



Tenants' Voice - Improving Services group update

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Welcome from Tola

A warm welcome on these chilly days.

Hi, I'm Tola, your new Head of Housing Operations. I have been at Progress Housing Group for three years and have worked in housing since 1996 – so quite a while!

You – our tenants – are at the heart of what we do, and we have created new departments and team names to help you understand better how we can support you. You can read more about this below.

We have lots of useful information in this edition, from updates on staying safe in your home to our work to improve energy efficiency in some of your homes.

Find out who won our Progress in Bloom competition and how you can get involved in our trips to Blackpool Illuminations and our Christmas panto at Stanner Lodge.

We have information on scams that we want you to be aware of and some tips on avoiding over-spending at Christmas.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Independent Times, and if you have any feedback or ideas on future articles, please get in touch.

Tola Adesemowo
Head of Housing
Operations



New team names

You may notice slight changes in team names, but this will not change our services and commitment to you.

Our new department and team names reflect how we put our tenants at the heart of what we do, as we continue to work closely with partners to provide housing and support services.

So...

- ◆ You will notice our Progress Involvement Team is now the Customer Voice Team. They will focus more on customer engagement, listening to and amplifying your voice. Clare and Danni are your Customer Voice Activities Coordinators. (see their photos and the activities they have planned on page five).

- ◆ Our enhanced Tenancy Sustainability Service includes a new Tenancy Sustainability Team.
- ◆ The Tenancy Sustainability Team will help new tenants settle in their homes both financially and emotionally. In addition, we will continue to support our existing tenants, offering advice and guidance in order for them to stay in their homes for longer.

Our four Tenancy Sustainability Officers:

- ◆ Provide practical and emotional support to help tenants with their tenancy.
- ◆ Offer individual support with benefits, budgeting advice, life skills and wellbeing.
- ◆ Work closely with our partner charity Key Unlocking Futures to support people with multiple issues.
- ◆ Can put tenants in touch with other organisations in the community that can help.



Have you seen our Tenant Annual Review?



Our review, which includes a foreword from one of our tenants, Philip, is structured around some of the tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) and our Customer Promises. This was in anticipation of the TSMs being introduced on 1 April 2023.

It includes performance information for general needs housing, housing for people over 55, leasehold and shared ownership from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

To read the review, visit www.progressgroup.org.uk/newsletter

If you would like a printed copy sent to your home, please contact us on **0333 320 4555**. If you live in one of our schemes, you can find a copy on the notice board in the communal area.

We need your feedback

Help us improve our services by completing our quarterly satisfaction survey.

As your landlord, it is important to us that we provide you with the highest standard of service possible.

We value your opinions greatly and want to know how happy you are with the way we look after your property and manage your tenancy.

To help us do that, the Regulator of Social Housing has created a set of measures to look at how satisfied you are with the services we provide. These are called **Tenant Satisfaction Measures** - you may hear them shortened to TSMs.

We will be gathering your opinions via a survey. The questions in the survey will help us understand what we may need to change to improve things or what not to change.

Areas that these questions will focus on include:

Do you feel safe in your home?

Is your property in good repair?

Are we respectful and helpful when you have problems?

We will publish the results from this survey in the summer each year and they will be available on website and tenant forum groups. We will also look at the results to drive service improvement and to do things better!

The results will highlight what's going well for tenants and where we must focus on improvements.

We'll share the results on our website and with the Regulator of Social Housing every year.

A company called Acuity will soon be carrying out the surveys on our behalf. If you receive a call, email or text message to take part, please do so. This is your opportunity to tell us what's good about our services and where we need to improve. By sharing your experiences, you will help to make a difference.

For further information on TSMs, visit www.progressgroup.org.uk/TSM

If you'd like to share your feedback, you don't need to wait for us to contact you. You can do so at any time - visit our website – www.progressgroup.org.uk/feedback or email us.

Easter party at St Gerard's



Your activities

What's been going on?

We love a good party here, as it is a great way for tenants to get together and meet new people, reducing social isolation.

- ◆ We held several parties at our schemes to celebrate King Charles's coronation.

Tenants at Jubilee Court and Amounderness Court watched Northeast Producers Travelling Theatre Company perform One Fine Day.

Entertainer Andy Smith sang at Stanner Lodge, Hennel House, Lowerhouse and St John's Court.

- ◆ Tenants from various schemes enjoyed socialising with others at Our Lady and St Gerard's Parochial Centre in Lostock Hall for some Easter fun.
- ◆ Our new Project SEARCH interns joined tenants at Greenwood Court for games and cake.





Meet Clare and Danni

Clare



Danni



Hello, we are Clare and Danni, your Customer Voice Activities Coordinators.

Clare: “Hello. I joined a few months ago and I can’t wait to meet you all.

“I am looking forward to organising and helping out with trips, events and activities for you. Building on this, I hope to help you become more confident to volunteer and run your own activities to make best use of our community spaces and help to combat loneliness.”

Danni has returned after maternity leave: “Becoming a new mum has been amazing. I have loved every second of my maternity leave with her watching her grow and learn.

“It’s nice to have normality back again. I’m looking forward to getting stuck in and getting back out into the community again which is what I love.”

What’s new?

Our activities provide opportunities for tenants to get together, develop friendships, visit interesting places, share previous life experiences and make new memories.

Independent living schemes in South Ribble

Wednesday, 6 December - Blackpool Illuminations with fish and chip supper - £10.

Thursday, 14 December - Christmas panto at Charleston Court - free admission.

Wednesday, 17 January 2024 - Boundary Mill - £5.

Thursday, 15 February - Ena Mill and Bents Garden Centre - £7.

Independent living schemes in Fylde

Thursday, 7 December - Christmas panto at Stanner Lodge - free admission.

Wednesday, 13 December - Blackpool Illuminations with fish and chip supper - £10.

Wednesday, 10 January - Boundary Mill - £5.

Wednesday, 7 February - Ena Mill and Bents Garden Centre - £7.

- ◆ Tenants from across South Ribble and Fylde are invited to a Christmas party at St Gerard’s Parochial Centre in Lostock Hall on 13 December.

If you would like to find out more or book a place at any of these events, please contact the Customer Voice Team at community@progressgroup.org.uk, or call Diane on **01772 450669**.

Keen to be green



Peter, Sustainability and Environment Officer

We have been doing a lot to improve your homes' energy efficiency.

This has included upgrading the gas plant room and installing heating controls in flats at Ashwood Court; upgrading all lights to LEDs at Derby House; and energy saving measures at Greenwood Court.

We have further work planned at Ashwood Court, Charleston Court, Northbrook Gardens, Orchard Grange, Laidleys Manor and Tuson House, Liggard Court and Bolton Croft over the next two years.

For more information, speak to your independent living coordinator or our Sustainability and Environmental Team on **0333 320 4555**.

Do you want to join our new committee?

We have recently been consulting on proposals for a new committee which will include tenants and board members (non-executive directors).

The purpose of the committees will be to help us listen to our tenants more and make sure we are doing what we should be as a landlord.

We will be recruiting for these committees in January. Tenant members would be expected to take part one day a month, which includes meetings, training or activities. If you would like to know more, please contact Gillian Hayhurst via **governanceteam@progressgroup.org.uk** or call **0333 320 4555**.

Gas safety

Our Gas Team conducts over 7,000 gas safety checks annually to keep you safe. It is a legal requirement that we access your property and carry out a Landlord Gas Safe Record, which includes maintenance and efficiency checks on all gas appliances owned by Progress Housing Group.

You must allow access on the first appointment or contact us to rearrange access. Please contact us if the appointment is unsuitable or if you have specific needs.

All our properties have fire and carbon monoxide alarms and you must check these regularly. If you need any help on testing your alarms, you can talk to your area housing officer or independent living coordinator. You can also call 0333 320 4555.

Badly fitted and poorly serviced gas appliances can cause gas leaks, fires, explosions, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

- ◆ If you smell gas or think there might be a gas leak, call the free 24-hour National Gas emergency number immediately on **0800 111 999**.





Your wellbeing matters to us

Our tenant support and wellbeing service with independent provider Life & Progress offers 24-hour access to fully confidential support, guidance, professional advice and in-the-moment counselling.

You can get support and information on a wide range of work, family and personal issues, including:

- ◆ Mental health and wellbeing

- ◆ Tackling stress and anxiety
- ◆ Relationships
- ◆ Family matters
- ◆ Managing debt
- ◆ Power of attorney, wills and consumer rights.

To access the service:

Call 0330 094 8845

Visit www.lifeandprogress.co.uk and log in:

Username: progressgroup

Password: tenant

Do you know any community champions?

The Progress Community Champions Awards celebrates the amazing work being done by groups, individuals and young people who have been volunteering their time to support their local communities over the past year.

Winners will win vouchers in gold, silver, bronze and highly commended categories.

Nominations go live from 8 January to 16 February 2024. Judging will take place 7 March 2024. We will celebrate the winners on 22 March 2024.

More information will be shared on our website later this year.

For more information telephone **0333 320 4555** and ask for the Customer Voice Team or email **community@progressgroup.org.uk**

Have your say - you rights and complaints

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has opened a consultation as part of Awaab's Law relating to standards on tenants' rights and complaints.

DLUHC is proposing the Regulator of Social Housing introduce standards on:

- ◆ tenants' rights regarding their homes
- ◆ how tenants can complain against their landlord
- ◆ relevant regulatory requirements concerning homes, facilities and services.

This is an important opportunity to protect your rights and we would strongly encourage you to participate.

Closing date for the consultation is 22 November. To take the survey, visit our website: www.progressgroup.org.uk/newsletter



Are you ready for the digital switchover?



The old technology that powers landline telephones in the UK will be switched off in 2025. Landline operators in the UK will switch every home phone in the UK to an internet-based connection instead of a traditional copper-wire landline.

What does it mean for you?

If you have a telephone line coming into your property, how your handset connects to the network will be changing.

Rather than being plugged into a socket on the wall, you will receive a broadband router and your telephone will plug into the back of this instead.

All of your calls will be carried over the internet rather than the traditional analogue telephone network. It is important to note that in the event of a power cut, your telephone will no longer be able to make or receive calls until power is restored, so it is a good idea to keep your mobile phone charged just in case.

What happens next?

Your communication provider (who you pay for your telephone landline bill to) will be in contact in the coming months to arrange the posting/engineer visit to supply you with your new router.

Beware of scams

Digital switchover scamming

Please beware of fraudsters claiming to be your telephone or telecare service provider and offering to help you carry out the digital switchover. They may be phishing for your personal or bank details.

Please note that the digital switchover is free of charge. Progress Lifeline, councils and home care alarm providers or contractors will never ask for personal or financial information over the phone.

We are here to help

If you need advice and support about things that worry you, like your benefits, finances, employment, or wellbeing, we're here to help. We can also put you in touch with other organisations that can help.

Please give us a call on 0333 320 4555.

Our support in the community:

- ◆ The Base Community Centre, Broadfield, Leyland, in partnership with Key Unlocking Futures.

Community cafe - Monday - free hot food, 10am - 4.30pm.

Community shop - Wednesday - register and pay £2.50 weekly for 10 food items.

Drop-in and warm welcome Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am - 4pm.

- ◆ The Place - Wade Hall Community Centre, Royal Avenue, Leyland, run by Wade Hall Community Association.

Community shop - Mondays 12.30pm - 6.30pm. Register and pay £3.50 per visit for 10 items.

Back to Basics - Wednesdays 12.30pm - 3.30pm - crochet, arts and crafts, cooking on a budget.

Thrift Shop - Fridays, 12.30pm - 6.30pm.

- ◆ The Fylde Food Community Hub - Lower Lane Community Centre is open on Saturday mornings.

View our cost of living page on our website: www.progressgroup.org.uk/hub/



Extra expense at Christmas

The lead-up to Christmas is a stressful time, and we want to help you prepare, budget, and find more affordable alternatives.

Here are our top five tips from Money Saving Expert:



Seek out good quality, second-hand items through charity or toy swap shops and local Facebook Marketplace groups



Calculate your budget, and ask: "What can I afford to spend?"



Make a No Unnecessary Present Pact (NUPP) with family and friends



Secret Santa

Give one gift within a large group of friends or family, rather than buying everyone a present



Make your gift meaningful

Why not knit, bake or make a special gift?

You could also perform a good will gesture, such as offering to babysit, do someone's household chores, spend some quality time with someone isolated and create special memories.



Are you struggling to pay your rent? We can help you.



The winter months are particularly hard, especially with the rising cost of living.

We don't want you to struggle silently and get behind on your rent. If you are struggling, please contact us. Your income collection officer can advise you on what support is available and make appropriate referrals.

We encourage you to use a budget planner and look at ways to cut back on spending or boost your monthly income.

Ask yourself:

Are you on the cheapest tariff for all your monthly bills – gas, electric, mobile, broadband?

If you have credit card debt, can you switch to a 0% credit card and save yourself some interest payments?

It is far more critical to be able to pay the rent.

So, if you are having problems paying your rent, call us as soon as possible at **0333 320 4555**.

Household Support Fund

You can apply to your local council for the Household Support Fund. This could help if you struggle to afford energy and water bills, food, and essential items.

To find out more, visit www.gov.uk/cost-living-help-local-council

Keeping you warm



A cold house can affect your mental health. It is important for older people or those with health conditions, such as asthma, to stay warm.

Try to keep at least one room, such as your living room or bedroom, warm.



Use a hot water bottle under a blanket, or sleeping bag



Eat regularly and have one hot meal a day. Also, drink hot drinks regularly



Keep your feet warm with thick socks and slippers



Layer your clothes to trap heat



Try and move around once an hour.

Despite the drop in Ofgem's energy price cap, energy bills are still likely to be more expensive than last winter.

Here are some simple ways to reduce your energy usage:

1. Set your boiler's flow temperature between 55 and 60°C.

2. Dry clothes on clothes horse. If possible, open the window or use a dehumidifier to reduce the risk of damp in the air.
3. Turning down your room thermostat by just one degree can save 10% on your yearly heating bill. Between 18°C/65°F and 21°C/70°F is recommended. If you are in poor health, keep the temperature at 21°C/70°F.
4. Close your curtains to keep the heat in.

Warm Homes Discount

You could get £150 off your electricity bill for winter 2023 to 2024 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount applied to your electricity bill between early October 2023 and 31 March 2024.

You'll usually get the discount automatically if you're eligible.

If you might be eligible, you'll get a letter by early January 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.

If you are struggling to heat or ventilate your home, it can sometimes cause damp.




















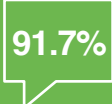







Damp can cause damage to your home, damage to your furniture and clothes, as well as making some health problems worse.

If you have concerns about damp or mould, call us on **0333 320 4555**.



How are we performing?

From April 2023 to September 2023

 Housing Management	Target	Result	Target met	Trend	Median peer*
We aim to re-let empty independent living properties within 28 days.	28 days	 18.6 days		Better than last quarter	26.7 days
We aim to have less than five properties of every 100 vacant and available to let at any time	5	 1.5		Better than last quarter	1 out of 100
We aim for current tenant rent arrears to be less than £4.80 of every £100 of rent due	£4.80	 £3.70		Worse than last quarter	£3.30 of every £100
We aim for current tenant rent arrears, excluding that owed by Housing Benefit, to be less than £4.00 of every £100 of rent due	£4.00	 £3.00		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	 9.9 days		Worse than last quarter	6.5 days
We aim to keep 94.5 out of every 100 responsive repairs appointments made	94.5%	 93%		Better than last quarter	95.8%
We aim to complete 1,873 planned component works from April to March	1,873	 1,850		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 93 tenants out of every 100 satisfied with the service provided to new tenants	93.5%	 91.7%		Better than last quarter	95.8 out of 100
We aim to keep 85 tenants out of every 100 satisfied with the service provided regarding arrears management	85.0%	 88.9%		Better than last quarter	Not available
We aim to keep 89 tenants out of every 100 satisfied with the overall quality of a responsive repair	89.5%	 85.8%		Worse than last quarter	89 out of 100
We aim to keep 85 tenants out of every 100 satisfied that the repair has been completed right first time	85.2%	 81.4%		Same as last quarter	Not available

*This column shows the performance figures of the median performing housing associations across England and Wales. We aim to be within the top quarter of all housing associations.

Have your say - Complaint Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman have launched consultations on a joint Complaint Handling Code.

The code aims to resolve complaints quickly and for organisations to learn from where things have gone wrong for individual tenants to make service improvements for the benefit of all. It also acts as a guide for anyone wanting to complain because it sets out what they should expect from the complaints process.

They are seeking views about the following:

- ◆ The code and whether any further improvements can be made to this
- ◆ Their proposals for monitoring compliance - whether these are transparent, proportionate and fair, and what else they might need to consider to be effective and efficient.

The consultation will run until 23 November 2023.

To take the survey, visit our website: www.progressgroup.org.uk/newsletter

Compliments and complaints

We love hearing from you, whether it is good or bad, as we look at all the feedback as an opportunity to learn and improve our services.

If you would like to leave us a compliment or make a complaint, contact us (see page opposite).

From April to September 2023, we received:

379 complaints

78 compliments
from our tenants.

You said, we did

When our tenants told us they were struggling to get through to the Customer Contact Centre due to call volumes and long wait times, we upgraded our telephony system. When a caller has been waiting for three minutes, we can offer a call back between 8.30am and 3pm during the week.





Tenants' Voice - Improving Services group update

Our Tenants' Voice – Improving Services group held its quarterly scrutiny meeting in October.

They heard our plans about sending out quarterly surveys as part of the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The involved tenants discussed the fact this was a good way to make sure we are accountable and listen to feedback. You can read more about this on page three.

The meeting also received an update on the out of hours service review, with three recommendations ongoing. Thanks to the new telephony system, the abandonment rate has reduced from 35.7% to 19%. We are looking at plans to extend the in-hours repairs period to 8am until 8pm.

Seven recommendations from our Community Safety Review have now been completed. This includes


promoting the work of our Community Safety Team and how to report anti-social behaviour. We are currently working on a process where community safety officers agree with tenants how and when they will provide feedback on their case.


The next area to be reviewed is communication to tenants, the current review looking at the planned maintenance service is complete, with the report currently being finalised by tenants before they provide their findings to the service team in November.

The tenants were then invited to join colleagues at their Black History Month celebration lunch at Leyland House. Julie is pictured enjoying a Caribbean-themed lunch and Tony is pictured on our front cover, trying on a head-dress.




Contact us

 **Manage your rent and repairs at any time online at:**
www.progressgroup.org.uk/sign-up-for-your-tenant-account/

 **Live chat** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)
www.progressgroup.org.uk

 **Email**
enquiries@progressgroup.org.uk

 **Phone** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)
0333 320 4555

 **In-person** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm)
or write to us at
Sumner House
21 King Street
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 2LW

 **Follow us on Facebook/ProgressStreetTalk**

Our Customer Promises



Key					
getting better	↑	the same	→	getting worse	↓
on target or better	✓	nearly on target	▲	getting better	✗

Homes

we promise to keep your homes well maintained and safe.



Measures	Target	Result 2022/23	Result June 2023	Result Sept 2023	Target met	Trend	Sector average*
% of homes not meeting Decent Homes Standard	0%	0.2%	0%	0%	✓	↑	N/A
% of gas safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	✓	→	99.9%
% of fire safety checks completed	100%	100%	99%	99%	▲	→	N/A
% of investment in existing homes (target provided at Group level)	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	▲	→	1.4%
Average energy performance certificate (EPC) rating	72.7	73.0	72.7	72.8	✓	↑	N/A
% of satisfaction that the home is well maintained (updated annually at year end)	76%	74.7%					73%
% of satisfaction that the home is safe (Updated annually at year end)	80%	79.4%					79%



Communities and neighbourhoods

we promise to work with you and other agencies to keep your community and neighbourhood safe and well maintained.



Measures	Target	Result 2022/23	Result June 2023	Result Sept 2023	Target met	Trend	Sector average*
% of reinvestment in new properties and existing stock (target provided at Group level)	8.3%	6.4%	8.3%	8.4%	✓	↑	5.7%
Number of anti-social behaviour cases per 1,000 homes	80	91.1	18.9	55.2	✗	↓	35.7
% of satisfaction that Progress Housing Group makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods (updated annually at year end)	68%	58.9%					68%
% of satisfaction that communal areas are kept clean and well maintained (updated annually at year end)	69%	66.8%					69%
% of satisfaction with approach to handling anti-social behaviour (updated annually at year end)	65%	55.1%					65%

Culture

we promise to be respectful and supportive at all times and involve you in improving services.



Measures	Target	Result 2022/23	Result June 2023	Result Sept 2023	Target met	Trend	Sector average*
Number of people supported via Progress Futures	100	341	73	136	✓	→	N/A
Number of complaints per 1,000 homes	80	82.7	24.9	45.8	▲	↑	40.3
% who agree they are treated fairly and with respect (updated annually at year end)	80%	75.3%					80%
% of satisfaction that your views are listened and acted upon (updated annually at year end)	65%	61.2%					65%
% of satisfaction that you are kept informed about things that matter to you (Updated annually at year end)	76%	70.4%					76%

* How we compare to other housing associations in the UK.

If undelivered please return to:
Progress Housing Group,
Sumner House,
21 King Street,
Leyland,
Lancashire,
PR25 2LW

ONEPOST



Progress in Bloom

Gold winners

Linda – Bashall Grove

Alan – Lostock Court

Alice – Bolton Croft

Tony – Churchside

Mill Pond Gardeners –
Old Mill Court

June – Browndedge Walk

Silver winners

Michael & Christine –
Browndedge Walk

Elaine – Lowerfield

Barbara – Fox Lane

**All gardens entered will
receive a certificate and prize.**



Sunflower Growing Competition



**The tallest sunflower
was a whopping 310cm.
All participants in the
competition this year will
receive a certificate and a
prize.**

**Here are the winners,
starting with the tallest:**

Barbara – Northbrook
Gardens

Brenda – Northbrook
Gardens

Terry & Dorothy –
Northbrook Gardens

Elinor – Welsby Road

