

# Independent Times

Winter 2024



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# Welcome from Sharon

Hi, I'm Sharon and I am on secondment as the Head of Housing Operations.

I have worked for Progress Housing Group for over 3 years and have worked in the housing sector for over 23 years.

We have had a busy time over the last few months visiting all our independent living schemes as part of the Big Conversation. This gave us the opportunity to speak with you and understand what is important to you. We will be feeding back on what you have had to say and how this will change how we deliver our services to you.

We celebrate 30 years this year, so we spoke to our 'cover girl' Winifred who has been with us since the beginning.

It is lovely to see Bill's birthday celebration at Orchard Grange on his 99th birthday - Happy Birthday Bill! (See the back page).

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.

**Sharon**  
Head of Housing Operations



# Your Big Conversation feedback

Thank you to everyone who joined us at the Big Conversation events last summer and gave us feedback.

Here is an overview of what you told us:

1. You think some of the communal areas in your schemes are in need of a refresh.
2. You think our grounds maintenance service needs to be improved.
3. You think our laundry facilities need improving.
4. You think there is not enough social activity in your scheme.
5. You think we need more scooter storage.
6. Some of you would feel safer with more CCTV at your schemes.
7. You feel our heating systems can be too hot.
8. You are not happy that our window cleaning contractors do not clean your individual flat windows.
9. You feel that relationships could be improved.
10. You feel you do not see your independent living coordinator enough.

We have listened to what you have told us and we are working on an action plan to improve our services to you.

# Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Over the past few months, an external provider called Acuity has been carrying out Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) surveys via text, email and telephone calls. Tenants are selected at random to make sure we get a fair representation. To read the results, visit the performance section of our website, [www.progressgroup.org.uk/performance/](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk/performance/).

# Have you seen your Tenant Annual Review?



Your review, which includes a foreword from one of our independent living tenants Ron, is structured around some of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and our Customer Promises.

It includes performance information for general needs housing, housing for people over 55, supported housing tenants and shared owners from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

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.

# Manage your tenancy

We have lots of useful information on our website including leaflets, publications and explainer videos. The leaflets include information ranging from how to use thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs), to information about damp and mould.

For more information visit [www.progressgroup.org.uk/manage-your-tenancy/resources/](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk/manage-your-tenancy/resources/).

If you would like printed copies, or copies in large print, please let us know by calling **0333 320 4555**.



# Progress Futures

Are you looking for something to do to in your free time?

Our Progress Futures Team offer more than just employment advice. The team can look at volunteering opportunities where you can meet new people. Or they can find courses to increase your confidence or teach you new life skills. Get in touch with the team by emailing [futures@progressgroup.org.uk](mailto:futures@progressgroup.org.uk) or calling **07976 812 535** or **0333 320 4555**.



# What has been going on?

## Race day



Tenants at Tuson House in Penwortham and St John's Court in Lytham St Annes dressed up for an afternoon at the races at their schemes.

The tenants enjoyed an afternoon of horse racing, using a wooden board donated to them by a local resident near Tuson House.

Organiser Ann, from Tuson House, says: "We hold horse racing afternoons every now and again and we all have a laugh."

The tenants at Tuson House also loaned out the board to St John's Court.

Ann adds: "I know we like going to other schemes and other people coming to ours as we get to meet other people."



Myra and Ann at Tuson House >



Greenwood Court Christmas party



St John's Court Christmas party



Thank you to The Consortia Group for supplying hampers for our festive quiz winners

## What is coming up?

Here is a list of what we have planned for the next few months:

### South Ribble

#### Coffee mornings

Every Friday from 8.30am - 10.30am at Lowerhouse, Welsby Road, in Leyland.

#### Trips

- ◆ **Wednesday 8 January**  
3000 bingo trip
- ◆ **Wednesday 12 February**  
Cheshire Oaks
- ◆ **Wednesday 12 March**  
Oswaldtwistle Mill
- ◆ **Wednesday 16 April**  
Skipton Market
- ◆ **Wednesday 14 May**  
Bury Market
- ◆ **Wednesday 11 June**  
York

### Fylde

#### Trips

- ◆ **Tuesday 14 January**  
Mecca Bingo at Blackpool
- ◆ **Tuesday 18 February**  
Cheshire Oaks
- ◆ **Tuesday 11 March**  
Liverpool Docks
- ◆ **Tuesday 15 April**  
Skipton Market
- ◆ **Friday 16 May**  
Bury Market
- ◆ **Tuesday 17 June**  
York

## Supporting charities

Well done to our tenants who have raised money for charities.

- Tenants at Ancenis Court in Kirkham raised £740 for Macmillan during a coffee morning, auction and raffle. This will be match funded by Progress Housing Group to £1,480.

- Tenants from various schemes enjoyed a coffee and cake afternoon at Lowerhouse in Leyland. The event, organised by Sandra, raised £264.45 for Macmillan, which was match funded by the Group to £530.90.
- Linda raised £530 for Rosemere by holding a Christmas fair at Bolton Croft and will apply for match funding.

Boost your fundraising by applying for our Charity Fund, where we can make a donation.

As part of our 30th anniversary, we are aiming to donate £30,000 by supporting tenants and colleagues with their fundraising.

For more information call **01772 450669** or email [community@progressgroup.org.uk](mailto:community@progressgroup.org.uk)



Tenants at Lowerhouse



Linda at Bolton Croft Christmas fair

If you would like to find out more or book a place, please contact the Customer Voice Team at [community@progressgroup.org.uk](mailto:community@progressgroup.org.uk) or call Danni on **07866 010999**.



# Gas safety

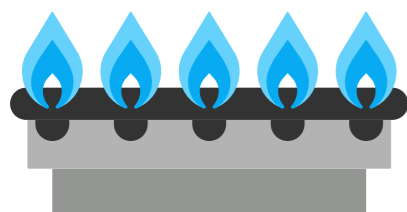
It is important you continue to allow us access to check your gas appliances annually.

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

Signs that could indicate your gas appliances are not working correctly: lazy yellow/orange flames instead of crisp blue ones, error messages or unexpected noises from your boiler or dark and sooty stains around your gas appliance. Contact us to check it.

6 symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are:

- ◆ headaches
- ◆ dizziness
- ◆ breathlessness
- ◆ nausea
- ◆ collapse
- ◆ loss of consciousness.



# What happens during an electrical inspection and test?

We will carry out a full electrical inspection and test every 5 years to make sure we meet legislation and keep you safe.

This test involves completing an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR).

You will need to be at home to allow access and remain at home whilst the electrician is there. We book half a day for this.

The electrician will need access to all electrical accessories (sockets and switches etc) in every room. At some point during the inspection, the electricity will need to be isolated. There will be no mess involved.

We will test the 'fixed' electrical parts of your property, like the wiring, the plug sockets, and the light fittings in every room, as well as the consumer unit (fuse box).



The inspection will find out if:

- ◆ any of your electrical installations are overloaded
- ◆ there are any potential electric shock risks and fire hazards
- ◆ there is any defective electrical work
- ◆ there is a lack of earthing or bonding – these are 2 ways of preventing electrical shocks that are built into electrical installations.

If the EICR flags up any issues, any remedial work must be completed within a defined timeframe by qualified electrical installers. These will be identified, and where possible, completed during the inspection. If not, we will arrange a suitable appointment with you.

Never attempt to do any DIY work with electricals. Always ask a qualified electrician.



# Tenants' Voice - Improving Services group update

Here is a summary of what our Tenants' Voice - Improving Services group have discussed at the recent scrutiny meetings.

The group looked further into options to receive independent support and mentoring for tenants involved in scrutiny activity.

They also received an update on the progress being made on their recent reviews. This included out of hours, planned maintenance, communication and aids and adaptation reviews and our annual rent review.

The next area to be reviewed by tenants was chosen. This will be our complaints procedure. You can see these dates on the events section at the bottom of our homepage on our website [www.progressgroup.org.uk](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk), or ask your independent living coordinator.

- ◆ The next quarterly update meeting of the Tenants' Voice – Improving Services group will be early spring at either Leyland House or Progress House and on Microsoft Teams.

# Community Chats

Thank you to everyone who spoke to us during our Community Chats.

Over the summer, we completed Community Chats in various areas, including Kilnhouse, Gisburn and Ilkley Avenue, Lytham St Annes and Kingsfold West, Penwortham.

Our Group Chief Executive, Jacqui De-Rose, met with tenants in Gisburn and Ilkley Avenue.

She said: **“We hold these Community Chat events on a regular basis and every time we learn something new to help us improve our services to tenants.”**

Our Executive Director (Operations, Services and Support), Tammy Bradley, talked to tenants in Gisburn and Ilkley Avenue and Kingsfold West.



She said: **“Community Chats are a fantastic way for us to hear the voice of tenants and the wider community. It is so important that we go out to our local areas, to visit tenants in their homes and hear directly about what is important to them, what they like about living in their homes and what ideas they have to improve things.”**



# Living your best life



As part of our 30th anniversary, we ran a creative competition with three categories: Photography, creative and poetry.

Well done to our winners who each received a shopping voucher.

## Photography

**1st Myra** - sunset in Norfolk

**Joint 2nd Ann** - sunset from my window; and **Tony** - nature collage

## Creative

**1st Dee** - millennium cross stitch

**2nd Ian** - wooden side table

**3rd Barry** - steam punk robots

## Poetry

**1st My life with Progress Housing Group by Joyce**



For more photos of all our entries, please visit our website.

# Fire safety training awareness

## You said it, so we did it.

Our Tenants' Forum told us that you wanted to feel more confident about fire safety, so we organised fire safety awareness training sessions.

More than 40 tenants attended a session at 1 of the following schemes: Orchard Grange, Old Mill Court, Amounderness

Court, Outram House, Lowerhouse, Lowerfield, Northbrook Gardens and South Hey.

The session discussed causes of fires, spotting hazards, raising the alarm, how to escape and human behaviour.

Tenants said they found the course useful and thanked us for organising it.

## Test your alarms

We install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors where appropriate in your property. We recommend you regularly test the batteries in these alarms to check they are working.



# Progress in Bloom

Well done to all our Progress in Bloom winners:

## Gold winners

Tony, Churchside  
June, Walton-le-Dale  
Jubilee Court communal courtyard  
Linda, Bashall Grove  
Judith, Yarrow Road  
David, Ancenis Court

## Silver winners

Elinor, Welsby Road  
Amounderness Court communal gardens  
Elaine, Lowerfield  
Alice, Bolton Croft  
Hazel, Bashall Grove  
Sylvia, Jubilee Court

Zena, Jubilee Court  
Maureen, Jubilee Court  
David, Jubilee Court  
Lynn, Yarrow Place  
Jean, Ilkley Avenue

All winners received a certificate and shopping vouchers. To view our video of all the winners, visit our website.



# Spotlight on one of our Gold winners...

## Jubilee Court

Tenants at Jubilee Court in Leyland 'feel like they are in Spain' after creating their own little oasis.

Wilma and David, and Gill and Derek have transformed their courtyard, planting flower beds, creating a concrete plinth (nicknamed their 'coffin') and installing benches for tenants to enjoy their outdoor areas.

Wilma (pictured second right) said: "A few of us contributed to getting paint for the concrete coffin and Derek got some artificial grass for it. We then put gardening pots

and ornaments on it. He also did the flagging for us. "We stripped the benches back and painted them, and got some railway sleepers.

"We added solar lights to the trees in the middle and at Christmas, we put up a tree, with big baubles.



"It's nice to look out the window and see a bit of colour rather than just grey slabs.

"Tenants in the other quadrant have also worked on their area."



# Money matters

**We know this time of year is hard, especially with the rising cost of living. We do not want you to struggle on your own and fall behind on your rent. If you are finding things tough, please contact us.**

While it is understandable that you might be anxious about telling us that you are going to be late with the rent, it is far better to discuss this with us, so we can explore how we might be able to assist you.

## What is Universal Credit Managed Migration?

The government is moving people who are currently claiming legacy benefits such as Housing Benefit onto Universal Credit. This is happening now.

You do not need to do anything until you have received a Universal Credit 'Migration Letter'.

Once you have received the letter, you will have 3 months to make your claim for Universal Credit.

The notice tells you:

- ◆ the need to claim Universal Credit instead
- ◆ the 'deadline day'
- ◆ what happens if you do not claim in time
- ◆ other information about how to claim Universal Credit, joint claims, couples, etc.

If you need help claiming or think you may be worse off with this change, please call our Tenancy Sustainability Team on **0333 320 4555**.

## Are you entitled to Pension Credit?

Are you over the state pension age?

If so, you could be entitled to Pension Credit.

Pension Credit gives you extra money to help with your living costs if you are over State Pension age and on a low income.

Pension Credit can also help with housing costs such as ground rent or service charges.

For more information, visit [www.gov.uk/pension-credit](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit) or speak to our Tenancy Sustainability Team.

# Your wellbeing matter to us

**Our tenant support and wellbeing service with independent provider Life & Progress offers 24-hour access to confidential support, advice and in-the-moment counselling on a wide range of issues from relationships and family matters, to legal matters.**

This is how the service could help you with financial matters, such as debt.

- ◆ Signposting to specialist debt advice services that can offer personalised support for managing and reducing debt.
- ◆ Talking you through a basic budget to help you get a clear view of your finances.

- ◆ Introducing you to a financial coach, who could provide ongoing guidance with budgeting and financial planning.

**You can access Life & Progress by calling 0330 094 8845**

You can also visit [www.tenantcare.co.uk](http://www.tenantcare.co.uk)

Username: **progressgroup**

Password: **tenant**

# Who likes Lego?

**Dee, who is one of our competition winners, also loves building with Lego.**

She estimates she has built around 60 sets over the past 4 years.

Her hobby started when her son bought her a simple Lego set to try out after her husband died.

Dee's Lego pieces are quite the talk of Lostock Court, as anyone who visits, often refer to her as 'The Lego Lady.'

She said: **"My favourite one has to be the jazz quartet, as I love jazz music. The typewriter is also special, as I used to be a medical secretary."**



Dee, 88, has also completed the Tower Bridge, which has around 2,500 pieces, a Harry Potter train, the Statue of Liberty and the Ghostbusters car.

She added: **"I like the challenge of putting it all together. It takes my mind off the pain I have sometimes as I am in a wheelchair. If anyone is looking for a hobby to do at home, I would recommend Lego."**



# Do you know who is knocking on your door?

If an unknown person knocked on your door and wanted access to your home, or block of flats, would you know what to do?

Double-check the person's ID before you let someone into your home.

## Are they who they say they are?

A rogue trader or bogus caller may call uninvited to your home to trick you into letting them in so that they can steal or persuade you to hand over money for a product or service you do not need or at a very high price.



**Contact us immediately if you think you have been targeted or if you have any concerns.**  
**Call the police if you feel scared or threatened.**  
**Talk to us before you sign any documents relating to disrepair claims.**

# Preparing your home for winter

Keeping your home warm in winter will help prevent condensation and mould. Where you can, try to allow warm air to circulate by leaving doors open. Insulate your home as much as possible.

If you have concerns about damp or mould, contact us.

We have a dedicated team of damp experts who will attend your home to assess the affected areas and the property as a whole.

If you are struggling with, or worried about, the cost of gas and electricity, we have a range of support services to help. Please get in touch.



## Register for priority services

Did you know that if you sign up with the Priority Services Register with your energy suppliers (gas and electricity) you could get extra help? For example, if there is a power cut, someone can check up on you and provide hot meals. You may also want someone to check your meter regularly or move your prepayment meter.

To get this extra help, you can apply to be added to your electricity network Priority Services Register.

# Compliments and complaints

From 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024, the Group received:

**532 complaints**

**189 resolved at first point of contact**

**104 compliments**

## You said/we did

When we assessed our Complaints, Feedback and Redress Policy earlier this year, we talked with some of our involved tenants and they told us that they would like our letters/emails to be clearer when we issue an outcome to a complaint. Tenants said that saying a complaint was “upheld” or “not upheld” wasn’t always clear, so they suggested we change this to “we got it wrong” or “we got it right”. They also welcomed the change made by the Housing Ombudsman Code that removed a “partially” upheld outcome.

We have now changed all our complaint responses to the more customer friendly language our tenants suggested.

## Compliments

- A tenant would like to log a compliment for everyone on the Repairs Team and the operatives that carry out the repairs.
- An independent living coordinator received a thank you card from the family of a tenant she had been supporting.
- We received a letter complimenting an independent living coordinator as being the best scheme manager they have had, always making time for the tenants.

## How to make a complaint or compliment

Please get in touch with us via the methods listed on this page.

We are a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and we carry out an annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code.

You can find further information on the Housing Ombudsman, and the code, on its website, [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)



# Contact us

**Manage your rent and repairs at any time online at:**  
[my.progressgroup.org.uk](http://my.progressgroup.org.uk)

**Live chat**  
 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)  
[www.progressgroup.org.uk](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk)

**Email**  
[enquiries@progressgroup.org.uk](mailto: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**

**Share with us on Instagram:**  
[@progress\\_hg](https://www.instagram.com/progress_hg)



# Our Customer Promises

Jubilee Court

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

## Homes

we promise to keep your homes well maintained and safe.



Measures	Target	Result 2023/24	Apr-Jun 2024	Apr-Sept 2024	Target met	Trend*	Peer median **
% of homes not meeting Decent Homes Standard	0%	0.2%	0.03%	0.08%	✗	↓	0%
% of gas safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	✓	→	99.98%
% of fire safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	✓	→	99.92%
% of investment in existing homes (target provided at Group level)	1.9%	1.7%	1.9%	2.1%	✓	↑	N/A
% of homes with energy performance certificate (EPC) rating C or higher	77.7%	75.0%	75.0%	78.0%	✓	↑	73.5%
% of satisfaction that the home is well maintained	74%	72.5%	76.3%	77.6%	✓	↑	69.4%
% of satisfaction that the home is safe	80%	78.8%	82.0%	80.8%	✓	↓	76.5%

EPC rating: the result of 72.9 means that 1,719 properties out of 6,883 have an EPC rating below C.

\* Trend shows whether better, the same or worse than the previous quarter.

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

## 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 2023/24	Apr-Jun 2024	Apr-Sept 2024	Target met	Trend*	Peer median **
% of reinvestment in new properties and existing stock (target provided at Group level)	9%	7.3%	10.0%	9.4%	✓	↓	6.7%
Number of anti-social behaviour cases per 1,000 homes	75	77	19	41	✗	↓	39.4
% of satisfaction that Progress Housing Group makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	68%	70.6%	70.3%	67.3%	▲	↓	62.4%
% of satisfaction that communal areas are kept clean and well maintained	73%	67.2%	71.4%	72.8%	▲	↑	65.2%
% of satisfaction with approach to handling anti-social behaviour	63%	62.1%	62.9%	59.0%	✗	↓	57.0%

## Culture

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



Measures	Target	Result 2023/24	Apr-Jun 2024	Apr-Sept 2024	Target met	Trend*	Peer median **
Number of tenants supported via Progress Futures	200	452	109	146	✓	↑	N/A
Number of complaints per 1,000 homes	80	82.9	17.5	33.6	✓	↑	N/A
% who agree they are treated fairly and with respect	80%	79.2%	78.4%	82.0%	✓	↑	76.0%
% of satisfaction that your views are listened and acted upon	65%	63.1%	63.5%	59.7%	✗	↓	58.4%
% of satisfaction that you are kept informed about things that matter to you	72%	71.3%	76.7%	69.9%	✗	↓	69.7%

If you would like to read about our Tenant Satisfaction Measures and check our performance data for the last six months, visit our website at [progressgroup.org.uk/performance/](https://progressgroup.org.uk/performance/)



**Return Address**  
Progress Housing Group  
Sumner House  
21 King Street  
Leyland  
Lancashire  
PR25 2LW

The Delivery Group



## Happy 99th birthday Bill

Bill's family, friends and tenants at Orchard Grange enjoyed a party to celebrate Bill turning 99.



## 30 years of Progress

### Winifred's story

Born in Chorley, Winifred moved to a ground-floor flat in Penwortham more than 40 years ago.



She recalls:

**“It was strange at first because everyone was a lot older than me.**

**“But I soon got used to it and I love it here. The people are nice and we all get on. If you need anything, I only need to ask a neighbour.”**

Winifred says she enjoys being a Progress Housing Group tenant and feels reassured by the support from both her independent living coordinator, Ian, and Progress Lifeline, our community alarm service.