

plusdane.co.uk

# unity

customer magazine

Plus Dane Housing Issue 46 | Winter 2023



inside:

X f Instagram in

our  
annual  
report

winter  
campaign

pocket  
power

money  
matters

support  
for  
you

helpful  
advice

# welcome to the winter edition of **unity** magazine

We hope you find the information on these pages 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).

## inside this edition

-  **4 Money matters**
  - Could pension credit top up your income?
-  **5 Tenant satisfaction measures**
  - Our most recent results
-  **6 Our annual report**
  - Highlights from our 2022/23 report
-  **8 Complaints**
  - What happens when you make a complaint
-  **9 Winter warmth**
  - Keeping safe in your home
-  **10 Our winter campaign**
  - Support through the festive season and beyond
-  **11 The Customer Assurance Panel**
  - Latest news from our CAP



## new homes for you

**Kingsbourne is our fabulous development in the heart of Nantwich, Cheshire.** 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!**

**This is a fantastic opportunity** to get on the property ladder, for sale through **shared ownership with a 50% share available from £100,000.**

Visit the 'find a home' section [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk) for more information or email [sales@homeshub.co.uk](mailto:sales@homeshub.co.uk)



**H** **HomesHub**  
by Plus Dane

# A message from the chair of our Board



On December 1 we launched our 2023 winter campaign, which is something we do each year focussed on supporting customers throughout the winter period when we know - with Christmas, and colder weather meaning we need to use more energy - there is a real pressure on household finances.

Each year, we are grateful for the support of our private sector partners who donate to our campaign either in the form of cash, gifts for our Christmas toy appeal, items that we use as part of our fundraising activity or their time. This investment means we can help more people than we would be able to otherwise and demonstrates the commitment of our partners to our social purpose.

While it's important that we provide that immediate support where we can for those customers that may be struggling, there is also a balance to be struck between planning for the longer term to make our homes warmer and more cost effective for customers to live in. Over the next couple of years, we will be investing more than £10 million in a range of measures to make our homes warmer – this will cover things such as wall insulation, roof insulation, heating systems and new windows. We are also installing heat meters in some of those homes in apartment blocks where customers currently pay for their energy through a service charge so that they are able to monitor their own usage and only pay for what they use. We will continue to make use of external funding opportunities that arise in the future so that we can maximise the impact of our own investment and positively impact more of our customers.

One of the teams in Plus Dane that works with customers all year round to manage through the cost-of-living crisis is our Floating Support team. This team was established by the Plus Dane Board in 2019 because we recognised that with a lot of statutory services being stopped, some of our customers were not able to access services that had previously helped them. In just a three-month period, this team has been able to support customers to the tune of over £250,000 through supporting them with benefits claims and sourcing grant funding for items such as fridges freezers, cookers and washing machines and furniture.

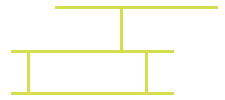
If you do find yourself struggling over winter, I would urge you to speak to one of our teams as there may be support that either ourselves or one of our partners can provide. You can find out more information about the types of support we can offer in the cost-of-living pages on our website.

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.





## could Pension Credit help you?

### Pension Credit tops up pension income and can help with day-to-day living costs.

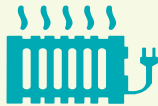
If you are over state pension age you may be eligible, even if you have savings. People who claim Pension Credit may also be able to get:

- additional Cost of Living Payments
- help with heating costs
- help with rent and Council Tax
- a free TV licence (over 75s)
- help with the cost of NHS services, such as dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments.

**You could be eligible for Pension Credit if your weekly income is below £201.05 or, if you have a partner who lives with you, £306.85.** Qualifying income level may be higher in some circumstances.

**The Plus Dane Welfare team can help - call 0800 169 2988.**

### warm home discount



**You could get £150 off your electricity bill this winter under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.**

The money is not paid to you - **it's a one-off discount, and will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.**

**Find out more at: [www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)**

If you might be eligible, you'll get a letter by early January 2024. You qualify if you either get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit, or are on a low income and have high energy costs. If you do not get a letter and you think you're eligible, you must contact the Warm Home Discount Scheme before 29 February 2024.

**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.**



### debt advice you can trust

**StepChange is a dedicated debt advice charity** that can help if you are worried about money. **Visit their website at [stepchange.org](http://stepchange.org), or call them on 0800 138 1111 for free help and support** for as long as you need it **or ask our Welfare Team to make a referral to the RAISE Debt Advice Team.**

### helping to maximise your income



On our website, **we have partnered up with 'Entitled To' to provide a free benefit calculator** that gives you all the information you need to know. We also have a **user-friendly budget planner**, that is **free to use** and should only take a few minutes to complete once you have all your financial information to hand.

**You can find them at [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk), under 'Money Matters' in the 'Supporting You' section.**

### beware loan sharks!



An offer of **an easy loan is usually too good to be true, and you could end up a victim of a loan shark.** 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. **This kind of money lending is illegal,** and Stop Loan Sharks is an organisation that can help if you feel you have no-one to turn to.

**You can call anytime on 0300 555 222 or live chat on their website [stoploansharks.co.uk](http://stoploansharks.co.uk)**  
**You can report loan sharks and get confidential support to keep you safe.**



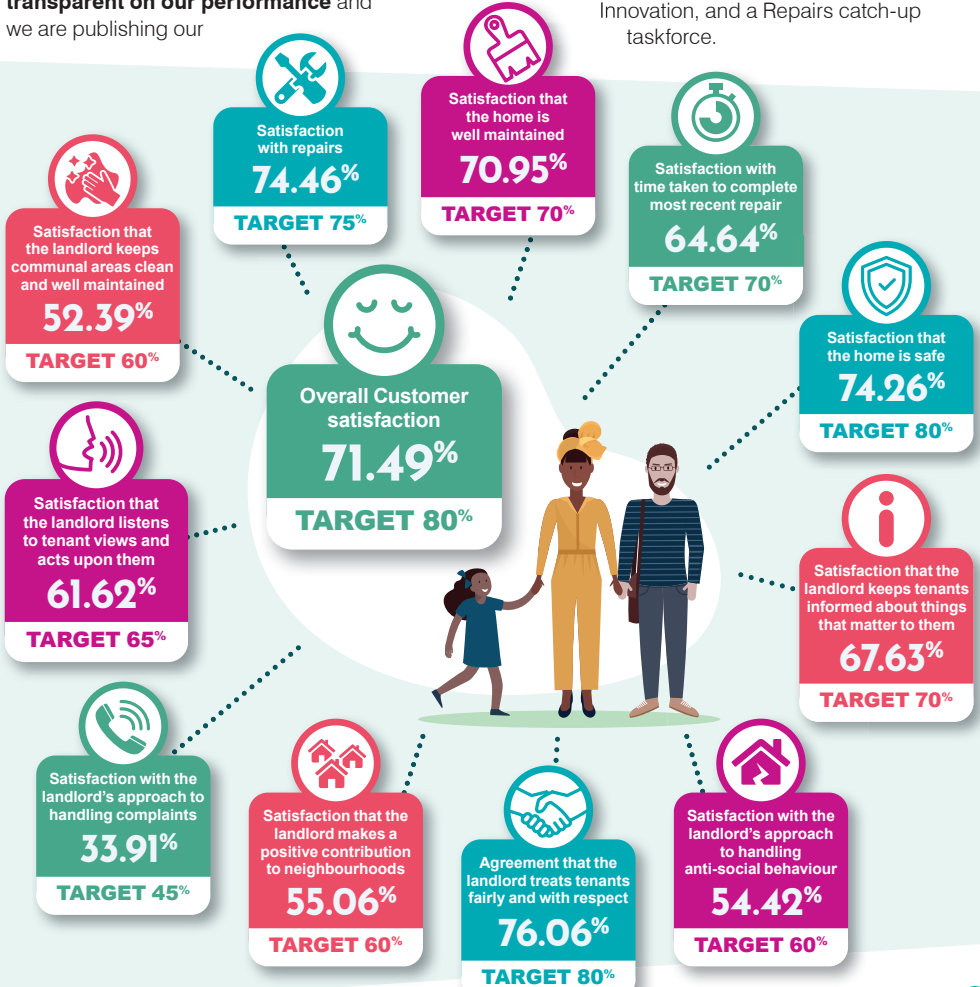
## tenant satisfaction measures

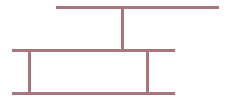
The Regulator of Social Housing has created a new system to see how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

This includes a set of **tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs)** that social housing landlords, including housing associations like us, must report on, once a year. **We want to be open and transparent on our performance** and we are publishing our

**TSM results every quarter on our website**, well in advance of the annual deadline next year. The graphic below shows our results from the second quarter of the financial year (June to September).

As you can see we still have a lot to do to get to target in most of these measures, but we have already put in place **seven taskforces that will help us to improve** in these areas, including Complaints; Damp & Mould, Restructure, Innovation, and a Repairs catch-up taskforce.





## Our annual report 2022 | 23 is out now!

“Our annual report 22 | 23 shows another mixed year in terms of performance. There is some performance that I am pleased with, but there are areas of performance that aren’t where we want them to be, and we will be working hard to make these better in the year ahead.”

Ian Reed  
Chief Executive




### investing in homes

**268**  LAST YEAR 132  
new bathrooms

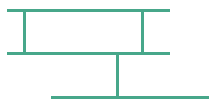
**422**  LAST YEAR 445  
new kitchens



### helping customers into homes

Built **148**  LAST YEAR 143  
brand new homes  
[our target was 142]





## what you said

**83.3%** were satisfied with Plus Dane overall

LAST YEAR 77.9%



## our repairs service

we completed **46,773** repairs in total

## anti social behaviour

we managed **310** separate ASB cases

LAST YEAR 260



## keeping you safe



**99.2%** overall safety compliance for asbestos, electrics, gas, lifts & water hygiene [our target was 100%]

LAST YEAR 99.4%

## supporting communities

we supported **804** customers to improve their wellbeing



we achieved over **£161K** in social value through our contractors & suppliers which was ploughed back into our neighbourhoods to provide added value to the work we already do



## working with our contractors







## 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.

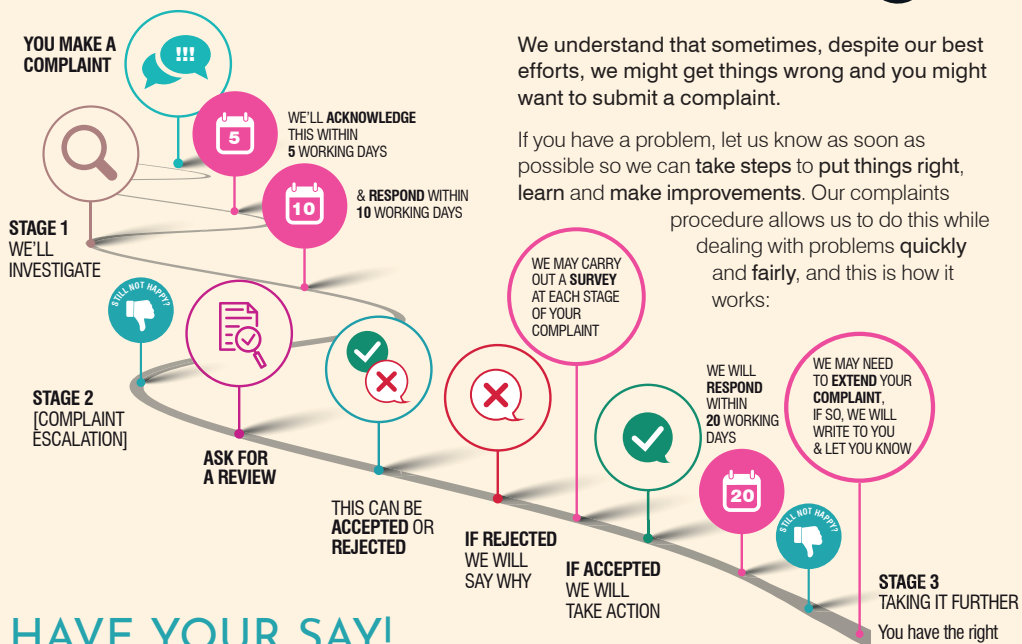
The Ombudsman works to **investigate complaints** and **resolve disputes** if you feel our process has not resolved your issue.

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



## 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**





# winter warmth keep yourself safe

Winter can be a risky time for fires as we make more effort to keep warm. Here's some things to keep in mind:

- **Keep electric heaters away from curtains and furniture**, and never use them for drying clothes. Always unplug them when not in use.
- **Be careful using candles or matches** - put them out completely before leaving the room or going to bed.
- **Fires can be caused by items like e-bikes, e-scooters and hoverboards powered by lithium-ion batteries.** Do not keep them charging when you are asleep or go out; never cover the battery pack when charging, or store near things that could easily catch fire.
- **Never use hot water bottles in the same bed as an electric blanket**, even if the blanket is switched off. Unplug electric blankets before you get into bed, unless they have a thermostat control for safe all-night use, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## what to do if there is a fire



- **Don't tackle fires yourself.** Leave it to the professionals.
- **If safe to do so, shut the door to the room where the fire has started.**
- **Keep calm and act quickly.** Understand the type of property you live in and what you should do if you have a fire in your home or a communal area.
- **Don't waste time investigating what's happened or rescuing valuables.**
- **If there's smoke, keep low.** The lower you are the clearer the air is.
- **Before you open a door check if it's warm.** If it is, don't open it - fire is on the other side.
- **Call 999 as soon as you're clear of the building.** 999 calls are free.
- **Don't go back in until you have permission.**
- **Let us know as soon as it is safe.**



## think about contents insurance



Contents insurance is designed to help protect your things. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen.

We have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks and Great Lakes Insurance UK Limited, who provide the **My Home Contents Insurance Scheme** - designed for social housing customers.

This can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including things like furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

For more information, call

**Thistle Tenant Risks**

on **0345 450 7288**

or visit

**www.thistlemyhome.co.uk**





# our winter campaign

**Our winter campaign is now underway. We work with our partner organisations over the winter months to help customers struggling with cold weather, the ongoing cost of living crisis, and to spread a little Christmas cheer.**

The campaign looks to **reduce some of the pressures our customers are facing** at this time of year. We are **working in partnership with our community partners**, contractors and colleagues to provide a range of support, including food parcels, help with energy costs, and toy appeals for families that otherwise would go without.

**We help residents** living in our **sheltered housing** schemes to **hold festive parties**, and our supported housing team will be make sure that **customers** living in our **temporary accommodation** will **enjoy a festive lunch**.

Like last year, 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.**

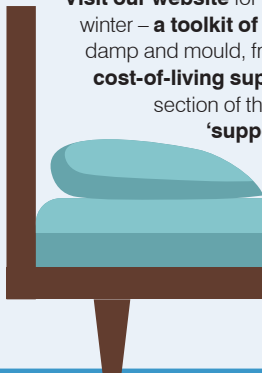
You can **contact our Engagement and Partnerships team all year round** for more information on the support available, from access to food bank or fuel vouchers, to wellbeing support, to help getting back into work and training. **We work with a range of specialist organisations** across **Cheshire and Merseyside** like **Making Space, the First Person Project, Springboard and Liverpool in Work**, who have really made a difference to the lives of our customers who have used them.

To find out more, please email [engagement&partnerships@plusdane.co.uk](mailto:engagement&partnerships@plusdane.co.uk)



## chill-proof your home

Visit our website for a guide to chill-proofing your home over winter – a **toolkit of help and advice** on everything from damp and mould, freezing pipes and **saving energy to cost-of-living support**. Find it in the **'supporting you'** section of the [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk), under **'supporting your health and wellbeing'**





## the customer assurance panel

**My name is Angela Needham and I am the newly elected Vice Chair of the Customer Assurance Panel (CAP). The CAP is made up of 10 Plus Dane customers**

**and we provide assurance to Board and you as customers that Plus Dane are doing what they say they are doing with the services they provide.**

It's been a busy few months for CAP. In July we had an Away Day which gave us the opportunity to meet face-to-face, as CAP meetings are held online. We spent a productive day shaping Plus Dane's Customer Charter identifying how we, as customers, want our services provided. We also agreed how CAP can have input into the Purpose Committee and Board ensuring our views are fully represented.

In addition to our regular CAP meetings we held a special meeting to discuss the Social Housing (Regulation) Act which comes into force next year. This Act places tenants at the forefront of landlords' services and policies and places high expectations on landlords to demonstrate how they achieve their aims. It gives the Regulator greater powers to intervene if it feels landlords are not performing to standard. The CAP has responded independently to the Government's consultation on the new Consumer Standards.

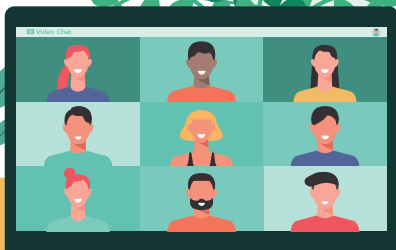
**Plus Dane  
Customer  
Assurance Panel**



We receive regular reports on Tenant Satisfaction Measures and have made suggestions on those areas needing improvement. We are also keen that we communicate with tenants in a variety of ways and that Plus Dane provide honest and meaningful information.

In the last edition of Unity we asked if anyone wished to join CAP as there was a vacancy. I am pleased to say that Dorothy McDowell applied and was successfully recruited to the vacant position. We welcome Dorothy to the Panel.

It's fair to say that the next few months will be extremely busy for all in the social housing sector working towards the implementation of the new Housing Act.





# Save up to **£500** on your household bills in one call!



**Pocket Power** provides a free phone service to help customers save money on their household bills.

The friendly team help customers switch & get discounts on energy, water, internet, phone, banking & car insurance



**“Pocket Power** went through all my bills, explained everything and got me money off. I'd definitely recommend them! People are paying too much on their bills & not realising they can save money”

**Bill, 62 saved £534**



To save money on your household bills please contact our team **0800 169 2988** or email **customer@plusdane.co.uk**

**get in touch**  @plusdane  [www.plusdane.co.uk](http://www.plusdane.co.uk)  [facebook.com/plusdane](https://facebook.com/plusdane)

If you do not wish to continue receiving Unity magazine please let us know by emailing: [communications@plusdane.co.uk](mailto:communications@plusdane.co.uk) or calling **0800 169 2988**