

Independent Times

Autumn/Winter 2022



Happy 103rd birthday Thelma!

page 6

Keeping our tenants
safe and well
page 7

Cost of living support
page 8



Welcome from Kirsty Ellis

Hello Everyone,

Now that StreetTalk has moved online following consultation with tenants, I am pleased to share with you your new longer Independent Times which we will continue to provide to schemes twice a year. If you would like to receive updates between issues please sign up for email alerts at www.progressgroup.org.uk/sign-up or follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/ProgressStreetTalk.

It's great to see the wealth of work that has been ongoing over the past six months as we have prioritised tenants' wellbeing. You can read more about some of the fantastic things that have happened so far.

I would like to say a BIG thank you to all the tenants I met at the house meetings of Orchard Grange and Tuson House, where

we talked through what services tenants value and how we can improve the service going forward.

I realise this is only a couple of schemes, but I enjoyed it so much that I am going to continue to attend team meetings throughout the year, so hopefully, I will meet you soon.

In the meantime, we will be conducting informal surveys with all independent living tenants to gain a wider perspective on what you value in the service and how we can improve.

I hope you enjoy the read!

Kirsty Ellis
Head of Operations
(Homes and Opportunities).



What's been going on?



I haven't been out properly since the pandemic, and I'm so glad I did. I have had a wonderful time.

We always have so much fun at St Gerard's, and the food is amazing as always.

Throughout summer, we have covered a wide range of events and activities within our independent living schemes, ranging from chair fitness classes to men's pie afternoons!

But of course, we hold fond memories of how we celebrated our late Queen's Platinum Jubilee with parties at Jubilee Court; Bashall Grove; Bridge Court; Northbrook Gardens; Hennel House; Ancenis Court and St John's Court. (See all our photos on the back page).

Our Easter event at St Gerard's in Lostock Hall was very popular, with more than 70 tenants joining us!

We have also been holding weekly chair fitness classes, afternoon teas with live entertainment, garden renovations, digital online help sessions provided by Age UK, monthly men's pie afternoons, bacon butty mornings, and summer musicals.

Our tenants have certainly been having fun, as they told us:

"Thank you for the party, Danni. It is what we all needed."

"The musical was so much fun. Thank you for arranging this for us."

"You have done yourself proud. Thank you for the lovely food and entertainment today."

"I am really enjoying the chair fitness classes. They get me out, and it's a chance to meet up with my friends and have a laugh."

Looking ahead, our Progress Activities Co-ordinator, Danni, has received requests for trips to Bury Market, Liverpool Art Gallery, and Blackpool illuminations.

There have also been more requests for afternoon teas, games afternoons, more bacon butty mornings, fishing trips and another multi-cultural event, so there is plenty for our activities co-ordinator role to take forward. Now Danni has gone on maternity leave, we are pleased to announce that Sue Broster will take over the role whilst Danni is away. I'm sure you will all give her a warm welcome.

We will be starting yoga and pamper sessions such as nails and massage shortly, so keep your eyes peeled for them!

If anyone is interested in coming to any of these events or finding out more about our regular activities, such as chair exercises at Lowerhouse community centre and Charleston Court, and our fishing club, please contact Sue on 07811 351787.

Beware of bogus callers

We have also recently been made aware of someone knocking on tenants' doors, saying they needed to check their fire alarm.

THINK - are you expecting someone?

SECURE - secure your door chain/look through your spy hole before opening your door.

CHECK - do not open the door to anyone unless they have a Progress Housing Group ID badge or we have notified you in advance of a contractor visit. If you are unsure, do not allow the person in your home, and please

ring 03333 204555, as anyone genuinely visiting will be happy to wait whilst you check.

Call the police if you feel scared or threatened.

Watch a helpful video from Danny and Mike, operatives from our Property Services Team on our website. Scan the code to see the video.



Have your say on the quality of social housing by completing this online survey by The Chartered Institute of Housing and National Housing Federation:

www.bettersocialhousingreview.org.uk/have-your-say/

Deadline 30 October 2022.



A day in the life of Sue

Independent Living Co-ordinator at Croft Court, Liggard Court and St John's Court in Fylde West.



Sue



Tenants' Voice scrutiny update



Sue Broster has worked for Progress Housing Group for four years as an independent living co-ordinator and loves her job.

“My day is varied. I do safety calls each morning for those tenants who want them, check the buildings for any repairs or health and safety concerns, and complete fire checks weekly.

“I facilitate viewings, sign-ups and pre-termination inspections; we can go a few months without any, and like buses, they can all come at once.

“I also liaise with outside agencies when tenants need support, ensuring they are safe.

“My job has changed over the years, as there are more electronic systems and no paperwork in the office, so I seem to be at my desk a lot more. But I try to keep in contact with my colleagues and tenants by phone or by meeting for a coffee so we don't feel so isolated in our roles.

“But my favourite part of my job is mixing with my tenants, either at lunch or afternoon teas (notice the food element).

“Some days, you have a never-ending stream of tenants wanting a chat, needing support, or help with printing forms, and some days I can go without seeing a soul.

“There have been quite a few highlights in this role. The past two years have been challenging, but the high point for me was knowing how much of a difference we made during lockdown when all we could do was contact the tenants by phone and chat with them. The feedback was lovely, as some felt so alone. Recently having moved back to some of my old schemes, it was lovely to see familiar faces and receive some lovely comments about my return.”

Sue also reveals plans for tenants to mix more in the communal areas: “We are trying to get tenants to use the communal facilities more. So we will be trialling a lunch club at each scheme and afternoon teas at least once a month over the next few months. Hopefully, this will get them using those facilities more and mixing, creating new friendships.”

Sue is now temporarily covering for Danni as Activities Scheme Co-ordinator.

Our scrutiny group had its first meeting at the beginning of July under its new name, Tenants' Voice – Improving Services.

The first items on the agenda were updates on the reviews carried out on complaints and feedback and tenant engagement. The group noted that good progress was being made, and lots of work was being done to engage tenants.

Members also discussed the possibility of speaking with the government's Minister of State for Housing as part of the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign, which Progress Housing Group supports.

The group also looked into the electrical testing process and agreed more information would be available on our website. They also discussed our planned maintenance programmes on tenants' homes (mainly external repairs like roofing and guttering) and how we keep tenants informed of this work.

The group signed off a new pictorial tenancy guide that has been introduced

following one of their recommendations. This guide will help tenants understand their rights and responsibilities in their homes.

Members received a report to show the number of properties accessed to carry out the gas servicing work, following recommendations from the group to change the tone and information provided in the standard letters. The letters appear to have been well received, and we hope to see more operatives able to access the property first time due to these letters.

The Tenants' Voice group comprises tenants who support us in improving services by conducting in-depth reviews of specific service areas. The group will next review our out of hours service.

They are always happy to welcome new members, so if you would like to join, call us on 03333 204555 or email community@progressgroup.org.uk.

You can find out more about the Tenants' Voice group by visiting our website www.progressgroup.org.uk/scrutiny



Pictured left to right, Maureen, Jacqui and Thelma celebrating Thelma's centenary birthday

Happy 103rd birthday to Thelma

Thelma has been enjoying a lot of TV and radio fame as one half of the UK's oldest twins.

Thelma enjoyed her party with her fellow tenants at Amounderness Court in Kirkham, and she was presented with flowers from our Chief Executive Jacqui De-Rose.

Thelma says: "I do appreciate Progress Housing Group doing this for me. It was very good of them. The party in the communal lounge was lovely."

Thelma and her sister Elma were featured on BBC's North West Tonight and Thelma was interviewed on BBC Radio Lancashire.

Thelma laughs: "My twin says to me 'who would have thought we would live to be this age?' We had an aunt who lived to be 105, so we must be catching up."

Jacqui says: "Thelma took the time out of her celebrations to tell me all about her life in Stockport before she moved to Kirkham.

"The highlight was her story about having dancing lessons at lunchtime from the older girls in the crisp factory. She said it was great fun and meant she was able to enjoy the trips to the music hall and make new friends.

"It was touching to hear her stories about the war, the bombs and her family. She said her best memories are about her time as a child and going to school.

"Thelma was wonderful, I absolutely loved meeting her."

You can watch our interview with Thelma by visiting the 'news' section on our website.

Keeping our tenants safe and well

Your safety is always a priority for us and so we want to share some of the detail with you of our Health and Safety Management Strategy.

This is what we want to do:

1. We want to make sure everyone who works for us understands our health and safety plans
2. We want to see good health and safety taking place in the day-to-day work that we do
3. We want to have a good system in place so that we can work well together
4. We want to assure everyone that we follow the law and properly manage health and safety risks.

We will talk to our Tenant Forum regularly to ensure our ways of working protect you and your visitors from risks to your health and safety wherever possible.

To do this, we will make sure:

- Our homes meet health and safety legislation relating to property matters (the law), including Fire safety, asbestos, gas safety, water hygiene, lifts and lifting equipment and electrical safety
- Those working on our behalf in our homes do a good job, and we will check their work to make sure risks to tenants and their visitors are low

- Sensible health and safety risk management is a key part of our work
- We do all we can to ensure tenants have many opportunities to tell us about health and safety matters, and we will liaise with the Tenants' Voice group
- We encourage tenants to have their say, and we'll show that we are listening by taking action
- That health and safety information we provide for tenants is clear and helpful.

If you have any other ideas or suggestions, or if you need help with something concerning health and safety in your home, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us on 03333 204555, live web chat on www.progressgroup.org.uk, Monday to Friday 8am-5pm or email enquiries@progressgroup.org.uk.

For more up-to-date information, including stories from your neighbourhood, visit our website www.progressgroup.org.uk/news/ or follow us our social media pages.





Jumble sale success at Martinfield



Big shout out to our Martinfield independent living scheme tenants, who raised an impressive £274.90 during their table-top jumble sale.

The activity and events committee members Janice, Wendy, Susan, Queenie, and Susan organised the sale at Martinfield community centre in Penwortham.

They wish to thank all the local tenants and residents who donated clothes, toys, bric-a-brac, food for the raffle, and bottles for the tombola. The committee also shares its thanks to the Avon representative, who kindly donated her proceeds from the day.

All the funds raised will go towards seasonal activities for tenants to enjoy at the independent living scheme.

Cost of living support

We understand that this is a stressful time and you may be feeling anxious about rising costs. We are working hard to look at ways that we can help you manage the situation.

If you have a communal heating system in your home, you may have already been invited to an energy roadshow held at your scheme. Here we will share tips on how you can reduce your energy consumption and discuss what we are doing to support you through this time. We will also share information about how you can potentially save money and advise you on where to go to get extra support from other agencies.

Your independent living co-ordinators will let you know when these sessions will take place. For tenants in schemes without community heating schemes, if you have concerns about your energy bills, or would like more information saving energy or money, please speak to your independent living co-ordinator.

There is a list of community resources and support on our website: www.progressgroup.org.uk/support-wellbeing/ and we are sharing regular updates on our social media pages and in future newsletters.

What else are we doing?

As well as offering immediate support to our tenants, we are also working closely with our partners at South Ribble Borough Council and Fylde Council, to develop a joint action plan in response to the crisis.

By joining forces with our peer organisations through the PlaceShapers network, we are also continuing to highlight the huge impact of the rising cost of living on our tenants and communities.

Please do contact us if you are struggling so we can explore how we or our partners can support you. Call **03333 204555** (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm) or live chat at **www.progressgroup.org.uk** (Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm).

Useful contacts for extra support

Age Concern Central Lancashire - 01772 552875

Citizens Advice Energy Advice Programme - 0808 223 1133 or visit www.citizensadvice.lancashirewest.org.uk

Citizens Advice Debt Service - 0808 278 7880

Complaints and compliments

Number of complaints recorded 2021/22 across the entire Group = 654

Number of complaints responded to within the Group's timescales = 568 (86.9%)

Number of complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's timescales = 634 (96.9%)

Number of compliments recorded 2021/22 = 244

Some of the things we have done following your complaints:

- Due to feedback received regarding delays in works being carried out by multiple contractors, we have introduced a single point of contact to co-ordinate projects from beginning to end.

- A contractor induction form has been created. This ensures all contractors are made aware of the correct procedures they must follow before being allowed to enter tenants' homes.
- Following the publication of the Housing Ombudsman Code, we are promoting and improving the recording of feedback as well as promoting and providing further guidance to colleagues to enable them to resolve more complaints at the first point of contact. This has shown a clear improvement between quarters three and four in 2021/22.

To make a complaint or provide a compliment

Contact us by:

- Calling 03333 204555 or by live chat at www.progressgroup.org.uk, Monday to Friday 8am - 6pm
- Emailing enquiries@progressgroup.org.uk
- Submitting an online form www.progressgroup.org.uk/feedback
- Writing to us at Sumner House, 21 King Street, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 2LW

Housing Ombudsman

As a social housing landlord, we are members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. To find out more about the Housing Ombudsman and their complaint handling code, you can visit their website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk





How are we performing?		From April 2021 to March 2022				
Housing Management		Target	Result	Target met	Trend	Top quarter*
We aim to re-let empty independent living properties within 25 days		25 days	29.1 days		Better than last quarter	20.3 days
We aim to have less than 4 properties out of every 100 vacant and available to let at any time		4	3.0		Better than last quarter	1 out of 100
We aim for current tenant rent arrears to be less than £3.90 of every £100 of rent due		£3.90	£4.20		Worse than last quarter	£2.80 of every £100
We aim for current tenant rent arrears, excluding that owed by Housing Benefit, to be less than £3.90 of every £100 of rent due		£3.90	£4.20		Worse than last quarter	£2.80 of every £100
Repairs		Target	Result	Target met	Trend	Top quarter*
We aim to complete responsive repairs within 6.5 days		6.5 days	10.5 days		Worse than last quarter	6.5 days
We aim to keep 95.5 out of every 100 responsive repairs appointments made		95.5%	93.7%		Better than last quarter	96.3%
We aim to complete 2,325 planned component works from April to March		2,325	1,962		Worse than last quarter	Not available
We aim for 100 out of every 100 gas appliances to have been serviced in the last 12 months		100%	100%		Same as last quarter	100 out of 100
Tenant Satisfaction		Target	Result	Target met	Trend	Top quarter*
We aim to keep 95 tenants out of every 100 satisfied with the service provided to new tenants		95.0%	93.1%		Better than last quarter	97.6 out of 100
We aim to keep 85 tenants out of every 100 satisfied with the service provided regarding arrears management		85.0%	90.9%		Better than last quarter	Not available
We aim to keep 91.0 tenants out of every 100 satisfied with the overall quality of a responsive repair		91.0%	87.3%		Worse than last quarter	97 out of 100
We aim to keep 85.5 tenants out of every 100 satisfied that the repair has been completed right first time		85.5%	84.2%		Same as last quarter	Not available

*This column shows the performance figures of the highest performing housing associations across England and Wales. We aim to be within the top quarter of all housing associations. You will see that for some of these indicators we are already on the top quarter whilst for others we need to do a bit more work.



Progress in Bloom

Progress in Bloom is our annual gardening competition open to anyone who lives in one of our properties or communities, and our Progress Lifeline customers.

Thank you for all your entries sharing your gardens, pots and produce with us; it has been a joy looking at all the wonderful and different designs, planting and garden spaces.

It was great to host the presentation and awards event again in the community at one of our independent living schemes at Bashall Grove in Farington, where tenants and residents enjoyed tea and cake. Jacqui De-Rose, the Group's Chief Executive, presented the certificates and prizes of a £20 National Gardening voucher.

Congratulations to everyone who entered for all your hard work and your silver and gold awards:

Silver

June, tenants and residents of Spring Gardens, Nikki, Rebecca, Sandy, Steve, Buddy, Inese, Len, Lynn, Dorothy, Ann, Joan and Iverson Wood Rise.

Gold

Alan, Alice, Friends of Leyland Station, Ancenis Court - David, Sollams Close, Bolton Croft, Sharon and James, Reg and Elaine, Louise, Thomas and Jean, The Armer Family, Angela, Kelly, Tony, Barbara, Norman, Bernie, Barbara, Linda, Iverson Wood Rise (please note, this is a different property to the silver winner), Hebden Court, Ilford Street, Jude Court and Elinor.



Contact us

- Phone** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) 03333 204555
- Live chat** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm) www.progressgroup.org.uk
- Email** enquiries@progressgroup.org.uk
- In-person** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm) or write to us
Sumner House
21 King Street
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 2LW
- Manage your rent and repairs at any time online at:** www.progressgroup.org.uk
- Follow us on Facebook/ProgressStreetTalk**

Remembering the Royal Platinum Jubilee



As we mourn the loss of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, we remember happier times of celebrating her Platinum Jubilee earlier this year.



Ancenis Court



Jubilee Court



Northbrook Gardens



Charleston Court



Tuson House



Bashall Grove



Hennel House

Bus victory!

Well done to Julia, who has campaigned for a popular bus route to stop outside Derby House in Wesham.

After a two-year crusade to get the number 78 service stopping at Derby House again, the service now stops in Derby Road, Park Lane and Mowbreck Lane. This means our Derby House tenants can use the bus to travel to Kirkham and Lytham.

Julia says: "We find it hard to walk down to the main street, especially with heavy shopping, and taxis are expensive.

"I have been campaigning for these bus stops for two years, and I have never given up. I am



Julia

really passionate about this, so I am pleased they have listened to us.

"This bus means so much to tenants and will give everyone their lives back."

Julia moved into Derby House six years ago with her husband, Felix.

She says she enjoys the social side that the independent living scheme brings: "I came here because I am very sociable and I like people. I have met a lot of friends here, and everyone is very welcoming."