



OUR VOICE

September 2024

Welcome to Our Voice

Hello and welcome to our new-look Our Voice newsletter.

We've decided to stop producing our twice-yearly printed Our Voice magazine for several reasons, including its environmental impact and cost.

We'd like to thank everyone who contributed to the magazine over the years, from submitting content to proofreading draft versions.

Instead, we're now producing a bi-monthly newsletter, containing all the important news and updates you need to know about from across the Group. This information will be hosted on our website as well.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who's taken part in our customer consultation as part of our proposed merger with Grand Union Housing Group. More information about that process will follow in future updates.

We hope you enjoy this first edition of our new-look Our Voice newsletter.

New ways to contact Aaron Services

We're delighted to announce that our heating servicing, repairs and installations contractor Aaron Services has launched new interactive ways of contacting them.

To complement the existing phone line, customers can now contact Aaron Services through two-way text messaging, WhatsApp or live web chat.

These channels will be monitored by colleagues at Aaron Services and customer enquiries will be responded to promptly.



Customers can contact Aaron Services about any aspect of their service, including changes to appointments, reporting repairs or general enquiries.

Aaron Services will also be using the new technology to send servicing appointment reminders to customers two days beforehand.

These messages will again be two-way communication and customers will be able to respond and engage with a colleague who'll be able to handle their enquiry.



Contacting Aaron Services

Customers can contact Aaron Services about any aspect of their service, including changes to appointments, reporting repairs or general enquiries.

WhatsApp

- 07977 523 049

SMS (text message)

- 07537 173 719

Live webchat

- longhurst.group/aaron-livechat



Please note, customers can still continue to contact Aaron Services via our usual **0800 111 4013** freephone number.

Phone line message changes

We've been changing our phone line options to make it easier for you to speak to the people you need to as quickly as possible.

This has included introducing a new anti-social behaviour and neighbour issues line.

This line was launched in July to enable customers who needed to report anti-social behaviour or issues with neighbours directly to the team responsible for dealing with these cases.

To ensure customers get through to the correct team on our phone lines, we've now made it clearer on our phone line recording what you can speak to our colleagues about on this new anti-social behaviour line.

When you call our freephone **0800 111 4013** number, please listen carefully to the options and select the right one for your question.

Meanwhile, our Lettings Team will now be dealing with tenancy terminations only on its line. This is to ensure the process is as smooth as possible and that all other tenancy enquiries are processed and sent to the most relevant colleagues straight away.

Checking your benefits entitlement

It's more important than ever to make sure you're receiving all the financial support you're entitled to.

From Universal Credit to Pension Credit, there could be money you're missing out on and our Money Advice Team wants you to check you're getting the money you can claim.

Following the Government's announcement that the Winter Fuel Payment will now be means tested, it's important that you check whether you're entitled to Pension Credit.

Meanwhile, customers may have recently received – or are due to receive – a Migration Notice telling them they need to move to Universal Credit.

This will happen if you're receiving one or more benefits such as Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment Support Allowance.

You must claim Universal Credit by the deadline on your Migration Notice letter. This is three months from the date the letter was sent to you.

If you fail to make your Universal Credit claim by this date, your current benefits will end, even if you meet the conditions of entitlement.

Other benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment, will stay the same.



Pension Credit

More information about Pension Credit can be found online.

UK Government website

- longhurst.group/govt-pension-credit



AgeUK

- longhurst.group/age-uk-pension-credit



Universal Credit Migration

For help and support about the Universal Credit migration, contact the DWP Migration Notice Helpline.

- 0800 169 0328
- 8am–6pm, Mon–Fri.

Online: Citizens Advice

- longhurst.group/uc-migration



Join our scrutiny panel?

We're looking for customers to join our Scrutiny Team to help improve the quality of services that you receive. We need customers of all ages, skill levels and backgrounds to sign up and get involved.

The next topic the Scrutiny Team will be looking at is the process that's in place when a property becomes empty and before new customers move in.

The scrutiny process is customer-led, with the Customer Engagement Team present for any support needed. Full training will be provided before you get stuck in to your review.

Most recently, the Scrutiny Team reviewed communication between the Group and customers. We've now gathered all the recommendations from that review and charted our progress against them.

To see what changes have been implemented as a result of the Scrutiny Team's review, visit the Hub to read the full review report.



Longhurst Group Scrutiny Team Find out more about the Scrutiny Team on The Hub.

Register to join the team

- longhurst.group/thehub-scrutiny-team



Scrutiny review results

- longhurst.group/thehub-commsreview



Helping customers back into work

A young mum has praised our Employment and Skills service for helping her back into work.

Charlene Willson, from Higham Ferrers, worked with our Employment and Skills Advisor Rob Friday and is now working full time in Quality Control.

She said that Rob's support and guidance were invaluable in helping her achieve her goals.

"I'd done various jobs – working in a warehouse and in retail. I wanted to get back into a skilled career and thanks to Rob, I was able to," she added.



"As a single mum, I couldn't afford to work for minimum wage or early or late hours due to childcare, so I hadn't been working before speaking to Rob.

"I wanted to get back into Quality Control, and Rob's guidance helped me to have the confidence I

needed to secure a well-paid and skilled role.”

Charlene is now working full-time as a Quality Technician.

She said: “I’d been speaking to somebody at Longhurst Group on the phone and I explained my circumstances. They offered me lots of help, including a referral to the Employment and Skills service.

“Rob helped me research companies, prepared me for interviews and gave me tips to manage my nerves and increase my confidence.

“Rob’s help was incredibly beneficial for me. I’m now back in a skilled career which pays more than enough to enable me to provide for me and my children.

“I’m incredibly grateful. He helped me get from a difficult situation to living a life I can enjoy and he contributed to the start of the rest of my life.”



Employment and Skills support

To find out more about our Employment and Skills service, visit:

- longhurst-group.org.uk/employment-and-skills







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0800 111 4013



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