan with a clear focus on how we can deliver more for customers and improve the customer experience.

Max Steinberg, Chair, Plus Dane Housing

School's out

The school holidays can mean extra expenses. On the 'supporting you' section of www.plusdane.co.uk, you can find out about **your council's HAF** (Holiday Activity Fund) programme – this is available to **children on free school meals**, and offers **free healthy food and activities**. There's also handy ways to save money on school uniforms!





tenant satisfaction



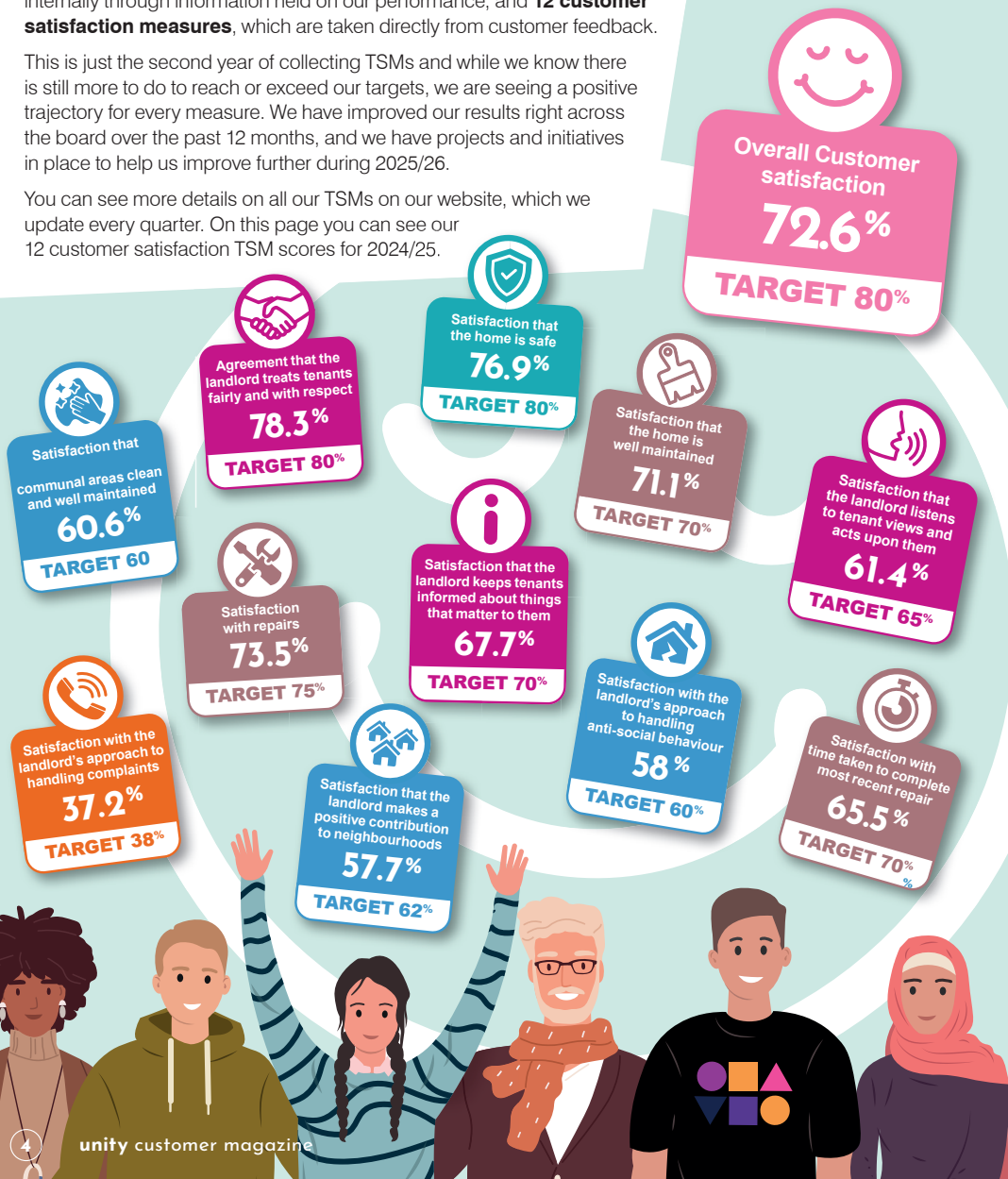
Regulator of
Social Housing

In 2023 the Regulator of Social Housing created 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 (TSMs) that we now report on.

There are **26 measures in total** - **14 performance measures**, collected internally through information held on our performance; and **12 customer satisfaction measures**, which are taken directly from customer feedback.

This is just the second year of collecting TSMs and while we know there is still more to do to reach or exceed our targets, we are seeing a positive trajectory for every measure. We have improved our results right across the board over the past 12 months, and we have projects and initiatives in place to help us improve further during 2025/26.

You can see more details on all our TSMs on our website, which we update every quarter. On this page you can see our 12 customer satisfaction TSM scores for 2024/25.



help with your wellbeing

supporting you



We are now working with Wellbeing Enterprises to help customers across Merseyside improve their health and wellbeing.

They are a community interest company that provides practical, social, and emotional support to help people make positive and lasting change in their lives.

Wellbeing Enterprises can offer **one-to-one support** to help you navigate challenges, access resources, and reconnect with opportunities in the community.

This service is available to all Plus Dane customers across Merseyside.



In Cheshire, we set up the **Wellbeing First** project with **specialist providers Making Space** in 2022, and they have **worked with more than 160 customers** since then, giving **friendly, one-to-one support to customers** concerned about **mental health issues like depression, stress, anxiety, worry, or low mood.**

Email our Engagement and Partnerships team engagementandpartnerships@plusdane.co.uk to find out more.

working together in Congleton



We have turned a floor of our Congleton offices into a Wellbeing Hub, bringing together a wide range of specialists in mental health and wellbeing support.

The **top floor** of our **Shepherds Mill headquarters** has been **repurposed into a vibrant space** that will bring together nearly **20 partners** to help improve **outcomes** for local people.

The Wellbeing Hub was officially opened in May by Congleton Town Mayor Cllr Kay Wesley, Plus Dane chief executive Ian Reed and Kate Little, chief executive of CVS Cheshire East. The space was painted and decorated by our partner contractor Bell Group.

For more information contact wellbeinghub@plusdane.co.uk.

Advice drop-in for Runcorn customers



The next of our monthly drop-in events for customers in Runcorn is on **Thursday, July 31 at Castlefields Community Centre, Village Square, Castlefields, Runcorn WA7 2ST.**

Customers can stop by at any time between **are 3pm - 4.45pm** for a chat and hot drink with your local team.

Our drop-ins take place on the last Thursday of every month and offer free help and advice on everything from accessing benefits and cost of living support to repairs.

We offer a range of support to customers who may be struggling with the cost of living. Contact the Engagement and Partnerships team on 0800 169 2988 or email engagement&partnerships@plusdane.co.uk.



meet our new in-house cleaning team

Our communal cleaning service has recently been brought in-house, with an aim to provide better quality, consistency, and efficiency for all customers who receive the service.

By managing the service directly we can maintain higher standards, respond to feedback more quickly, and create a more tailored approach to cleaning communal areas across our schemes.

Our new dedicated team is committed to delivering a clean and safe environment for those living in homes with shared areas like entrances, hallways and stairwells, where customers pay a service charge.



Since bringing the service in-house in April, we have already received positive feedback and are grateful to customers for their patience whilst the new service develops. We will be giving all customers who receive the service, the opportunity to share their views on the new in-house team in a survey which will be coming out in July. We would appreciate as many customers completing the survey as possible, so that we can continue to provide a service that meets your needs.



The decision to bring the service in-house was based on feedback from customers on the previous service.

We already have an in-house team of cleaners in our sheltered schemes and offices, so it made sense to bring the communal cleaning in-house as well.

For further information or to provide feedback on the new cleaning service, please email:
cleaning&windowcleaning@plusdane.co.uk



Supporting our LGBTQ+ customers



Plus Dane is a safe place for the LGBTQ+ community and we want our customers to feel safe to be who they want to be particularly in their own homes.

We have recently signed up to the LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge, a commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support for both customers and colleagues, as a member of HouseProud.

HouseProud is a colleague network across social housing, and we get to share best practice with other housing associations and connect with customer resources such as Rainbow Roofs – a support network for LGBTQ+ people living in social housing.

You can contact Rainbow Roofs if you have any housing issue that you think may benefit from their understanding and specialist knowledge.



Visit: www.houseproud-lgbt.com/northwest for more information, or contact Rainbow Roofs on rainbowroofs1@outlook.com or on Facebook.





your community



Members of **the sewing group** at **Derby Court extra care scheme** in **Halewood** were **celebrating** after securing some **money from Redrow's community fund**, that has gone **towards** some **new sewing machines!**



The **Bromley Farm Wellbeing Hub** celebrated **ten years** in style, with a **fun day** of activities for **all the family**.

Our **refugee resettlement team** in **Halton** marked **Refugee Week** with a screening of **two short films** about **its work** and **life experiences**, and picked up an **award** for their work on their annual **Iftar** dinner events during **Ramadan**.



We were **super proud** to support one of our **customers** who has now **raised money** for **40 life-saving defibrillators** in the community. **Widnes Vikings player Jake Maizen** did the honours launching the latest - **on the wall of Aiden Jackson's own home!** You can read more about this on the **news** section of our website.

Celebrating 50 years of Plus Dane Housing!



A lot was happening back in 1975 – and it also happens to be the year the two organisations that would become Plus Dane began.

1975



In Cheshire, Congleton Borough Council was formed, taking ownership of council homes in the area.

And in Merseyside, CDS, (Cooperative Development Services) set up in Liverpool - a co-operative housing agency providing advice and education for community groups.

Here are just some of the things that happened along the way...

1976 - CDS purchase 400 terraced houses and became a housing association in its own right.



1976

1986 - CDS opened its first new-build sheltered scheme, Radleys Court.

1986



1989 - CDS expanded into Halton, transferring 909 homes from Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation.

1989

2008 - Plus and Dane merge!
At the start we branded ourselves a 'neighbourhood investor', to reflect the wide range of community work we do.

2008



2005

2005 - Dane opened its first young persons hostel for 16-24 year olds, at Hungerford Road in Crewe.

2003 - Plus Housing Group forms - CDS merges with other organisations including Hornby Homes, Include Neighbourhood Regeneration, and NewGen.

2003

2000 - Hermitage Court in Holmes Chapel was Dane's first new-build development.



2000

1999 - Dane Housing is formed, following the transferring of 4,000 homes from Congleton Borough Council.

1999



1996 - CDS expands again, as part of the Liverpool Housing Action Trust. These were set up by the government to regenerate deprived areas.

1996

2010 - We opened our first extra care scheme, Heath View in Congleton. We now have two more – Derby Court and Arncliffe Gardens in Merseyside.



2010

2010

HomesHub
by Plus Dane

2010 - HomesHub, our specialist shared ownership arm, launches.

2012 - For five years, we manage homes for Cheshire West and Chester Council across Ellesmere Port and Neston.



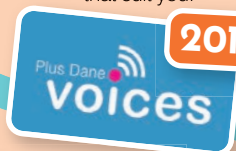
2012

2012 - The £100m Castlefields Development Project is completed. We worked in partnership to transform a run-down Runcorn estate with 800 new houses and flats, a village square community centre and shops.



2012

2016 - The launch of Plus Dane Voices, a new way of getting customers involved in giving feedback and in ways that suit you!



2016



2018

2018 - We worked with colleagues to launch our new Plus Dane values in 2018: Achieve for our customers, learn and grow, work together and take ownership!



2018

2018 - We begin working in partnership to deliver the government's Syrian refugee resettlement programme in Halton. The team now works with refugees from around the world.

2021

2021 - We led on the Homelessness Reduction Project partnership, helping to get more than 1500 people in Liverpool off the streets and into permanent homes during the Covid pandemic.



2022

2022 - Our flagship Welsh Streets project in Toxteth was completed in 2022, after decades of planning.

2023



2023 - The completion of our biggest retrofitting project to date, at Norwood and Gordon Court in Wirral.

2025



We celebrate 50 years!

We would like to hear from customers as part of our 50th anniversary celebrations. Maybe you have lived in your home since 1976, or helped out with a project over the years that has made a difference to your community. If you have a story to tell us, get in touch!



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**



by telephone on **0300 111 3000**

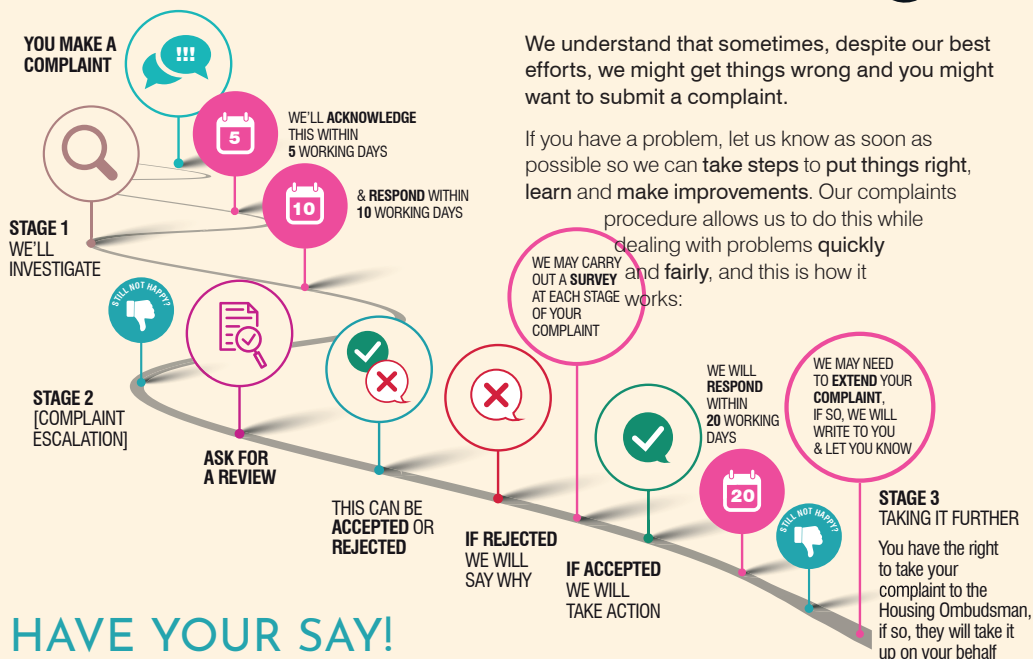


emailing **info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk**



or writing to **Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ.**

the complaints process



HAVE YOUR SAY!

online



www.plusdane.co.uk

portal



My Account

live chat



email



customer
@plusdane.co.uk

whatsapp



0151 351 4747

face to face



phone



0800 169 2988



a word from our customer assurance panel

It's Unity time, and here's your regular update from the Customer Assurance Panel (CAP). We have recently gained two new members, but we're still hoping for more support from the Cheshire area so if you're interested please email engagement officer Irene Crone at irene.crone@plusdane.co.uk.

Amanda Graham, CAP



Our members live across the Plus Dane area and are tenants and shared owners/ leaseholders. A former member now sits on the Board, and another (me!) is an Independent Member of the Purpose Committee, so being in the CAP can lead to other interesting things.

We have an away day planned for early July, where we will get together and discuss our workplan for the next 12 months. These will include being involved in an in-depth review of the Shared Owner / leaseholder services &

improvements. Hopefully our input will have a positive impact for those customers.

Those of you who have had repairs over the last 12 months may have seen contractors doing the work. This is a direct result of our scrutiny of the repairs backlog, and our suggestion to bring in extra workforce. Plus Dane responded by engaging Penny Lane Builders, and with extra input from the Repairs team and Plus Dane's skilled staff, this backlog is now back to an acceptable level, which is a great result.

Hopefully this has given you all an insight into what we do to keep the customer's voice heard.

Amanda Graham
CAP member &
Independent Member
Purpose Committee

Making a positive impact

As a responsible business, social value is at the heart of everything we do. We aim to deliver greater improvement to the economy, society and the environment in neighbourhoods where we own and manage homes.



Our latest Environmental, Social and Governance (or ESG) report for 2023 is available to read on our website now, full of examples of the work we have done over the year and the impact it has had on our customers and communities.





go with the flow



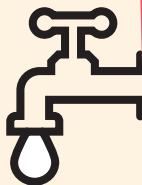
Legionnaires' disease is a kind of pneumonia that can be fatal. It's named after legionella, a type of bacteria that can be found in stagnant (non-flowing) water. It can cause an infection when it is breathed in.

If you use your taps, showers and toilets daily, you shouldn't have a problem with stagnant water.

But any taps or water outlets which are not normally used need to be flushed through regularly.

Turn the taps on slowly (to avoid splashing and releasing water droplets into the air), and let the water run for a few minutes.

If you are away from home for more than two weeks, then your hot and cold taps and shower should be flushed and cleaned when you come back. Shower heads should be flushed out on a regular basis – run the shower on its hottest setting for a few minutes at a time.

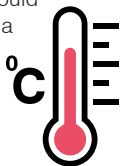


Hosepipes can create the perfect breeding ground for legionella in warmer weather as well. If hosepipes are not used at least once a week, we recommend flushing water through for a few minutes, with no attachment, before use.

Bacteria can also breed in limescale, which can grow on taps and shower headers. Soak them in white vinegar or limescale to clear it, or specialist cleaning products are available.

Controlling water temperature is important

too: All water heaters in your home should be permanently switched on and set at a temperature of 60°C. Combi boilers should also be permanently switched on, and set between 50-60 degrees.



let us know!

If your home has a communal area, whether its in an apartment building or green space outdoors, and you notice something in need of a repair, let us know! You might not be the first person to flag it up, but that's much better than us not knowing there is a problem at all. Don't assume your neighbours or anyone else has already reported an issue – get in touch and we can start getting it fixed.



Fire safety

In the summer barbecues are always a popular option. Merseyside Fire and Rescue offer the following advice:

- **Never** place fire pits, chimineas, barbecues or candles too close to gazebos, sheds, fences, trees/bushes or anything else that could catch fire.
- **Never** use petrol or paraffin to start or revive a fire or barbecue. You should only use recognised lighters or starter fuel on coals.
- **Never** leave a barbecue unattended. Don't leave them to smoulder, make sure they are completely out before leaving them.
- **Don't** empty barbecue or fire ashes/embers into a dustbin or wheelie bin. If they're hot they can melt the plastic and start a fire.
- **Keep** a bucket of water, sand or garden hose nearby for emergencies.





worth the **risk?**

Serious organised crime, like drug or gang related activity, is not welcome in our communities. We know it is dangerous and can make life miserable for those affected by it, and we work in a number of ways to make sure it is dealt with.

Any Plus Dane customer found to be involved in such illegal behaviour risks losing their home – and this can include family members named on the tenancy, even if they are not directly involved in what their relatives have been up to.

One example is a ringleader of an organised crime gang, who was recently sentenced to 16 years in prison for supplying class A and B drugs around Congleton and Cheshire. He hasn't only lost his freedom – the relatives he lived with lost their home, too.



As the property had been used for some of his criminal activities, we were able to take legal action to get it back and help keep the area safe.

Cases like this are not easy processes and can take a long time. We were **recently successful in working with the police to secure a closure order following reports of drug abuse, disorder and crime** at a property in Congleton.

The **police, together with our community safety team** responded to the **concerns of residents** regarding the behaviour at the property, including **drug-related activity, antisocial behaviour, threats of violence, and visitors all day and night.**

Residents in the local area **helped us to collect evidence** of the **issues** coming from the address, which **we were then able to prove in court.**

This case took two and a half years and we are very pleased with the outcome. Our good relationships with the police and the local community were the key to its success.

Good neighbours

Being a good neighbour means being tolerant and understanding other people's views and lifestyles - and it also means considering how our behaviour affects others. In summertime, it may be that people are more likely to invite others round to their homes for special occasions, and for these we ask for customers to be considerate of those around them, but also that neighbours are tolerant of one-off celebrations or get-togethers before reporting anti-social behaviour to us.

We have a **Good Neighbour Guide** that you can read on the '**supporting you**' section of our website for more on **what is considered ASB**, and **how to be mindful of your neighbours.**

ASB



ADR

mediation & training

Working it out

We work with a service called ADR Mediation when we are called to help with disputes between neighbours. It is a **specialist Community Interest Company with 20 years of experience in resolving conflicts** – not by finding fault or blame with one side or the other, but **finding the common ground to build understanding, restore relationships, and create happier, safer communities.**

Kenny Higham, a member of our community safety team, has also recently qualified as a trained mediator. Mediation can be really useful in **finding a way forward** in neighbourly disputes and **could work for you – so let us know if you need help.**



could you **claim?**

Did you know that more than £22 billion goes unclaimed every year by people who don't realise they could be getting benefits like Universal Credit, Council Tax support and Pension Credit?

As well as this, there is also billions worth of unclaimed social tariffs that can save low-income families money on broadband and utility bills.

Have you checked to see if this is something that could help you? You can call our friendly Welfare Team on 0800 169 2988 for advice, or visit the 'supporting you' section on our website where you can find the 'entitled to' benefit calculator to work it out for yourself.

Managed migration to **UC Universal Credit**

The Department for Work and Pensions is currently in the process of **moving all customers from existing benefits to Universal Credit.** This is known as **Managed Migration.**

If you haven't moved over to Universal Credit yet, you will receive a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with instructions on what to do when the time comes.



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Please do not take any action until you have spoken to our Welfare Team on 0800 169 2988. We'll review your current benefits and help ensure you move to Universal Credit at the right time, with the right support, to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Welfare Team on 0800 169 2988

Struggling with Debt or Money Worries?

If you're finding it hard to manage your money or keep up with loan or debt payments, you're not alone and help is out there. We encourage you to **seek advice and support as soon as possible.** The sooner you act, the more options you'll have.

For **free, confidential, and impartial advice,** visit **MoneyHelper.org.uk** – a government-backed service offering practical guidance on everything from everyday budgeting to dealing with rent arrears and serious debt.

Or you can **speak to charities like StepChange, National Debtline or Citizens Advice.** Many local councils offer free debt advice or can refer you to trusted local support services – check their website or call them for help.

Credit unions often offer more affordable lending options and may provide budgeting and debt advice services. Find a credit union: www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk

Loan Sharks



Loan sharks can offer you cash but demand huge amounts of interest on your repayments, and may threaten you or take other valuable items from you if you don't keep up. If you find yourself owing money to a loan shark there is help out there. **'Stop Loan Sharks'** is a government agency that can investigate, prosecute and even put them in prison. **You can report a loan shark or illegal money lender to 'Stop Loan Sharks' in complete confidence – you don't even have to leave your name.**

Call them any time on 0300 555 22 22 or report online at www.stoploansharks.co.uk



making alterations to **your home**

If you want to make changes to your home, you need to ask us for permission.



We need to make sure that your home is kept safe, and the work does not cause any accidental damage. While many general improvements are usually allowed, bigger changes to the layout of your home and its electrics will not be.

There is an **alterations booklet on our website** that outlines **everything you need to know**. From there you can fill in the **alterations request form** in the 'you and your home' section of our website, and **we will aim to get back to you within 28 days** to let you know if you can go ahead.

Typical alterations **we allow** include things like installing **Broadband, Ring doorbells and smart meters; carpet fitting; small sheds; kitchen and bathroom improvements; EV charging points and driveways.**

Things **we will not allow** include **power supplies to sheds or greenhouses; changes to an existing electrical circuit; replacement or removal of internal and/or external fire doors; adding or moving walls; conservatories or extensions; putting in dog or cat flaps, and ponds.**

Check the lists on our website for more details or contact our customer access team to talk through your options.

putting money **back in your pocket!**

Our welfare team secured more than **£1.8m** in income for our customers over the last financial year – almost double that of the year before. The team dealt with more than 1000 referrals and enquires.

They are on hand to help customers who may not be aware of what benefits you are entitled to, who might be struggling with debt and arrears and need advice and support, or may lack the digital skills to fill in online applications.

Contact us to see if they could help you.

£1.8m secured for Plus Dane customers



Our Welfare Team helped over 1,000 customers boost their income in 2024/25 - more than double last year's £711k!

Support included:

- Unclaimed benefits
- Debt advice via RAISE (an extra £1.5m gained)
- Help with digital forms & arrears

The Plus Dane Portal

Are you using the Plus Dane Customer Portal?

Plus Dane Housing

Our digital portal makes it easier than ever to pay your rent and keep an eye on your rent statements whenever you need to.

You can also do things like report a repair or change your personal details.

Registering is really easy, you just need your tenancy reference number and a unique activation code which you can get by calling our **customer team on 0800 169 2988** - then go to our website to sign up.

After that you will be able to access your account anytime from the website, and can also download a link to your mobile's home screen to take you straight there from your phone.

Thousands of Plus Dane customers are already using the portal. Why not try it out?



HomesHub
by Plus Dane

Find your dream home through shared ownership

Our HomesHub team has been established across Cheshire and Merseyside for 20 years; our approach to delivering the very best possible service to customers looking for affordable home ownership is unrivalled across the region.

We believe that home ownership should be open to everyone. We offer our homes through shared ownership, giving you the opportunity to spread the cost to suit your budget.

Visit the 'find a home' section of www.plusdane.co.uk for more information, call us on **0800 917 1066**, or email sales@homeshub.co.uk

  @homeshub

