

PRIMA NEWS

WINTER 2020



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Welcome to the Winter 2020 Edition of Prima News

We know this year has been difficult for most. Being apart from loved ones and not being able to do the things we enjoy most has affected our communities in ways we never expected.

We currently find ourselves coming out of the second lockdown with the idea of returning to semi-normal ways of working looking possible soon.

When the first lockdown was announced back in March, all of our staff were asked to work from home. Fortunately, we were well equipped to deal with this change in circumstances and we were able to carry on working as normal. When the time comes, and only when it is safe to do so, we will revisit our ways of working and consider how we can use what we have learnt from working differently this year to inform how we work in the future.

By embracing advancements in technology and learning how to work more efficiently. We have managed to continue to deliver services to customers, although in a slightly different way. We have started to offer virtual video tours for customers looking to move home and our virtual repair inspection service means we can now see your issue and better diagnose what work is needed using a smartphone. These are just some examples of new ways of working we will be looking to continue.


I hope everyone reading this has a great Christmas and a very happy New Year. I wish you all the best for 2021. Stay safe and keep following the latest public health advice.

John Ghader
Group Chief Executive, Prima Group.


Contact Us


The quickest and easiest way of reaching us is by using the Prima Customer App. Details on how you can download the app can be found on page six.

There are also many other ways you can contact us here at Prima Group, all of which are listed below:

 Download our app by heading to www.primagroup.org/customer-app

 Via our website by heading to www.primagroup.org/contact-us

 Our webchat service can be found in the bottom right corner of our website. This service is available during the office opening hours listed below.

 At the start of October, we contacted all of our customers to let you know our phone number had changed. If you haven't done so already, please update your records with our new number: **0151 452 0202**

Opening Hours

Monday - 9am to 5pm
 Tuesday - 9am to 5pm
 Wednesday - 11am to 5pm
 Thursday - 9am to 5pm
 Friday - 9am to 5pm



Photo by Carl Raw

Latest Update on Coronavirus

We regularly review our services as government advice and guidance around coronavirus changes.

At the time of writing this, Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral are in Tier 2 of the government's three-tier system of local COVID-19 alert levels in England.

This means that there can be no mixing indoors, apart from with support bubbles. Up to six people can meet outdoors. Pubs and restaurants can open, with last orders at 10pm and closing at 11pm - but alcohol can only be served with a substantial meal.

These restrictions can change quite regularly depending on how an area is coping with the virus so please keep checking what the latest information is for the area you are in.

Repairs

We are providing our repairs service as normal but all staff will be wearing PPE and following the latest social distancing advice. Please let us know if you are concerned about having repairs carried out in your home at this time or if you are self-isolating.

Gas and Electricity Testing

We would like to thank our customers for helping us continue to keep homes compliant with the gas safety requirements so far.

It is vital that you allow us to enter your

property to carry out gas and electricity testing. Please also remember that all of our staff will be carrying ID. Do not let anyone enter your home that hasn't shown you their ID. You can always call us if you are unsure.

Tenancy Support

If you are struggling to afford your home or are struggling to pay any essential bills, please let us know and we will do all we can to help.

Planned Improvements

Our planned improvement work, which involves replacing kitchens and bathrooms, is also on hold during this time. We are currently reviewing our plans to see where we can amend them to deliver works that cause minimum inconvenience and allow for social distancing. This means we will be carrying out planned works externally where there's less risk, rather than inside homes. We will reschedule kitchen and bathroom works once we are sure that it is safe to do so.

Customer Contact

We are still here to answer your phone calls, emails, webchats and Customer App contacts as normal, although our offices remain closed for now. Over 40% of our customer contacts now come online rather than by phone.

The quickest and easiest way to get in touch with us is by using our Customer App which is available on the App Store or Google Play Store.

Asbestos Surveys

What is it?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral composed of soft and flexible fibres that are resistant to heat, electricity and corrosion. These qualities make the mineral a useful building material, but the risks from asbestos occur when the material becomes damaged or disturbed and asbestos fibres become airborne.

Is it dangerous?

If asbestos remains undisturbed and is in good condition, then it does not normally present a significant health risk to people. It is sometimes safer to leave the material in place than to remove it. Exposure to asbestos fibres may cause asbestos related diseases, but these types of diseases only usually occur in people who have worked or come into contact with significant levels of asbestos over a number of years.

Asbestos can be found in any residential building built or refurbished before the year 2000. Historically, it was in many of the common materials used in the building trade. Asbestos materials found in properties may include:

1. Asbestos cement water tank
2. Loft insulation
3. Older textured coating (artex on ceilings)
4. Soffit board (roof overhang)
5. Bathroom toilet cisterns (in resin/cement)
6. Older vinyl floor tiles
7. Older fuse boxes
8. Heater cupboards (insulating board around boiler or to cupboards doors)



Why do I need a survey on my home?

Asbestos surveys are a legal requirement and must be carried out before any home renovations take place. The survey will inform us and our contractors if there are asbestos materials present within the property. This means they can avoid disturbing the material or arrange for its removal if it is in poor condition or if it is in the way of the planned refurbishment works.

We work in partnership with AEC to carry out asbestos surveys in residential properties to ensure tenants are kept safe and all asbestos materials are identified, kept in good order or removed if they could be disturbed during works in our tenant's homes.

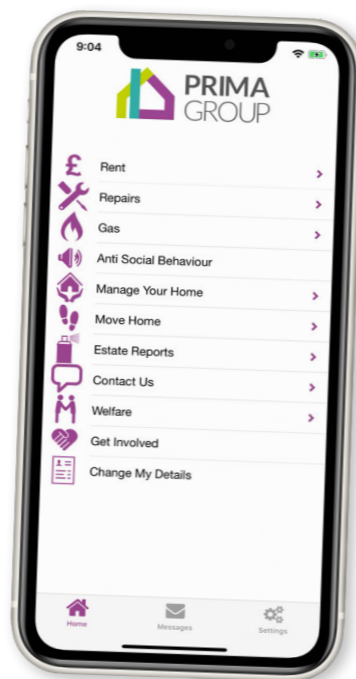
Prima Customer App

Manage your home at a time that suits you

With the Prima Customer App, you can now easily check your balance, see mini-statements, request a statement, report a repair, request visits and report ASB as well as a whole host of other functions.

Using our app means you can reach us a lot faster than you would if you were to phone us. To report a repair or a case of ASB, you simply have to fill in your information and a member of the team will be in touch if we need to know more.

As you can now access your rent account 24/7 using the Customer App, we've moved away from sending rent statements out with our newsletter. If you're not online, you can call the office to request a rent statement to be posted to you at anytime to check your balance.



Search for **Prima Group**



Supporting You

We've been busy making sure our customers are receiving the support they need. Since April we have:



Allocated 27 homes to homeless families needing to move



Secured £244,461 in awards and grants helping maximise customers income



Made over 16,000 contacts with customers



Carried out virtual repair inspections to provide quick and convenient appointments with surveyors



Undertaken 5500 emergency, routine and urgent repairs for customers



Continued to carry out gas safety checks to keep our customers safe

If you need any advice or support during the coronavirus outbreak then please don't hesitate to get in touch with us using the contact details on page three.

Get Yourself Online

Digital expectations have changed in recent months and we understand that you might need help accessing and using the internet during these difficult times. You might need help looking for a job, getting healthy, keeping in touch with family members, saving money or just having fun.

According to the government's Digital Inclusion Strategy, as much as 37% of social housing tenants are digitally excluded. This is either by not having access to the internet or by lacking the necessary technology at home. Housing associations are ideally placed to help residents boost their digital skills and we have recently been working with other social landlords in the Liverpool City Region to look at sustainable ways to assist tenants.

If you are experiencing difficulties with getting online and need some support, we may be able to help. Get in touch with us using the details below and we will see how we can help.



0151 452 0202



www.primagroup.org/contact-us



Tomato Growing Competition at Our Sheltered Schemes

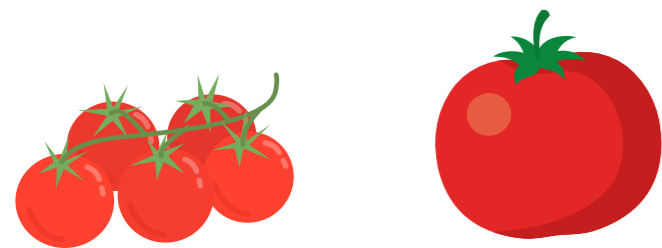
Over the summer, we delivered 60 tomato plants to tenants at Maud Roberts Court, Chestnut Court and Jericho Court.

We held a competition to see who could grow the best tomatoes from their plants. We have now distributed the prizes to the winners.

Well done to everyone involved and thank you all for taking part. Keep an eye out for more competitions coming soon.



Photo by Marisol Benitez



Neighbourhood Plans Coming Soon



Keep an eye out for our revamped Neighbourhood Plans coming soon.

The plans contain specific details on what we have planned for your area and give you an update on what local facilities, community clubs and events are available to you.

Look out for your new Neighbourhood Housing Officer too, we'll be sharing their details on our website with the launch of the Neighbourhood Plans.

We will update our website as soon as they are available.

Anti-Food Waste Apps

Too Good to Go and Olio are apps that are designed to connect people to local businesses that are offering food and other goods nearing their sell by date at a discounted price.

Too Good to Go are focused solely on 'saving perfectly good, surplus food from your local stores', while Olio also offer other items such as handmade crafts.

By using these apps you will not only be saving money but you'll also be creating a more sustainable environment.

Both apps have a combined total over 30m users worldwide and are growing in popularity.



Too Good To Go



Both apps are available on the App Store or Google Play Store.

Our 19/20 Annual Report

Our latest Annual Report is available to view on our website now.

In this report, we provide you with a brief overview of how we have been performing over the past year. We look at our repairs, customer service and housing statistics and provide you with details on how we spend our money.

We also list what we have planned for the year ahead in each category.

Head to the Corporate Info section of our website to take a look for yourself.



Photo by Ryan Warburton

Customer Board

You still have the chance to join our newly-formed Customer Board and help shape the way we work. The Prima Customer Board will have an extremely important role to play, acting as the voice of the customer and helping to direct our future.

They've been meeting by video call and have recently reviewed the new tenancy agreement and fed back on several policies including the adaptation and anti-social behaviour policies. They have also played an important part in setting out customer expectations on our 'Together with Tenants Charter', which looks at how we will ensure we hear and listen to our customers. In the coming months they'll work with us to set out our response to the government's new 'Charter for Social Housing Tenants', which looks at the actions the government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, listened to and live in good quality homes.

Visit our website to find out more and apply.



Households into Work

If you're a Prima Group tenant who is finding it difficult to get back into work then Households into Work (HIW) might be able to help. HIW recognise that many people who would like nothing more than to work aren't able to because of issues in their lives which prevent them from doing so. Households into Work is not just a programme to help people find jobs, it's about supporting people so they feel ready to take on and stay in a job.

If you're a Liverpool City Region Resident, aged 16 or over, and dealing with issues like mental illness, addiction, drug use, domestic abuse, debt or you have low self-confidence or self-esteem, then they can introduce you to one of their dedicated Employment Advocates. This friendly team can give you one-to-one support to help you deal with any challenging issues you face and prepare you for your next positive step forward.

Even better, you can join with other members of your household like your partner, spouse, parents, children, grandparents or close friends, even if you don't all need to live at the same address.

Households into Work started in March 2018 and is funded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. If you would like to know more about the programme, please email the support team at hiw@liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk or phone them on **0151 330 1111** and ask for Households into Work.



New campaign launched to tackle online loan sharks

The England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) have launched a new campaign called #SharkFreeSurfing. It's aimed at tackling illegal money lending on the internet and warning of the dangers of online loan sharks.

The campaign comes amid concerns more people are falling prey to unscrupulous lenders online as statistics show one in five victims met their lender on social media in the first half of 2020.

Loan sharks are increasingly using social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, to advertise their illegal loans and target potential victims.

These criminals will lure people in with seemingly attractive loan offers but will quickly resort to intimidation, threats and violence to enforce repayment and trap borrowers in a spiral of debt.

Tony Quigley, Head of IMLT, said: "We are aware that loan sharks are becoming more active on social media, particularly in community groups and on local selling pages, which we will not tolerate."

"Loan sharks are using online platforms to advertise their predatory lending activities and target potential victims. People throughout our communities are struggling financially due to the pandemic and the increased pressures to not only meet monthly bills, but also the added expense of Christmas, may make them more at risk of being targeted by illegal money lenders."

"I urge people to remain vigilant when online – if you spot a suspicious loan advert on social media, report it to us. If you need to borrow money, always check the lender is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority and contact your local credit union about ethical financial products and services."

How to protect yourself from loan sharks online

Know who you're dealing with. If you've only ever met someone online or are unsure of the legitimacy of a lender, take some time to do a bit more research.

Beware of loan adverts with no credit checks. Loan sharks have been known to advertise in community groups and on local selling pages. They may seem friendly and accommodating, but their behaviour can quickly change, and you might be harassed or threatened if you get behind with your repayments.

Beware of any requests for your details or money. Loan sharks may ask for copies of your passport or pictures of your house, the street and your house number. Never send money or give card details, online account details or copies of personal documents to anyone you don't know or trust.

How to report a loan shark

If you suspect someone may be a loan shark or they are acting inappropriately, you can report them anonymously to www.stoploansharks.co.uk or by calling the Stop Loan Sharks Helpline on **0300 555 2222**. Alternatively, you can email the team reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk or access support via live chat on their website.



If you are struggling financially, Prima Group can help

If you are finding budgeting, managing bills or covering your outgoings difficult, our Income Team can help.

They can help you with budgeting, refer you for free debt and benefit advice and can support you with one off funds and grants that can get you through tough times.

Please don't think you're alone and reach out for help:



0151 452 0202



www.primagroup.org/contact-us



Bringing the fun to Leasowe this Summer

Throughout Leasowe this summer, families with children that were eligible for free school meals benefited from free food boxes delivered straight to their doors, as well as a wide variety of fun activities to take part in.

Leasowe Summer of Food & Fun was a six-week programme that was put together by Wirral Development Trust, Prima Group, Leasowe Community Centre, Leasowe Nursery School, Leasowe Adventure Playground (Wirral Council), Leasowe Rakers FC and Lu Ban Restaurant with funding coming from Edsential CIC.

Leasowe residents enjoyed themed activity packs, all-in-one food boxes, quality food lunches, competitions, football coaching and street treats. All activities were designed with the latest social distancing guidance in mind.

Ailsa Dunn, Prima Group's Group Director of Customer Insight, said: "We know that COVID-19 has been difficult for many families around the UK, including those in Wirral, but we hope that the Leasowe Summer of Food & Fun brings some well-needed fun for children in Leasowe, as well as providing an opportunity for families to enjoy some quality food."

Lu Ban restaurant in Liverpool provided the WellFed all-in-one food boxes. The boxes were delivered every Friday and were designed around local food palates that school children and families love.

Executive Head Chef at Lu Ban, Dave Critchley, said: "We really hope that families in Leasowe can have not only an exciting eating experience on a Friday night but they also learn how to make a variety of meals so they can make them again further down the line. It's not just a great meal in a box, this is about longevity, this is about teaching a family some basic skills on how to take some simple ingredients and turn them into something amazing."



Dave Critchley



Halloween in Leasowe

On 30th October, children all over Leasowe took part in a Halloween lantern making event.

Staff from Wirral Development Trust provided local residents with the necessary tools to make the lanterns and handed out food parcels in what was an unusual Halloween for everyone with the latest social distancing guidance having to be followed.

We really enjoyed looking at the pictures from the day and seeing how creative you all are.



Local Football Team Receive Paul Curtis Artwork

Local street artist, Paul Curtis, was recently commissioned by Wirral Council, Leasowe JMC and Prima Group to paint a mural for Leasowe Rakers FC on the side of a shipping container. Paul is the artist that painted the Liver Bird Wings in Liverpool's Baltic Triangle as well as many other murals across the north-west. Leasowe Rakers FC will use the container for storage and changing facilities.



Rent Prize Draws

If you have a clear rent account then you will automatically be entered into a quarterly prize draw to win either a £100 or £50 Love2Shop voucher.

Visit www.primagroup.org to find out more.



1x £100 Love2Shop Voucher



2x £50 Love2Shop Vouchers

Domestic Abuse at Home

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline has seen a 25% increase in calls since March.

If you or anyone you know is suffering from domestic abuse, help is available.

Sefton IDVA Service - 0151 934 5142

Wirral Police Helpline - 0151 777 2689

Liverpool DV Helpline - 0800 731 1313

Llandudno DV Helpline - 01492 872992



My Home
Contents Insurance

Home contents
insurance designed
for tenants
in social housing.

Visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk
for more information