



# NB Housing

Homes that build community

## Tenants Newsletter

ISSUE 23  
JUNE 2020



### We Value Your Input!



We value our tenants input, we want to hear your opinions and feedback on our services. At present we have three tenants' groups that have been meeting monthly before COVID-19. We hope to continue these when restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so.

In the meantime, please contact us with any issues you feel would improve services of NB Housing. We can be contacted on 028 90 592 110, text on 074 9820 2221, emailed at [info@nb-housing.org](mailto:info@nb-housing.org) or send us a message on Facebook.

Since the beginning of the year we have offered courses on First Aid and Universal credit Awareness, and seen the successful conclusion of the Live Well Project at Holyrood House.








The Universal Credit Awareness course run by Advice NI was well attended and it give our tenants skills and knowledge to understand how this new benefit is calculated with difficulties you should look out for. All those who participated stated that Ryan Fitsimmons from Advice NI who took the course was excellent.

Please contact us with any ideas on personal development courses you feel would benefit all.



## NB Housing Working With Local Community Groups During COVID-19 Lockdown

We have been collaborating with local community groups to help our more vulnerable tenants during this difficult time. We would like to thank all those who have supported tenants in the delivery much needed services  
Thanks to.....

-  The Ardoyne Association for the coordination and delivery of food parcels for those unable to go out
-  To the volunteers for the shopping service provided to those tenants who are shielding
-  The Mill Café for the freshly cooked hot meals delivered to tenants at a reduced cost
-  To Belfast City Council for providing food boxes to tenants who are self-isolating
-  To the local youth workers who have stepped in to assist with deliveries to our older tenants
-  To all the keyworkers delivering support and care packages to tenants
-  And last but not least to all of NB Housing Support Staff in the support schemes and entire team working to provide essential services to all of our tenants.



# We're All In This Together



We hope all our tenants and their families are doing well in these very challenging times. We at NB Housing are working hard to ensure our services are being delivered safely and want to make everyone aware of where they can get assistance and support if required. In line with government advice on the management of the coronavirus outbreak, it has become necessary to make changes in the way we deliver our services.

At present we are still focusing on essential service delivery and will keep you updated as and when restrictions are relaxed and we can resume normal service. We are still contactable and can be reached by telephone, text and website. We have provided some information below which you will find useful as we progress through lockdown.

## Access to Gatelodge and Crumlin Road Offices

Both offices remain closed for the foreseeable future. Our staff continue to work from home and can be contacted on the office number 028 90 592110. When you call this number, our receptionist will redirect your call or you will be asked to leave a message and a member of staff will come back to you. We can also be contacted via email on [info@nb-housing.org](mailto:info@nb-housing.org), by texting on 074 9820 2221 or on our website [www.nb-housing.org](http://www.nb-housing.org).

## Home Visits

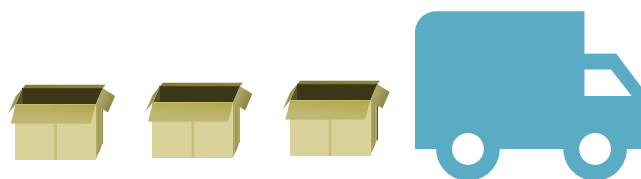
As per government guidelines we continue to practice social distancing and are unable to visit our tenants at this time. This is to keep both tenants and staff safe.



## Moving home

Anyone awaiting an exchange or planning on moving are advised that as of 15th June 2020 restrictions of movement have been lifted. Our Housing Team are now able to process allocations and exchanges to properties that do not share an entrance, i.e. houses, not apartments within a complex.

Given current health guidelines, and in an effort to ensure all of our tenants are safe, you will experience some changes in the way we conduct viewings. It is crucial that health guidelines are followed at all times e.g. avoiding unnecessary contacts, practising social distancing and the use of PPE where relevant. Housing officers will guide those wishing to make a move through the process.



## Rent Payments

If you are currently experiencing financial difficulty please do not hesitate to contact our housing team on 028 90 592110 for advice and support. We will have a sensitive approach to those experience financial issues. If you are worried about money, our team are available to help with benefit and debt advice.

If you need to make a Universal Credit claim and are unable to make your claim online, or need help with your claim, please telephone our Housing Team on 028 90 592110 or the Universal Credit Helpline on 0800 0121331.

## Department for Communities COVID-19 Guidance

We have included a copy of correspondence from Paul Price, Director of Social Housing Policy & Oversight at the Department of Communities. This letter provides information on the measures the department are taking to ensure tenants are safe during the pandemic. In addition to this, the department has also issued COVID-19 guidance for both social tenants and landlords. Both documents can be accessed on the departments website via the following links. We have also uploaded onto the NB Housing website [www.nb-housing.org](http://www.nb-housing.org)

- <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/dfc-covid-19-guidance-for-social-housing-landlords-and-tenants.pdf>
- <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/dfc-covid-19-guidance-letter-from-prince-to-all-social-tenants.PDF>

## Additional Support from the Department for Communities

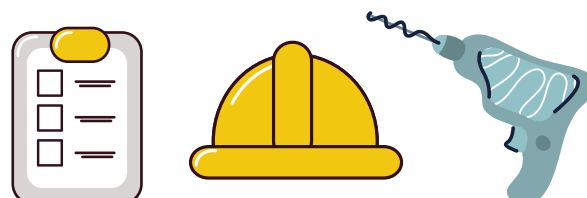
To help support people who live in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic the Department for Communities has put in place additional short-term financial support for living expenses, through the COVID-19 grant. This grant is for people whose income has been affected by COVID-19, such as the need to self-isolate, full criteria can be found at Finance Support on NI Direct.

A further support mechanism already in place is the Universal Credit Contingency Fund. This is for people claiming Universal Credit for the first time and so have a five week wait for payment. Therefore, you can apply for living expenses from the Universal Credit Contingency Fund, which is a grant to cover the five weeks wait, full criteria can be found at Finance Support on NI Direct.

Furthermore, Discretionary Support continues to be available for those who are experiencing financial difficulties within a crisis situation, which can involve a grant or loan. For the above you can apply online at NI Direct in relation to Discretionary Support at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/finance-support-service-times-crisis-and-need> or by phone and/or further information on 0800 587 2750.

Added to these, financial support continues to be available in the following forms; short term benefit advances, social fund budgeting loans or sure start maternity grants, which can be accessed through forms at local benefits offices when these reopen or printed off online. Please access further information at NI Direct Finance Support Service.

## Repairs



At the present time we are carrying out repairs that are an emergency, of a health and safety nature, external repairs and works to vacant properties. We will also continue to carry out essential servicing where necessary.

Should a contractor be scheduled to attend your home they will carry out a risk assessment. Social distancing rules should be employed at all times.

We would ask you to advise if anyone in your household is self-isolating. We need to ensure both our contractors and tenants are safe and make every attempt to minimise the spread of the virus.

If you are unable to allow access for either shielding or self-isolation reasons, please advise our contractors at the earliest opportunity and we will seek to make alternative arrangements.

All other repairs can still be reported by calling us on 028 90 592 110. A staff member will advise you if the repair is considered an emergency or of a health and safety nature. If it is not, your repair will be logged for completion when it is safe to attend to.

A Freephone Helpline has been established to assist those in vulnerable groups to access information, advice and support in relation to COVID-19. The Helpline, which is managed by Advice NI, is open 9am to 5pm, 7 days per week, the number is 0808 802 0020. Alternatively you can text ACTION to 81025, email: Covid19@adviceni.net or complete a form on the Advice NI website

We all have a role to play in preventing the spread of the virus. We encourage everyone to follow Public Health guidelines, stay at home, wash your hands and practice social distancing. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our tenants for bearing with us during the pandemic and encourage anyone to get in touch for support and advice, we are here to help!

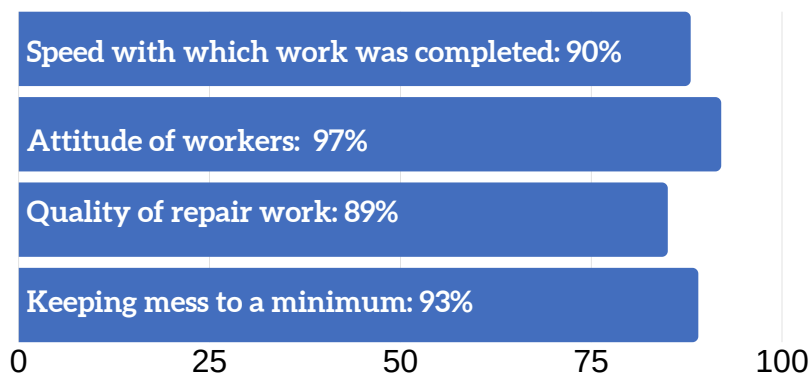
# Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results

Thanks to all NB Housing tenants and residents who returned their completed Tenant Satisfaction Surveys in 2020. NB Housing values feedback from our tenants on the services we provide.

Our 2019/20 survey has demonstrated high satisfaction levels across all our services. A total of 138 tenants responded to the surveys which represents a 14% return. We seek to continually engage with our tenants to ensure that they are kept informed of our services and that their views are taken into account.

Whilst the satisfaction levels are very positive, your responses will also give us an opportunity to make improvements in certain areas that were not as positive. We welcome any ideas you may have to help us improve our services and encourage tenants to make suggestions by contacting us by phone, letter or by email ([info@nb-housing.org](mailto:info@nb-housing.org)). Alternatively, you can use the comments leaflet which can be downloaded from our website [www.nb-housing.org](http://www.nb-housing.org).

## Contractor Performance



93% of tenants surveyed were satisfied with the overall service provided by NB Housing

88% of tenants surveyed were satisfied with their area/ location

84% of tenants surveyed were satisfied with their accommodation

100% of Foyer residents surveyed were satisfied with the overall support service provided by the Foyer

93% of tenants surveyed were satisfied that their views are taken into account

96% of tenants surveyed were satisfied that NB Housing keeps them informed

# Advice from our Maintenance Team

## Response Maintenance

Due to COVID-19, NB Housing are only carrying out emergency repair orders to your home. We would ask that repairs are reported either by telephone (028 9035 1131) or email ([repairs@nb-housing.org](mailto:repairs@nb-housing.org)). If reporting by email please include photographs if possible.

**Emergency repairs** are matters 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.

When contacting NB Housing please ensure that you advise the Maintenance Team of any health and safety issues regarding COVID-19 and if you or others in your household are self-isolating under guidance from your GP.

NB Housing will be closely monitoring government guidance on COVID-19 and we hope that non-emergency remedial repairs will start to be issued by the Association to our contractors.

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

## Responsive Repairs Performance

During the recent 2019/2020 financial year, we are pleased to confirm our Contractors performance on priority categories was:

Repair Category	% On time	% Late
Emergencies	98%	2%
Urgent	93%	7%
Routine	85%	15%

**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. i.e. broken-down boiler with no heat or hot water.

**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. i.e. leak at a radiator.

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



General Conditions of Tenancy  
2017 Edition

**Our Tenants Handbook** sets out a number of repairs which NB Housing carry out along with a number of items that are deemed to be **Tenants Responsibility**; please refer to Pages 13-15 for these lists. If you do not have a copy of the handbook please contact our office for a copy to be posted out or visit our website to download a digital copy.



## Planned Maintenance

NB Housing invested over £1.2 million in planned improvements during the past year. Below are some images of recently completed planned maintenance work

"All of the workers were very courteous, polite and went out of their way to be helpful; I am more than satisfied with the completed work"



Due to COVID-19 the majority of our Planned Maintenance work has been suspended. We have commenced external maintenance works to properties which have passed COVID-19 risk assessments. We are planning with our contractor to have suspended projects back under way once lockdown restrictions are reviewed by the NI Executive.

### 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.

### Respect Our Staff

When dealing with our staff or contractors we would ask that you treat them with respect and dignity. Our Staff and Contractors are dedicated to ensure our high level of service standards to all our tenants. NB Housing staff members treat all our tenants with upmost respect and we would ask for the same back.

## • Advice from the Consumer Council •

### Use The Consumer Council's free online budgeting tool to review your finances

If you are looking to take control of your spending or identify areas where you can potentially save money on your household bills, The Consumer Council's free online budgeting tool can help.

It can give you a report that allows you to easily review your spending, allowing you to see where your money is going.

The tool shows you what typical households in Northern Ireland are spending in areas such as energy, food and travel costs. This allows you to see how your household spending compares against other households. It also provides access to other sources of information and help.

There is no need to enter any sensitive personal or banking information, as our budgeting tool is straightforward to use and only requires you to enter your income and outgoings.

To use The Consumer Council's free online budgeting tool please visit:  
[budgettool.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://budgettool.consumercouncil.org.uk)

#### Notes to editors

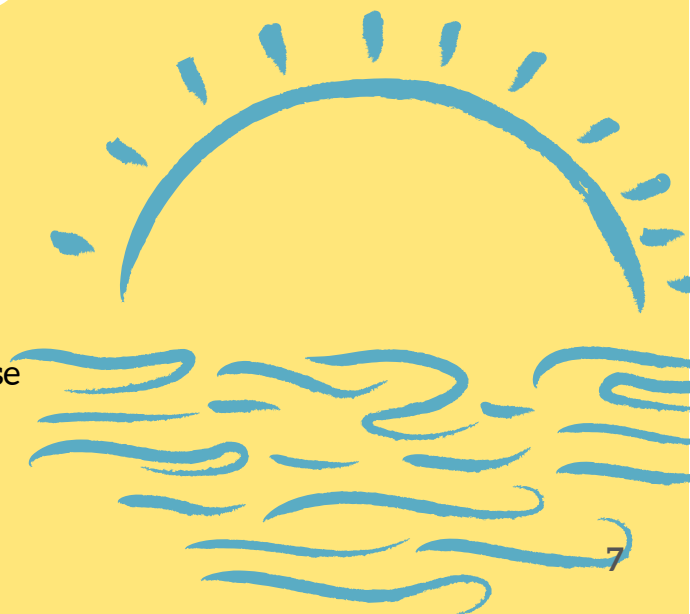
1. Consumer Council Media Contact: Matthew Stevenson 028 9025 1827  
[matthew.stevenson@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:matthew.stevenson@consumercouncil.org.uk)
2. The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation, working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland's consumers. The Council campaigns for high standards of service and protection and a fair deal for all. It also carries out research, gives advice and publishes reports and other publications. It deals with individual complaints about transport, natural gas, electricity, coal, postal services and water.
3. For more information, visit [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk) or Facebook /The-Consumer-Council-Northern-Ireland or Twitter @ConsumerCouncil

## Summer Office Closures

Our offices will be closed on the following days:

- Monday 13th July 2020 & Tuesday 14th July 2020
- Monday 31st August 2020

In the event of an out of hours emergency repair, please call Radius Connect24 on 0800 7313081



### **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**

- 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