

## **P1** WELCOME!

We welcome our two new members of the Sugarhouse Team – Chris & Jess. PLUS Smart Meters – Looking at how they may change energy use.

## **P2** ALL INCLUSIVE BILLS

We look at the all inc deals that we have rolled out this year.

**GAS SAFETY**- Updates you need to aware of.

## **P3** / BUY TO LET UPDATE

The Bank of England are getting tougher on Buy-To - Let mortgages.

We look at what the changes may mean for you.

## **P4** / IN THE SPOTLIGHT

We often speak with you on the phone or by email, so we have put together a 2 minute Q&A session with one of our friendly staff.

# sugarhouse properties

QUARTERLEY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2016 EDITION

## The Sugarhouse Team Strengthens! Welcome To Chris & Jess!

### Chris Greenwood Maintenance Co-Ordinator

Chris has recently joined our team after returning to the motherland from an extended holiday of over 8 years in Sydney, Australia.



Yes, he is still complaining about the weather but is enjoying getting wrapped up and getting out to the properties to ensure that our portfolio is kept in its best condition. From his experience of co-ordinating general maintenance of over 2,000 properties for a large developer in Sydney, he is excited to be back home and continuing his love of all things construction. After leaving Sugarhouse, Chris looks forward to a good glass of red wine whilst putting his feet up on the sofa and watching the mighty Leeds Rhinos!

### Jess Hall Lettings Manager

Jess has recently joined our team after working in Sheffield for three years and brings with her over 4 years of lettings experience. She is excited to be back in Leeds after leaving the dark side of Yorkshire and has joined us as our Lettings Manager.



In her spare time, she likes to jump on a plane to Spain to see her family and travels all over the UK; however, Jess loves nothing more than to go to a country pub for dinner and a glass of wine.

You can also see the rest of the team on our website!

## Smart Meters – A Clever Idea or Are The Energy Companies Spying On Us?

### What is a smart meter?

Smart meters are the next generation of gas and electricity meters and offer a range of intelligent functions. We have seen a huge increase in the amount of tenants asking for all-inclusive deals and the new smart meters are going to revolutionise how these are managed.

For example, we can get a real time reading on how much energy the tenants are using and can tell how they are performing against their allowance for their inclusive energy. The meter will also communicate directly with your energy supplier meaning that no one will need to come and read your meter in future.

Another benefit to the smart meter is that the energy company can quickly change the meter to a pre-payment meter where the tenant will have to top up with credit by calling the energy company. This can be reverted at any time which sees the end to expensive meter changes.

We will be rolling out the smart meters in all the properties which sign up to the All-Inclusive Bills package as soon as we have the green light from the supplier.



## Gas Safety Certificates-Turning up the heat

The regulatory body Gas Safe has announced changes to legislation which will see a dramatic shake up of how issues are reported on the annual landlord gas safety checks.



From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, "Not To Current Standards or N.C.S" will be scrapped. The changes will see only 2 categories used when a fault is found. These categories will be:

**At Risk:** A notice sticker put on appliance and tenants advised not to use. Remedial work is required.

**Immediately Dangerous:** The appliance has to be isolated and will be unusable until the fault has been rectified.

Previously gas safety certificates will have had N.C.S advisory points listed, from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, when re-tested these will become "At Risk" and will require remedial action. Our approved Gas Safe engineers will be able to ensure that any works that become required are completed quickly; whilst keeping the costs down.

## All Inclusive Bills

We have seen a huge increase on the demand from our tenants for All Inclusive bill packages.

This year we have rolled out 3 fantastic packages to our tenants which range from the basic gas, water and electric right the way up to services such as a regular cleaner and Apple TV's! The increased popularity of packaged rents is set to continue in 2017.



As a landlord, having your tenants on an All Inclusive Package offers huge benefits to you also. With heating included, we have seen a huge decrease in reported condensation. The tenants are not afraid to put their heating on which reduces any build-up of condensation.

For our student tenants, we have teamed up with the National Union of Students' (NUS) approved insurance company Endsleigh, to provide them with a fantastic contents insurance package which covers their valuables and Uni books etc, for a weekly price that's less than a packet of crisps!

Next year we may be pushing the packages even further to include more services for the tenants. We're always looking to increase the scope of our services to your tenants even further so watch this space!

## Changeover – 30<sup>th</sup> June/1<sup>st</sup> July

The infamous changeover is almost upon us!

Our whole letting year builds up to these two key dates and with around 2,000 students moving around Leeds, we have been busy planning for the past few months.

We have a team of property inspectors who will visit all the properties and check their condition. We have 24 hours to get the property ready for the tenants moving in the next day.

We will be creating a time lapse video of the 30<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July so you can see the flurry of activity in our office!

### Changeover Charges

During the busy changeover period, you will notice that there may be charges relating to maintenance, cleaning and other repairs that are listed on your July Statement.

Rest assured, any of these invoices which are tenant chargeable will be proposed to the outgoing tenants as a deduction from their deposit.



## Management Terms of Business

We've updated our terms of business in the last 6 months and have emailed you a copy.

If you have not yet returned your copy, please ensure that this is done before the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

If you require an additional copy, please call and speak to Jess or email [jess@sugarhouseproperties.co.uk](mailto:jess@sugarhouseproperties.co.uk)  
Thank-you.

## Service As Normal as Stamp Duty Changes Settles!

Service as normal since stamp duty rise!

The dust appears to have settled since the rise in stamp duties payable for buy to let investors and second home buyers at the beginning of April. We are happy to report that there is still a strong demand for stock in Leeds and many of our investors have not been put off by these extra expenses.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, an extra 3% was added to the stamp duty rates for Buy to let investors and buyers wishing to purchase a second home. Many feared that this would bring an end to demand for buy to let properties and would de-value stock values for residential Landlords. Whilst this may be the case in certain areas of the country, Sugarhouse properties have seen an increase in demand for our 'from buy to let' service especially in the Leeds student accommodation sector. We believe that this is mainly due to higher rates of return compared to other areas such as London and the south.

We have had a high demand for rented properties throughout the Leeds area and this pared with higher rates of return, compared to many other areas of the country, means that we feel there is still plenty of life left in the Leeds residential lettings market.



### Bank Of England – Getting Tough On Buy-To-Let

The Bank of England has just issued their new stance on implementing harder regimes when people apply for buy-to-let borrowing. The Bank Of England has put together four measures designed to control buy-to-let lending standards:

- Lenders should consider the borrower's costs associated with letting the property, including tax costs.
- Steps must be taken to make sure that a borrower's personal income should be made transparent if they want it included to support the mortgage.
- Future interest increases should be predicted in affordability assessments, including the worst instant of interest rates increasing to 5.5% for a full five years.
- Any landlords with four or more properties should undergo a special underwriting process.

It is hoping that by introducing this tougher stance, the authority will substantially reduce BTL lending from between 10-20% by 2019.

However, data shows that approximately 75% of lenders agreeing to buy-to-let mortgages are already meeting the standards' criteria, the authority is increasingly concerned by the fact that 5 out of the 20 major lenders are presently using a 'stressed interest rate' of 5.47% or lower – which is lower than the new level which is being introduced by the authority.

The four measures will start from the summer of this year.



## Integrating Social Media



FACEBOOK - [facebook.com/SugarhouseProperties](https://facebook.com/SugarhouseProperties)

The Facebook competition reached its climax at the end of April. We had a huge audience with our posts reaching over 65,000 students! The winning group came to our office to collect their 40" SMART TV. The runners up won 2 bottles of bubbly! With such a high post reach, we have been able to maximise our brand exposure to such a huge audience.

TWITTER - [@SugarhouseLeeds](https://twitter.com/SugarhouseLeeds)

#Fish&ChipFriday made its debut to Twitter last month. We've teamed up with Charlie Brett's Fish Restaurant in Headingley, to offer a fortnightly competition, where we pick at random a visitor to our office for the FREE fish & chip voucher!

YOUTUBE – [youtube.com/sugarhousepropeties](https://youtube.com/sugarhousepropeties)

We've added a selection of new videos to our Youtube channel. We have introduced a number of "Self Help" videos for our tenants from changing a lightbulb and topping up the boiler to dealing with condensation and understanding RCD Fuseboards. One of our videos has over 60,000 views!

INSTAGRAM – [www.instagram.com/sugarhouseproperties](https://www.instagram.com/sugarhouseproperties)

You'll be surprised at what we see on a day to day basis! Our Instagram account has loads of photos while we are out and about and our students frequently like and comment on our snaps. From rooftop views of Headingley Stadium to the snow we had at the end of April, our snaps are always worth a look!

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## In The Spotlight: *Richard*



**Name:** Richard Napier

**Position:** Director

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### Next Issue:

*We'll have loads more news to bring you in the next newsletter; Here is a snip of what we'll be looking at;*

#### **BREXIT**

We'll look at the details of how the biggest decision for the UK unfolded. If we decided to leave, what impacts this has on the property market. If we decided to stay, we will look at how staying united with Europe will affect our property market.

#### **WINTER PROPERTY PREPERATION**

Cold months are coming and it is time to wrap up warm. Properties need some winter TLC also so we look over some easy ways you can help protect your property.

#### **INVESTMENT – PROPERTY PAYS?**

Like cars, properties need looking after. We will take a look at the most common issues in houses and how spending money can actually MAKE you money...!

#### **STUDENT LETTING SEASON**

With the next student letting season fast approaching, we look at ways to prepare the properties and suggest ideas to make sure the houses are looking their best.

We often only get to communicate with you via phone call or email, so we thought that we'd add a special section to each newsletter which is about our members of staff. In this section, we will have a quick two minute Q&A section. Hopefully it will help put a face to the name and also a little insight into each one of us.

#### ***Describe yourself in 3 words.***

Fun, loyal, determined

#### ***What's the first thing you do when you arrive at Sugarhouse on a morning?***

Make a coffee! I'm useless without caffeine.

#### ***What do you love the most about Leeds?***

I've loved watching Leeds evolve over recent years as the city has turned into one of the most vibrant and exciting cities in the UK with a thriving city centre, bustling suburbs and loads of great bars and restaurants.

#### ***What do you get up to when you're not in the office?***

I wouldn't know, I'm always here! I like a game of five a side (injuries permitting), good food, travel and photography. I'm happiest when I'm outside.

#### ***What would your dream property be?***

Somewhere quiet, simple and by the sea. Oh, and a hot tub wouldn't go amiss.

#### ***What is Sugarhouse's biggest asset?***

Our staff. We've got a great team with everyone 100% committed to providing the best possible customer service they can for our landlords and tenants alike.

#### ***What do you like the most about the property industry?***

No two days are the same and I love being busy. It's also great finding our tenants their perfect home and meeting such a varied and interesting mix of people.

#### ***What character in a film would you most like to play?***

It would have to be James Bond, it wouldn't get much better than that. Although I hate heights so it would have to be all ground level action!

#### ***Who do people say you are you a lookalike of?***

I have no idea! Someone younger than me hopefully!

#### ***What is your favourite holiday spot?***

I like going off the beaten track when I can (mostly because my phone doesn't work there!) and have spent quite a lot of time in South America which I love.

#### ***Four dinner guests of your choice:***

I'd start with Gordon Ramsey so there's some decent food on the table and then I'd have to go Elvis (just because he's Elvis), Nelson Mandela (no explanation required) and Maradona, because I'm a big football fan and there hasn't been anyone better.