



OUR VOICE

November 2024

Welcome to Our Voice

Hello and welcome to the second edition of our new-look Our Voice newsletter.

This new bi-monthly publication aims to bring you all the need-to-know information from across Longhurst Group, as well as useful tips and guidance to ensure you're getting all the support you're entitled to.

In this edition, we're focusing on compliance certificates, an update on the communal cleaning contract, our device and data gifting scheme and support available to you over the winter months.

We hope you find this edition of Our Voice useful and on behalf of everyone at Longhurst Group, Merry Christmas!

Our new brand

When we complete our merger with Grand Union Housing Group in the next few weeks we'll have a new name and a new brand.

Once our merger is completed on Monday, 16 December, we'll join together to form a new organisation called Amplius.

Amplius means 'more' or 'further' in Latin and that's exactly what we're determined to do.

We want to be better and do more for our customers, providing quality affordable homes and services to ensure we have more of a positive impact on people's lives.

To find out more and watch a video explaining more about our new name, visit: longhurst-group.org.uk/stronger2gether

Safe and well this winter

During the winter months with longer nights and colder temperatures, it's important that you look after yourself, family and friends.

We also know that with rising energy costs and utility bills, even the smallest of changes can make a big difference to your physical and financial wellbeing.

We've created a resource full of hints and tips to help keep you warm and safe this winter.

To view this, visit: longhurst-group.org.uk/wellbeing/winter-wellness-tips

Understanding compliance certificates



As your landlord, we're responsible for gas safety in your home and must make sure a gas service is carried out every year.

Likewise, we carry out electrical safety inspections too.

When you have a gas safety check or an electrical inspection, our contractor will provide a certificate which contains lots of information.

To help you make sense of these certificates, we've created an easy-to-understand booklet which explains what each section means and what details it should include.

To download the booklet as a PDF, visit: longhurst-group.org.uk/me-and-my-home/repairs-and-maintenance/gas-servicing-and-other-safety-checks

Communal cleaning contract update



We're working hard to appoint new contractors to deliver our communal cleaning services across the Group.

So far, 17 contractors have shown interest in the communal cleaning contract, and they're currently being carefully reviewed by our Estates, Procurement, Homeownership and Housing Teams.

We know that having reliable, high-quality cleaning is important to our customers, and we're doing everything we can to make sure we secure the best outcome.

Each contractor is being assessed on essential criteria like health and safety, insurance coverage, experience, and customer service.

Our Customer Evaluation Panel will also be scoring the responses to one of the questions in the procurement process to ensure customers are involved in the selection of our new contractor.

We're hoping to be in a position to appoint a new communal cleaning contractor in the next few months and will provide more information when we're able to.

Our latest annual report

We're pleased to announce that our 2023/24 annual report and financial statements have been published.

Titled 'Stronger Foundations', the report demonstrates our performance over the last 12 months and how we're committed to further improving services.

It includes customer stories and case studies, as well as video interviews and key statistics in each of our strategic pillars.

We've once again hosted the report on an interactive online platform to create an engaging experience for readers.

To view the report, visit:
annualreport.longhurst.group/23-24/

Helping Ganiu back into work

When Ganiu Ishola's wife died nearly a decade ago, his life turned upside down.

Forced to give up work to care for his young children, he didn't know where to turn.

Now, nine years on and with his children at college, support from our Employment and Skills service has helped him get back into work.

Ganiu, 60, lives in Lincoln and has a track record of working. But despite this experience, he was finding it hard to have success.

He says the intervention of Rob Friday, our Employment and Training Advisor, was the turning point and he's now working full-time for Lincolnshire Co-op.

"It was hard having to take care of the children and dealing with losing a loved one," he said.

"It was very stressful. Once the kids had grown up and could take care of themselves and go to college, I knew I wanted to get back into work.

"I was submitting lots of applications, but I wasn't getting any response."



Ganiu was referred to the Employment and Skills service by our Income Team. Rob helped Ganiu update his CV to focus on his experience rather than his career gap. He said:

"I'm so grateful that I met him and that he could help me.

"I feel good that I have a job to go to Monday to Friday. It's nice.

"The job is awesome and everybody is friendly. I love it, it's brilliant.

"I'd definitely encourage other customers to reach out to Rob and the team if they're in a similar situation to me, or just want help finding work. It can change your life."

Customer Forum and scrutiny panel recruitment



We've got some exciting opportunities for customers to get involved, have their say and help us to improve the services we provide.

From our Customer Forum to our Scrutiny Team, we hope there's something for everyone.

For more information, check out the links below.

Join our Customer Forum

social.longhurst.group/yMuVe

Join our Scrutiny Team

social.longhurst.group/42QzX

By getting involved, you'll gain valuable experience, develop new skills and play a crucial role in helping to improve our services.

We can't wait to hear from you.

A message from Customer Services

We know how important it is to our customers to get through to us on the phone as quickly as possible.

We also acknowledge that it can be frustrating waiting in a queue to speak to a member of our Customer Service Team. They're working hard to answer your call as quickly as possible.

However, it's really important that you do stay on the line, otherwise if you hang up and call back, you'll join the back of the queue again.

To explain this in more detail, six of our fantastic team members have recorded a message to you.

Watch the video by visiting:
youtu.be/AFOXPh8z_CQ

Winter support for you

Our Money Advice Team is urging customers to find out if they can utilise any additional support this winter.

The team has put together some important information on the Household Support Fund, Pension Credit and warm spaces.



Household Support Fund

Your local council might be able to help you with essential costs, such as energy and water bills, food and essential items.

Food vouchers may also be available to families during the school holidays.

You don't have to be getting benefits to receive support from your local council, but each local authority decides how to run its own scheme, so you'll need to find out what support is available to you.

To find out more, visit:

- [gov.uk/cost-living-help-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/cost-living-help-local-council)



Winter support for you



Pension Credit

Pension Credit provides you with extra money to help with your living costs if you're over State Pension age and on a low income.

It can also help you with housing costs such as ground rent or service charges.

If you're on Pension Credit, you may then also qualify for the Winter Fuel Allowance payment.

To find out if you're eligible for Pension Credit, visit:

- [gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator)



Warm Welcome Spaces

The Warm Welcome campaign wants everyone in the UK to find a place of belonging and reconnection at a Warm Welcome Space near their home.

To find out more about Warm Welcome Spaces, and to find your nearest one, visit:

- [warmwelcome.uk/find-a-space](https://www.warmwelcome.uk/find-a-space)



Device and data gifting scheme

Alarming, one in seven adults and one in five children in the UK are digitally excluded. Digital access is crucial for education, job opportunities, and affordable utilities.

That's why we're committed to doing our bit to help end digital poverty.

Our Employment and Skills Team operates a device and data gifting scheme, which sees us donate laptops, mobile phones and pre-loaded SIM cards to customers who are most in-need and could use these items to find work or develop their skills.

To find out more about this scheme and to see if you're an eligible customer, email EmploymentAndSkills@longhurst-group.org.uk

Summer competition winner

In our final printed edition of the Our Voice customer magazine, our competition prize was a hedgehog house.


We once again had a great response to the competition, and we're delighted to be able to announce the winner.

**It is..... David Bullock of Burton on Trent!
Congratulations, David. Your hedgehog house
is on the way to you.**

Thank you to everyone who's entered our competitions over the years. We hope you've enjoyed completing the wordsearch and winning various prizes!



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