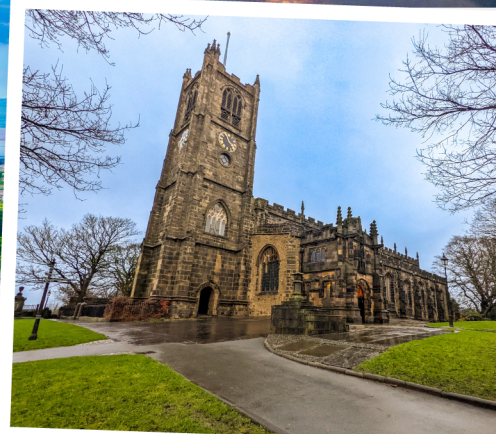


your

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

council housing matters

DIGITAL NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2024 (ISSUE 2/6)



WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF YOUR COUNCIL HOUSING MATTERS!

Inside, you'll find a wealth of information about the exciting events and initiatives happening in our community. From neighbourhood news and improvements to helpful advice on maintaining your home, we've got you covered. Discover how you can get involved in shaping our services, learn about the latest changes to our Town Hall opening hours, and find out what's been happening in your area. We also share important updates on rent payments, repairs, and how to keep your home free from dampness and mould. Whether you're a long-time resident or new to the neighbourhood...this issue has something for everyone.



BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

We recognise that sustainable communities require people to feel safe and secure in their environment, and a big part of that is how well they get on with their neighbours. If people feel safe and secure, they are more likely to stay living in their new home. This in turn creates a more settled community. We have put together some useful tips on how you can be a good neighbour and welcome new residents to your community.

What Are Good Neighbours?

Good neighbours are considerate, tolerant, and understanding of other people and their different lifestyles. They help build successful communities.

Why You Should Be A Good Neighbour

Being on bad terms with your neighbour can make your life frustrating, day after day, but taking the time to establish good terms with your neighbours has numerous benefits. The community will be friendlier, the neighbourhood safer, and the area a nicer and more comfortable place to live.

Different Lifestyles And One-Off Incidents

We are all different and we should respect that. Often people do not realise they may be disturbing others. One-off incidents can be annoying, such as a loud party, but if they are not frequent then you should try to tolerate it. If they occur on a regular basis, and the disturbance causes you a problem, it is often a matter of making your neighbour aware in a friendly manner and seeking to work out a solution together. Our Community Safety and Neighbourhood Teams will encourage residents to try to resolve matters themselves where appropriate. Involving us before talking to your neighbour may lead to hostile feelings and make matters worse.

Understanding Each Other

Get to know your neighbours if you can. Sometimes, you can remedy problems before they start. For example, if they work nights, quiet mornings will be important for them. If they have young children, quiet evenings will be important to them. Give them information that will help them be more considerate of your lifestyle too. If your teenage son plays the drums, let them know in advance and say if it's getting too loud, they should let you know.

Being A Good Neighbour

Introduce yourself – say hi! Whether you're new in the neighbourhood or new neighbours have just moved in, introduce yourself. Say hello and share or ask about the local area.

More information on 'How To Be A Good Neighbour' can be found in our leaflet, which will be issued to all new tenants in their new tenancy pack.



MESSY GARDENS & BULKY MATTERS



One of the things that brings down the appearance of a neighbourhood is the sight of gardens that are not being maintained properly or where the tenants are dumping household waste and unwanted bulky items such as furniture and old appliances in their own gardens.

It makes the neighbourhood somewhere that people do not want to live or where they are embarrassed to have visitors to their home because of neighbouring gardens. It is also a breach of the tenancy agreement, which can have serious consequences.

If you are struggling to maintain your garden or dispose of your household waste correctly, you should speak to your housing officer before you get to the stage where action is being taken against you. They may be able to signpost you to support services. You can contact your housing officer at housingofficers@lancaster.gov.uk or on **01524 582929**.

The Bulky Matters service works in partnership with Lancaster City Council and collects bulky household

items from homes around the district. You can book a collection online at lancaster.gov.uk/bins-recycling/bulky-household-item-collection or via **01524 582000**. Council Housing tenants can receive one collection per financial year of up to 4 items for free, and after that any additional collections are charged as follows:

| Number of Items | Charge |
|-----------------|--------|
| 1 item | £24.00 |
| 2 items | £32.00 |
| 3 or 4 items | £39.00 |

SWITCH2 - UNDERSTANDING YOUR HEATING SYSTEM

If you're a resident of Brunton's Warehouse, Cable Street, or Water Street, your property is part of a community heating system. This means that a central boiler room pumps hot water through pipes to each property, and individual smart meters measure the heating and hot water used.



Benefits Of Community Heating Include:

- No need to buy or service your own boiler (for homeowners)
- Automatic meter readings sent to your supplier
- Low carbon energy from local heat sources
- Potential for lower cost heat compared to fossil fuels

Your heating system uses a communal boiler and a specialist pre-payment meter. The current daily standing charge is £0.4647, which means a minimum weekly top-up of £3.25 is required to avoid debt.

It's important to note that due to the nature of this system, residents are not able to change providers. The meter will continue to charge the standing fee regardless of whether it's turned on or your heat usage. Turning off the meter can cause it to fault, which may result in a chargeable call-out from Switch2.

If you have any issues with your heating system, please contact the Council Housing repairs team at **01524 582929**. The Switch2 customer service team is also available Monday to Friday, 8am-6pm, at **0333 321 2010** or info@switch2.co.uk for any questions about your heating and hot water.



ANNUAL RENT INCREASE

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

Your rent will have increased on 1st April 2024, and the details of your increase has been sent to you via letter.

IF YOU RECEIVE HOUSING BENEFIT

You do not need to do anything as Housing Benefit will automatically be informed that your rent has changed. If your service charges include ineligible charges, then you will need to arrange to pay these charges yourself. If your rent is only partially paid by Housing Benefit, then the amount you pay may need to be adjusted. If you are unsure how much to pay, please contact the Income Management Team on **01524 582541**.

IF YOU RECEIVE UNIVERSAL CREDIT

After 1st April, you must update your Universal Credit claim with the new rent and service charge rate before the end of your next assessment period. The rent-free weeks will remain at 4 weeks. Once you have updated your Universal Credit if your rent is paid direct to the Council, you do not need to take any further action. If your rent is not paid to the Council or you have a shortfall or arrears payment to make, then this may need to be adjusted. If your service charges include ineligible charges, then you will need to arrange to pay these charges yourself. If you require help or assistance to update your claim or you are unsure how much you need to pay, please contact the Income Management Team on **01524 582541**.

IF YOU PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT

You do not need to take any action as your payment will be automatically adjusted. If you pay by Standing Order, you will need to contact your bank and tell them the new amount that needs to be paid. If you are unsure how much the Standing Order needs to be then please contact the Income Management Team on **01524 582541**.

If you pay by Bank Transfer You will need to log into your account and enter the new amount that needs to be paid. If you are unsure how much the payment needs to be then please contact the Income Management Team on **01524 582541**.

IF YOU PAY BY RENT CARD (AT POST OFFICE, PAYZONE OR COUNCIL'S ONLINE/TELEPHONE SYSTEM):

You will need to adjust the amount you pay to the new rent. If you are unsure how much the payments need to be then please contact the Income Management Team on **01524 582541**.



RETURN TO WORK

Start your journey to a great job today!

Are you thinking about returning to work or getting your first job but not sure where to start? Maybe you already have a job, but you would like to change career or find one with more security and opportunities to progress?

We work closely with other support and training providers in the district to help you reach your goals and tackle any obstacles that may be in the way. There is a wide range of courses and skills training available locally and online, that you could undertake at no cost to you, which could also help you on your path to the job that you really want.

We can also help you turn an idea for your own business into a reality or support you to develop the business you already have.

If you, a family member, or friend would like an informal chat and a coffee to discuss what help and opportunities there are within your local area, then pop along to the My Mainway hub on a Monday between 1pm and 4pm. If you can't make this or would prefer to chat via email or phone, then please complete the self-referral form here or email skills@lancaster.gov.uk and we will be in touch.

53-WEEK RENT YEAR



There are normally 52 weeks in a year, and we charge our tenants on a weekly basis to cover this period. Rent weeks always start on a Monday. But every five or six years, the days of the week fall so there are 53 Mondays - and therefore 53 'rent weeks' - in a year.

As Lancaster City Council provides 4 rent free weeks, this means there are 49 weeks payable. The next time this will happen is the financial year from Monday 1 April 2024 to Sunday 6 April 2025.

Calculating your extra payment depends on any benefits you receive, how you pay your rent and how often you make payments.

HOW IS YOUR RENT PAID?

Housing Benefit Covers All Of My Rent...

As your Housing Benefit pays your rent in full, you will not be impacted by the 53-week year between Monday 1 April 2024 and Sunday 6 April 2025.

Housing Benefit Covers Part Of My Rent And I Pay The Rest...

As you have four rent clear weeks, there will be 49 weeks of rent to pay in total between Monday 1 April 2024 and Sunday 6 April 2025.

Housing Benefit will cover some of the extra week's payment, but you will be responsible for covering any shortfall.

Universal Credit Covers All Of My Rent...

Unfortunately, Universal Credit (UC) **won't cover** the extra week of rent that is chargeable between Monday 1 April 2024 and Sunday 6 April 2025.

As you have four rent clear weeks, UC will pay 48 weeks of rent (52 weeks minus your four rent clear weeks) but you will need to cover the additional week of rent payment. We suggest you spread the extra week's rent over the year in monthly payments.

To do this, multiply your current weekly rent charge X 49 weeks ÷ 12 months. You will need to cover any difference between this amount and the amount received from UC.

Universal Credit Covers Part Of My Rent And I Pay The Rest...

Unfortunately, Universal Credit (UC) won't cover the extra week of rent that is chargeable between Monday 1 April 2024 and Sunday 6 April 2025.

As you have four rent clear weeks, there will be 49 weeks of rent to pay in total and you will need to ensure any shortfall is covered. We suggest you spread the extra week's rent over the year.

To calculate the extra you will need to pay each month, multiply your current weekly rent charge X 49 weeks ÷ 12 months. You will need to cover any difference between this amount and the amount received from UC.

What Can I Do If I'm Not Happy Universal Credit Aren't Covering The 53rd Week?

Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do as you will still be liable as the tenant to pay the extra week of rent Universal Credit won't cover.

If you don't pay, you'll end up in arrears. However, we would encourage you to write to your local MP, in the hopes the Department for Work and Pensions will cover the extra week the next time we have a 53 week financial year.

I Pay My Rent Independently (Weekly Payer)...

As you have four rent clear weeks, you will need to pay rent for 49 weeks between Monday 1 April 2024 and Sunday 6 April 2025.

I Pay My Rent Independently (Four-Weekly Payer)...

As you have four rent clear weeks, you will need to pay rent for 49 weeks between Monday 1 April 2024 and Sunday 6 April 2025. We suggest you spread the extra week's rent over the year. To do this, multiply your weekly rent charge X 49 ÷ 13 = four weekly rent payment.

I Pay My Rent Independently (Monthly Payer)...

As you have four rent clear weeks, you will need to pay rent for 49 weeks between Monday 1 April 2024 and Sunday 6 April 2025. We suggest you spread the extra week's rent over the year.

To do this, multiply your current weekly rent charge X 49 weeks ÷ 12 months = monthly rent payment.

If you are concerned about the 53-week year and your finances, or you have any questions, you can speak to one of our Income Officers on 01524 582541



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

AS A COUNCIL TENANT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS.

For example, did you know?

- At a basic level you have the right to live in a home which is fit for human habitation.
- It is also a legal requirement for the council to maintain your home so that it meets the Government's 'Decent Homes Standard'. This means your home should be in a reasonable state of repair, should have reasonably modern facilities (an adequately sized kitchen which isn't too old, for example), and should provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort with an efficient heating system which keeps your home warm.
- As your landlord the Council must comply with all health and safety legislation. The safety of your home and its surroundings is our top priority, and we invest an awful lot of time and effort into making sure your gas and electricity supplied are safe, that fire safety precautions are in place, that any reports of damp and mould receive a prompt response, and much more.
- You have the right to request reasonable adjustments to the way the council delivers services to you. For example, if the way we deliver services puts you at a disadvantage because of a disability, you can request that we deliver services in a way that meets your needs. Maybe you have sight or hearing impairment, for example, and we need to communicate with you in a particular way? Or perhaps you live in a building with a lift, are unable to use the stairs, and you need the council to assist you in managing when the lift is out of action for servicing or repair? It is your right as a tenant to request an adjustment to the service you receive.
- You also have the right to quiet enjoyment of your home. If the council need to enter your home you have the right to receive notice of a visit to carry our repairs and maintenance, or for the council to view the condition or state of repair of your home.

Your tenancy agreement contains lots of details about your rights as a council tenant and is a really useful document to refer to. If you need a replacement copy of your tenancy agreement, just get in touch with the team on **01524 582929** or at **councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk** and request a new copy.

RENTAL PAYMENT SUPPORT

SUPPORTING YOU WITH RENT PAYMENTS

Our friendly Income Management Team is here to help you manage your rent account. We understand that rent charges are part of your tenancy agreement and your responsibility, but we're experienced in supporting tenants to handle their tenancies appropriately.

You can contact the team at **01524 582541** or **chincomemanagementteam@lancaster.gov.uk** for any rent related queries, including:

- Detailing your rent account balance, charges, and arrears, and agreeing on repayment plans
- Taking payments over the phone
- Providing information on available payment methods and helping set up direct debits
- Issuing new rent swipe cards
- Conducting benefit checks to ensure you're receiving all entitled benefits
- Checking for available funds, grants, or schemes to help with rent charges or arrears
- Signposting or referring for more complex advice needs

Remember, we're here to support you in managing your rent account effectively. Don't hesitate to reach out if you need assistance or have any questions.





RAISING A REPAIR WITH LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL HOUSING

At Lancaster City Council Housing, we understand that reporting a repair promptly is essential to keeping your home safe, comfortable, and well-maintained. That's why we've made it easy for you to get in touch with our dedicated Repairs team whenever you need assistance.

To report a repair, simply call us on **01524 582929**, and our friendly staff will be happy to help. If you prefer, you can also use our online contact form, which can be accessed via <https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/repairs>. We'll schedule an appointment for any repairs that require access to your home, ensuring minimal disruption to your day.

If you need to report a repair related to your gas fire, boiler, or central heating, please contact our gas partnership contractor, EMCOR. You can reach them free of charge on **0800 111 4521**, or at the standard rate on **01744 833398**.

In case of an emergency repair outside of office hours, don't hesitate to call our Emergency Call Centre on 01524 67099. Please note that these calls are recorded for monitoring and training purposes.

When you report a repair, we'll assess its urgency and prioritize accordingly. Emergency repairs that pose a danger to life, limb, or property will be carried out within 24 hours. Urgent repairs that don't qualify as emergencies will be addressed within five working days, while all other repairs will be completed within 4 weeks.

Remember, as a tenant, you have the right to certain repairs being carried out within a specific timeframe. If we fail to meet our obligations for these 'qualifying repairs', you may have the right to arrange your own repairs following a set procedure. You can find more information about your 'Right to Repair' in our leaflet, available on our website - or as a printed copy from Customer Services.

IMPORTANT HOME ACCESS FOR SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE CHECKS BY YOUR LANDLORD

Part of our job as your landlord is to allow you to have quiet enjoyment of your home and surroundings. However, there are times when we need to access your home. We will never ask to do this without good reason.

Perhaps most importantly we need you to let us in for your annual Gas Safety Check (if your home has a gas meter, supply or gas appliances installed). Not only is this annual check a legal requirement, but it is also vitally important for the safety of you and your neighbours. We also carry out five-yearly electrical inspection and we need you to let us in for these too.

There are other reasons, too, why we might ask for access. These could include our programme of 6-week and 6-month new tenant visits, tenancy audits, to carry out stock condition surveys which help us understand the repair needs of your home, to fix emergency repair issues such as leaks, check solid fuel appliances/flues and more.

If we need to, we can seek legal authority to enter your home if we believe there is good reason too, but we always ask permission first, and we would always rather you let us in willingly. We will always aim to visit your home at a time that is convenient for you.

Please remember, whenever a council employee or contractor wants to enter your home, they should be wearing an ID badge, and you should always ask to see this if you're unsure. If they can't produce an ID badge you can refuse their entry. If you are ever unsure you should call 01524 582929 and speak to one of the team.

PREVENTING DAMPNESS AND MOULD IN YOUR HOME

Lancaster City Council Housing is committed to helping tenants maintain a healthy living environment. As such, we would like to provide you with important information about preventing dampness and mould in your home. Although these issues are often associated with colder months, they can occur year-round, particularly in areas with high humidity.

Understanding Condensation and Mould

The primary cause of dampness and mould growth in homes is condensation. This happens when warm, humid air comes into contact with cooler surfaces, creating the perfect conditions for black mould, a fungus that thrives in damp environments. To prevent condensation and the subsequent growth of mould, it is essential to control moisture, ensure proper ventilation, and maintain consistent heating throughout your home.

Controlling Moisture

Controlling moisture is key to preventing dampness and mould. We recommend air-drying your laundry outdoors whenever possible. If you need to dry your clothes indoors, please use a well-ventilated room. When cooking or showering, be sure to utilise extractor fans to remove excess moisture, and keep doors closed to prevent this moisture from spreading to other areas of your home.

Ensuring Proper Ventilation

Proper ventilation is also crucial in allowing excess moisture to escape. To ensure adequate ventilation, please keep your trickle vents open and open your windows for short periods throughout the day. It's essential to strike a balance between ventilation and warmth, so be mindful of the weather and the temperature inside your home.

Maintaining Consistent Heating

Maintaining consistent heating, even during the summer months, can also help prevent condensation and mould growth. We suggest using thermostats and timers to maintain a steady background temperature and avoid extreme temperature fluctuations. This will help keep your home at a comfortable temperature while reducing the risk of dampness and mould.

Dealing with Mould

If you do notice mould in your home, it can often be addressed by carefully wiping or vacuuming away the mould and cleaning the affected area with a fungicidal wash or sterilizing fluid. For fabric items, dry cleaning or shampooing is usually effective. You can also use diluted tea tree oil, but please test it on a small area first to ensure it doesn't cause any damage.

Other Causes of Dampness

While condensation is the most common cause of dampness and mould, it's important to be aware of other potential sources. These include rising damp, which can occur due to a damaged damp proof course, penetrating damp, which is often caused by external damage to your home, and leaky plumbing. If you suspect any of these issues, please don't hesitate to contact Lancaster City Council Housing's customer service team for guidance and assistance.



We understand that dealing with dampness and mould can be concerning, but by following these guidelines, you can effectively prevent these issues and maintain a healthy living space. Lancaster City Council Housing is here to support you in this effort. If you have any questions, require further advice, or need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at 01524 582929 or councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk. We are always happy to help.

MEET THE DEDICATED PEOPLE WHO MANAGE AND REPRESENT YOUR ESTATE:

| Estate | Housing Officer | Income management Officer | Community Safety Officer | Inspector |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Lancaster North | | | | |
| Beaumont | Jenny | Paul | Louise | Dave |
| Mainway | Jenny | Paul | Amanda | TBC |
| Ryelands | Graceleanne | Nicola | Amanda | TBC |
| Vale | Daniel | Sam | Louise | Dave |
| Lancaster South | | | | |
| Bowerham | Daniel | Sam | Amanda | TBC |
| Caton | Lorraine | Nicola | Amanda | TBC |
| City Centre | Lorraine | Alister | Amanda | TBC |
| Greaves | Graceleanne | Paul | Amanda | TBC |
| Galgate & South Villages | Jenny | Paul | Amanda | TBC |
| Halton | Lorraine | Nicola | Amanda | TBC |
| Hala | Jenny | Paul | Amanda | TBC |
| Hornby & Lune Villages | Michelle M | Sam | Amanda | TBC |
| Marsh | Lorraine | Alister | Amanda | TBC |
| Newton | Michelle M | Michelle B | Amanda | TBC |
| Ridge | Michelle M | Michelle B | Amanda | TBC |
| Morecambe/Coastal | | | | |
| Branksome | Lorraine | Alister | Louise | Dave |
| Carnforth | Graceleanne | Michelle B | Louise | Dave |
| Higher Heysham | Daniel | Nicola | Louise | Dave |
| The Kelleys | Daniel | Alister | Louise | Dave |
| Kingsway | Daniel | Michelle B | Louise | Dave |
| Morecambe Central | Michelle M | Alister | Louise | Dave |
| Middleton & Overton | Graceleanne | Sam | Louise | Dave |
| Slyne | Graceleanne | Nicola | Louise | Dave |
| Bolton le Sands | Graceleanne | Nicola | Louise | Dave |
| Trumacar | Jenny | Nicola | Louise | Dave |
| Westgate | Michelle M | Sam | Louise | Dave |
| Warton & Rurals | Daniel | Alister | Louise | Dave |
| Mellishaw Park | | | | |
| Mellishaw Park | Lorraine | Alister | Joe | Dave |



OUR NEW ONLINE PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

Ideal Choice Homes is Lancaster City Council's own lettings website. The website also includes properties advertised by other registered providers of social housing (housing associations).

From the 8th of April 2024, Lancaster City Council will be using a new Choice Based Lettings system for the housing register and the letting of social housing across the Lancaster district.

All applicants will need to complete a new housing application form, if they wish to remain on the housing register and continue to bid on properties that are advertised. This will ensure that all information we hold for you is correct and up to date.

If you would like to remain on the housing register, please complete a new housing application form via lancaster.locatapro.org/onlineform.

DON'T BE A STRANGER - UPDATE YOUR DETAILS!

We know that everyone likes to keep up to date in different ways - maybe you prefer a text, an email, or a good old-fashioned letter through your door?

We will be working hard in the coming weeks and months to improve the different methods we use to communicate, the first job we need to do is make sure we have up to date contact details for all tenants and leaseholders. For example, we want to increase our use of text message reminders for repairs appointments, to make sure you know when the team are coming to carry out a repair to your home.

We'd also like to replace some of our letters with emails for those of you who'd prefer it, and if you do like a phone call and a chat with the team, we need an up-to-date phone number for that too.

So please take a moment to give us your details and help us improve the service we deliver for you. We'd like an up-to-date mobile phone number (and landline if you have one too) and an email address if you use one. To update your details, you can phone us on 01524 582929 or simply visit lancaster.gov.uk/data-collection and fill in the online form.



WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

At Lancaster City Council Housing, we are dedicated to delivering the highest standard of service to our residents. However, we recognise that there may be instances when our actions or the level of service provided does not meet your expectations. In such cases, we greatly value your feedback, including complaints, as it helps us identify areas where we need to improve.

If you wish to raise a complaint, you can do so In-person at our offices, by phone at 01524 582929, or via email at housingcomplaints@lancaster.gov.uk.

We understand that raising a complaint can be challenging, which is why we are more than happy to arrange meetings with complainants. You are also welcome to bring along a friend, relative, or representative to these meetings for additional support.

Our Commitment to Resolution

We are committed to resolving complaints to the best of our ability and to the satisfaction of our valued residents. We view each complaint as an opportunity to learn, grow, and enhance the services we provide.

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's definition, we recognise 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."

Transparency and Support

As part of our commitment to transparency, we release an annual report that assesses our approach to complaint handling, ensuring alignment with the Housing Ombudsman's code and government requirements. If you require further assistance or support, you can also reach out to the Housing Ombudsman directly at info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk or by calling 0300 111 3000.



Housing
Ombudsman Service

EVENT LOOKBACK

As we step into April 2024, it's a good time to look back at the fun events and activities that brought us all closer over the past few months. Our dedicated housing team has been working tirelessly to organise a wide range of engaging initiatives, catering to the diverse interests and age groups within our community. From lively gatherings and exciting trips to informative workshops and eco-friendly litter-picks, there was no shortage of opportunities to connect with neighbours, learn new skills, and make a positive impact on our environment.

In this section, we're going to look-back at the highlights of these events.



MORLEY CLOSE COMMUNITY ROOM UPDATE

Big news for our community! Work has started at the back of Morley Close. This is thanks to money from the Neighbourhood Community Projects Fund. Now, getting to the community room at Morley Close will be easier. Plus, we'll have more room for fun gatherings when the weather is nice. If you want to know more about this project or how to get funds like this, please talk to our housing office. They're here to help!



BIG MARSH CLEAN UP

During the half-term holiday in February, the Marsh Community Centre, The Friends of the Marsh Group and Lancaster City Council came together to organise a Green Event over two days. The first day was a big community clean-up which included a well-attended litter pick, two skips for residents on the estate to get rid of unwanted items and two brilliant operatives from Public Realm with the cage van to collect items that could not go in the skips. In the afternoon there were refreshments at the Community Centre and a poster competition. The winners of the poster competition will have their posters turned into signs which will be put up around the estate.

On day two the Green Gang from Lancaster City Council came to the Marsh and gave an informative session about the importance of recycling which I think we all learnt things from- who new glass was made from sand! Thank you, Matthew, for getting everyone thinking about re-using and recycling. The kids also got to go in the waste recycling wagon which they all thoroughly enjoyed despite the weather.

The kids did a planting session at the Community Centre and even though the rain was coming down extremely hard they all got involved and planted up some lovely containers.



The event ended with an information lunch with lots of energy saving freebies and ideas from Lancaster City Council Customers Services and CAB. There was also information about free training courses available for all ages. Following on from this event there will be another community litter pick on the Marsh in the May half term.

A big thank you to everyone who was involved in the Big Clean up at the Marsh. Please get in touch with Rachael Harland Community Engagement Officer on **01524 586891** or rharland@lancaster.gov.uk if you think your estate would benefit from a Big Clean-up or you are interested in organising a Community Litter pick.



RYELANDS EASTER EGG-STRAVAGANZA!

The Ryelands Estate had a blast this Easter, thanks to the Ryelands Residents Community Group! Flopsy the rabbit delighted the kids, while adults and children battled it out in egg and spoon races (with some grown-up cheating involved!). The Easter bonnet competition at St Chads Church Hall showcased the little ones' creativity, and the Bake-off Competition and cake sale had everyone drooling. A big thank you to the amazing Ryelands Residents Community Group, especially the lovely Jenny Armer, for making this Easter unforgettable in the Ryelands Estate!



DEDICATION TO COMMUNITY GARDENS

In our community area at 1-5 the Greaves, one of our tenants has done something wonderful. She has worked very hard on the garden, making it a lovely spot for everyone. Now, she's also been fixing up the kitchen garden, and the photos show just how nice it looks. We are really thankful for all her effort and how much she has improved our neighbourhood.



**BUILDING A
STRONGER
COMMUNITY**

We are incredibly grateful for your active participation and enthusiasm in making these events a resounding success. Your involvement is what makes our community thrive, and we look forward to even more fantastic experiences with you in the months ahead.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for future events or activities, why not get in touch?

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF OUR SERVICES

At Lancaster City Council Housing, we firmly believe that the key to providing exceptional services and ensuring a high quality of life for our residents lies in understanding and addressing your needs – which is why we place such a high value on your active participation and candid feedback.

We offer a variety of opportunities for you to get involved and make your voice heard, such as:

- Scrutiny groups
- Tenants' Voice Group
- Tenant and Resident Associations
- Interactive initiatives tailored to your interests and other commitments



By getting involved, you can play a crucial role in:

- Driving continuous improvement in our services based on your valuable insights
- Influencing decisions to align with the wants and needs of our tenants and residents
- Enhancing accountability by actively participating in the decision-making process
- Ensuring the effective use of our tenants' income to achieve the best value for money

Ready to Make a Difference?

If you're eager to shape the future of our services and communities, we invite you to visit keepconnected.lancaster.gov.uk/council-housing-tenants-get-involved, or contact Rachael Harland, your Community Engagement Officer, at **01524 586891** or rharland@lancaster.gov.uk. Your involvement can have a lasting impact on the quality of life for yourself and your fellow residents.

UPCOMING ESTATE EVENTS

Welcome to our community corner! Here, we'll tell you all about the fun and important events coming up in our areas managed by Lancaster City Council Housing. You'll find lots of different activities, from fun family events to helpful workshops. These events are great ways to meet your neighbours and make our community even better. Keep an eye out here to join in!

Ryelands' Residents' Community Group

Join the Ryelands Residents Community Group every other Monday, 9-10 am, at St Chads Church Hall for engaging discussions and community bonding. The next meeting is on 29th April. Stay connected with Ryelands Estate happenings on their Facebook page.

Branksome's Good Neighbours Group

The Branksome Good Neighbours Group meets Tuesdays, 9-11 am, at the Toby Carvery Shrimp Roundabout in Morecambe. Don't miss the monthly community litter pick and refreshments on the last Saturday of each month, 11 am-1 pm, at Benson Avenue park. Equipment provided. Follow them on Facebook for more details.

Visit Our Mainway Hub

Every Thursday, 10 am-12 pm, the Mainway Tenants and Residents Group gathers at the My Mainway Hub, 7 Owen Road, Lancaster. Meet your neighbours and discuss important issues. Stay informed about Mainway happenings by following Mainway Stars on Facebook.

Ridge and Marsh Community Centres

For a packed schedule of exciting activities, visit the Ridge Community Centre and Marsh Community Centre in Lancaster. These vibrant hubs always have something interesting going on. Follow EMUES at the Ridge Community Centre and Marsh Community Centre Lancaster on Facebook to stay updated.



THE TENANTS' VOICE GROUP

At Lancaster City Council Housing, we believe that every tenant and leaseholder should have the opportunity to shape the policies and decisions that impact their lives. That's why we've created 'The Tenants' Voice', a powerful platform that brings together tenants, leaseholders, councillors, and Council Housing staff to engage in meaningful discussions and push for positive change.

Formerly known as the District Wide Tenants Forum, this bi-monthly meeting serves as a catalyst for open communication and collaboration, empowering community members to actively participate in shaping the future of council housing.

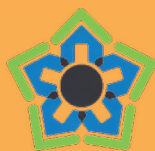
During these meetings, we cover a wide range of relevant topics, such as:

- The latest Council and government initiatives
- Policies, procedures, and service delivery matters
- Improvement plans and strategies to enhance the tenant experience

By attending Tenants' Voice meetings, you can contribute your ideas, insights, and concerns, helping to improve the services offered by Council Housing and ensuring that your voice is heard loud and clear.

JOIN US AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

If you're passionate about making a positive impact and want to have a say in the decision-making process, we invite you to join us at the next Tenants' Voice Meeting at Carnforth Independent Living Scheme Community Lounge 6-8pm on Thursday 6th June.



the tenants voice



LGBTQ+ TENANTS' VOICE GROUP

A brand-new group is here to boost the voices of our LGBTQ+ customers and tackle the unique issues they face. Meeting once a month, this supportive space offers a platform for action, socialising, and addressing the challenges that can sometimes make members of the LGBTQ+ community feel isolated. Join us in creating a more inclusive housing experience for all.

YOUNG PERSONS' TENANTS' VOICE GROUP (UNDER 18)

Attention all young people under 18 living on our estates! We've created a special monthly group just for you, designed to address the issues that matter most to you and explore the services you'd like to see implemented to boost your confidence, skills, and social interaction. Your input will directly influence the Tenants Voice, so come and make your mark!

OLDER PERSONS' TENANTS' VOICE GROUP (AGES 55+)

For our valued tenants and leaseholders aged 55 and above, we've launched a dedicated monthly group to focus on the issues that are most important to you. We recognise that certain concerns and ideas can be specific to your age group, and we want to ensure your voices are heard. This group will also contribute to the Tenants Voice, making sure your perspectives are represented.

To learn more, please contact Rachael Harland, your Community Engagement Officer, at 01524 586891 or rharland@lancaster.gov.uk.

EMPOWER YOURSELF AND YOUR COMMUNITY WITH TPAS



Lancaster City Council strongly encourages all residents to become members of TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service), the nation's foremost experts in tenant engagement. By joining TPAS, you'll have the power to influence community and housing decisions, playing an integral role in shaping the future of Lancaster City Council's Housing Services.

As a TPAS member, you'll gain access to a wealth of benefits, including:

- Comprehensive training opportunities and informative regional events
- The latest news and insights on housing and tenant involvement policies
- TPAS Connect, an exclusive online community where you can share best practices and support fellow members
- Thanks to the Council's membership, you can enjoy all these benefits for free, making it easier than ever to get involved and make a real difference.

BECOME A TPAS MEMBER TODAY

To join TPAS, simply visit tpas.org.uk and register. For access to TPAS Connect, email rharland@lancaster.gov.uk or call 01524 586891.

Your participation can drive meaningful improvements in our services.

HOW ELSE CAN I GET INVOLVED?

HELP OUR SCRUTINY PANEL TO IMPROVE SERVICES

The Scrutiny Panel is on a mission to thoroughly investigate, examine, and evaluate the services currently provided by Lancaster City Council Housing. By gathering evidence and insights, the panel crafts achievable, time-bound recommendations aimed at improving the lives of tenants.

PROMOTE BUILDING SAFETY

The Building Safety Panel, consisting of dedicated resident representatives from Lancaster's three high-rise buildings, gathers quarterly to discuss and review crucial building safety information and resident feedback. These panel members work tirelessly to ensure safety standards are upheld, understand upcoming work that may impact building safety, and relay their findings, recommendations, and concerns to the Tenants Voice Meeting.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME

Can't attend meetings or events in person? No problem! With our Armchair Involvement initiative, you can still play a crucial role in shaping Lancaster City Council Housing's work. Whether it's filling out surveys or providing feedback on policies, your input is invaluable in helping us serve our community better.

NEW TOWN HALL OPENING HOURS

We are delighted to announce that our Town Halls at Morecambe and Lancaster are extending their opening hours from 15th April 2024.

Both Town Halls will be open from 9am-4.30pm, Monday to Friday with staff from our Customer Services team on hand to help with any enquiries you might have.

Of course, our phone, email and online contact will be available as it always has been, but for those of you who prefer to speak to someone face to face please feel free to drop in.

Don't forget, our My Mainway Hub remains open 10am - 4pm, Mon, Tues, and Thurs if this is more convenient, where staff will also be happy to help.