

unity

plusdane.co.uk

customer magazine

Plus Dane Housing

Issue 52 | Winter 2025



inside:



Our
annual
report
highlights

Awaab's
Law and
damp &
mould

Supporting
you over
the festive
season

Unity is our magazine for all Plus Dane customers

Welcome to our festive winter 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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50
years
Plus Dane Housing

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our Christmas opening hours

Our offices will be closed for the Christmas holidays from 5.30pm on Thursday, December 23 and will open again as normal on Friday, January 2. Our out of hours service will be available during that time to deal with urgent repairs and emergencies.



A message from the chair of our Board

Welcome to the latest edition of Unity in which you will find articles on important safety information over the Christmas period, a recap of our 2024/25 performance from our annual report which was published in September and money matters .

On 27 October, Awaab's Law came into effect. There is more information on page 13, but what it means for you as a customer is that there are now strict timescales within which we need to investigate, make safe and resolve emergency and significant hazards in your home. The roll out of the law has started with a focus on damp & mould and emergency hazards but this will be extended to other areas in the future. The key points of the law which impact you as a customer are:

- If we become aware of a potential significant damp & mould hazard in your home, we must investigate this within 10 working days.
- If the investigation finds a significant hazard that could impact the health or safety of someone living in your home, we must make it safe within 5 working days of our investigation even if this is a temporary measure to remove the immediate hazard.
- We must complete any follow up works, to address the root cause of the hazard to prevent it returning, within 12 weeks.
- In an emergency situation, we must investigate and make safe any emergency hazard within 24 hours.

Plus Dane is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary of providing homes and services across Cheshire and Merseyside. As part of our celebrations, we have launched a Golden Community Impact Fund with up to 50, £1,000 grants to support our customers to do something special in their community.

Customers or community groups that customers are a part of can apply for a grant if they have an idea or are already involved in an initiative that could do with a financial boost to support its successful delivery. Since launching in September, we have already awarded over 30 projects which is fantastic news, but there is more available up to our maximum of £50k.

We are interested in funding initiatives that can deliver positive community impact, support a range of people or encourage participation from local people. If you have an idea, we would really be interested in hearing from you, you can apply for the fund **on our website**.

Enjoy this edition of Unity and I wish you and your loved ones a very peaceful holiday season.

Max Steinberg, Chair, Plus Dane Housing





winter campaign

here for you through the winter

Every year our winter campaign takes place to help customers who may be struggling through the festive season or the colder months.

This includes things like **providing winter warmth packs, Christmas presents for families, and food and energy vouchers.** And as a result, it can also **help connect customers** to our ongoing partnerships **with mental health and wellbeing professionals** and year-round friendship groups to help combat isolation.

Our colleagues also **actively support the Congleton Toy Appeal and Cash for Kids** to help families in the wider community have a **happier Christmas.**



We use our data and information we have about customers to directly contact households we think may need **a helping hand over the winter**, as well as asking Plus Dane colleagues, partner contractors and community partners, to let us know about customers they **meet who may be struggling to afford essential items** during the festive season and beyond.

If we haven't been in touch and you **need extra support from our winter campaign**, our **Engagement and Partnerships team may be able to help.** You can get in touch with them at engagement&partnerships@plusedane.co.uk or call 0800 169 2988.



Christmas company

If you are on your own over the festive season, there will be a range of **free community events** to combat loneliness and isolation, including **social afternoons and Christmas dinners.** Keep an eye on our **website and social media** for a **list of places that will be open and welcoming anyone** who would like to get involved.





Celebrating 50 years of Plus Dane Housing!

Golden Communities Impact Fund: your idea could change everything!

Imagine the difference one great idea can make. We launched the Golden Communities Impact Fund earlier this year to mark our 50th anniversary, and we've been amazed by the creativity and passion in our neighbourhoods—so far, we've supported 34 incredible projects, from environmental initiatives to youth programmes and everything in between!

Our **Golden Communities Impact Fund** is making 50 grants of up to £1000 available to help our communities shine even brighter.

The Fund was the idea of our new Chair Max Steinberg (see the chair's message on p3), **who said:**

"Our 50th year is a big milestone for us, it represents a long history of our investment across Cheshire and Merseyside communities and something we wanted to mark with our customers."

But we're not done yet. The fund is still open, and we're especially eager to support new projects in Alsager, Middlewich, Warrington, and Ellesmere Port. If you live in these areas and have a vision to make your community better, this is your moment!

Got an idea? Whether it's big or small, we want to hear from you. Visit www.plusdane.co.uk to see if your project is eligible, and take the first step toward making a real impact where you live.



how the fund has helped



The brilliant Sefton Baby Baskets were one of the first groups to apply for the fund.

A **registered charity run by volunteers**, it was set up to provide essential baby basics for pregnant and new mums in need of support. Their **colourful baskets are filled with everything a baby needs**, from babygros and blankets to toiletries and toys.

The **group applied for the Golden Community Impact Fund** to go towards **providing heated clothes airers to help parents dry laundry** more quickly and at a lower cost.

Sefton Baby Baskets is based in Crosby Town Hall, where they sort donated new and pre-loved items. Their **baskets are sent across the Liverpool City Region and beyond** – in fact, they will provide a basket for any new mum in need, providing someone can get it to them.

As their profile has grown, **demand has soared – Sefton Baby Baskets supported 460 mums and babies in 2024**, and this year had helped more than that by October time. Those in need of help need to be referred by social services, midwives, health visitors and schools, or **Sefton Baby Baskets can be contacted directly via email at seftonbabybaskets@outlook.com**, or through their **Facebook, Instagram or Tik Tok** pages.

You can read more stories from our 50th anniversary celebrations on our website!





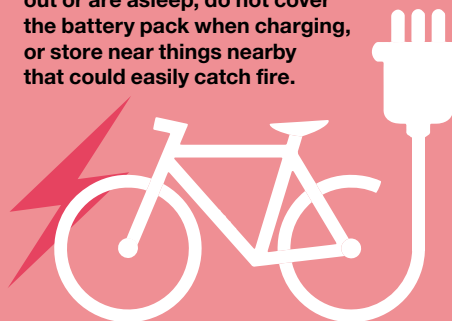
over the festive season

From Christmas decorations to new electronics and keeping your home warm and bright, there are more safety hazards to be aware of at this time of year. Here are some tips for keeping this festive season safe for you and your family.

- **Make sure children's gifts are safe** for their age, and buy things like toys, lights, electronics and chargers from trusted shops and websites – making sure they meet UK safety standards.
- **Look out for small items young children can choke on**, like button batteries - these can badly hurt or kill a small child if swallowed. Never leave these items lying around, and make sure that children know not to put them in their mouths, ears or nose.
- **Keep decorations and cards away from fires and other heat sources** like light fittings, and don't leave candles burning when you leave a room.
- **Beware of trailing cables and wires** in the rush to connect new gadgets and appliances, and always read the instructions.
- **Falls are the most common accident at home** – so try to keep your home clutter free, and make sure stairs are well-lit and free from obstacles.

E-bikes, e-scooters and hoverboards make great Christmas presents, but fires caused by their lithium batteries are ever more common, and can be devastating.

Take extra care storing and charging them in your home - make sure they are not in the way of any exits, never leave them on charge when you go out or are asleep, do not cover the battery pack when charging, or store near things nearby that could easily catch fire.



IF THERE IS A FIRE,
DON'T TRY TO PUT
IT OUT – KEEP SAFE
AND CALL **999**



Keeping shared spaces tidy

We know that the festive season can mean a lot of extra rubbish and recycling. If you live in a scheme or flats with communal areas, it is important to keep them tidy and free from clutter, and make sure your extra waste is not left to pile up.

Don't store anything that might catch fire or burn in communal areas, including cupboards with electrical equipment. Let us know about any damage to the building, fire doors, or anything blocking exits (including fire exits).





how **your evidence** supports an anti-social behaviour (ASB) case



The problem starts. You call the police or Plus Dane. When officers arrive, everything is calm – no-one else saw or heard what happened. We understand this can be very frustrating; so when you report ASB to us, we may ask you to gather evidence - information we might even need to use in court.

When you contact us about an incident of ASB, your initial report is the foundation of the case.

Thorough evidence-gathering is essential for any legal case, and what we present in county court needs to be strong enough to convince a judge to make an order for a breach of tenancy. This gives us the legal permission to evict a customer from their home, protecting victims of anti-social behaviour.

How do I gather evidence?

Diary sheets are a great way to record what is happening, and how often, over time. This is particularly good in the case of issues with noisy neighbours. Leaving voice notes for yourself works too. Tell your case officer what puts you most at ease when it comes to providing evidence, as we want to make the process as stress-free as possible.

Make a note of the the date, time and place the behaviour happened, what you were doing at that time, and also how you felt.

When it comes to a court trial, it is not just a case of proving what took place, it is the impact the ASB has had on victims and witnesses. This can be the difference between a breach of tenancy order being given straight away, or suspended unless there is more ASB in future.

Anti-social behaviour that causes neighbours to be deprived of sleep or have to change their day-to-day routines, for example, is something the courts do not look favourably upon. Even when the behaviour is not criminal, nuisance conduct that alarms and distresses others is a reasonable ground for action.

We will review your complaint regularly to see how things are getting on. **Keep written proof of everything like threatening emails, letters, text messages or threats on social media. Written evidence is so powerful, and even if it is distressing to see, you should keep it. If you have voicemail messages you should also keep them, or share them with our Community Safety team.** We will store a copy on our records and where we can add this to a witness statement, proving what was heard. If a threat is made on social media, take a screen shot and share this with us so we can confirm we have seen this evidence.

If the ASB is unreasonable and persistent noise, we subscribe to the Noise App, which allows customers to record noise using their own mobile smartphone. CCTV and video doorbells are also very effective in gathering evidence of anti-social behaviour, but there are strict rules for how you install and use these, and we would advise you to look into this first. **See the Information Commissioner's Office, at www.ico.org.uk, to find out more.**

Can I stay anonymous when I report ASB?



Yes. We will respect your decision and won't share your name with the person you are complaining about.

However, it can make it difficult for us to take formal legal action when victims don't want to be identified. If the case goes to court, your evidence may be needed, and you might be asked to give a statement. An example is if a perpetrator calls you a specific name - if your anonymised statement just says 'I was verbally abused', this significantly minimises the impact of the harm caused.

If you are worried about your safety, let us know. We may be able to take steps to protect your identity or offer support through specialist services.



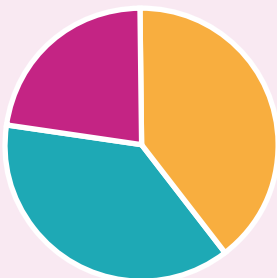
our annual report is out now!



Our annual report 2024/25 is one in which I am pleased to report improvements in operational performance during a period of significant change. When we developed our corporate plan last year, you told us what we should prioritise: investing in our homes and making them warmer and more energy efficient, repairing things when they go wrong and not replacing, and providing support services that help people to remain in their home. You will see how we are delivering these priorities in the report. You can read it in full on our website, and here are some of the highlights.

Ian Reed Chief Executive

where does each
£1 of income go?



- cost to run Plus Dane **24p**
- investment in homes **39p**
- building new homes **37p**

creating work opportunities

we supported **104**
customers into **work & training**



anti-social behaviour

we managed **408**
separate **ASB** cases



feedback

we received
1169
complaints



we received
130
compliments



invest in your home

99.9%

were **satisfied**
with **planned**
investment works
[our target was 98%]

we **improved**
the **energy**
efficiency
(EPC) of
510 homes



EPC

E → B
E → C
D → C
D → B

Homes

6
17
117
370



our repairs service

we completed
57,340
responsive
repairs in total



we spent
£22m
on **repairs**
in total



helping customers into homes



built
345
brand **new**
homes



654
existing
homes
relet



224
new
homes let



helped
101
customers into
home ownership



keeping you safe



completed
99.97%
of **gas safety**
checks



99.72%
of our **homes**
have an **electrical**
safety certificate
[EICR]



99.90%
of our **homes**
have an **up to**
date Fire Risk
Assessment
[where required]





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**

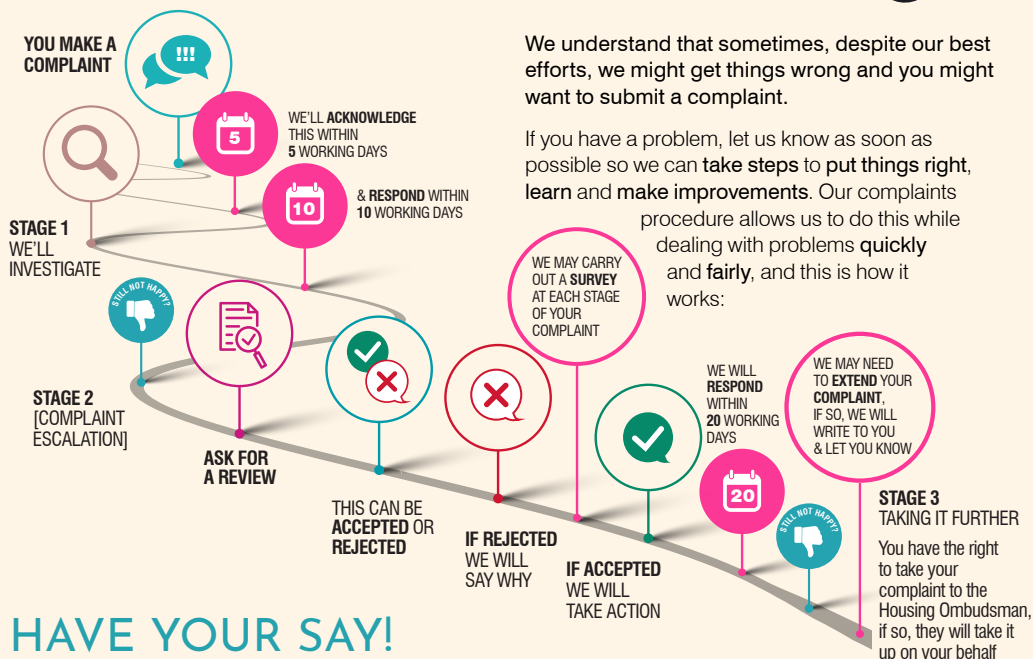


emailing **info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk**



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

the complaints process



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!

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



customer assurance panel update

Our Customer Assurance Panel is made up of nine members, who work with Plus Dane and the Board to look at how we can improve our services for customers to make sure they are the best they can be.

A message from Amanda Graham, CAP's acting chair

The CAP met on 15 October for their quarterly meeting, and we were pleased to see that there has been a **big reduction in Stage 1 complaints over the last quarter**. This has been raised at previous meetings as we wanted to see a reduction that would demonstrate that **residents are happier in their homes and with the services provided by Plus Dane**.

The **repairs backlog is also reducing**, with **shorter waiting times** for most repairs now (unless they are complex). These things in particular are listed on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, which are scrutinised by CAP before going to the Board, so we get to see and comment on them first.

Stock Condition Surveys are being carried out across all areas, so that there is an up-to-date condition record for your home. These checks can **pick up things like damp & mould** or issues with windows, and are an opportunity to **mention any problems you've had to the surveyors** (who are a mix of contractors and Plus Dane colleagues).

We will be recruiting in the New Year, so if you are interested in finding out more about becoming a member of CAP, **please get in touch with Irene Crone, by email Irene.Crone@plusdane.co.uk or by phone 0800 169 2988**. We're especially keen to have members from Cheshire, so that we represent all areas.



Amanda Graham, CAP



customer groups your chance to get involved

We are setting up two new digital customer groups – a Leaseholder Forum and a Service Charge Forum. Meetings will take place a couple of times a year so that customers can share their views and help us improve services.

We have also set up two digital Task and Finish Groups with customers – these are groups of volunteers formed to complete a specific project.

- **The Customer Communications Group** has met three times so far and reviewed the draft annual report and how best to communicate Awaabs Law (see p13) to customers.
- **The Sustainability Group** reviewed Plus Dane's Sustainability Strategy, and is exploring options for Green Champions across our neighbourhoods to act as a customer sounding board as we deliver the Sustainability Strategy action plan.

If you would like to find out more about these and other customer groups please email Irene Crone on irene.crone@plusdane.co.uk



supporting you

mental health and wellbeing support in Cheshire



Our Wellbeing First project is available to help customers in Cheshire in need of mental health and wellbeing support.

Our successful partnership with healthcare specialists Making Space means we can offer tailored help.

Wellbeing First began in 2022, and **we have helped nearly 200 customers to date**. It provides friendly, **one-to-one support to Plus Dane customers** concerned about **mental health issues like depression, stress, anxiety, worry, or low mood**. It has helped people to improve their confidence, self-esteem and emotional resilience, resulting in an increased

sense of purpose, self-worth, and improved independence and aspirations for the future.

The service **provides weekly 1-2-1 wellbeing support** at days and times that suit customers, adapting to the needs of the individual, as well as **self-guided help, access to online therapy modules**.

Wellbeing First is open to Cheshire-based Plus Dane customers aged 16 and over.

For customers in Merseyside, we work with an organisation called Wellbeing Enterprises CIC to provide a similar support service. Referrals and enquires for either of these can be sent to engagement&partnerships@plusdane.co.uk.



JobsPlus success in L8



Last summer, we were part of the partnership that officially launched the Jobs Plus pilot.

Operating out of our Irene Milson Resource Centre in Toxteth, **Jobs Plus was designed to offer a new way of supporting people with work and training opportunities** in the local area.

We are now starting to see the project **achieve a range of positive outcomes** since its beginnings in June 2024, with **120 people registering** with the service and **29 people finding jobs** – including setting up their own businesses.

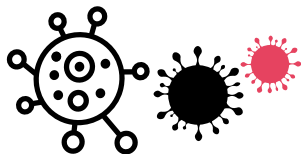
Jobs Plus was set up by Plus Dane in partnership with Transform Lives. Funded by Youth Futures Foundation and the Learning and Work Institute through the Department of Work and Pensions, **our community hub in Toxteth is the base of one of ten pilot sites in the UK** taking part in the initiative, targeting areas of high unemployment.

The model for Jobs Plus has come from the USA where its person-led approach has a **proven record of success** in increasing employment and earnings **for those who take part**.

Watch out for festive scams and loan sharks!

Christmas can be a time of stress and money worries – and there's plenty of loan sharks and scammers waiting to take advantage. Visit our website for more information on how you can protect yourself and where to get help.





a change to how we deal with **damp and mould**



Awaab's Law is a new law that will make a big difference to how housing associations like Plus Dane deal with hazards in your home.

It is named after two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who tragically died in 2020 due to prolonged exposure to mould in his home in Rochdale. The law aims to make sure that social landlords act quickly to address hazards like damp and mould, which pose serious health risks.

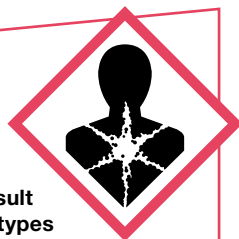
Awaab's Law came into force in October 2025, and over the next two years it will grow to cover additional housing hazards such as excess cold, fire risks, and structural collapse. Eventually private landlords will need to comply too.

what we need to do now

We now **have to investigate and resolve hazards within strict timescales**. If you report a potentially significant hazard in your home, **we must:**

- **Investigate within 10 working days**
- **Provide you with a written summary of the investigation findings** within three working days of finishing it.
- **If we find the damp and mould hazard poses what is called 'a significant risk of harm', we must make your home safe within five working days** (taking temporary measures if necessary).
- **Any extra work needed** to prevent serious hazards reoccurring **must be done within 12 weeks**, and overall repair works must be completed within a reasonable time period.
- **In an emergency situation, we must investigate and action any emergency repairs within 24 hours.**
- **If your home cannot be made safe within the specified timescales** for Awaab's Law, then **we must offer you suitable alternative accommodation until it is safe to return.**

what is a hazard?



From now on, as a result of Awaab's Law, two types of hazard will be included in social housing tenancy agreements.

A 'significant hazard' is one that poses a significant risk of harm to a customer's health or safety. It is something that would need be made safe 'as a matter of urgency'.

An emergency hazard is one that poses 'an imminent and significant risk of harm to the health or safety of the tenant in the social home' - something that 'a reasonable social landlord... would take steps to make safe within 24 hours'. They are issues that could cause immediate harm if not addressed very quickly.

here to help you



We have been working hard to make sure we are ready for the changes that have come in with Awaab's Law. We have already put in place new ways of working to deal with damp and mould.

The safety of our customers and colleagues is our number one priority, and understanding what we need to do is a key part of keeping everyone safe. If you have any questions or concerns about the safety of your home or Awaab's Law, please contact us.



reporting repairs



reporting hazards - let us know if you see something that looks unsafe!

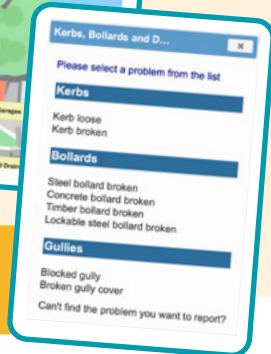
Did you know that if you see something in a communal area that looks unsafe and could cause an accident, you can quickly let us know through the Plus Dane website?

Anyone can report a hazard through www.plusdane.co.uk - for example, if you spot something like an uneven pathway or fallen tree branch on a Plus Dane property that could cause someone to slip, trip or fall.

To do this, go to the 'you and your home' section and you will find the option to 'report a repair' on the left hand side of the drop-down menu.

From there, you can scroll down to see a selection of icons. The 'communal facilities' button will give you internal and external options to flag up a variety of potential problems.

If you do see something that looks like it could be unsafe, don't assume anyone else has already told us and please get in touch, so we can fix the problem and keep you safe.



You can report a repair in a similar way using the Plus Dane customer portal, emailing our Customer Access Team at customer@plusdane.co.uk, or by calling 0800 169 2988.

supporting our LGBTQ+ customers



Rainbow Roofs is a support network for LGBTQ+ people living in social housing.

Their specialist knowledge can help with any housing issue, or you can get involved and join the group.

This year, we signed up to the LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge, a commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support for both customers and colleagues, as a member of the HouseProud network. **We are promoting the work of Rainbow Roofs as part of our pledge.**

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



could Pension Credit **help you?**

Pension Credit gives you extra money to help with your living costs if you're over state pension age and on a low income. It may also help with things like housing costs, council tax support and a free TV licence. Our dedicated Welfare team can help you see if you are eligible and apply, or you can visit www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim, or call 0800 99 1234.

the end of the Universal Credit roll out

The final stage of the government's Universal Credit roll out is happening now. The Universal Credit system replaces a range of existing benefits and tax credits, like Income Support and Housing Benefit.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should have now contacted everyone this affects, so it can get people on to Universal Credit and close legacy benefits by the end of March 2026. This process has been called managed migration.

Most Plus Dane customers who need to will have already done this now, but the last few who haven't yet should receive a letter from the DWP called a managed migration notice this month (December 2025). You will then have three months to follow the instructions and move on to Universal Credit. Your payments will stop if you don't do this.

Our expert Welfare Team can help you with this – contact them on 0800 169 2988 or welfare.team@plusdane.co.uk. Or contact the official Universal Credit Migration Notice Hotline on 0800 169 0328.

Credit Migration Case Study



how we can help

We helped one customer with their managed migration when their benefits were stopped after missing the deadline to move over to Universal Credit. This had left them in serious arrears.

The customer had disabilities that made going through the process over the telephone very difficult, as a result their case was closed, leaving them worried and confused.

So one of our Welfare team visited the customer at home to talk through what happened, and then was able to contact Universal Credit on their behalf to sort out the problem. The case was reopened and payments backdated, which successfully cleared their arrears.



debt advice you can trust

We are delighted to be continuing our working relationship with the **RAISE** debt advice team. If you're in the Liverpool area you're struggling with bills, benefits, or debt, visit www.raiseadvice.org.uk.

The debt charity **Stepchange** can give you help and advice, wherever you live. Visit www.stepchange.org to find out more.



the Warm Homes Discount Scheme

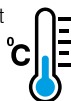
The Warm Home Discount Scheme is a one-off £150 discount off your electricity bill. You qualify if you either get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit or are on a low income.



The Winter Fuel Payment for people of pension age returned this year. If you were born before 22 September 1959 you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. If you're eligible, you should have been sent a letter to say how much you will get and may already have been paid – if not, you will be by the end of December.

With both of these, you don't have to do anything. If you're eligible, your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill automatically.

As well as these, a cold weather payment is available in certain circumstances, if the temperature drops below zero for seven consecutive days.



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?



H 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**

