

gateway news

AUTUMN/WINTER 2024



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Hello & Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of Gateway News.

We have another jam-packed edition of Gateway News for you, which I hope you'll find interesting and useful.

It was great to see so many of you joining us for our Big Get Together and Annual General Meeting in September, getting involved and supporting the Board's decision making. Combining the AGM with a family fun day, which included food and children's activities was a great success.

I for one will be encouraging similar events in the future and hope many of you will be able to join in.

A highlight of the day for me was watching our Community Empowerment and Annual Report videos. These were fantastic showcases of our achievements over the past year, not only in terms of financials but also the real-life stuff. They show how the teams at CGA work right in the hearts of our communities, supporting tenants not just to live in the homes we provide but to thrive in them.



I hope you all keep safe and well over the Autumn and Winter months. Gateway News will be back in the Spring and I'll keep you updated on what happens at the Board meetings in my Chair's blog on the website.

Phil Parramore
Chair of the Board

PParramore



Hi everyone, and welcome to the latest edition of Gateway News. As ever this edition is packed with articles and stories which hopefully you'll enjoy reading.

It was great to see so many of you attend Harbour House for our Annual General Meeting in September. An important part of our ethos at CGA is that tenants can play an active role in how the business is run, and tenant members once again demonstrated this by having their voice heard and making their vote count on the day, as well as asking

questions directly to me and my team. Your feedback on the event has been excellent, with you particularly enjoying the ability to speak to our staff on issues that matter to you, as well as meeting and chatting to our Board Members. You can read much more about the day – and the work we are doing in response to the wider feedback you provide us with – in the following pages.

Over the last few months I've been out and about in our communities and was particularly pleased to visit the Savick estate to see the results of our investment in this area – the demolition of the empty shops and maisonettes has made way for many new, great-quality affordable family homes and new community facilities. Feedback from local tenants has been very positive, and we intend to build on this by creating even more new family homes just down the

road at the former church site.

When this edition lands on your doormat Summer will be very much behind us and the darker nights will be starting to take hold. I hope some of the articles will support you to take action to make sure that your home is safe and secure and encourage you to get involved with us directly or in community activities so that you are able to stay active over the coming months.

Rob Wakefield
Chief Executive

The Big Get Together and Annual General Meeting 2024

In September, we welcomed over 70 tenants to Harbour House for our Big Get Together and Annual General Meeting (AGM).

This gave tenants the chance to join us to look back at the last 12 months at CGA, as well as hear about our plans for the year to come. As CGA Members, all tenants who came along were eligible to vote on several important matters.

The AGM allowed tenants to review updates from across the business in our Annual Report and Community Empowerment videos.

Our Executive Leadership Team spoke about our achievements and highlights from the year as well as answering tenants' questions. A big thank you to those tenants who submitted some great questions for the team - you can read a selection and the responses on the next page.

Thanks again to everyone who joined us - if you'd like to see more of what happened on the day, visit our website www.communitygateway.co.uk/agm



AGM Q&A

What are CGA's key priorities over the next year?

Our focus is to continue to provide the services you've told us you want, and provide them well. We will continue to invest in your homes, work with you on improving your neighbourhoods and communities and build new homes. We will also make sure that you benefit from great customer service.

Is CGA making a profit from all the new houses you're building?

We don't make a profit. The amount we borrow, plus money from the government doesn't cover building costs, so we are not turning a profit.

Do CGA carry out regular inspections of roofing and guttering?

Our teams have a responsibility to carry out visual inspections and report back anything that they notice. For example a leaking gutter, issues with slates or a broken window.

We also carry out regular internal and external inspections through our HomeCare programme.



Why are you building new homes with only electricity?

Building regulations and planning now require us to build homes without gas. Electricity is more 'green-friendly' than gas, so that's the priority. The way these new homes are built means they are more energy efficient, so they should be cheaper to run, compared to old gas boiler systems.

What measures are being implemented to improve safety and reduce anti-social behaviour in our communities?

We have reintroduced community 'Days of

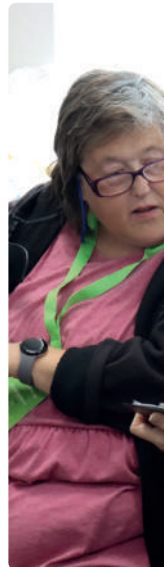
Action' with the police. Our good working relationship with the police helps us agree where these days should be held, based on where issues are arising. We campaign, pressure and lobby the police about their presence on our estates. The number of community police officers has increased, which is great, and we've been able to work together to make sure that neighbourhood policing is targeted at our estates so tenants benefit.

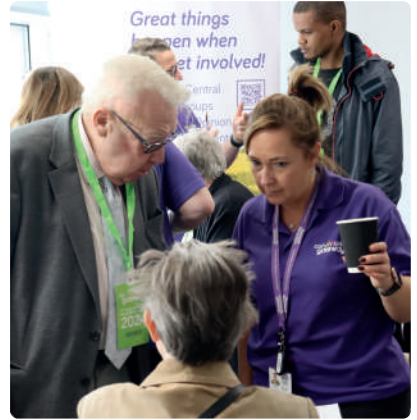
Why don't GreenCare remove grass cuttings?

Tenants have told us that as it costs more to collect cuttings, they are happy for us to use a 'let lie' approach.

For the full set of questions and responses from our Annual General Meeting, visit our website.

AGM 2024





How we've listened to you, and acted on what you've told us

YOU SAID

Through consultation activities you told us how we can continue to have a positive impact on our communities.

Following your feedback on call-wait times, Gateway Central members asked for a call queue to be implemented.

Through our community conversations you told us you wanted easier access to our support and services.

At The Big Conversation, we learned that you wanted a wider choice of repairs appointments.

WE DID

We created a brand-new Community Investment Strategy which sets out how we will work with you to create cleaner, greener and safer communities.

We introduced call-waiting position numbers and extra training for repairs call-handlers, helping us to reduce our average call wait times from over six minutes to under a minute.

We launched Gateway2You, giving you the opportunity to drop in and speak to our teams about the things that matter to you, in accessible local venues.

We changed the working patterns of our operatives, providing a wider range of appointment times.

Making a difference in our communities

Our teams have been out and about in your neighbourhoods, listening to tenants' views and using this feedback to make a positive difference.

Here's a couple of examples of how we've acted on what you've told us:

During a community pop-up in Ashton, tenants told us that they would like to make use of some outdoor space behind their flats, but the space had become overgrown, and they were unable to access it. We also found that they had no privacy because their communal front and back gardens were connected directly to a public footpath.

This was reported back to our

Property Investment and GreenCare teams, who arranged for a new fence to be installed and the outdoor space to be brought back to life with a clean-up, making a positive difference to the community.

Feedback from tenants at our GreenCare Spotlight Session told us that dense shrubs in a Grange neighbourhood were attracting litter and pests.

We've cleared the problem area and followed up with a recent day of action, listening to local issues and concerns.

Tenants have told us they're really pleased with the improvements.

Ashton Before



Grange Before



Ashton After



Grange After





Community Empowerment

At CGA, we work closely with our tenants to gather your feedback, opinions and suggestions. We listen to the Tenant Voice and use what you tell us to help shape and improve our services.

We actively encourage tenants to get involved with us, and have their say on how we do things.

We have tenants from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds who engage with us on a regular basis. They have helped shape the priorities for our new Community Empowerment Strategy.

The strategy aims to strengthen our performance and build on our successes. By working with tenants, we build relationships that are open and transparent, with interactions that make tenants feel they have been treated fairly and with respect.

FIND OUT MORE

Visit our website to find out how we are working hard to deliver the strategy.



ment Strategy 2024-27

The key aims of this strategy are:

- To make sure tenants' opinions and feedback is clearly heard throughout the organisation. We'll listen, and share the impact your feedback has had.
- To make sure everyone is able to get involved and make their voice heard - we'll help and support if you need it, so you can get involved.
- To continue to support tenant-led decision-making and the influence tenants can have. We do this through involving you in regular scrutiny and in-depth reviews of our services.
- To ensure our communications are fully accessible so tenants are always informed about our services, events and the latest news.
- To support our tenant committee, Gateway Central, strengthening its links with our Board to reinforce tenant influence.
- To make sure we exceed what's expected of us in terms of regulatory requirements, delivering against our community empowerment rules and, ultimately, giving great customer service to tenants.

Services in the spotlight

Earlier this year, we launched a new initiative to give tenants the chance to hear directly from CGA colleagues who work in our main service areas. These Spotlight Sessions allow tenants to take a deep dive into our services to see how we're performing and make improvements.

Sessions to date have already made recommendations for service improvements - these include:

Tenants said:

When we post a card to a tenant whose garden is not well maintained, we should include information on how they can ask for help if they are struggling.

We updated our cards to include a contact number for tenants who might need support.

We need to raise tenants' awareness on how to report anti-social behaviour (ASB).

We are carrying out days of action to help raise awareness of reporting processes. We also put

more information on our website and created a 'Your Guide to ASB Reporting' that sets out clearly how tenants can report ASB.

More information about local services would help new tenants settle into their homes and communities.

We updated the handouts given to tenants at sign-up to include this information.

Use rent statements to share key messages.

We will use our rent statements to share Health and Safety messages and other information as and when required.

To find out more about each session and to give us your views please visit the Get Involved pages on our website: www.communitygateway.co.uk/get-involved

Learning from complaints

We welcome all feedback and encourage tenants to let us know when things haven't gone well. By listening to you, we can learn when we haven't got things right and put changes in place to improve our services.

Over the last year we've received 141 expressions of dissatisfaction (this is when tenants want to tell us something isn't right, but don't want to make a formal complaint).

Of these, 86% (121) were upheld. We also received 222 complaints, of which 77% (171) were upheld. Of the tenants who made a complaint, 76% were satisfied with how it was handled.

Some examples of how we have listened and learnt from complaints this year are:

Make it clearer what CGA is responsible for and what the tenant is responsible for when moving into a new-build home.

We updated our 'New-Build Home User Guide' to make it easier for tenants to understand their responsibilities when it comes to repairs.

Make sure all colleagues follow tenant communication preferences.

We have updated our systems to ensure that tenant communication preferences are clear and understandable for colleagues when they have any contact with a tenant.

Letters sent to tenants should be clearer and more customer friendly.

We are reviewing all the letters we send to tenants to make them friendly and easy to understand.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) have been introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing in England to help them see how well housing providers are delivering services, and making sure they are providing good quality homes and services. They also show our tenants how well we are performing in the following areas:

- **Overall satisfaction with services**
- **Respectful and helpful engagement**
- **Keeping properties in good repair**

- **Responsible neighbourhood management**
- **Maintaining building safety**
- **Effective handling of complaints**

The TSMs consist of 22 measures: 12 of these come from surveying tenants about their satisfaction with services, and 10 come from information on how we are performing. This includes data in relation to building safety, anti-social behaviour and complaint handling. To find out more about the survey, visit our website: www.communitygateway.co.uk/tenant-satisfaction-measures

The surveys were sent out between 8th September and 18th October 2023, by text message, post, online and telephone.

The survey was sent to 6,453 tenants and we received 1,211 responses. The survey was delivered independently and the responses we received were representative of all tenants. Here are our results as at 31st March 2024:

Overall satisfaction with CGA services: 78.6%

Respectful and helpful engagement



67.1%

Satisfaction that CGA listens to your views and acts upon them



74.6%

Satisfaction that CGA keeps you informed about things that matter to you



80.3%

Satisfaction that CGA treats you fairly and with respect

Keeping properties in good repair



80.1%

Of tenants satisfied with our repairs service



77.4%

Of tenants were satisfied with the time taken to complete the most recent repair



76.6%

Satisfaction that your homes are well maintained



0.0%

CGA homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard



98.7%

Of emergency repairs completed within target timescale (24 hours)



83.4%

Of non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale (20 days)

Responsible neighbourhood management



69.0%

Satisfaction that CGA keeps communal areas clean and well maintained



66.0%

Satisfaction that CGA makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods



54.7%

Satisfaction with CGA's approach to handling anti-social behaviour



67.4

Number of anti-social behaviour cases opened
(per 1000 homes)



2.5

Number of anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents opened
(per 1000 homes)

Maintaining building safety



78.8%

Satisfaction that your home is safe



99.7%

Gas safety checks completed



100%

Fire safety checks completed



100%

Asbestos safety checks completed



100%

Water safety checks completed



100%

Lift safety checks completed

Effective handling of complaints



43.9%

Satisfaction with CGA's approach to handling complaints



25.7

Stage 1 Complaints relative to the size of the landlord
(per 1000 homes)



97.7%

Stage 1 Complaints responded to within the Complaint Handling Code timescales



3.5

Stage 2 Complaints relative to the size of the landlord
(per 1000 homes)



100%

Stage 2 Complaints responded to within the Complaint Handling Code timescales

Next Steps

We have shared these results with our strategic Tenant Committee, Gateway Central, who have scrutinised the results and will continue to have oversight of our work to improve services.

We have used the results from this survey, along with learning identified from tenant complaints, and tenant feedback from consultation activities, to create a Service Transformation Strategy. This strategy focuses on three themes:

- **Putting customers at the heart of all we do**
- **Delivering brilliant basics**
- **Continuous improvement based on tenant feedback**

The strategy and action plan clearly set out how we will improve our services to better meet the needs of our tenants, helping us to improve our performance.

We recognise that our results are not as good as we would like them to be, so we're taking steps to improve our services to you. So far we have:

- **Delivered customer service training to all our colleagues, helping us to improve the way we communicate**
- **Delivered training to our Repairs call handlers, supporting them to deliver a tailored service to meet**

individual needs

- **Launched a new set of values and behaviours for colleagues to follow when they deliver services**
- **Worked with our Tenant Scrutiny Group to conduct a full review into our complaints process, making eight recommendations to improve it**

We are now in the process of comparing our survey results with other landlords and will update you shortly on how we compare.

From October 2024, we have started our 2024/25 survey,

contacting a sample of tenants as part of a rolling programme of gathering your feedback. Selected tenants will receive a short survey to share their experiences with us. It's your chance to tell us how we're doing, what we're getting right, and where we can improve.

The survey is quick, taking less than five minutes and will be conducted by an independent organisation called TPTracker. Your feedback helps us shape our services for you!

Look out for your survey in the post and return it using the prepaid envelope within two weeks.

Learning from your survey feedback

We continually look to increase satisfaction across all the measures we survey, and have worked with tenants to improve our satisfaction ratings in these areas. Below is a selection of some of the work we have done so far to achieve this.

Satisfaction with our Repairs service

- We introduced a new satisfaction reporting process: cards are now given out at the end of a repairs appointment, so tenants can give us feedback quickly.
- We carried out a Scrutiny Review around communication with our repairs service, as a result of which 33 recommendations were made and 32 implemented.



Satisfaction that tenants' homes are safe

- We contacted all tenants who were not satisfied to listen to their concerns. This allowed us to understand that many concerns were about the safety of communities.
- We updated our Gas Safety check process, allowing us to increase our access rate to 100%.
- We held a dedicated session for tenants to allow them to gain a better understanding of how we keep their homes safe.

Satisfaction that CGA listens to tenant views and acts upon them

- We included a Tenant Voice section on our website, allowing tenants to see how we have listened to their views and acted on them.

Satisfaction that CGA keeps you informed about things that matter to you.

- We changed the remit of our Tenant Talk group to include setting the content for your newsletter, Gateway News.
- We launched a new website with increased accessibility, working with tenants to make sure it is not only user-friendly but holds all the information tenants want to read.
- We created a new suite of 'Your Guides To...' These were designed with tenants to contain all the information they want and need to know.

Satisfaction that CGA treats you fairly and with respect

- We consulted with tenants online and in-person to better understand what 'fairness' and 'respect' means to them to inform a new set of customer service commitments.



YOUR GUIDE TO

Parking Permits

At Community Gateway Association, we are committed to helping tenants and leaseholders access parking in their local community, where CGA-owned land is designated for this purpose.

Recognising that parking space is a high priority, our parking permit scheme provides an effective way to ensure that tenants and leaseholders have priority access to available parking. This scheme also allows CGA employees and contractors to park in areas with limited spaces to deliver essential services efficiently.

Who enforces Community Gateway's car parking permit system?

CGA's restricted parking zones are managed by Spring Parking Limited.

They will make sure all cars parked there display the correct permits which are valid, in date, and match up with the car registration number we have saved on our online system.

Parking permits are available to tenants, household members of a CGA property, leaseholders, and tenants

from Spring Parking Limited, and any unregistered vehicles found parking in these zones may incur a fine.

How to apply for your parking permit

To receive your free parking permit, you'll need to submit an application to us. Each household can receive up to three free parking permits per property. If you're applying for more than one vehicle, please complete the online form separately for each one.

You can submit your application here:

www.communitygateway.co.uk/parking-permits

If you have any questions or need help with the online form, please call our Tenancy Services Team on 0800 953 0213 (option 2).

How to apply for your parking permit

After your application is approved, you'll receive a permit sticker by post, which must be attached to your front windscreen immediately. This sticker is tied to your specific vehicle registration, so if you change your registration, let us know so we can

Satisfaction with CGA's approach to handling complaints

- We worked with our Tenant Scrutiny Group to conduct a full review into our complaints process, making eight recommendations to improve it.

Satisfaction that CGA keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

- We worked with tenants through our Spotlight Session to better understand your priorities in this area.

Satisfaction that CGA makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

- Our new Corporate Plan demonstrates a clear commitment in this area.
- We worked with tenants to create a Community Investment Strategy, which sets out how we will work in partnership with tenants and communities to create a positive contribution to your local areas.
- We used data to target our community development activities, tailoring our projects to address the needs of each community.
- We updated our Community Fund criteria to ensure funding is awarded to projects that help



increase satisfaction that neighbourhoods are clean, green and safe.

- We carried out 'days of action' – speaking directly with communities to better understand the challenges our tenants and residents face, helping us to create area-specific action plans..

Satisfaction with CGA's approach to handling anti-social behaviour

- We developed a new plan to raise tenants' awareness on how to report anti-social behaviour.
- We strengthened partnership working to tackle areas experiencing high levels of anti-social behaviour complaints.

Customise our website with Recite Me's accessibility tools

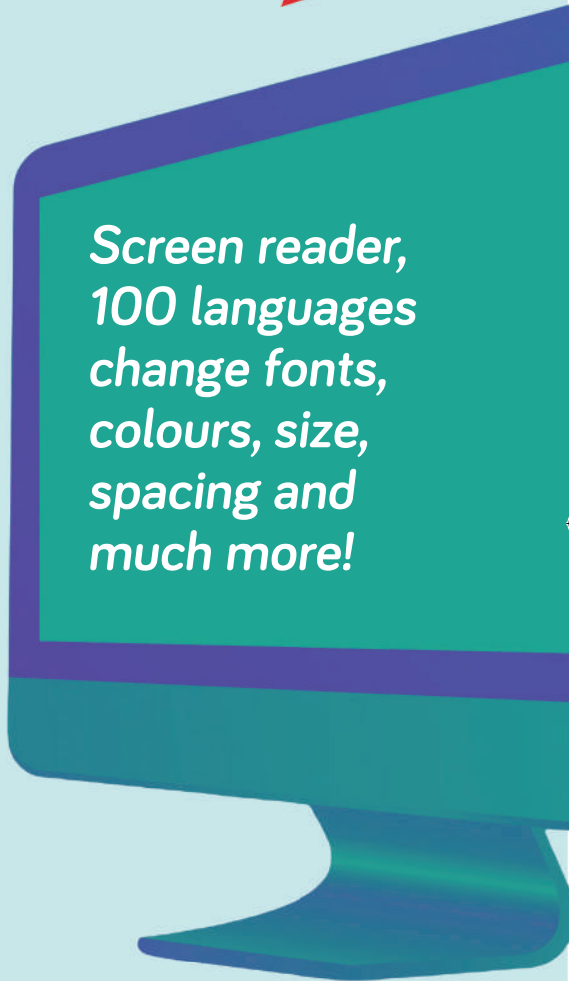


CGA provides an inclusive online experience to make sure visitors to our website can access online content and services barrier-free.

As part of our diversity and inclusion strategy, website visitors are able to access a wide range of accessibility and language support tools to customise their digital experience through Recite Me assistive technology.

Being able to offer an inclusive experience is essential to support tenants who may encounter barriers when exploring our website due to having a disability, learning difficulty, visual impairment, or if they speak English as a second language.

The Recite Me assistive toolbar on our website includes screen reading functionality, multiple reading aids, customisable styling options and an on-demand live translation feature that boasts over 100 languages including 65 text-to-speech and styling options.



**If you require any support accessing the tools, please contact us:
0800 953 0213 (option 6)**



Our Gateway2You sessions are designed as a way for us to bring our services to you!

Teams from across the organisation will meet at different local community centres throughout each month, giving you the opportunity to call in and talk to them about anything you need.

Whether that's help accessing support, getting questions answered, finding out more about getting involved with us - whatever you need.

We have drop-in sessions planned across every area, every month.

Take a look at the dates, times and locations for each month.

Area: Preston South
Fishwick, St Matts

Venue: St Matts M
Preston, PR1 5QQ

When: 3rd Monday
1pm-3pm

Area: Preston North
Brookfield, Moor N

Venue: Ascension
Street Road, Ribbles

When: 1st Tuesday
10am-12pm



South
Latts

St James Mission, 117 Acregate Lane,
PR1 1QQ

Monday of every month

Area: Preston Central
City Centre, Deepdale

-

Venue: City Church St Thomas' Centre,
Lancaster Road North, PR1 2SQ

-

When: 2nd Thursday of every month
10am-12pm

North
Ribbon Nook, Ribbleton

St James Church, 450 Watling
Ribbleton, Preston, PR2 6UA

Friday of every month

Area: Preston West
Ashton, Ingol

-

Venue: The Hub at St Bernards, Elswick
Road, Preston, PR2 1NT

-

When: Last Friday of every month
11am-1pm

Making your voice heard as a CGA Member

Have you thought about becoming a Community Gateway Member? We've updated and re-branded our Membership Scheme, giving you the chance to have your say, make your voice heard and influence change.

We love hearing from tenants and making sure that your feedback, opinions and suggestions are at the heart of everything we do. As an active Community Gateway Member, you can have your say on how we operate and help us improve our services to you.

But we don't expect you to help us out for nothing – as an active CGA Member you will **earn points and be rewarded for your time!** Scanning your Membership card when you join us at an event or take part in an activity will automatically add points to your balance. You can keep track of your points through an account accessed via our Tenant Hub.

As you earn points, you'll move up through three tiers:



EXPLORER



VOYAGER



TRAILBLAZER

All Members will be automatically entered into our regular prize draws – and the higher your tier the bigger and better the prizes!



ALREADY A MEMBER?

Give us a call to find out how you can make the most of your Membership.

How to become active

- ✔ Take part in workshops and activities
- ✔ Join our tenant groups
- ✔ Complete surveys and consultations, in person or online
- ✔ Register on our Tenant Hub
- ✔ Come along to our Annual General Meeting and cast your vote

Member benefits

- ✔ Get a priority invitation to our Annual General Meeting and have the chance to vote for the tenants who represent you on our Board
- ✔ Access to activities and events, and invitations to play our popular online games, with opportunities to win prizes
- ✔ Earn Membership points for taking part in activities and events to unlock a range of great rewards and be entered into fantastic giveaways
- ✔ Help decide which community projects we support

If you'd like to know more about becoming a Member, call 0800 953 0213 (option 6) or visit the Tenant Hub.



Fire safety

Did you know that the most common causes of fires in CGA homes are cigarettes, cooking and candles?

- Never leave cooking food unattended and avoid using chip pans as these are a major fire risk.
- Put candles in a holder and keep them away from things that may burn (curtains for example) – never leave them burning when you're not in the room.
- It's safer to smoke outside, but always make sure that cigarettes are stubbed right out and disposed of safely.
- Avoid overloading sockets with plugs. Keep appliances in good working order to prevent them starting a fire – don't use an appliance if it's faulty.
- We're proud that we have completed 100% of fire safety checks - your safety is our priority.

E-bikes and e-scooters

E-bikes and e-scooters are becoming increasingly popular - however they can be dangerous if they are not stored safely, or if cheap, imitation chargers and batteries are bought instead of authentic products. They use lithium-ion batteries which can cause serious, rapidly growing fires that are hard to put out and generate toxic fumes which can cause injury or death.

Find out more on our website:
www.communitygateway.co.uk/fire-safety



Gas safety

Since May this year, we've achieved a 100% completion rate for gas servicing appointments, ensuring your gas appliances, carbon monoxide detector and smoke detector are safe. Thanks to everyone who has helped us maintain this high standard by keeping appointments and allowing us access. **Remember, every check counts.**

For more information about gas safety visit www.communitygateway.co.uk/gas-servicing

As part of Gas Safety Week in September, our Gas Team held a forum at Harbour House, bringing together 18 gas safety and servicing professionals for a session filled with insightful presentations and discussions on key safety updates. The forum not only highlighted the importance of gas safety but also allowed our Gas Team to share knowledge which will benefit our tenants.

As the weather gets colder, it's a good idea to check your boiler is in good working order:

- Check the pressure: a quick check of the pressure gauge will tell you if the pressure is at the right level – usually between 1 and 1.5. If the pressure is too high, try bleeding your radiators. If it's too low, try using your refilling loop to increase it.
- Check your radiators: feel your radiators when the heating is on. If they're cold towards the bottom it could be trapped air – bleeding the radiator should solve the problem.
- Check for thermostat faults: If you suspect an error with your thermostat, then try replacing the batteries first – failing that, give our Repairs Team a call.

If you need help from our Repairs Team, please get in touch by calling **0800 953 0213 (option 1)**, emailing repairs@communitygateway.co.uk or using the repairs reporting form on our website: www.communitygateway.co.uk/book-repairs-appointment



Damp, mould and condensation

The colder weather can mean an increase in damp, mould and condensation occurring in homes. We are committed to providing and maintaining a dry, warm and safe home for all our tenants. We recognise the significant impact damp and mould can have on the health and wellbeing of our tenants.

When you report damp and mould concerns to us, you can expect that:

- We will listen to your concerns and take them seriously.
- One of our specialists will visit your home and carry out a thorough inspection.
- We will work hard to identify the root cause of the problem.
- If needed, we will complete any repair work to fix structural or plumbing issues.
- If needed, we will make improvements to the ventilation in your home.
- In the case of mould, we will

remove the mould and treat the affected area with specialist products.

- We will keep customers fully informed about appointments, inspections, outcomes and the timetabling of works.
- We will carry out a follow-up call three months after the works have been completed to ensure that the issue is fully resolved and has not returned.

If you think you may have damp or mould in your home, please contact us immediately. You can call us on **0800 953 0213 (option 1)** or fill out the form on our website: **www.communitygateway.co.uk/dmc** If you fill out the form, we will call you within two working days to arrange an appointment.

If you are struggling with the cost of heating your home, please get in touch. Our Tenancy Support Team is here to help. You can call them on **0800 953 0213 (option 4)** or email **tenancysupport@communitygateway.co.uk**

Beware of disrepair claims companies

At CGA, we're aware of a growing trend of people working for disrepair claims companies knocking on tenants' doors and using aggressive sales tactics to try and persuade people to submit a disrepair claim against us. A formal disrepair claim, filed in a court, will allege that a tenant's property needs repairs, but the landlord (CGA) has failed to put things right.

They often try to get you to sign documentation on the spot, which can tie you down to a long and drawn-out process with hefty costs. They may also tell you that the compensation you'll be

awarded will be substantial. However, in our experience, the money that a tenant will receive – after all the legal fees have been paid, and the solicitors have taken their percentage – is minimal.

If you need a repair at your property, the quickest way to get the job done is to request a repair on the Community Gateway website. Go to: www.communitygateway.co.uk/book-repairs-appointment You can also send an email to: repairs@communitygateway.co.uk or phone us on **0800 953 0213** (option 1).

Emergency repairs

A reminder that you can call us 24 hours a day, every day, if you have an emergency repair. We're open for emergencies after 5pm: our on-call team will visit to carry out the emergency repair, or make a temporary repair if the job can't be completed in full. We've seen an increase in the number of calls coming through which aren't for emergency repairs. This results in our lines being busy and tenants with genuine emergencies being left on hold.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

- *Uncontainable leak*
- *Total loss of power*
- *Total loss of heating and hot water in a home without alternative forms of hot water e.g. electric shower.*
- *Serious security breach (such as an insecure front door)*
- *Major structural damage*

We carried out 98.79% of emergency repairs and 72.31% of non-emergency repairs within target (as at August 2024).

Thinking about a move?

There is very high demand for CGA homes at the moment, which is resulting in long wait times.

If you're thinking about moving because your home is too big for your family, please get in touch. Downsizing to a home that's better suited to your needs may also help you make savings.

Mutual exchange is when you swap your home with another social housing tenant. We have a process in place to support you to do this, which could mean a move to a more suitable property or location.

Interested? Why not get in touch with the team for some friendly advice. Call 0800 953 0213 (option 5) or email customerservices@communitygateway.co.uk



A few days in the life of a Tenancy Management Officer

Tenants have told us how important community safety is to them. Our Tenancy Management Team is here to support tenants to maintain their tenancy agreement and work collaboratively with other agencies to help keep the place you live safe. It's a busy team, where no two days are the same, as Officers deal with reports of anti-social behaviour, noise nuisance, neighbour dispute and more.

A member of the team took us through what a couple of typical days involved...

"I made a joint visit with our Safeguarding Team to a tenant who was having difficulty managing the amount of personal belongings in their home – the aim of the visit was to offer support and advice to help the tenants maintain their tenancy.

"I then went to a home visit to review witness evidence in a longstanding neighbour dispute, which could not be resolved amicably and which resulted in injunctions being taken out against both parties.

"Two more home visits followed that - one accompanied by the police – following complaints about cannabis use by the tenant's family members. I then met a member of the team back at head office to discuss how we can support tenants who are experiencing anti-social

behaviour on one of our estates.

"I met with the Neighbourhood Policing Team to talk about joint working to help tackle issues in a number of areas, before making another visit with the police to seize an off-road motorbike, which was being used in a way that breached the owner's tenancy.

"Unfortunately, I had to support an eviction after a tenant had refused to engage with us or accept support over a period of time in relation to their rent arrears, which left us with no alternative.

"I finished off at St Matthew's PACT (Police and Communities Together) meeting, where we discussed ways of working to help address local issues with local people and partners."

You can contact our Tenancy Management Team in a number of ways:

Call: 0800 9530213 (option 5)

Email: tenancymanagement@communitygateway.co.uk

You must call 999 in an emergency, especially if an incident is happening or has just happened.



New homes and communities

We continue to make regeneration and investment in our neighbourhoods a priority, providing more affordable homes and making a difference in our communities. Here's a snapshot of our latest developments and the people who are enjoying them.

Lea Church, Savick

Work has begun on the next stage of our regeneration work in Savick, on the site of the former Lea Methodist Church. 17 new homes for affordable rent will be built on the site.

Savick shops and library

July this year saw the handover of 25 brand-new family homes for affordable rent, replacing empty shops and outdated maisonettes. The community will also benefit from a retail unit and a library. The library will be managed by Lancashire County Council and is set to open very soon.



Thank you so much Gateway. I've been moving in this week and the whole team and builders on site couldn't have been more helpful. You've all done a great job.



The houses are beautiful. We've settled in well, love our home so much, thank you CGA.



The Atrium, Ribbleton

Our new extra-care scheme, The Atrium on Miller Road, Ribbleton, follows the success of The Courtyards in Ingol, offering **independent living and extra care for the over 60s** in a community setting. The team at The Atrium were delighted to welcome its first resident, Daphne, at the beginning of June. Daphne, who is a long-standing CGA tenant, was involved in putting together the original business case for developing CGA's Extra Care offer, so it was a pleasure to see her moving in.



The Meadows, Ribbleton

We are delighted to confirm that we have completed **78 brand-new, high-quality family homes for affordable rent and shared ownership** on Miller Road, Ribbleton. All homes benefit from off-street parking, private gardens and pleasant landscaped communal spaces. Miller Road is in a convenient location for schools, shops and transport links to the city centre.





Tenancy Support - we're here to help

Our Tenancy Support Team are here to help – with a tailored benefits advice service open to you, your household members and anyone who's applying for a home with us. They can help with general information, advice and guidance, benefit checks, help with making claims online and more.

The team achieves some great results – take a look at how they helped maximise tenants' income between April 2023 and March 2024:

- **An extra £55,186 per week in Welfare Benefits, claimed by CGA tenants**
- **A total of £726,820 in Welfare Benefits, backdated to CGA tenants over the year**
- **An extra £55,808 per month Universal Credit, claimed by CGA tenants**
- **Overall, an additional £4,266,241 was awarded to CGA tenants over the year**
- **87 food parcels accessed for tenants over the year**
- **51 tenants supported to obtain white goods through grant applications over the year**

A tenant in his 70s on state pension with a small occupational pension was referred to the team. He was struggling to look after himself, so we helped him apply for Attendance Allowance, which he was awarded at £101.75 per week. We also worked out that he was entitled to Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, maximising his income by over £150 per week.

If you need help or advice, please contact our friendly Tenancy Support Team by calling **0800 953 0213** (option 4) or emailing tenancysupport@communitygateway.co.uk

What is a 53-week rent year?

If you pay your rent weekly, you need to know that this financial year (April 2024-March 2025) is a 53-week rent year. Your rent is paid every week on a Monday, and this year there will be 53 Mondays. This means:

In a typical year there are 52 weeks, so there are 52 weekly charges for rent. Every five to six years there are 53 Mondays in a year, so 53 weeks' rent are charged instead of the usual 52.

If you usually benefit from the four rent-free weeks, this won't change. You will pay rent for 49 of the 53 weeks this year.

You may need to make a change to your payments depending on how you pay your rent:

Universal Credit

If you get Universal Credit, the DWP work out your monthly rent by multiplying your weekly rent by 48 and then dividing it by 12. You'll need to make up the difference between the monthly amount owed and the amount the DWP pays you. For example, if your rent is £90 per week, your monthly payment will be £367.50 but the DWP will only pay you £360.00. You will be required to make up the difference.

Housing Benefit

If you get Housing Benefit you don't need to do anything, as this will be covered by the Housing Benefit payment cycles.

Direct Debit

If you pay by Direct Debit, we have updated the amount automatically and will contact you to confirm the new collection amounts.

Recurring card payment

If you pay by recurring card payment, we'll update the amount automatically.

Standing Order

If you pay by Standing Order, you'll need to contact your bank to update the amount.

Other methods

If you use a different method of payment, you'll need to calculate your monthly payment by multiplying your weekly rent by 49 then dividing the total into 12 monthly payments.

If you're finding it hard to pay your rent, it's important that you speak to us. We will look at your personal circumstances, discuss an affordable repayment plan and help you find out if you are entitled to any other welfare benefits or support.

Please call us on **0800 953 0213 (option 5)** or email rent@communitygateway.co.uk to see how we can help.

Housing Pathways – tackling homelessness

You've told us that tackling homelessness should be a priority. We have always supported homelessness prevention, and work in partnership with Preston City Council to address rough sleeping. We invest in accommodation and support for those who find themselves homeless.

Our homelessness programme comprises three areas:

- The Spires is a 26-bed temporary accommodation development which is part of the government's Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme. Tenants work with a dedicated Project Worker to sustain a tenancy and move on to live independently. Tenants can live at The Spires for up to three years.
- Our Outreach service offers support to people who have previously been homeless and need that additional support to help them maintain their own home and tenancy, moving to a general needs tenancy when they no longer need help.
- Our Community Support service is available to existing tenants who

need extra support to maintain a tenancy, as without it they would be at risk of losing their home. CGA teams and external organisations can signpost tenants to the service. The service can be funded through Housing Benefit if it meets the criteria.

We continue to develop our services and are committed to supporting anyone without a permanent home.

Sam was living rough and had drug and alcohol misuse problems. With support from the Pathways team, he's begun volunteering, developed his self-esteem and is managing his money independently. He'd like to obtain a Health and Safety card and get some part-time work labouring. "It feels like I'm moving in the right direction," he says.

Tackling isolation

Tenants at our independent living and extra-care schemes continue to enjoy a range of activities and events, including games afternoons, coffee mornings, trips out, dementia-friendly cafes and more.

Residents at our city centre scheme, Astley Court, were determined to make better use of their communal lounge, socialise with other tenants, and play some games too – dominoes being their favourite!

Some of them – such as Bernard – have lived at the scheme for a while without ever engaging in social activities, but now Bernard is absolutely loving it, joining in with the regular games sessions as well as activities organised by SHAPE Lancashire.

The tenants at Astley Court told us what a difference it's making to their weekly routines:

Mira said: **“It’s nice to come out and speak to people. It’s so refreshing. There are other things I wouldn’t mind doing – like having a crafts day. When the weather gets better, it’ll be nice to get out in the fresh air.”**

Independent Living Officer, Anne-Marie, explained: **“One of the residents, Patrick, has been quite tenacious making sure things are happening. Everyone knows each other – they chat to each other regularly and they love interacting. So it makes sense to hold these coffee and games sessions because it’s a great way for them to socialise.”**

Patrick has lived at Astley Court for 25 years: **“It’s the best place I’ve ever lived,”** he says. Stewart added: **“It gets you out of the flat.”**

The positive effects of activities like these in tackling loneliness and social isolation are plain to see, and Geoff summarises it perfectly: **“It beats watching TV!”**

If you live in one of our Independent Living Schemes, contact your Independent Living Officer to find out about activities and events, and how you can get involved.

Learning new skills with PVC

Tenants told us that they wanted the chance to learn skills that would help them around the house, saving money and making their homes even nicer places to live.

We called on the team at our charitable subsidiary, Preston Vocational Centre (PVC), to help: PVC offers vocational training to young people across Preston, preparing them for apprenticeships, employment or further education, taking positive steps to achieve their potential.

PVC organised free wallpapering and painting workshops at which tenants learned new skills with some expert tuition, as well as making new friends. They told us:

“ It got me out of my home which was good as I am new to the area. It has given me more confidence, I made new friends and learned new skills. Community Gateway have done something really quite special.

“ I really enjoyed it and felt like I learned new skills and gained more confidence to go on to decorate my own home. If CGA run anything else I would love to be involved.



To find out more about PVC and the work they do, visit www.prestonvocationalcentre.co.uk

If you'd like to take part in a similar workshop, why not join our Tenant Hub to be first to find out what opportunities are coming up. Visit www.gateway2engagement.co.uk



Communities in bloom!

We love seeing tenants' well-kept gardens when we're out and about. If you have your own outdoor space, it's part of your tenancy agreement to maintain it, keeping the grass cut and everything generally tidy.

Take a look at these beautiful outdoor spaces spotted by some of our operatives:



Your Autumn Recipe

Slow cooker beef stew



prep: 40 mins



cook: 4-8 hours



serves 6-8

Shopping List

1 onion
3 carrots
2 tbsp tomato puree
2 beef stock cubes
1 bay leaf
900g braising beef
(sometimes it's cheaper to buy a whole piece to cut yourself)

Method

Fry the onion in 1 tbsp of oil over a medium heat until it starts to soften – this should take about five minutes.

Add the carrots, fry for a couple more minutes then add to the slow cooker with the puree, stock cube and 600 ml boiling water. Season with some salt and pepper.

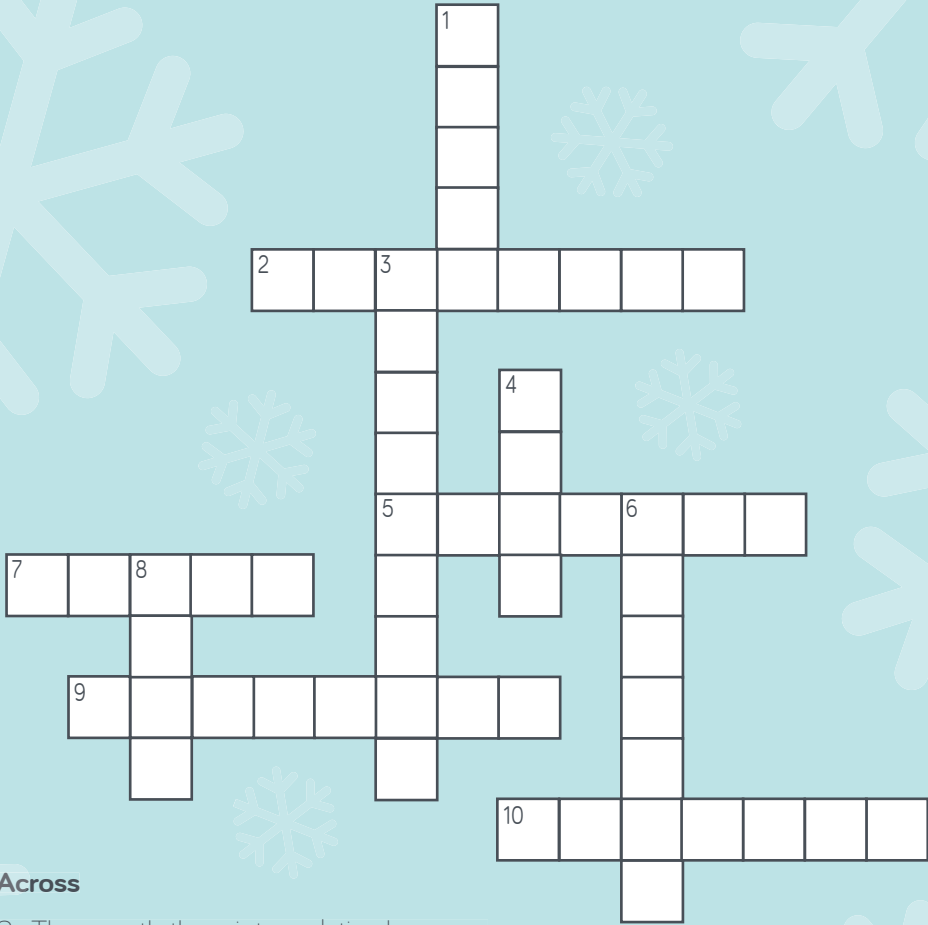
Add the beef to the pan and fry in batches until browned, before adding to the slow cooker. Cook on low for 7-8 hours or high for 4 hours.

If the gravy needs thickening, add a paste made from 2 tsp cornflour and a splash of water then cook for a further 30 minutes.

Serve with mash and green veg!

WINTER CROSSWORD

Check the website for answers!



Across

2. The month the winter solstice happens
5. Man made out of snow with a carrot nose
7. Keep your feet warm
9. Severe snowstorm with high winds
10. First month of the New Year

Down

1. Colour of snow
3. A famous festival in December
4. Falls in winter and covers the ground
6. Use these to keep your hands warm
8. Not hot but ____

This newsletter is also available at communitygateway.co.uk/gatewaynews where you can use 'Recite Me' to translate it into another language or read it out loud.

If you have a story to share and/or events and activities in the coming year, let us know all about it...

-  Harbour House, Port Way, Preston PR2 2DW
-  communications@communitygateway.co.uk
-  www.communitygateway.co.uk
-  0800 953 0213

Join us on social media to keep up to date with what's going on at Gateway.

-  @CGAPreston
- Tenant only Facebook Group**
-  [/groups/CGAEngagement](https://www.facebook.com/groups/CGAEngagement)



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