



# NB Housing

Homes that build community

## Tenants Newsletter

ISSUE 28  
AUTUMN 2021

### Tenants Focus Group

Our tenant focus group meet via Zoom or WhatsApp group chats, to discuss ongoing issues or programme ideas. We are always seeking new members to come along and join. We can work with tenants groups on community clean ups or other initiatives to help make your area a nice place to live.

### Free Wi-Fi

Are you living at home with families that are in education and do not have access to Wi-Fi? If so contact our Community Development & Tenant Support Officer Sadie on 02890592110 who may be able to get you free Wi-Fi for up to 1 year.

## Window Box Programme

Over the past few weeks NB Housing has been working with tenants to provide some colourful window boxes!

We created and delivered these with the help of an expert gardener Johnny who met with our tenants and instructed them how to care for the plants. This was a very enjoyable programme for both tenants and staff!

Watch out for our other programmes including:

- Oven to plate cooking classes
- Tackling mental health through nature and positive images

If you would like to be involved in any of these programmes please contact our Community Development & Tenant Support Officer, Sadie on 02890592110



# Do Your Neighbour a Favour!

Are you doing any helpful things for your neighbours?

If so, why not let us know as we at NB Housing are promoting the "Do your neighbour a favour" campaign. We want to know if you are someone who helps your neighbours by carrying out some daily tasks for them like grocery shopping or gardening.

We launched our campaign during good relations week and would love for you to let us know if you are helping out a neighbour. Send any stories and pictures to [sadie.reid@nb-housing.org](mailto:sadie.reid@nb-housing.org) or contact our office on 02890592110.

All Neighbours involved will get an award from NB Housing!

## Save Money On Your Energy Bills

### Advice from the Consumer Council

With winter weather upon us we need more electricity, gas and oil to light and heat our homes.

Did you know there are five electricity companies in Northern Ireland who have over 20 different tariffs on offer and they all want you to be one of their customers? This year, many suppliers are increasing their prices. Now is the time to see if you can get a better deal than the one you are currently on. A better deal might be with a different supplier or by changing your payment or billing method with your current supplier.

The Consumer Council has an interactive, independent online energy price comparison tool which will show you the best electricity and gas deals, as well as guides to explain the switching process. All you need is a recent bill to hand, visit [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk) and search for Energy Price Comparison Tool then follow the 5 easy steps.

If you are unable to access the online tool, call The Consumer Council freephone on 0800 121 6022 and someone will be able to provide free advice or navigate the tool with you.

Switching is simple and there is no interruption to your electricity or gas supply; you will just start receiving bills from your new supplier.

### Topping up your oil tank?

If you use home heating oil you can make savings by shopping around different suppliers for the best deal. Every week The Consumer Council contact home heating oil suppliers from across Northern Ireland to bring you the average price for 300, 500 and 900 litres of home heating oil. You can use this information as a benchmark to see how much the average cost of oil is in Belfast.

### More help and advice

If The Consumer Council's website has a number of free resources, including a budget planner, to help you take control of your spending and identify areas where you can save some money. Visit [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk), call on Freephone 0800 121 6022, email [contact@consumerCouncil.org.uk](mailto:contact@consumerCouncil.org.uk) or find us on Facebook and Twitter.



# Our New Homes

An update from the Development Team

Our Development Team and Contractors have been working hard to maintain our development programme during these uncertain times. We continue to seek new opportunities and during the year we have completed 6 Rehab properties, 3 New Build properties, agreed to purchase a further 21 units and obtained planned permission for our new build project on Crumlin Road.

The houses pictured are our most recent completions, which provided new homes to 2 families in Co Down.



Millisle



Bangor

## New Build Update

### Crumlin Road

NB Housing was successful in obtaining planning permission to build 14 new units on the Crumlin Road. We expect works to commence in late autumn and look forward to bringing you updates in future editions.



### Emerson Mill, North Belfast

We have agreed to acquire 5 units at the above location, these units include 1 bungalow and 4 family houses, we expect to take possession of these homes before the end of 2021.



# An Update From Our Maintenance Team

## Responsive Repairs

Throughout the coronavirus lockdown NB Housing continued to provide an essential emergency repairs service, ensuring we put measures in place to keep both residents and staff safe. We have put in place the necessary safety precautions to complete all work at a distance. If we have to enter your property to carry out a repair, we ask that you allow us access and adhere to social distancing guidelines.

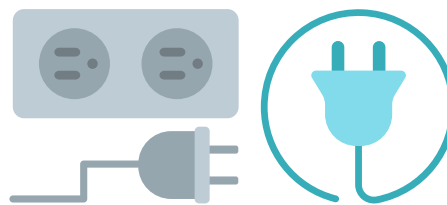
**Please do not allow access to contractors or staff if you or a member of your household has coronavirus symptoms. Instead contact the maintenance team immediately so we can re-book your repair.**

Non-emergency repair requests were also logged during this time, we have now started to tackle this backlog with appropriate safety measures in place. It will take some time to get through these and the incoming new repairs requests, so please bear with us as we work to catch up.

## Planned Maintenance

All planned maintenance programmes (e.g. kitchen/bathroom/window replacements, and heating upgrades) ceased during lockdown. We are arranging for contractors to start these works again once detailed Covid-19 risk assessments are agreed. We are working with all our contractors to ensure works can be undertaken safely. This may mean some works take longer to complete. We have returned to work on our external painting and other external maintenance projects.

## Electrical Safety



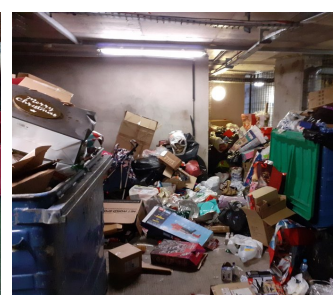
Electrical safety checks to homes is ongoing. Please help us by allowing our electricians access if you are contacted as it is essential that your electrical installation is inspected regularly.

## Rubbish

We receive numerous complaints about rubbish which has been dumped in communal areas of apartment blocks and alleyways to houses. This includes items such as mattresses, clothing, cardboard and furniture. Not only does this look unsightly, it can also smell and be a trip hazard.

If there is a problem with the bins in your building, please contact our repairs team. The number of bins per scheme or household is dictated by your local council, using the recycling bins provided will ensure that there is sufficient room in the household bin between collections.

Bulky items and things that cannot be recycled must be disposed of responsibly. If exits and walkways are blocked by dumped rubbish this could prevent someone from escaping in the event of a fire. Most Councils run a bulky waste collection service which can be booked by telephone or email. The association has incurred costs of over £10,000 managing and removing additional rubbish from schemes during the first six months of the year. Money that could be spent on providing maintenance and other services.





## Adaptations

We continue to programme in adaptation requests upon receipt of a formal recommendation. Like many in the health service, Occupational Therapists were redeployed to assist with the pandemic. Given the restrictions easing, they have returned to their normal duties and have started to complete assessments again. Like most areas, there is a backlog and it will take time to address. However, many minor adaptations do not require the input of the occupational therapists and if you feel your request is minor in nature, please contact our maintenance team who will assist you. If you have any further questions about the information above please contact your Maintenance Officer on 028 9035 1131.



Above is an example of a level access shower installation.

## Rechargeable Repairs

NB Housing carry out repairs as standard on the structure of your home along with gas, electricity, plumbing, and heating installations etc. These repairs are completed in accordance with the terms of your tenancy agreement. Below are examples of costs that are rechargeable:

- Any damage caused deliberately or by neglect.
- Wilful damage or neglect due to actions of the tenant or former tenant, household members, invited guests or contractor employed by the tenant;

- Alleged break in to property where the tenant has not reported this to the Police and does not have a crime reference number;
- Any item that does not become defective due to fair wear and tear;
- Damage as a result of action not taken by the tenant, such as reporting repairs;
- Removal of items left in communal areas;
- Clearing properties at any time during a tenancy or at the point the tenancy ends;
- Clearing gardens at any time during a tenancy or at the point the tenancy ends;
- Making good any alterations carried out by the tenant where approval has not been authorised to carry out such works or has resulted in damage to the property or neighbouring property;
- Any court costs as a result of a breach of tenancy conditions, for example incidents of anti-social behaviour or gaining access to properties to carry out a gas service;
- Call out fees for any out of hours work carried out which is not deemed to be an emergency;
- Where specialist equipment and/or materials have been ordered and the tenant refuses to have them fitted or provide access (the cost of the equipment / materials recharged); and
- Loss of keys or fobs.

If you would like more information on rechargeable repairs, please get in touch by ringing 028 9035 1131 or email [repairs@nb-housing.org](mailto:repairs@nb-housing.org)

## Preparing Your Home For Winter

With many of us working from home for the foreseeable future, our houses have become our offices as well as the place we spend the majority of our free time. So it's really important that you cooperate with us in preparing your homes for the colder months and making sure your boiler is working safely.

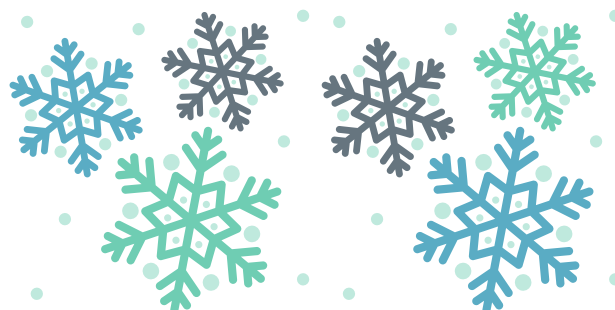
A well-maintained boiler will be more efficient, which could then save you money on your fuel bills. Turn your boiler on for a short time to test everything is working as it should, if not then let us know and we will arrange an engineer to come and resolve the issues.

There are some checks you can do first:

- Please ensure that you have credit on both gas and electric meters to enable the boiler to switch on and fire up.
- If your boiler has been out of action for a while and you're only just turning it back on, the pressure should be around the 1 – 1.5 bar. If it's showing less than 0.5 bar, you'll need to let us know.
- Check that radiators are switched on at the valves and that the radiators are heating up properly. Let us know any that are not getting warm.
- If water is leaking when the boiler is on then let us know and we will get it looked at as soon as possible.

These tips will ensure your boiler will keep working throughout the winter, heating your home and helping to create a cosy place to live and work. It is our responsibility to service all boilers each year and it is important we have your cooperation to do this. Not having access to your home is the biggest problem we have when carrying out this vital service.

When you have made an appointment for this service, it is important that you are there to let us in. Failure to do so may result in your gas supply being capped and legal proceedings being commenced.



## House Sales Scheme

The Department for Communities has requested that we inform tenants of the following:

On 28 August 2022 the statutory House Sales Scheme for NB Housing tenants will permanently and completely close. This scheme enables eligible tenants to purchase their social home supported by a discount.

From this date, no new applications can be made to the House Sales Scheme. To be clear, applications to the Sales Scheme must be made before midnight on 27 August 2022. No applications can be accepted after that time. As long as an application is made before midnight on 27 August 2022, the application may be processed and the sale may complete after that date.

The closure of the House Sales Scheme on 28 August 2022 reflects legislation passed by the NI Assembly on 30 June 2020 and given Royal Assent on 28 August 2020. Further information from the Department is available on NI Direct."



# Electrical Safety

## Take Care When Cooking

- Cooking is one of the leading causes of fires in homes. The kitchen is generally the highest risk area in the home.
- Stay alert and do not get distracted whilst cooking. Most kitchen fires occur when people leave things unattended.
- Do not leave children alone in the kitchen.
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean. A build-up of fat and bits of food can start a fire.
- Clean out the crumb tray in toasters regularly.
- Clear lint from tumble dryers extracts.
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker.
- Keep electrical appliances and leads away from water.
- Switch off all non-essential appliances at night.

## Some Tips For Kitchen Safety

- Don't leave electrical appliances like dishwashers or washing machines running unattended
- Don't wrap flexible cables around any equipment when it is still warm
- Check that flexible leads and appliances such as kettles and toasters are in good condition
- Don't try to clean or repair an appliance when it is still plugged in
- Never try to get toast that is stuck out of a toaster while it is plugged in, and especially not with a metal knife as there are often live parts inside
- Make sure you thoroughly clean your oven and grill – a build up of fat and grease is a major cause of fires
- Check your plug sockets are not overloaded with too many electrical appliances as this can lead to overheating
- Avoid storing objects on top of appliances like the microwave, which can block ventilation

- Defrost your fridge and freezer at least once a year to ensure these appliances continue to work properly
- Make sure you have a working smoke detector in case something does go wrong

## Using Portable Heaters Safely

Electrical heaters can be a great way to keep warm, especially if you only want to warm up one room. However, they should be used with care. Fires caused by portable heaters do happen and have resulted in fatalities.

- Don't put anything on top of heaters. Never use it to dry your clothes.
- Keep your heater away from bedding, curtains and furniture.
- Never leave your heater unattended whilst in use or when you are asleep.
- Never power a heater from an extension lead, they can easily be overloaded and cause fires. Before moving your heater, turn it off and allow it to cool.
- Keep portable heaters in a safe place, both when they are being used and when they are being stored.
- Ensure your heater is in good working order, do not use it if its faulty.
- Do not leave young children or pets unattended in areas where portable heaters are switched on.

## Electrical Installation Inspections

We are currently completing electrical inspections to some homes. If your home is selected please assist us and provide access to have these necessary inspections completed.

### Contents Insurance

NB Housing would advise all tenants that it is their responsibility to take out contents insurance. NB Housing is not liable for any loss or damage caused to tenants belongings. Contents insurance can be obtained from most Insurance Brokers .

### Out of Hours Visit Service

Temporarily suspended while lockdown restrictions are in place. We will keep you informed as and when restrictions are eased. However please do not hesitate to contact us on 02890592110 should you require any assistance..

### Debt Advice

NB Housing wishes to highlight the availability of an independent debt advice charity that offers guidance for people in debt. The charity Debt Support Trust is open from 8.00am-7.00pm Monday to Friday and can be contacted on 0800 085 0226 or online at [www.debtsupporttrust.org.uk](http://www.debtsupporttrust.org.uk). You will not be charged for their advice and any information that you give or receive is treated in the strictest confidence.

### Recycling Centres

- **Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council:**  
<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/recyclingcentres/>  
T: 028 9446 3113 & T: 028 9034 0000
- **Ards and North Down Borough Council:**  
<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/bins-and-recycling/recycling-centres>  
0300 013 3333
- **Belfast City Council**  
<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/recycling/centres>  
0800 032 8100
- **Mid and East Antrim Council**  
<https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/resident/waste-recycling>  
0300 124 5000
- **Mid Ulster Council**  
<https://www.midulstercouncil.org/resident/bins-recycling/recycling-centres>  
03000 132 132

### Useful Numbers

**Radius CONNECT24** (for out of hours emergency repairs) 0800 731 3081

**NIHE:** 03448 920 900

**Belfast City Council Pest Control:** 028 9027 0431

**Phoenix Gas:** 0345 455 5555

**Noise Control:** 028 9037 3006

**Power NI:** 0345 745 5455

**Waste Management:** 028 9027 0657

### NB Housing Contact Details

#### Gatelodge Office

8 Flax Street, Belfast, BT14 7EQ

Tel: 028 9059 2110

#### Crumlin Road Office

282-290 Crumlin Road, Belfast, BT14 7ED

Tel: 028 9035 1131

Did you know you can contact us through the 'Getting in Touch' tab on our website ([www.nb-housing.org](http://www.nb-housing.org)), can contact us via email: [info@nb-housing.org](mailto:info@nb-housing.org) or can text us on 074 9820 2221