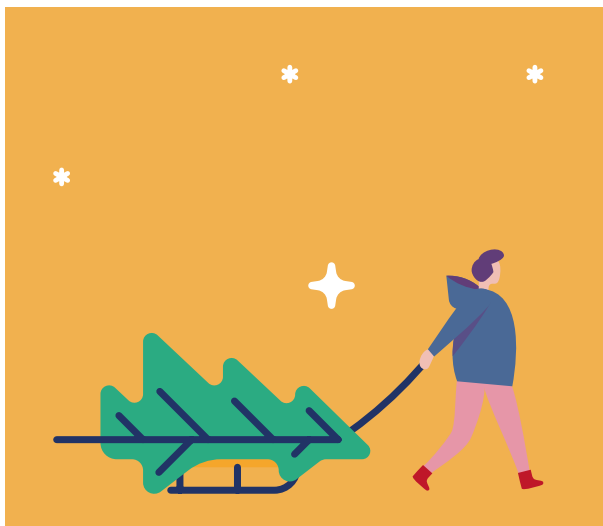


Winter 2019

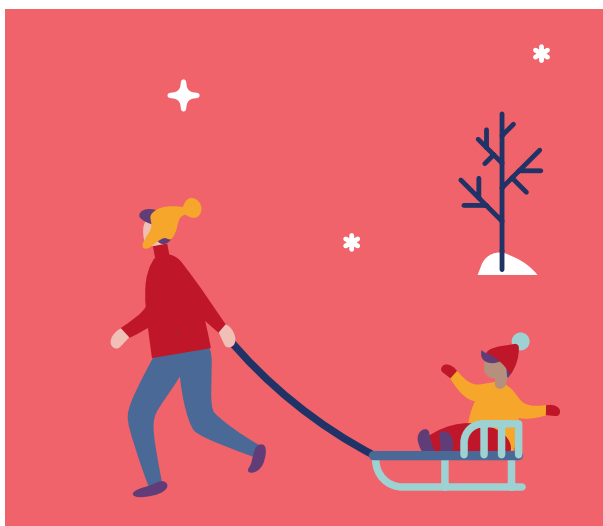
Newsletter



Christmas opening hours



Don't get wrapped up in debt



Supporting homeless people in Yorkshire



Welcome

The team and Board at LYHA would like to wish all our customers a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

We've made significant improvements across the business during 2019, which have helped us regain the highest G1 governance rating and retain our V1 rating for viability. Particularly important to me is our increased engagement with customers. We're listening to what you tell us and making positive changes to improve the customer experience. We know that we still have some way to go but I'm both confident and extremely positive about the future ahead.

Over the next few months we're going to be reviewing our corporate plan, building on our progress from last year and developing new initiatives to continue to improve our homes and services.

On a personal note I am delighted to have been made permanent Chief Executive. It is an honour to lead LYHA. Thank you for all your support and I look forward to meeting many of our customers over the coming year.

Mark Pearson
Chief Executive

Christmas opening hours

Our office will close at 5.00pm on Tuesday 24th December and reopen at 8.30am on Thursday 2nd January.

If you need to report an emergency repair during this time, please call **0113 278 3335**.

If your enquiry is not urgent, please call us back when we

re-open in January and we will respond to you as quickly as we can.



Supporting homeless people in Yorkshire

This Christmas we are delighted to be supporting two local homeless charities, St George's Crypt in Leeds and the Barnsley Homeless Alliance, who do lots of fantastic work supporting homeless people in our region.

The LYHA team has been very busy collecting clothing, food and Christmas gift items that we'll be donating very shortly.

Shelter cites the number of people registered homeless in Yorkshire to be just short of 6,000 in 2018, but the real figure is probably much higher. Winter is understandably the toughest time of year, with freezing temperatures and harsh weather conditions - not to mention being surrounded by "perfect Christmas" images and people out celebrating - so it is great to be able to do our bit to help.

Don't get wrapped up in debt

We know that Christmas can be busy and expensive, and that debt can easily become a big worry at this time of the year. If you are struggling with money, please don't suffer in silence or let your rent payments lapse.

Putting a plan in place early to ensure all your priority bills (rent, gas, electric etc) are being paid will help to ease some of the financial stress and ensure that you don't start the New Year in arrears.

As a first point of call you should call your Income Officer, either Katy Horrigan: 0113 2208104 or Chris Radcliffe: 0113 2208125. They will be able to signpost you to sources of support and help answer your questions.

Make sure you inform your Housing Benefit Department or Universal Credit promptly if there are any changes in your circumstances that may affect your entitlement to benefits.

Although we're closed over Christmas and New Year, please don't forget **your rent is due on the 1st of every month**. Where possible, try to ensure your rent account is paid in advance or consider paying a little extra in December so you are not caught out in January when post-Christmas bills arrive.

If you don't currently pay your rent by direct debit we would encourage you to contact your Income Officer to set this up. It's easy to do, saves

your time and ensures that regular payments are made.

You can also make payments to your rent account via your myLYHA account on our website **www.lyha.co.uk/login-pay-your-rent**. If you're not already registered you just need an email address and your tenancy reference number, which you can find on the bottom of your rent statement. You can also pay your rent over the phone on **0113 278 3335**, at your local post office using a GIRO card or by online banking to Sort code - 09-02-22, Account no – 10525191. Please type your tenancy reference number in the subject reference box.



Investing in our homes and estates

It's been a busy year in terms of investment and improvement. We've spent over £½ million on health and safety works and made improvements to many of our homes, including new bathrooms, kitchens and boilers. We'll also shortly be completing 58 new homes, in Barnsley and Morley, to help address the shortage of affordable housing in our region.

Thank you to all our customers who took part in the recent consultation about our estates services. The focus groups have given us some really useful feedback to help us make improvements to our services next year, including the establishment

of regular telephone satisfaction surveys and updating our website to improve communications on an ongoing basis.

We have recently updated our estates service level agreements and these can be found at **www.lyha.co.uk/estate-services**

We're also delighted to have recently been re-awarded the Customer Service Excellence Award in recognition of our commitment to driving customer-focussed change within LYHA. We know we've still got some way to go, but we are listening and acting on what you tell us to ensure that we continue to improve our service.

Stay warm and well this winter



Make sure you are prepared for the cold this winter. Freezing weather conditions can increase the risk of accidents and illnesses so please keep a look out for any elderly or vulnerable neighbours.

- Check local news and weather forecasts so you know when cold weather is on its way.
- Heat your home to at least 18°C (65F), particularly your living room and bedroom.
- Keep furniture away from radiators, so you get maximum benefit from your heating.
- If you are going away, don't turn your boiler off (keep your heating on a low temperature to avoid burst pipes) and ideally leave a contact number with a neighbour.
- If you think you may have a frozen pipe gently pour some warm (never hot) water over it to see if that helps.
- We strongly advise all customers to take out home contents insurance in case of theft, fire or flood. Visit www.lyha.co.uk/contents_insurance
- Struggling to pay your fuel bills? If you are retired or receive certain benefits you may be eligible for financial help. See www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/heating to find out more.
- If you think your heating bills are too high you may be able to get a better deal elsewhere. You should phone round for other quotes from different providers or visit a price comparison website such as www.comparethemarket.com or www.moneysupermarket.com
- If you have concerns about any of your neighbours, please check on them and ensure they have enough supplies of food etc.

Keeping you safe

Customer safety is our top priority and during 2019 we have invested heavily in this tremendously important area.

If you live in a flat that has shared communal areas, please take 5 minutes to read the Fire Risk Assessment report for your home, which are all published on our website: <https://www.lyha.co.uk/fire-safety-advice-flats-shared-entrance>. If you have recently been given a fire blanket we have also created a short factsheet showing you how to use this: www.lyha.co.uk/how-use-fire-blanket.



Feeling lonely at Christmas?

Last but by no means least, we understand that Christmas isn't always the happy time of year it is portrayed to be and can be very difficult for many people.

If you, a family member, or neighbour is lonely or have no one to turn to please don't struggle in silence. A phone call or a quick knock on the door to check someone is OK may be more valuable than you'll ever know and there are some fantastic sources of support out there including The Samaritans (www.samaritans.org) and Age UK (www.ageuk.org.uk) who have years and years of experience helping people in the same position. Please seek help.

Samaritans – **116 123**
Age UK – **0800 678 1602**

