

*your*

LANCASTER  
CITY COUNCIL  
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

# council housing *matters*

AUTUMN 2023



## WHAT WE HAVE IN STORE IN THIS BUMPER ISSUE:

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**We're Relaunching Our Website**

**Building a Bright Future: An Update On The Mainway Project**

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## A WARM WELCOME FROM COUNCILLOR CAROLINE JACKSON

It is a huge pleasure to me to have the housing portfolio again after my two years as Leader of the council.

We are on the verge of so many big projects which were just starting back in 2021 especially the houses to be built on Skerton site and the Canal Quarter. I am really excited to be involved as these will be the first council houses for forty years and built to the highest standards to save tenants money and reduce our carbon footprint.

We also want to improve the efficiency of the everyday contacts we have with tenants and I am looking forward to us testing out a new system for reporting and checking on progress of repairs online. More news later in the year. Standards of service for tenants are also being improved with the introduction of the new Community Safety Team who will deal with anti-social behaviour on our estates, and we hope to hear more from you all about how that works through Tenants Voice.

All credit to the housing officers for managing so many projects alongside the difficulties we all have with the cost of living crisis. I look forward to an exciting time in the next few years.

*Caroline Jackson*  
Councillor





## 'YOUR COUNCIL HOUSING MATTERS' FUTURE UPDATES TO YOUR NEWSLETTER

**We're making changes to the way we publish and distribute the 'Your Council Housing Matters' newsletter.**

Currently, we release a full newsletter twice a year, however, starting in January we will introduce a shorter and more focused version of the newsletter, which will be published every two months.

We are also changing 'Your Council Housing Matters' to a fully digital format. This digital newsletter will be accessible on the official Council Housing website.

Whenever a new issue is available, you will be able to receive an email notification with a clickable link taking you directly to the newsletter.

To ensure that you receive a notification for each new edition of the newsletter, please contact Customer Services at 01524 582929, or by email at [councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk), to confirm your email address. If you would prefer to still receive a paper copy, please let us know. By delivering a shorter and more regular focused newsletter, we'll be providing up to date information straight to your inbox every other month.

# WE'RE RELAUNCHING OUR WEBSITE

@ [LANCASTER.GOV.UK/HOUSING/COUNCIL-HOUSING](https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing)

**We're gearing up to launch our completely revamped website. We have been working to bring you a more user-friendly, efficient, and visually appealing platform to access all the housing-related information and services you need.**

As we put the final touches on the website, we want to keep you informed every step of the way – so rest assured - we'll be announcing the official launch date via our social media channels...so make sure you're following us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!

The new website has been designed with you in mind, incorporating valuable feedback from our community of tenants. It will provide easy access to important resources, updates, and communication channels with our team. Once launched, we will continue to add more features to ensure that you can easily navigate everything you need to know about your tenancy, and the options available to you. We genuinely appreciate your patience and continued support during this transition. Stay tuned for more updates and be on the lookout for the big reveal! If you have any comments about how we can improve the site – please get in touch.



# BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE: THE MAINWAY PROJECT SETS ITS VISION IN MOTION



We are excited to bring you the latest updates on the MyMainway project as it continues to shape the future of this fantastic location in Lancaster. In this article you will find comprehensive details about the progress, current status, and the future of the project.

## REFURBISHMENT OF LUNE AND DERBY HOUSE: CREATING A MODERN LIVING EXPERIENCE

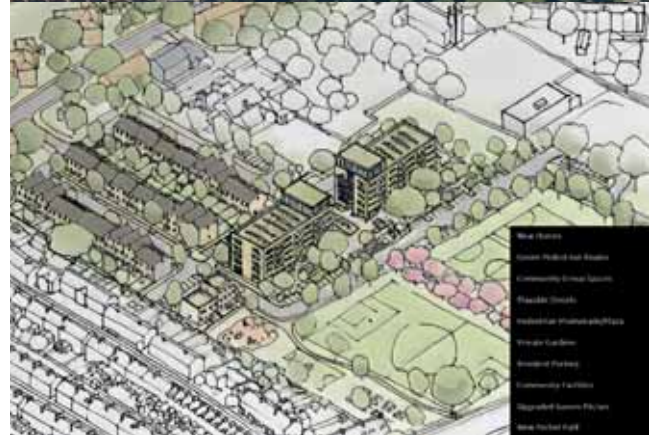


For a significant period, the MyMainway team have been working on a pilot project to refurbish Lune and Derby

Houses, aimed at developing modern, energy-efficient, and aesthetically pleasing homes as a precursor to the full Mainway Masterplan. However, unforeseen cost increases and a lack of available government funding presented challenges for the Council in funding this venture. As a result, this part of the project moved towards seeking a partner to collaborate on the development. Lune and Derby Houses are now to be refurbished by a development partner of the Council, and will no longer be Council homes but will be designed to deliver on the wider housing aspirations of the MyMainway project as whole.

## SKERTON HIGH SCHOOL SITE: PHASE ONE OF THE MASTERPLAN

As the Mainway Project progressed, plans took shape to acquire the Skerton High School site, which had remained unused since its closure in 2014. In July, the purchase was finalised, heralding ambitious plans for the creation of new homes on this site. The proposed development includes three blocks of energy-efficient flats, offering breathtaking views to future residents. Additionally, the ambitious plans include indoor community spaces on the ground floor of one block, as well as some housing to the rear of the site sitting on pedestrian-friendly streets, the preservation of playing fields and cherry trees, the establishment of a children's play park, and the creation of connecting routes between Ryelands Park and the riverside. The proposal aims to construct approximately 130 new Council homes on the school site, with Lancaster City Council as the landlord.





## LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE: A VISION FOR THE MAINWAY ESTATE

The Mainway Project's visionary outlook goes beyond Phase 1, encompassing the current homes across the entire Mainway Estate. The strategic approach involves first building new homes on the school site to create new homes for existing Mainway residents to move into, before progressing with the development of other blocks of flats. Although specific details of future phases are yet to be fully developed, residents are encouraged to share their views and potential concerns. Residents can do so by visiting the Mainway Hub on Owen Road or by contacting the project team using the provided details.

## NEXT STEPS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

With the successful acquisition of the school site, the immediate focus has shifted towards the demolition of the school buildings. The project team has expressed a

desire to preserve some of the school's art deco features, adding a touch of historical charm to the modern landscape. Community input remains highly valued, and consultations will continue to be scheduled, providing Mainway residents and others across the community with the opportunity to discuss and contribute to the process. As we move into the autumn months, efforts will be dedicated to seeking planning permission for Phase One of the Masterplan.

## VISIT THE MYMAINWAY HUB

Did you know about our Mainway Hub on Owen Road? While our primary focus is on guiding and supporting the MyMainway initiative, we are equally adept at addressing other housing-related concerns. Residents are welcome to drop in on a Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday from 10am to 4pm.

# COMPLAINTS

At Lancaster City Council Housing, we take pride in providing housing services to thousands of residents every year. We always strive to maintain high standards, but also understand that sometimes things we do fail to meet the standards we expect of ourselves.

Your feedback matters to us greatly, and we welcome all forms of input, including complaints, from those directly impacted by our work. Our top priority is to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of our customers, and we consider each complaint as an invaluable opportunity to learn and improve our services for the future.

We are dedicated to ensuring a customer-friendly complaint handling process that allows our residents and the wider community to express themselves and be understood. In line with the Housing Ombudsman's guidelines, we define a complaint as:

"An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents."

Complaints can be submitted in person, over the phone, via email, or in writing. We are also open to arranging meetings with complainants, providing the option to bring along a friend, relative, or representative for additional support. You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman for support at [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or by calling them on 0300 111 3000.

As part of our commitment to transparency, we publish an annual report that reviews our approach in line with the Housing Ombudsman's code and government requirements. The most recent self-assessment by the Council Housing Services department is being conducted as we speak for 2023, and will soon be accessible on our website.



# PROTECTING YOUR HOME: ACCESSING OUR HOME INSURANCE INITIATIVE

**For the peace of mind of our tenants, Lancaster City Council Housing provides access to a Home Contents Insurance Scheme in partnership with RSA, part of the Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Group.**

Contrary to popular belief, most social housing providers do not automatically provide insurance coverage for furniture, belongings, and decorations against unfortunate events like fire, theft, vandalism, or burst pipes. Unfortunately, some customers only discover this lack of coverage after damage has occurred, which can be distressing.

To address this concern and ensure your peace of mind, RSA offers a straightforward solution to insure your possessions through a special household contents insurance scheme. You can choose between two cover levels: 'Simple' and 'Simple+' – with 'Simple+' offering full Accidental Damage cover. This opportunity is tailored solely for Lancaster City Council tenants.

Under this scheme, the majority of household goods and contents, including pedal cycles and computer equipment, are insured while within your home. Coverage is provided for specific events, such as theft, fire, and flood. Additionally, you are protected against lost or stolen keys, freezer contents, your personal liability to the public, and the cost of alternative accommodation.

Moreover, any improvements you have made to your home, such as fitted wardrobes and laminate flooring, are also insured. The scheme automatically includes Accidental Breakage limited cover for incidents like breakage of mirrors, ceramic hobs in free-standing cookers amongst other items. It also covers the replacement of internal fixtures which you have

installed personally if they are damaged, and if your keys are lost or stolen - no excess payment is required when making a claim.

You also have the option to extend your cover to include accidental damage, personal belongings, wheelchairs, and hearing aids, ensuring comprehensive protection for your valued possessions. This inclusive scheme means you can safeguard your belongings, granting you the peace of mind that comes with reliable insurance coverage

With new-for-old cover (except for clothing and household linen, where an allowance for wear and tear is deducted), the payment process becomes easy with flexible options – weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or annually. Furthermore, there is no need for additional security measures on your home to be eligible for coverage.

**This scheme ensures transparency, with no hidden costs – what you see is what you pay.**

**If you'd like to know more, please contact our customer services on 01524 582929.**



# DEALING WITH DAMPNESS & MOULD IN YOUR HOME

As we find ourselves heading towards the colder months of autumn and winter once again, it's important to learn now to identify the sign of dampness and mould in case they occur in your home.

Condensation is a major cause of dampness, and occurs when warm, moist air inside meets a cold surface, forming water droplets that can damage walls, ceilings, and furniture. Condensation is common in colder months and in areas with limited airflow, such as behind furniture and near windows – it is also important to remember that black mould is almost always present with condensation.

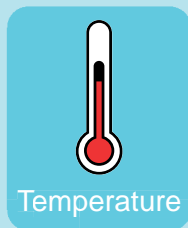
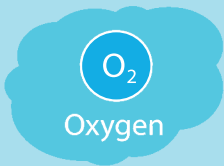
Condensation and mould growth in homes is particularly affected by moisture levels, temperature, and ventilation. Simply increasing your heating will not solve the problem. Common causes of condensation and mould include poor ventilation, inadequate heating, poor insulation, and high humidity levels. The first sign is water droplets appearing on your windows and other cold surfaces. If not addressed, this can lead to black mould growth.

## WHAT IS BLACK MOULD?

Black mould is a common household fungus that can thrive in damp, humid conditions. Mould spores are invisible to the naked eye and are constantly present in the air, both inside and outside our homes.

There are four key factors that contribute to mould growth:

- **Moisture**, which is constantly present in the air, especially in countries with a humid climate, such as the UK.
- **Oxygen**, which accounts for 21% by volume of the air we breathe.
- **A Food Source**, which can include a variety of materials including wallpaper, paint, wood, and fabric.
- **A Suitable Temperature**, particularly thriving in temperatures between 25-30 degrees Celsius.



## FOUR STEPS TO PREVENT CONDENSATION AND MOULD

### 1. Reduce Moisture Production:

- Air-dry clothes outdoors whenever possible.
- Use a well-ventilated bathroom for indoor drying.
- Vent tumble dryers outside.
- Avoid uncovered boiling and gas heating.

### 2. Eliminate Excess Moisture:

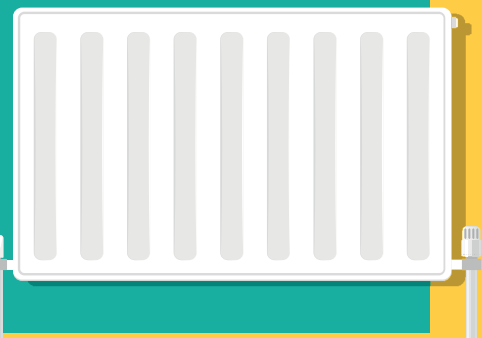
- Wipe window condensation daily, especially in the bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen.
- Take short, hot showers instead of baths.
- Use exhaust fans in the kitchen and bathroom when cooking or bathing.
- Close the bathroom door when showering or bathing.
- Maintain necessary chimney and flue ventilation for gas appliances.

### 3. Ventilate Efficiently:

- Slightly open windows or use trickle vents to allow fresh air to circulate.
- Leave a small gap between furniture and cold walls.
- Use extraction ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom to remove moist air.
- Isolate the kitchen and bathroom from the rest of the house by closing doors.
- Avoid overfilling wardrobes.
- Air bedrooms in the morning.

### 4. Maintain Steady Heating:

- Maintain a consistent background heating during cold weather.
- Use radiator controls, room thermostats, and timers to manage heating efficiently.
- Avoid turning the heating system off completely.



## HOW DO YOU REMOVE MOULD?

Once identified, black mould is relatively easy to remove:

- To remove black mould, carefully wipe or vacuum it away. Avoid brushing to prevent spore release.
- Clean the affected area with a fungicidal wash or sterilizing fluid.
- Dry clean or shampoo mildewed items.
- You can also use tea tree oil; dilute it with water and soak affected items or spray trouble spots, testing a small area first.

Once the mould is removed, redecorate the area using fungicidal paint or wallpaper paste. Avoid regular paint, as it can feed mould.

If left untreated, damp issues will only get worse, it's very important that you deal with any issues you find as soon as you spot it. Dealing with issues early on, can help you prevent the possibility of causing damage to your property.



## WARMTH VERSUS VENTILATION

Balancing warmth and ventilation is essential to prevent the growth of condensation and mould in your home. Although opening windows may seem counterintuitive, it actually allows warm, moist air to escape and is cheaper to heat in the long run. Double-glazed windows can seal in natural ventilation, which can lead to condensation and mould problems. However, using trickle vents or slightly opening windows can restore necessary ventilation.

It is important to note that short, controlled periods of ventilation are recommended - rather than keeping windows open all day - to maintain the balance between warmth and air quality.



If you would like further information or advice regarding the prevention of dampness or mould in your home, please contact our customer services by calling **01524 582929** or emailing [councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk).

## ARE THERE ANY OTHER FORMS OF DAMPNESS YOU SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR?

### Rising damp

occurs when water rises from the ground into a property, typically due to a damaged damp proof course (DPC). It is more noticeable in winter and can lead to wall plaster deterioration and wallpaper detachment. Black mould is rarely seen with rising damp due to the presence of ground salts in the water.

### Penetrating dampness

occurs on external walls or ceilings when there is a leak in the roof. It is caused by disrepair to the exterior of the home, such as missing brickwork pointing or cracked rendering. Penetrating dampness is most noticeable after rainfall and appears as distinct, damp patches. Black mould is also rarely seen in these areas, as they are typically too wet.

### Defective plumbing

is a relatively common cause of dampness, affecting both internal and external walls and ceilings. Leaks from water and waste pipes can cause the affected area to remain consistently damp. Examining water and waste pipes, seals around baths, showers, and sinks, and external pipework can usually identify the source of the problem.





# SAFE AND SMART: A GUIDE FOR STORING & CHARGING ELECTRIC MOBILITY DEVICES INCLUDING MOBILITY SCOOTER AND E-BIKES

The use of mobility devices can greatly improve the quality of life for older or less mobile residents, allowing them to access common facilities in residential premises and external facilities in the wider community. In recent years, their increased usage has raised concerns about fire safety during storage and charging.

Fires due to improperly maintained or charged electrical mobility devices pose a significant risk, endangering tenants, employees, firefighters, and other individuals in residential buildings. The consequences can also be devastating - so it is important to know the basics about how to safely charge your scooter or e-bike to minimise the risk of fire, and to guarantee the well-being of other residents:

## CHARGING

- Make sure to follow the manufacturer's guidelines for charging your device and remember to unplug the charger once it has completed charging.
- For your safety, ensure your living space and especially the area close to where you store/charge your device, is equipped with functional smoke alarms. Whilst the City Council will seek to test these once a year as part of our gas safety checks you can also help by testing these each month yourself.
- While charging batteries, stay awake and attentive so that you can react promptly in case of any emergency, such as a fire. Avoid leaving batteries to charge while you are asleep or away from home.
- Always use the charger approved by the manufacturer for your specific product. If you notice any signs of wear or damage, purchase an official replacement charger from a reputable seller.
- During charging, refrain from covering chargers or battery packs to prevent overheating or potential fire hazards.
- Keep your mobility device away from flammable materials and avoid charging batteries near combustible substances.
- To maintain battery health, avoid overcharging. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for recommended charge times.
- Be cautious with socket outlets; do not overload them or use unsuitable extension leads. Utilise un-coiled extensions and ensure that the lead is adequately rated for your devices.
- In case of an e-bike, e-scooter, or lithium-ion battery fire, prioritise your safety. Evacuate immediately, stay away from the fire, and call emergency services at 999. Do not attempt to extinguish the fire yourself.

## STORAGE

- Refrain from storing or charging mobility devices in escape routes or communal spaces within multi-occupied buildings. In case of a fire, such placements can impede people's ability to evacuate effectively.
- Store mobility devices and their batteries in a cool environment, avoiding extreme temperatures of either hot or cold.
- When not in use for extended periods, follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding the storage and maintenance of lithium-ion batteries to ensure their longevity and safety.

## PURCHASING

- Only purchase e-bikes, e-scooters, chargers, and batteries from reputable retailers known for producing high-quality products.
- It's essential to be cautious of counterfeit electrical goods that can lead to fires. Opting for genuine chargers and battery packs, even if they cost a bit more, is a wise investment in your safety and the protection of your home.
- If considering an e-bike conversion kit, ensure you buy from a trustworthy seller who complies with British or European standards.
- To protect your interests, register your purchased product with the manufacturer. Registering helps manufacturers reach you promptly in case of safety concerns or recalls, especially since batteries are usually covered by warranties.
- Before making a purchase, check for any product recalls affecting the items you plan to buy. Websites such as [electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk) can provide relevant information in this regard. Being informed will help you make safer choices.

## DAMAGE AND DISPOSAL

Dropping or being involved in crashes can cause damage to batteries in e-bikes or e-scooters. Such damage may lead to unexpected overheating and potential fire hazards. Be sure to inspect your battery for any signs of harm, and if you suspect damage, it is crucial to replace it immediately. Under no circumstances should you continue using or attempting to charge a damaged battery.

When it comes to disposing of a damaged or end-of-life battery, avoid tossing it into your household waste or standard recycling bins. Punctured or crushed batteries can pose fire risks in bin lorries, recycling centres, and waste facilities. To responsibly dispose of these batteries, check if your mobility device manufacturer offers a recycling service or consult your local authority for suitable battery recycling options. Taking proper disposal measures ensures both safety and environmental consciousness.



# MONEY MATTERS

## HOW CAN OUR INCOME MANAGEMENT TEAM HELP YOU?

**Living costs – such as rent and daily necessities – are rising constantly, which can create ongoing challenges in our daily lives.**

Our Income Management Team take a friendly, supportive approach and can provide you with advice and assistance to manage your rent account, and other finances.

Working closely with the Housing Support team, The aim is to help you achieve financial stability, offer personalised support, carry out benefit maximisation checks, and point you in the direction of relevant advice and guidance to help you and your family navigate financial challenges successfully.

The team is always happy to discuss your unique financial situation, including your income, expenses, debts, and other financial challenges. This way, they can offer advice tailored to your specific circumstances and either refer or signpost you to other agencies for practical support.

If you are worried about managing your rent account or need advice regarding other financial matters, contact the team to discuss your financial situation confidentially with an understanding member of our team on 01524 582541 or by email at [councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk).



## ALL ABOUT...OUR TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES



**We are excited to introduce the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). From Spring 2024, all social housing providers across the country (including Lancaster City Council) will be required to submit performance and satisfaction information based on a standard set of questions.**

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures will allow you to understand exactly how well we're performing when delivering services to you, and how this compares with other housing providers.

We carried out our satisfaction survey during 2023 – if you completed the survey, thank you! - and have now gathered your valuable feedback, opinions and experiences.

The questions in the survey asked for your feedback on areas such as overall satisfaction, satisfaction with the home and communal, repairs and maintenance, safety, how the housing service contributes to your neighbourhood, how well we listen to you and act on what you tell us, whether we treat you with respect, and more.

Shortly, we shall be publishing these results so you can see how we measure up, and where the areas for

improvement are. We are already focussing on particular areas of service improvement based on what your feedback told us, and there is more to come. Look out for more information on this in the coming weeks.

We will be working hard to make sure we make meaningful changes to the way we deliver services based on what you have told us: this is what the Tenant Satisfaction Measures are all about. If you are interested in finding out more about how we perform as a housing provider, you can find our performance information on our 'Policies and Performance' page on our website. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact us at [councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk).

# Council Housing | Q2 Performance



Here is a general overview of how we have performed between April-September 2023/24 in a number of key areas



## Income Management



**£240,022**  
Current Tenant Arrears



**9.5%** Increase from previous year



**£10,000+**  
More rent owed by our tenants



## Empty Homes



**18.6 day**  
Average Relet Time



**£208,955**  
Rent not collected due to empty homes



This is a **34%** increase on the previous year



## Maintenance



**90%**  
of standard repairs were carried out within target time



We continued to maintain a **100%** compliance rate with Gas Service Standards



**90%** of jobs resolved on the 1st visit



**96%**  
of appointments made were kept



## Community Safety



We opened **87** new cases of Anti-Social Behaviour this year



We closed **156** cases in the same time frame



**86%**  
Of closed cases were resolved



Verbal Abuse and Harassment was the most common form of ASB - making up over 17% of all reports

During the 2022/23 financial year, the housing team have been focussing strongly on:

- Supporting tenants to manage their finances during the cost of living crisis,
- Establishing our Community Safety Team, to deliver a more customer focused & harm centred service,
- Managing housing compliance issues, such as damp and mould, ensuring tenant safety in the home

# CARING FOR OUR SENIOR TENANTS THIS WINTER

As the colder months approach, our priority remains the well-being and comfort of our tenants. Each year, we conduct a winter welfare check for tenants aged 75 and over to ensure they are ready for the season's challenges.

**Your Well-Being Matters:** We care deeply about your health, happiness, and financial stability, which is why our team will be reaching out soon to conduct a winter welfare check. This initiative is designed to provide you with essential support during the chilly months.

**Health and Safety:** Our winter welfare check includes questions about your health, ensuring you have the necessary resources and information to stay well throughout the season. If you have any concerns about your health, please don't hesitate to share them with us.

**Overcoming Loneliness:** Winter can sometimes bring feelings of loneliness. We want to ensure that you remain connected to our supportive community. If you feel isolated, remember that we are here to provide not only practical help but also signposting to other support services that can be of assistance.

**Financial Support:** Our team will inquire about your financial situation, making sure you have access to the resources you need for a warm and comfortable winter. If you have any concerns in this area, please let us know, and we will do our best to assist you.

Your well-being is our top priority, and we are committed to making this winter a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable season for you. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

# DISPOSE RESPONSIBLY, SUPPORT SUSTAINABLY - LET BULKY MATTERS TAKE CARE OF YOUR UNWANTED HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Our Bulky Matters service, a collaboration between Lancaster City Council and local charity Furniture Matters, allows you to easily dispose of unwanted household items while also supporting local communities and environmental initiatives. Furniture Matters partners with over 100 organisations across Lancaster and Cumbria to ensure your discarded items are given a new lease on life.

At our Bulky Matters 'Sort It' centre, your items are carefully sorted to find out whether they can be reused, repaired, stripped for parts, or recycled. Reusable items find new homes with individuals in need, while non-reusable materials are responsibly processed and taken to the landfill site.

As a council tenant, you're entitled to one complimentary Bulky Matters collection each year. To arrange a collection, simply give us a call on 01524 582491. Collection times vary depending on your location, but you can find more details at [lancaster.gov.uk/bins-recycling/bulky-household-item-collection](http://lancaster.gov.uk/bins-recycling/bulky-household-item-collection).

For additional collections, we offer a convenient pay-as-you-go service. Rates start at £21.50 for one item, £29 for two items, and £35.50 for three or four items.

Each additional item costs £8.60. The proceeds from these collections help us fund our various initiatives, including reconditioning your old items and providing affordable furniture to those in need.

We happily collect a variety of unwanted household items, including furniture, appliances, electronics, and miscellaneous items like toys, tools, and mobility aids. However, we cannot collect things such as household fixtures and fittings, outdoor refuse, or larger goods such as pianos or refrigeration units.

If you have any questions about whether or not we can collect a particular item, please don't hesitate to contact us. We're always happy to help!

# ALL ABOUT... OUR STOCK CONDITION SURVEYS

Earlier this year, Ridge and Partners, a professional property consultancy, were appointed as our trusted service partner for overseeing the management of an extensive stock condition survey for all Council homes within the district.

Ridge and Partners brought their extensive skills and experience to the project and the information that has now been collected will play a crucial role in our Council Housing Asset Strategy for 2022-2027, helping us to learn more about your homes and what works are needed.

Thank you for allowing access to your home to carry out this really important work.

Now that the collection of data is almost complete, we will be making informed about planned programmes of maintenance works for the coming years. Once the full and updated programmes of works are completed we

will publish them, allowing you to check what works are scheduled to take place where you live.

Look out for this in the new year.

If you are one of the small number of homes which has not yet had a survey, please contact our customer services team on 01524 582929 to arrange this.

RIDGE

## THE MELLISHAW GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE: A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS LIVING SPACES



**The Mellishaw Gypsy and Traveller Site has flourished as a vibrant home for numerous families since it was established in 1982.**

As the years passed, however, the need to revitalise the site has become more evident, prompting an exciting collaboration between the community, local architects from Mason Gillibrand, and the City Council. The proposed improvements will modernise and rejuvenate the resident's living spaces and optimise the overall site layout. In the earlier months of 2023, residents of Mellishaw were supported to temporarily move off site as we work with local contractor Pinnington to transform the site in part thanks to a successful winning bid to the Department for Local Government, Housing and Communities.

Exciting times ahead for Mellishaw Park!

# MEET THE INCOME MANAGEMENT TEAM

Meet the Lancaster City Council Housing's Income and Administration Team. With a focus on financial operations, the team expertly manages rent collection, tenant inquiries, and administrative tasks.

## ELLA HEWITT INCOME & ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

Hello, my name is Ella Hewitt, I started with the Income Management Team in January 2023 as an Income Management Officer and have recently changed role, now supporting the team as the Income and Administration Manager. Prior to being with the Council, I was employed in a Local Citizens Advice where I trained as a Benefits Advisor, which included working on the National Universal Credit Helpline, then later qualified as a Debt Advisor. This skillset is invaluable with the work we do with our tenants, identifying missing benefit entitlement, maximising their income and in turn reducing and managing any rent arrears in a sustainable and affordable manner. The proactive and preventative approach the team has is invaluable to our tenants, we strive to improve, and I thoroughly enjoy being part of such a caring and supporting team, who actively try to increase tenancy sustainment and tenant satisfaction.



## MICHELLE BRENNAN INCOME MANAGEMENT OFFICER

I joined Lancaster City Council in May 2000, and I am one of the Income Management Officers. I cover the Ridge/Newton/Kingsway and Carnforth area. I enjoy being in a team, supporting our residents which have faced many challenges over the past few years and now the cost-of-living crisis. It's the people that make the job rewarding.

## ALISTER HOSMER INCOME MANAGEMENT OFFICER

I am a newbie of 6 months in the fantastic Income Management Team, I currently cover the City Centres, Marsh, Branksome, Mellishaw Park, Warton & rural patches. I come from an Income Management and collections background, I find this job really rewarding and enjoy working with our tenants to ensure they can sustain their tenancies.

## PAUL FRASER-GRAY INCOME MANAGEMENT OFFICER

I have worked for Council Housing for fifteen years, twelve of those within the rents team. I previously worked within regeneration projects in Morecambe. Our whole team are here to provide help and support to our tenants if they have any issues when paying their rent, and we work closely with many local agencies that can also provide additional support, especially during this current cost of living crisis.

## SAMANTHA JEFFERY INCOME MANAGEMENT OFFICER

I am an Income Management Officer and have worked in my current role for approximately 18 years, starting in Council Housing in 2004 as a Housing Assistant. My role has changed immensely over the last few years with the introduction of Universal Credit and the Covid pandemic. This means that as an Income Management Officer I carry out a much more supportive role than previously and can help with advice on maximising income, benefit checks, grant applications and referrals to other agencies for support or advice if necessary.

## NICOLA MYLES INCOME MANAGEMENT OFFICER

Hello, my name is Nicola, I am the Income Management Officer for Ryelands, Higher Heysham, Trumacar, Caton & Halton and Bolton le Sands & Slyne. I have been in the Income Team since 1999 and enjoy being part of the team and wider Housing Department. Outside of work I enjoy spending time with my family & friends and going on holiday!

# A LOOKBACK AT OUR EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

The housing team work tirelessly to support all manner of community events and activities and out and about across the district, and recent months have been no different! Over the past six months, our community has been buzzing with excitement as they came together fun-filled gatherings, organised trips, educational workshops, community litter-picks – you name it, there was something for everyone to enjoy regardless of age or interest.

In this section, we're looking back at the wonderful activities that we all enjoyed together!

We've also included contributions from several events that were held towards the end of 2022 – the photos for which, sadly, didn't arrive in time for the last issue of Your Council Housing Matters – but we're over the moon to finally give them their moment in the spotlight!

## OCTOBER 2022: HALLOWEEN LITTER-PICK

Despite the drizzle, the Ryelands Residents Community Group came together on October 27th for an exciting Halloween Litter pick with some added help from the children - some as young as 2 years old - who all mucked in to help to make a difference on their estate, their dedication was truly heartwarming with one claiming "I enjoyed this more than my computer game!" Kudos to the parents who managed the rubbish bags and helped with setup and cleanup. In just 90 minutes, our litter picking gang made a remarkable impact. After returning to St. Chad's Hall, we wrapped up the morning with sandwiches and spooky treats.



## OCTOBER 2022: MEL'S SOUP AT BECK VIEW



At Beck View, our independent living scheme, scheme manager Mel Cooper went the extra mile by preparing a delightful homemade soup for the tenants. Served alongside crusty bread and accompanied by a scrumptious ginger cake with custard, it was a heartwarming and satisfying meal. But the fun continued as everyone was treated to several rounds of bingo - and to sweeten the occasion that little bit more, some delicious parkin cake was also shared!

## OCTOBER 2022: HALLOWEEN PARTY AT PARKSIDE COURT

Thanks to the dedication of scheme manager Angela Walton, the residents of Parkside Court, our Independent Living Scheme, experienced an unforgettable and delightfully spooky Halloween party. The event was filled with an abundance of delicious food and refreshing drink which left everyone feeling very full! We were over the moon with all the residents who dressed up, adding to the fun and making the occasion truly memorable!



## OCTOBER 2022: LANGRIDGE SKIP DAY

On October 31st, 2022, the Langridge Estate hosted a Skip Day, arranged by Michelle McMeeking. Each court was provided with a skip to for the removal of rubbish, litter, and white goods. The primary objective of the Skip Day was to combat fly-tipping. This community initiative brought residents together, promoting a cleaner and safer environment for everyone involved.



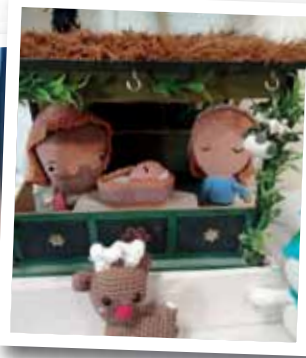
## CHRISTMAS 2022 - SHAKESPEARE ROAD CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

Linda Howard, the Independent Living scheme manager for Shakespeare Road, organised a Christmas raffle exclusively for the residents. The raffle featured three enticing hampers filled with an array of delightful treats as the coveted top prizes, complemented by six runner-up prizes.

## CHRISTMAS 2022 DECORATING COMPETITIONS

Community Engagement Officer Rachael Harland and Michelle Fitton - Chair of the Mainway Residents' Group - joined forces to organise a decorating competition for our Independent Living Schemes! The 2022 Christmas Decoration Competition enjoyed an array of fantastic entries, but the residents of Ripley Court emerged as the overall winners with their charming homemade decorations - transforming their communal lounge into a magical Santa's Grotto. As a well-deserved prize, they opted for a scrumptious Pie and Peas lunch in May.

We'd also like to say congratulations to Mr and Mrs Jeffords at Kingsway Court for their winning window display, which truly brightened the judges' day!



## DECEMBER 2022 - CHRISTMAS FAIR & PARTY AT PARKSIDE COURT



Thanks to the efforts of scheme manager Angela Walton, the residents of Parkside Court, our independent living scheme, were treated to not just one, but two memorable Christmas events. The first event was a Christmas fair with numerous stalls and engaging activities. The second event was a pre-

Christmas party, where residents enjoyed a wonderful selection of food and drinks.

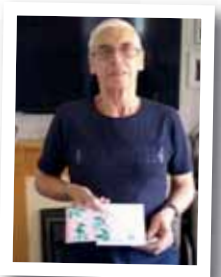
## FEBRUARY 2023 - VALENTINES DAY AT PARKSIDE COURT

Whether you're the kind of person who embraces Valentine's Day or not, it certainly provided the perfect opportunity for residents of Parkside Court Independent Living Scheme, to enjoy a get-together organised by our dedicated scheme manager, Angela Walton. The event featured live music and a generous spread of food and drinks – so everyone had plenty to savour and sip.



## APRIL 2023 - EMCOR PRIZE DRAW

Every quarter, our gas contract partner EMCOR Group (UK) plc organise a prize draw, offering a £50 Marks and Spencer voucher to one lucky winner for those who have provided access for our annual gas safety check. In April, tenants were invited to select a number between 2 and 558, and we are delighted to announce that Mr. Davies from Ingleton Drive emerged as the winner. Congratulations!



## MAY 2023 - CORONATION PARTY AT BECK VIEW

In celebration of the coronation of King Charles, several of our Independent Living schemes came together to host coronation parties. At Beck View, the event was skilfully organised by Independent Living Officer Melanie Cooper, who adorned the scheme with festive bunting flags and majestic gold balloon crowns. Residents proudly displayed flags from their windows along the drive. The festivities included a 'Royal-themed' game of bingo, followed by a captivating performance by Mark, inspiring sing-alongs, and dancing. One tenant shared heartfelt poems and songs about her childhood encounter with Prince Charles in Africa. The event featured a buffet lunch, and it was lovely to witness the tenants' support in the preparations, leading to a memorable celebration.

## JUNE 2023 - BBQ AT MORLEY CLOSE & PRICE CLOSE



In June 2023, the Joint Social Club, made up of the residents from Morley Close and Price Close, hosted an unforgettable BBQ party on a sun-kissed day with lots of sizzling delights. This close-knit club, known for its diverse activities like Monday bingo, Thursday darts, yard sales, and exciting coach trips, is eagerly anticipating their next adventure to Skipton!







## GET INVOLVED:

**We recognise that understanding the needs of our tenants is an important part of providing useful services and ensuring that our residents enjoy a high-quality standard of living - which is why we always value active participation and candid feedback from those who wish to contribute.**

To ensure that our residents have the opportunity to engage with us and have their voices heard, we have different ways you can get involved. These include scrutiny groups, the District-Wide Tenants Forum 'Tenant Voice', as well as various Tenant and Resident Associations, alongside the chance to engage with various other interactive initiatives.

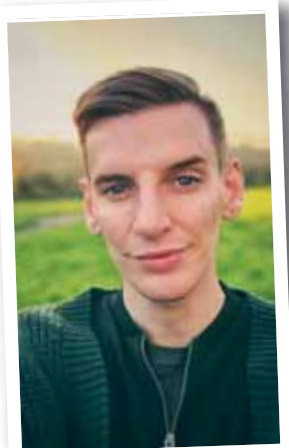
### WHAT IS THE TENANTS' VOICE?

**The 'Tenants' Voice' - formally District Wide Tenants Forum - brings together tenants, leaseholders, councillors, and Council Housing staff. This forum is a vital group that convenes bi-monthly, enabling tenants and leaseholders to play an active role in shaping policies and decisions within council housing while ensuring their voices are heard.**

Functioning as a consultative group, the primary focus is to address district-wide issues concerning tenants and leaseholders, acting as a bridge between the community and the housing team.

These meetings involve discussions on a wide range of topics, including new council and government initiatives, policies, procedures, service delivery matters, and improvement plans. This collaborative approach provides community members with an opportunity to be part of meaningful conversations that drive positive changes in council housing.

## A PERSONAL NOTE FROM JIM, CHAIRPERSON OF THE TENANTS' VOICE:



*Hey everyone, welcome to Chair in the City, a new column, direct from a fellow tenant! I am the chair of the Tenants' Voice group (we hope you like the new name) and it is my privilege to be a council tenant. We meet four times a year and look at things like reporting from the scrutiny panels as well as being an intermediary between the council and tenants. But we need your voice! Aside from the meetings, we also meet up for social events!*

*My hope this year is to boost engagement and to go and see some of the wonderful work going on around the district. If you want to get involved on a local level, or at the Tenants Voice forum - let me or Rachael Harland know!*

**To reach out to Rachael Harland - our dedicated Community Engagement Officer - you can send an email to [rharland@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:rharland@lancaster.gov.uk), or call 01524 586891.**

# Gardening Competition 2023

**Not everyone has a garden, but that shouldn't prevent us from celebrating the creative horticultural diversity that exists within the Lancaster City Council Housing Community!**

That's why, for all our green-fingered tenants across the district, our Community Engagement Officer Rachael Harland helps our residents to celebrate their hard work with a garden competition each and every year.

We were sure to listen to people's comments about last years' judging being too late in the summer...so we organised it to be judged a little earlier this year. We also added a new twist to mix things up a bit...so we included a theme encouraging everyone to celebrate the coronation of King Charles by creating colourful coronation containers!

This year we had two standard categories – Best Container Garden, and Best Communal Garden - each offering a £50 voucher as a prize.

But we also had a £25 voucher on offer for Best Child's Container Garden, and finally as a grand prize, we had a £100 voucher for the winner of Best Overall Garden.

## 2023 Winners:

Best  
Garden:  
Mrs Carol Brodie -  
Hindburn Place,  
Ryelands





**Best Container Garden:**  
Ruth Rattigan – Ripley Court, Lancaster



**Best Childrens Container:**  
Kelsie - Ryelands



**Best Communal Garden:**  
All Residents - Shards Court, Mainway



We'd like to give a huge congratulations to the winners – and a massive thank you to everyone who took part in the competition.

We were also over the moon to see the efforts made by the children at Ryelands who took the opportunity to get involved this year, creating some inspiring arrangements that took a lot of imagination!

“They’re all so amazing,” said Jenny Armor, one of the members of the Ryelands Resident’s Community Group, “we’re really proud of how the children used their imaginations to create such amazing little gardens!”

On a side note, we’d like to congratulate Jenny for winning the Roger Sherlock Community Inspiration Award – and we hope to do a feature about all the hard work Jenny has put in to bring the Ryelands Community together in the first digital edition of our newsletter – as well as all the hard work that the Community Group have produced over the years!



# All the fantastic entries for this year's 'Best Childrens' Container Garden'!



# MAKING AN IMPACT: THE NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUND

Welcome to the Neighbourhood Community Projects Fund! We are thrilled to offer grants of up to £3000 to support projects that make a positive difference in our community. Whether you have ideas to improve your neighbourhood or create lasting change...we're here to support you every step of the way!

## INTERESTED IN APPLYING?

To ensure your project has a meaningful impact, remember a few guidelines. It is important that your project benefits more than one person and specifically benefits council housing tenants. Do not worry about limitations, as you can submit applications at any time throughout the year.

Our priorities align with Lancaster City Council's goals: building a Sustainable District, fostering an Inclusive and Prosperous Local Economy, promoting Healthy and Happy Communities, and emphasising a Co-operative, Kind, and Responsible Council.

As part of these goals, we encourage projects that enhance green spaces, improve health and wellbeing of residents, or support financial and digital inclusion such as projects with a focus on providing access to sound money advice and management, boosting confidence in financial management, and enhancing digital usage and access for all.

## ESCAPE2MAKE'S ARTISTIC JOURNEY

Step into the vibrant world of Escape2Make, an organisation dedicated to nurturing creativity and fostering inclusivity among young individuals through captivating workshops and events. Their latest project has left participants bustling with excitement and artistic expression.

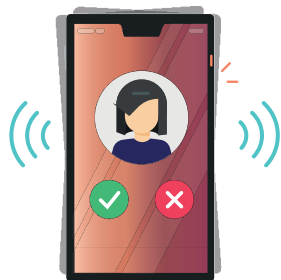
## Some of our funded projects:

- The **Land Art** workshop, held on the picturesque shores of Morecambe Beach, provided an opportunity for seventeen young people to create a breathtaking art piece, immortalised on film.
- The Marsh Community Centre in Lancaster was transformed into a colourful canvas for the **Paint Rave** event. Ten enthusiastic participants donned protective suits and let loose, painting to lively beats while immersing themselves in an atmosphere of pure artistic freedom. To add a touch of charm, they also had the chance to breathe new life into upcycled furniture.
- At More Music in Morecambe, six young individuals without any prior musical experience embarked on an extraordinary journey during the **Band In A Day** workshop. Guided by talented instructors, they discovered their hidden musical talents, composing an original song and fearlessly taking to the stage within a single day.



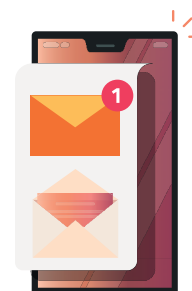
# Need To Get In Touch?

Please find essential contact information and online resources below to assist you in accessing our services. Should you have any questions or feedback, feel free to reach out to us through any of the following channels:



## Customer Services:

For any general inquiries, tenant support, or housing-related questions, our dedicated Customer Services team is available to assist you. Reach out to us via phone at **01524 582 929** or through email at **councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk**.



## Official Website:

For comprehensive information about Lancaster City Council Housing's services, policies, and resources, please visit our official website at **lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing**. Here, you can find valuable insights into the application process, tenancy guidelines, and other relevant topics.



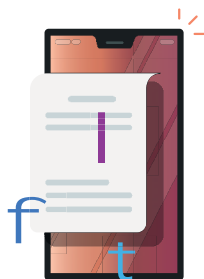
## Ideal Choice Homes:

Our service for the allocation of social housing, Ideal Choice Homes, offers a wide range of housing options and related services.

To explore available properties, or to simply discuss your specific requirements, visit the website at

**idealchoicetohomes.co.uk** or contact Ideal Choice Homes directly at **01524 582 005** for assistance.

To access Ideal Choice Homes' bidding system at any time, you can use our 24-hour automated bidding line. Dial **0845 505 8230** to use this service and participate in housing allocation bids effortlessly.



## Stay Connected With Us On Social Media:

For the latest updates, news, and community engagement, follow Lancaster City Council Housing on our social media platforms and stay informed about housing-related events and announcements:

f Connect with us at **facebook.com/LanCityHousing**  
t Stay in the loop at **twitter.com/LCC\_Housing**  
i Enjoy our media at **instagram.com/lancaster\_city\_council\_housing**

## Visit Our Hubs:

If you live on one of our estates or schemes, you can always pop into one of our housing hubs:

**MyMainway Hub:**  
Open Monday,  
Tuesday & Thursday  
10.00 – 16.00

**Morecambe Town Hall**  
Open Monday to Friday  
9.00 – 13.00

**Lancaster Town Hall**  
Open Monday to Friday  
9.00 – 13.00