



Housing NEWS

Sunderland
City Council

Summer 2023



Welcome

There's so much to read about in this summer issue of Housing News. From finding out about our 100th residents moving into their new home, how you can become

a tenant rep, the expansion of our helping the homeless scheme, to what Pension Credit is, what can be recycled in your blue bin and much more.

If there's anything that you'd like to know more about and would like us to feature in future editions of Housing News, please get in touch and let us know.

Milestone moment for council's housing plan

A Sunderland couple have become the 100th residents to move into their new council home.

Alison and David Step, who both live with a number of medical conditions that impact their mobility and general health, have praised the team at Sunderland City Council for their support, after securing a two-bedroom bungalow in Arnay Court in Old Mill Road.

The couple's one-storey new-build, one of 16 new homes developed in Southwick, has given them a new lease of life, enabling them to easily navigate the property and providing them with a large outdoor space for their grandchildren to enjoy.

The homes were built by Sunderland-based MCC Homes and are part of Sunderland City Council's £59m Housing Delivery and Investment Plan (HDIP).

The five-year HDIP sets out ambitions to ensure that residents have access to the homes they need throughout their lives; that vulnerable residents are able to live in properties that support them to live independently for longer, in which they are supported to live happy, fulfilled lives; and that empty



homes, that so often blight their community, are returned to use.

As well as being registered blind, Alison, 57, lives with osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, pruritus and has significant issues with her knees and hips that mean the move to the bungalow has greatly improved her quality of life.

Her husband David also has health problems. The 58-year-old has sleep apnoea, type 2 diabetes, spinal stenosis and dermatological problems, and having moved from a third-floor apartment with 51 stairs to navigate to access their home, the couple can now enjoy an enhanced quality of life.

Alison said: "We are absolutely tickled pink with the house. Our apartment was becoming really

difficult for us to access, which meant we were increasingly isolated.

"I think, in the end, we were becoming quite depressed, so the move to a home that meets our needs has lifted our mood and we're starting to live again, which is lovely."

Alison and David have become the 100th residents to move into a council house, with the local authority becoming a registered provider, after a 20-year hiatus, in 2020.

Arnay Court is one of several new developments across the city. The scheme includes five new 3-bedroom family homes and 11 2-bed bungalows for older people. The homes are designed to deliver good-quality, affordable accommodation for rent.

Become a tenant representative

Do you have a passion to improve neighbourhoods and communities in Sunderland?

If you do, we've an exciting opportunity for you to join our Housing Service Monitoring Group and to influence what, and how we deliver our services.

As a tenant representative you'll help us make decisions about what we provide and offer our tenants. You'll be a member of the group at our scheduled meetings (don't worry, they aren't very often!) and be consulted on specific areas of our work. This will include helping with and analysing the feedback we receive from tenants.

The payment is £800 a year for the role, which will require you to work just a few hours each month.

There are two vacant tenant rep positions available which are

open to anyone who is a tenant of Sunderland City Council.

To apply for one of the positions you must:

- hold a Sunderland City Council tenancy
- have a clear rent account, without any unspent convictions, court orders or any other breach of tenancy
- be a good listener, influencer and communicator
- be passionate about improving neighbourhoods and communities in the city

We are looking for two people who have:

- good communication skills
- the ability to be objective and can analyse, interpret, and question information

- the ability to weigh up issues, make balanced judgements and decisions
- a passion to improve neighbourhoods and communities
- if you have a knowledge or experience of the housing sector that'd be a bonus (but not essential)

To support the roles, the two tenants appointed will be provided with any equipment, training, and development that they need.

To apply or find out more about the roles, please contact Phil Auton on 0191 520 5551 or Email: sunderlandcouncilhousing@ Sunderland.co.uk



**WE WANT
YOUR FEEDBACK**

Complaints

We want to provide the best services we possibly can. Please get in touch if you feel that the housing services you have received from us are not of the high standard expected. Please contact us by:

Email:

sunderlandhousing@ Sunderland.gov.uk

Phone: 0191 561 2715

Address: Sunderland City Council, Housing Management Service, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland SR1 3AA

Or via your local Councillor or Member of Parliament

The Housing Ombudsman operates to oversee complaints about housing providers. You can contact them directly at any time for advice, support, or guidance:

Online form: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint

Phone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Helping the homeless scheme is expanding

Sunderland City Council have been granted additional funding from the Department of Levelling Up. It will provide support for an extra six tenancies which will assist those most in need. A further £62,450 has been granted to help those at risk of homelessness.

The funding for 2023–24 will provide those at risk of homelessness a property they can call a home. Sunderland City Council, alongside our support provider Oasis Community Housing, will continue to offer the Next Steps Accommodation Programme for up to twelve customers at any one time.

The programme will help those at risk of homelessness and give

them a short-term tenancy until they are ready to move on. The aim is for them to sustain a tenancy of their own.

Housing Operations Manager Phil Auton said "Receiving the funding from the Department of Levelling up is a key moment for our service this year, this will increase our capacity to assist those at risk of homelessness and continue to help those most at need.

"We have seen clients benefit from the scheme who have been at risk of homelessness or sleeping rough being provided with intensive support and accommodation which sets them up to sustain a tenancy of their own and help tackle homelessness in the city".





- don't boil kettles or pans longer than you need to
- make sure you put lids on pans
- open windows or use extractor fan (if fitted) when cooking
- wipe away any condensation from windows and other surfaces
- avoid drying clothes on radiators
- close the bathroom door when you're in the shower or bath

Improve the ventilation in your home:

- don't overfill cupboards and wardrobes
- don't block air vents or airbricks in your property
- open internal doors occasionally to allow air to circulate
- keep trickle vents in windows open

Keep your home well heated

- in cold weather provide a low background heat during the day
- don't use bottled gas or paraffin heaters

If you are experiencing issues with damp and mould in your home, please contact us immediately. Call: 0191 520 5551 or Email: sunderlandhousing@ Sunderland.gov.uk



Reporting a repair

If you need to report a repair that is needed to your home, please contact us by calling 0191 561 2715 or email: building@sunderland.gov.uk

Damp, condensation and mould

Damp

Damp occurs when a fault in the basic structure of the building lets in water from the outside.

The usual signs are mould, a musty smell and wet patches on the walls or ceilings after rain. If you think your home may have damp, please contact our Building Services Team on 0191 561 2715 or email building@sunderland.gov.uk who will arrange for a Technical Inspector to call at your home, look at the problem and arrange any necessary repair work.

Condensation and mould

What is condensation?

Even though you cannot see it, the air in your home contains water vapour. When warm air comes in contact with cold surfaces, such as window panes, outside walls, mirrors or tiles, it turns into droplets of water called condensation.

What causes condensation?

Condensation is a greater problem during winter when the weather gets colder. This is because we tend to keep windows and doors closed to keep the heat inside, so the

moisture cannot escape. The main causes are:

- too much moisture in your home
- not enough ventilation in the rooms of your home
- temperature in your home being too low

Condensation can cause a black mould, which has a musty smell, to form in your home. This usually happens on cold, outside surfaces and walls and in areas where the air does not flow well.

The mould usually forms on decorative surfaces such as wallpaper, tiles, windowsills and wall plaster, but it can also form on furniture, cushions, curtains and on clothing stored in wardrobes and drawers.

Black mould is not a sign of rising damp as it can only grow in pure water associated with condensation.

Useful tips to reduce condensation

Reduce the amount of moisture you produce:

Housing Team shortlisted for award

Congratulations to our Housing Operations team on being shortlisted in the Team of the year in the '0 to 1,000 Homes' category of the Housing Heroes Awards 2023!

The team was formed just over year ago, and since then have made a huge positive impact to how our housing stock is managed and how our tenants are supported.

They've worked hard to ensure that all the necessary systems, procedures and policies are in place to manage our properties properly. A major review of working practices and procedures they carried out has improved the service they offer.

The team has provided high quality customer service for all our tenants, including those who are vulnerable.

The winners were announced last month, and although the team were unsuccessful on this occasion, being shortlisted is testament to how far they've come in such a short space of time.



Could you be eligible for Pension Credit?

If you're over State Pension age, you may be eligible to claim Pension Credit, even if you own your home or have savings.

People who claim Pension Credit may also be able to get:

- help with heating costs
- help with rent and Council Tax

- a free TV licence - for those aged 75 or over
- help with the cost of NHS services, such as NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments

Don't miss out.

Check your eligibility at www.gov.uk/pension-credit or by calling 0800 99 1234

Tenant satisfaction

The Government has recently introduced a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

In addition to revised consumer standards, it will involve a set of tenant satisfaction measures that

social housing landlords must report on. People will be able to use these measures to understand how well landlords are doing.

Sunderland City Council is committed to delivering high levels of customer satisfaction. During our annual customer care visit to your home, we'll get your views

so they can help shape how we deliver our services.

You can find out more about the tenant satisfaction measures at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-satisfaction-measures-standard



Staying cool in hot weather

Five tips to help you stay cool when the weather heats up...

- drink plenty of fluids and avoid excess alcohol
- stay out of the sun between 11am and 3pm if possible
- look out for those who may find it more difficult to stay cool and hydrated

- avoid extreme physical exertion
- walk in the shade, apply sunscreen, wear a hat and light, loose clothing

For more information see www.nhs.uk and search 'hot weather'.

Cost of living support

If you need help or advice about money, have a look at our Cost of Living Support Hub.

The hub has lots of helpful advice and guidance about what support is available in Sunderland, see www.sunderland.gov.uk/cost-of-living

Recycle right

Don't forget to recycle as much as you can in your blue recycling bin.

Paper items go in the black inner caddy, and all other items go in the main part of the bin.

Things that you can put in the main part include:

- ✓ glass and plastic bottles
- ✓ food and drink cans
- ✓ food boxes/packaging (without any food left on)
- ✓ flattened cardboard boxes

However, some things can't be recycled and need to go in your green bin. This includes:

- ✗ plastic bags
- ✗ polystyrene
- ✗ packaging with food left on
- ✗ hard plastics – such as guttering, plant pots, children's toys
- ✗ nappies
- ✗ pizza boxes



For a reminder of what you can and can't recycle in your blue bin please visit: www.sunderland.gov.uk/bluebin

What you do really does make a difference, thank you for recycling.

Washington Old School development nears completion

Development of Washington Old School is bringing the once-rederelict property back into use.

Through a combined conversion and extension of the existing building, the Old School has been transformed into 15 self-contained dwellings. The homes that have

been created are specifically for tenants with learning disabilities. They are also helping to meet a strategic housing need and support the council's Housing Delivery and Investment Plan.

There is demand in the area for this type of housing for adults

with learning disabilities, and the development is adjacent to an autism support facility. These homes will provide much needed supported accommodation for rent.

The 15 single-bedroom apartments aim to meet specialist housing needs for adults with learning difficulties and will each contain an individual kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and living areas. The apartments have a communal outdoor space with outside courtyard furniture and planting. The residents will be supported by on-site staff. There will be secure entry into the grounds, helping to provide a safe environment for the residents.

The school was built in circa 1893 and originally known as Biddick School before being renamed and later closing in the 1990s.

The development is due to for completion later this year.

Get in touch

If you would like to speak to us, or have any queries, comments, or concerns about your home, please get in touch.

Email: sunderlandhousing@ Sunderland.gov.uk

Phone: 0191 520 5551

Post: Sunderland City Council, Housing Management Service, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland SR1 3AA

