



# NB Housing

Homes that build community

## Tenants Newsletter

ISSUE 19  
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### NB Housing staff supporting local communities and charities



During the year NB Housing staff raised £741 for Chest, Heart & Stroke and presented the donation in May. We raised the money by taking part in our annual step challenge, Christmas Jumper Day and bake off. The money raised will be used to support a number of services in Northern

Ireland including care services, prevention & health promotion, research and campaigning. We have chosen Chest Heart & Stroke for our charity this year and are looking forward to planning activities and raising even more funds for this worthy cause!

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# Advice from our Housing Team

## Universal Credit

Universal credit or UC has now been rolled out across Northern Ireland. There are often lengthy delays in the assessment of UC so it is very important that you communicate with us and ask us for assistance. We can assist with UC and rates claims. Rates claims are on a separate system and UC must be claimed first. Many tenants have to be reminded to claim rates separately.

Due to the delay in the assessment of UC there is an impact on arrears, hence it is vital that you tell us how your UC claim is progressing so we can take this into account when deciding to pursue rent arrears action. Unlike housing benefit we cannot get information from UC on your claim and we require you to be present to speak to them. We provide facilities at both our Crumlin Road and Gatelodge offices so you can log onto your UC portal and allow our staff to assist.

## Help with Universal Credit

Please seek an independent benefit check before applying for UC.

Contact Universal Credit customer service and support 0800 328 9344 free number, available 8am-6pm, Monday-Friday.

Contact Universal Credit online through email: [uc.servicecentrehousing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:uc.servicecentrehousing@dwp.gsi.gov.uk).

Department for Communities is 02890 829000

You may be able to get access to online facilities at your local library or find out more about local advice agencies from them. You can speak with a member of Libraries NI staff on t: 0345 4504 580 or email [enquiries@librariesni.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@librariesni.org.uk)

- Welfare Changes Advice Service 0808 8020020 [welfarechanges@adviceni.net](mailto:welfarechanges@adviceni.net)
- Make the Call 0800 232 1271
- Advice NI 02890 645919 [info@adviceni.net](mailto:info@adviceni.net)
- Housing Rights Service 02890 245640

## Mitigation payments stopping at the end of March 2020

A number of our tenants are receiving benefit cap and bedroom tax. You may be aware but these payments are due to stop at the end of March 2020. That means you will be required to pay the shortfall in your rent if you are living in a property where you have spare bedrooms. If you have one spare bedroom you will lose 14% of your housing benefit entitlement. This would mean if you get £100 per week at present you would have to pay the shortfall of £14 per week. If you have more than 1 spare bedroom you will lose 25% of your housing benefit.

The impact of this could be very significant. You will not receive any additional benefits or increases to either housing benefit or universal credit to pay the shortfall and you will be expected to pay the shortfall out of your current income. Should you require further clarification on how this will impact you, please contact us for further explanation and how we may be able to help you

Should the mitigation (meaning the current bedroom tax and benefit cap payments) not continue we will be in touch with our tenants to let them know how/if they will be affected and how much to pay. This exercise is likely to take place around the end of January 2020.

**If you would like further information on universal credit or mitigation payments please contact us on 028 9059 2110. Alternatively you can text us on 074 9820 2221 or send an email to [info@nb-housing.org](mailto:info@nb-housing.org)**

## Free, Independent, Confidential Advice & Information

### Benefits, Money Advice, Housing, Tribunal Representation, Employment and Consumer Issues.

Ardoyne Association  
111 Etna Drive  
Ardoyne  
Belfast  
BT14 7NN

Tel: 028 9071 5165

Ligoniel Improvement  
Association  
Wolfhill Centre,  
148 Ligoniel Road  
Belfast  
BT14 8DT

Tel: 028 9039 1225

Ballysillan Community Forum  
The Willowgrove Centre  
925 Crumlin Road  
Belfast  
BT14 8AB

Tel: 028 9039 1272

Tar Isteach Advice Service  
244 Antrim Road  
Belfast  
BT15 2AR

Tel: 028 9074 6665

Advice Space (formerly  
CAB)  
40 – 44 Duncairn Gardens  
Belfast  
BT15 2GG

Tel: 0300 123 3233

The Vine Centre  
193 Crumlin Road  
Belfast  
BT14 7DX

Tel: 028 9035 1020

### Local Jobs and Benefits Offices

- 87- 127 Great Victoria St • 0870 218 3788
- 106-108 Holywood Rd • 0800 022 4250
- Falls Road JBO 19 Falls Rd • 0800 022 4250
- Andersonstown JBO 580 Falls Rd • 0800 022 4250

If you live outside of Belfast the best way to contact your local jobs and benefits office is by going onto the NI Direct website- [www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices-jobcentres-and-social-security-offices](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices-jobcentres-and-social-security-offices) or by telephoning the Benefits Freephone number: 0800 022 4250

### Other Useful Contacts

Housing Rights Service  
The Skainos Centre  
239 Newtownards Road  
Belfast  
BT4 1AF

Tel: 028 9024 5640

The Law Society of  
N.Ireland  
96 Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT1 3GN

Tel: 028 9023 1614

### Help with Benefits

Should you need advice on payment methods or how to apply for benefits you can contact the Advice Space on 0300 123 3233.

**Advice Space Belfast** offices are located at:

- Merrion Business Centre, 58 Howard Street Belfast BT1 6PJ
- The Arches Centre, Holywood Road BT4 3BA
- 40-44 Duncairn Gardens BT15 2GG
- Unit 2 The Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road BT13
- 2BB 208 Andersonstown Road BT11 9EB
- 77a Springfield Road BT12 7AE

Or NIHE on 03448 920 902 or any local community centre offering this service.



# Delivering New Homes

The Development Departments role within NB Housing, is to source and deliver new housing for those in need. We are tasked with delivering NB Housings Development Strategy. Below is a brief snap shot of the work that we are doing including details of some of the projects under construction and recently completed developments.

## Hopefield Avenue, Belfast



NB Housing have now commenced construction of our new apartment complex at Hopefield Avenue, Belfast.

Wilson and Mawhinney have been appointed to deliver this project and it is programmed to complete in April 2020. Watch this space for progress pictures, however in the meantime the artist images will provide an idea of how the completed development will look.

## Tulleygarley Road, Ballymena



NB Housing have purchased 8 properties off the open market. Above is a computer generated image of the site. These properties are due to be completed for Autumn 2019.

## Forthriver, Belfast



NB Housing are currently on site with the construction of 24 houses in Forthriver. The scheme is programmed to complete during the spring of 2020.



NB Housing is committed to assisting employment through our development and maintenance contracts. Within our contracts we insert clauses to ensure that we provide training opportunities for the long term unemployed and apprenticeships.

This is Conor who is an electrical apprentice at our Forthriver scheme, he is currently working to ensure our new houses are ready for letting in the near future.



### Millview Meadows, Coalisland

9 properties have been purchased in Coalisland. Below are a few photos from the recent site visit.



These properties are expected to be handed over in the summer 2019.

### Orrmount Lane, Ballygowan

Orrmount Lane is a 5 unit scheme purchased in Ballygowan. These units are programmed to be completed in the summer 2019.



### Rebab Unit

Below is an example of a rehabilitation property that was completed in May 2019. Works undertaken included a new kitchen, new doors and windows, rewiring, new heating system, insulation upgrade, removal of the internal and external chimney and landscaping works.

#### Before...



#### After...



NB Housing currently have 11 properties undergoing rehab works. These are located throughout Belfast and Carrickfergus.



# Community Clean Up Days

## • Flax Mews & Geoffrey Street •

During the last 6 months we held community clean up days in Flax Mews & Geoffrey Street! It was great to see so many tenants and staff members getting involved. NB Housing provided skips, brushes and tools so that everyone could help clean up the area. We wanted to say a big thank you to everyone who came along and we look forward to holding more of these events in the future!

As well as Community Clean Ups, NB Housing have a number of other initiatives that tenants can get involved in which will help us shape our services. These include:

- Estate walkabouts where you can accompany us on inspections
- Tenant satisfaction surveys
- Mystery Shopper
- Policy & procedure reviews

By participating in these activities, our tenants will be making a difference to the areas in which they live. Whatever way you want to get involved please speak to your Housing Officer or our Community Development & Tenant Support Officer. If you have any ideas as to how to get more of our tenants involved then please let us know.



If you would like further information on Tenant Participation or would like to get involved please contact us on 02890592110 (Gatelodge Office) and 02890351131 (Crumlin Road Office). Or why not text us on 07498202221 or send an email to [info@nb-housing.org](mailto:info@nb-housing.org)



# Community Day in Flax Foyer

• Working in partnership with PricewaterhouseCoopers •



Before...



After...



Bytes are currently delivering Mental Health training to the Foyer residents in conjunction with the Hummingbird Project which is funded by PwC. The project is in the early stages with residents designing the programme with Bytes.

The end goal is to produce a computer game. Through the project PwC and Flax Foyer have developed a strong partnership for our residents. PwC have supported our residents with regards to donations, future opportunities in upskilling for employment,

and they recently spent a day in the Foyer carrying out a community project. They revamped the yard area and the lounge for the benefit of residents. A big thank you to PwC staff for all their hard work.

If you would like more information on the services offered in the Foyer please contact us on 028 9059 3301 or alternatively you can send an email to [info@flaxfoyer.com](mailto:info@flaxfoyer.com)



# Advice from our Maintenance Team

You may report a repair either in person, by telephone, email or in writing. When contacting NB Housing, please ask to speak to our Maintenance Department.

NB Housing tries to ensure repairs are completed as soon as possible; however, we will prioritise the repair into one of the following categories:

**Emergency:** Repairs which could risk health and safety or if not attended to, lead to further repairs being required. These repairs will be carried out within 24-hours.

**Urgent:** Less serious repairs that do not present a health and safety risk but could cause major inconvenience. These repairs will be attended to within 4-working days.

**Routine:** The majority of repairs will be classed as routine. These repairs will be completed within 20-working days.

NB Housings emergency contact service is provided by Radius CONNECT24 and is available outside of normal office hours to deal with out of hours emergency repairs. They can be contacted on Freephone 0800 731 3081.

## Access For Contractors

It is vital that all tenants provide access to NB Housing contractors to enable boiler services to be completed. This is a health and safety requirement and is essential.

Failure to provide access will result in abortive call outs and NB Housing reserves the right to recharge you the fee. If access continues to be an issue, NB Housing will instruct the capping of the gas supply at your home until the boiler service is complete and commence legal proceedings to gain access or seek possession which may potentially lead to you losing your tenancy, please note all additional costs associated with these actions will be deemed recoverable from tenants.

If you are unable to facilitate a contractor attending please contact NB Housing so alternative arrangements can be made.

## Yearly Performance

Our maintenance performance over the year April 18 to March 19 was:

Repair Category	% On Time	% Late
Emergencies	99%	1%
Urgent	94%	6%
Routine	91%	9%

## Tenant Satisfaction Surveys

We appreciate the feedback that all tenants have submitted following Tenant Satisfaction Surveys that we issue upon completion of a project. We thank you all for your time and effort returning these surveys as NB Housing reviews all comments/feedback made to enhance our service in future projects.

## Respect Our Staff

When dealing with any member of the NB Housing Staff Team or NB Housing Contractors we would ask that you treat them with respect and dignity. Our Staff and Contractors are dedicated to ensure our stock of over 950 properties is kept up to stringent standards and tenants need to respect timescales as to when works can be completed. NB Housing staff members treat all our tenants with upmost respect and we would ask for the same back.

## Cyclical & Planned Maintenance

Currently NB Housing are forming the Planned & Cyclical Maintenance projects for this financial year. Tenants that have been selected for these projects shall be issued with written notification of these works to allow for future consultations to occur.

- Structural Improvements to Ardglen Porches (16 Properties)
- Gas Boiler Replacements to 53 Properties
- Oil to Gas Heating Conversions to 14 Properties
- Kitchen Replacements to 61 Properties
- External Door Replacements to 27 Properties
- Replacement of Windows & External Doors to 3 Properties
- External Decoration to 90 Properties
- Communal Internal Decoration at 14 Flax Street & 26 Cliftonville Road



Kitchen replacement



External door replacement



Replacement of windows & external doors

## Works Currently On Site



We are currently replacing the communal lighting, fire alarm system, & communal ceilings in Holyrood House. This work began in February and is due to complete in summer 2019. We look forward to sharing pictures of the completed scheme.

## Gardens

NB Housing is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of open spaces within an NB Housing scheme. It is your responsibility to maintain your garden which is within the curtilage of your property. Failure to do so may be deemed a breach of your tenancy.

## Crime Prevention

Please remember to keep all doors and windows locked which may provide access to intruders. If you live in an apartment block, please ensure access is only granted to people you know. Always ask for identification from anyone you do not recognise. NB Housing Staff & Contractors carry identification badges. If you are suspicious about a visitor please contact the PSNI or our Crumlin Road office on 028 9035 1131.

# Summer Days Out & About – Know Your Rights

## • Advice from the Consumer Council •

With the summer holidays upon us, you may be lucky enough to be travelling overseas on your holidays. However, many of us in Northern Ireland will be enjoying a Staycation in our own country, either by choice or necessity! This could be some day trips we have planned, an overnight stay or a longer break. The Consumer Council has put together some useful tips for NB Housing tenants enjoying a Staycation this summer.

### Save money on your transport

Using public transport can help you save money once parking and other car costs are factored in. There are day, weekly, monthly and multi-journey tickets available, all of which could save you money, depending on when and how you are travelling.

Translink also offer Family and Friends Tickets. This ticket offers unlimited travel for 1 day for up to 2 adults + 4 children (minimum 1 adult and 1 child) on any scheduled bus or rail service within Northern Ireland every day during the main school holidays. To find out the best ticket for your travel needs, visit [www.translink.co.uk/find-the-right-ticket](http://www.translink.co.uk/find-the-right-ticket) or call the Translink contact centre on 028 9066 6630.

### Travelling with a disability or reduced mobility

If you need any assistance when travelling, call the Translink contact centre at least 24 hours before you travel to ensure you can get the information and assistance you need.

Translink has an 'Access Guide' and 'Facilities Guide' which provides information on services and facilities available. These guides are available on Translink's website at [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk). You can also request a copy from the contact centre or by e-mailing [feedback@translink.co.uk](mailto:feedback@translink.co.uk).

### Making a complaint about public transport

If you have a complaint Translink should deal with it quickly. Alternatively you can make a complaint to Translink in writing at Translink Customer Services, Translink Contact Centre, Adelaide Centre, 8 Falcon Road, Belfast, BT12 6PU, or by telephoning or emailing the contact details above.

If you are not happy with the response, The Consumer Council can help. Contact The Consumer Council on freephone number 0800 121 6022 or email [contact@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:contact@consumercouncil.org.uk).

### Avoid a private parking charge notice

If you are visiting a new town, or you are taking a trip to a shopping centre or entertainment venue, the car park you use may be

operated by a private parking company who may charge for parking. Overstaying, or failure to abide by their rules could result in a Parking Charge Notice (PCN). Make sure you read the terms and conditions of the car park. Other ways to avoid getting a PCN include:

### Park correctly – You can be ticketed for parking over the white lines;

- Check your registration – Ensure you enter the correct car registration in Pay and Display machines. Failure to do so will lead to a PCN even if you have paid the correct amount;
- Show your permits – If you are a permit-holder, or blue badge carrier, ensure it is clearly visible;
- Do not use blue badge or permit holder spaces – Unless you have the permits to do so; and
- Always keep your ticket – Just in case you receive a parking charge notice.

If you wish to challenge a PCN, please contact The Consumer Council in the first instance on 0800 121 6022 or visit [www.consumercouncil.org.uk/privateparking](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/privateparking) to download our factsheet.



## SUMMER OFFICE CLOSURE



Our offices will be closed on Friday 12th July and Monday 15th July. We will re-open on Tuesday 16th July at 9.00am

Our offices will be closed on Monday 26th August and will re-open on Tuesday 27th August at 9.00am

In the event of an out of hours emergency repair, please call Radius CONNECT24 on: 0800 7313081



## Difficulty Paying Rent?

If you've fallen behind with your rent payments, you should contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible to let them know that you have missed a payment. You can enter into a repayment agreement with NB Housing to help clear your debt. If you can't pay off your arrears in full, you can pay extra on top of your rent each month or each week over a certain period of time, until the arrears are paid off.

Falling into rent arrears can have serious consequences and you could even lose your home. For all these reasons, it's really important to try and pay back your rent arrears. You should also check that you're getting all the income you can, including any help towards your rent or other benefits you may be entitled to.

You can pay your rent in a number of ways, including:

- By Standing Order (this is the easiest way to pay and money can be transferred from your bank account to NB Housing on a weekly/fortnightly/monthly basis.)
- Online by visiting [www.nb-housing.org](http://www.nb-housing.org)
- At Paypoint outlets with your Allpay card
- By calling into either office on the Crumlin Road or at Flax Street and paying by cash or cheque and you will be issued with a receipt.

You can also get help from your local Advice Centres, they can help you talk to us and can even be present at any meetings or during phone calls.

We can refer you for specialist advice to make sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to, or to help you if you have high levels of debt and just can't cope.

You will need to contact NB Housing if there is any change in your circumstances that may have an impact on your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs.

Budget carefully and don't put off paying your rent as it will only lead to greater problems in the future. Make a list of your debts both priority and non-priority. Paying priority debts will ensure you keep your house as well as essential services.

If there are people living with you, make sure they know about your problems with the rent arrear and are helping you out if they can. This could be if you have adult children living with you, ask them to contribute something to help you pay off the debt. Check your rent statement regularly to make sure that your rent is being covered by either your payments or by help from Housing Benefit/Universal Credit. If you're getting certain benefits, you may be able to ask for an amount to be deducted from your payments and paid directly to us. This is called a third party deduction. Getting a third party deduction would mean your rent arrears would be paid automatically and you would not have to worry about making extra payments to the landlord yourself.

## Terminating Your Tenancy

If you want to terminate your tenancy you must provide NB Housing with 4 weeks' notice in writing. The best way to do this is to come to our office at Flax Street or Crumlin Road and complete a Notice of Termination form. Please note that keys must be returned before NOON the day after your tenancy has terminated or you will be charged a further weeks rent.

If you need a Housing Benefit overlap we can assist you to help make your move easier. If you are in rent arrears you should clear your balance or make a payment arrangement. It is important that you leave the property in a reasonable condition for re-letting. This means that you should ensure that the property is in a clean and tidy manner when you vacate it. If you use an electric or gas card, it would be appreciated if this is left in the property, or surrendered with your keys, to allow our contractors to carry out safety checks/servicing of gas and electrical supply.

Please note that a member of the Maintenance Team will visit you in your home to carry out an inspection to ensure no damage has been caused.

### **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**

NB Housing would highlight to tenants, that tenants can avail of an out of hours visit service. The facility is for tenants who work during our normal opening hours of 9.00am- 5.00pm. Tenants who wish to use this service can contact NB Housing to arrange a more suitable time.

### **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**

- Alexandra Park Avenue (108 Alexandra Park Avenue, BT15 3GJ)
- Blackstaff Way (1 Blackstaff Way BT11 9DT)
- Ormeau (6 Park Road, BT7 2FX)
- Palmerston Road (2-4 Palmerston Road, BT4 1QA)

### **Civic Amenity Sites**

- Agnes Street (between Crumlin Road and Shankill Road)
- Springfield Avenue (off Springfield Road near Falls Road)
- 368 Cregagh Road

### **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