



NB Housing Tenants Newsletter





Issue 12
Autumn Edition
2017

Community Clean-Up Day



On 27th July we held a community clean up day in Prospect Park! 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 Spring/Summer 2018.

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. If you have any ideas as to how to get more of our tenants involved then please let us know.

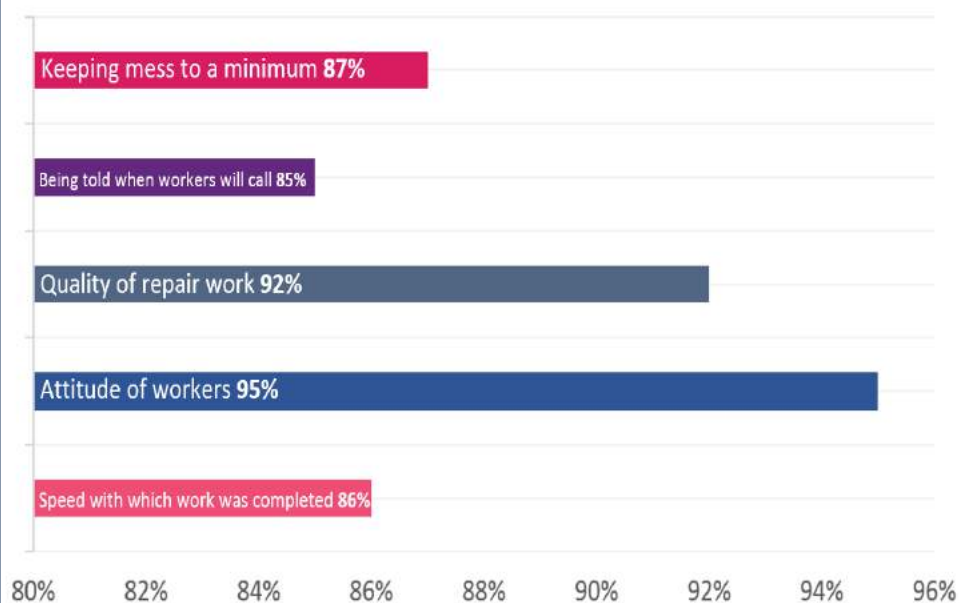
If you would like further information on **Tenant Participation** or would like to get involved please contact us on 02890592110 (Gatelodge Office) and 02890351131 (Crumlin Road Office). Or why not text us on 07498202221 or send an email to info@nb-housing.org



Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results 2017

Thanks to all NB Housing tenants and residents who returned their completed Tenant Satisfaction Surveys and tenants who responded to our Telephone Surveys in 2017. NB Housing values feedback from our tenants on the services we provide. Our 2016/17 survey has demonstrated high satisfaction levels across all our services. A total of 171 tenants responded to the surveys, representing a 19% 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.

Repair Satisfaction Levels



Whilst the above 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). Alternatively, you can use the comments leaflet which can be downloaded from our website www.nb-housing.org.

85% of tenants surveyed said that they were satisfied that their views are taken into account

88% of tenants surveyed said that they were satisfied that NB Housing was keeping them informed

89% of tenants surveyed said that they were satisfied with the helpfulness of staff

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

89% of tenants surveyed said that they were satisfied with the helpfulness of staff

79% of tenants said that they were satisfied that rent represents good value for money

92% of respondents are likely to recommend NB Housing to their friends or family

89% of tenants surveyed said that they were satisfied with the overall service that NB Housing provides



Lets Keep on Supporting People

About Supporting People

Supporting People (SP) is a flagship Government programme that helps more than 20,000 people in Northern Ireland each year to live independently and helps prevent problems that can result in hospitalisation, institutional care or homelessness. Supporting People provides a crucial safety net to vulnerable and marginalised people in Northern Ireland.



Challenges Ahead

Supporting People schemes face a very real financial challenge and an uncertain future. Funding for Supporting People has been frozen for 10 years, a 'real terms' cut of over 20%. More worryingly, over the summer, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive informed Supporting People providers that the annual funding allocation would be reduced by five percent.

22nd September 2017

On the 22nd September NB Housing took part in the Supporting People Campaign to highlight how important the Supporting People funding is and how we at NB Housing, use this funding. NB Housings Supported and Sheltered schemes receive this funding (Flax Foyer, Holyrood House and McCorry House) and our Joint Management Partners (Rosemount House and Thorndale Family Centre) also receive this funding. NB Housing are able to use the funding to provide services and support to our tenants and residents. The event was very well attended and provided an opportunity for local MLAs and Councillors to meet our residents and hear about how we use the Supporting People funding to assist with our services!





Two of our female residents from the **Flax Foyer** attended the **Homeless World Cup** in Norway last month playing in the NI woman's team for the first time. They played very well coming 8th and 16th in two competitions. They will also be playing in the Six Nations in Wales in October. This competition has helped our young people increase their self-esteem and confidence whilst also improving their physical health. It is a very successful competition which NB Housing supports.



Find out more about Flax Foyer !

We provide supported accommodation for young people aged 18-25 who are homeless.

If you are interested in this service, please contact us for more information or if you have a friend who does not know about this service, please share.

You can contact us on 02890593301, email us at info@nb-housing.org or find out more on our website: <http://www.nb-housing.org/flax-foyer-help-for-young-people>

Welfare Changes: The Introduction to Universal Credit

Universal Credit went live in Northern Ireland on the 27th September 2017 and will be rolled out in Belfast in June 2018 for new claimants, with other benefit claimants being naturally migrated over from July 2019 to March 2022. Universal Credit is for working aged people on a low income or out of work. Universal Credit can be paid fortnightly or monthly.

Universal Credit will replace a number of existing benefits including; income support, income related jobseekers allowance, child and working tax credits, income related employment support allowance and housing benefit.

It is important that everyone who will be affected by the new welfare changes prepares for the Universal Credit online application and finds out in advance the measures they need to take to ensure they are Universal Credit ready.

As part of the Universal Credit claiming process it is important to have an email address, photographic identification as well as details on income, savings, tenancy agreements and a bank account in place, as this information will form part of your application.

Universal Credit will ask all claimants to sign up to the Claimant Commitment and it is vital that claimants understand what this means for them, and how can they ensure they meet this commitment in order to maintain their benefits.

All Universal Credits claimants need to make and maintain their claims online.

North Belfast Advice Partnership will be delivering a number of Universal Credit workshops to help people prepare for the changeover and to ensure they are ready for their online application.

To book a place on a workshop please telephone Ligoniel Improvement Association 028 90391225.

Date	Time	Location
8/11/17	10.30am-12.30pm	Northside Family Support Programme, 183 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 3QF
10/11/17	10.30am-12.30pm	The HUBB, 30 St Aubyn Street, Belfast BT15 3QF
17/11/17	10am-12pm	Ligoneil Improvement Association, 148 Ligoneil Road, Belfast

The Workshop will cover the following areas of Universal Credit:

- How to prepare for UC claim
- UC online application
- Online account and journal
- Payments
- Housing impact
- Workability
- Reporting changes
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults



Do you need Welfare Reform Advice?



Help is available through face to face advice or by telephone from your local Citizens Advice or Advice NI independent advice centre.

Call our free independent welfare changes helpline Monday - Friday 9am to 5pm.

0808 802 0020
welfarechanges@adviceni.net



Advice from our Maintenance Team

Repair Reporting

You may report a repair either in person, by telephone, email or in writing. When contacting NB Housing, please ask to be put through to the Maintenance Department. During this interaction the Maintenance Team will ask for information on the defect and will require a contact telephone number for contractor access arrangements.

NB Housing endeavour that repairs are completed as soon as possible; however, we will prioritise the repair into 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 Housing employs Fold Telecare to deal with out-of-hours emergency repairs. You may contact them on **Freephone 0800 731 3081** to report your repair at any time when the office is not opened including weekends and bank holidays.

Below are some typical repairs that are tenants' responsibility:

- Replacement of lost/broken door keys
- Care and upkeep of gardens and hedges
- Replacement of bins and rotary dryers
- Clearing airlocks in pipes and radiators
- Replacement of broken glass
- Replacement of toilet seats and lids
- Repairs to electrical appliances, fires and heaters not installed by NB Housing
- Replacement of defective/blown light bulbs

Gas & Oil Boiler Servicing



Since the start of April 2017 NB Housing contractors have completed over 550 boiler services to gas/oil boilers within our stock. It is vital that all tenants provide access to NB Housing contractors to enable work orders to be completed. Boiler Servicing is a legal requirement and NB Housing has a zero tolerance on servicing not being carried out.

If failure to do so NB Housing may recharge for this aborted call out and if this access issue continues then possible capping of services or legal action could take place to take possession of the property. If you are unable to facilitate a contractor attending, contact NB Housing so alternative arrangements can be made.

Alterations

You should not make any alteration without requesting NB Housing's written permission. Failure to do so may result in NB Housing asking for works to be put back to original state and recharges may be involved. If you are unsure if permission is required contact NB Housing and speak to a member of the Maintenance Team.

Contents Insurance

NB Housing shall maintain the structural insurance on your home. We strongly recommend that all tenants insure their contents against loss, theft and damage. NB Housing is not responsible for any item(s) belonging to the tenant that may be damaged or destroyed as a result of unforeseen circumstances. Please ensure that your insurance covers broken glass as NB Housing is not responsible for replacement glazing regardless of the cause.

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 area of your property. Failure to do so may be deemed a breach of your tenancy.

Planned Maintenance

Since the start of the current financial year (April 2017), NB Housing has spent over £700,000 on Planned Maintenance projects.



Replacement kitchens to 70+ properties which has been very successful and highly praised by our tenants

"I am very pleased with my new kitchen"



"I love my new kitchen"



"The kitchen is now my favourite room in the house"



Redecoration of external elements which included: doors, railings, fencing, fascias, soffits & rendering to over 200+ properties across our stock. Additionally, McCorry House internal communal areas received a decoration make over.



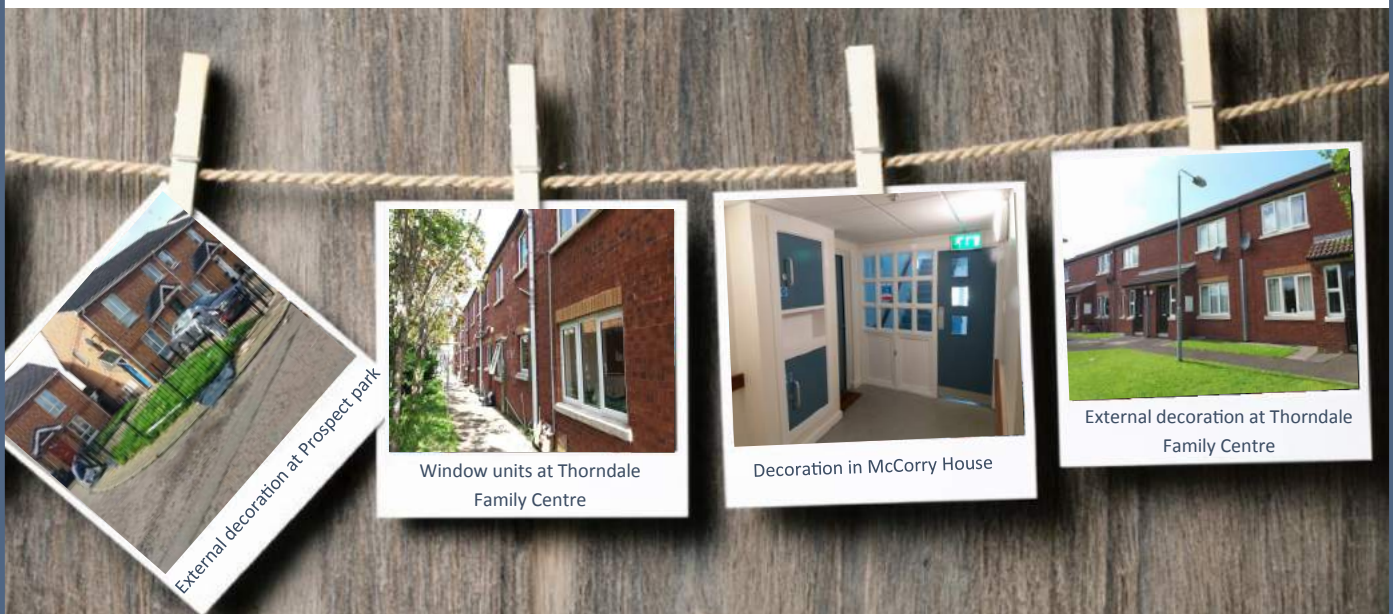
Under partnership with the Salvation Army works took place to Rowan Houses at Thorndale Family Centre which included window units and external decoration.



Replacement boilers to more efficient and economical gas units to over 30 properties so far. The project will incorporate 20+ oil to gas conversions in the new year



Prior to the Financial Year ending in March 2018 we hope to have completed more Planned Maintenance which will include external door replacements and soffit/facia replacements. Future consultations will take place with tenants that have been selected for these replacements



Budgeting for Christmas

Advice from the Consumer Council

For many people, Christmas is a special time of year, but with the cost of presents and food shopping, it can also be a financially stressful time.

In recent research published by The Consumer Council, 16% of Northern Ireland consumers named the cost of Christmas in the top 3 things they worry about in their household.



Top tips to help save money this Christmas

Below are some tips to help you manage your money and make savings.

1. Make a list of what you need and who you need to buy for
2. Make a realistic budget – and stick to it
3. Start shopping early to spread your spending
4. Shop around and compare prices
5. Get receipts for everything and keep them safe in case you need to return a purchase
6. If buying online, make sure you are buying from a reputable website to avoid scams. See our guide for more information: www.consumercouncil.org.uk/publications/online-shopping-tips/
7. Cash in your gift vouchers (one in four are not used)
8. Do not shop for Christmas food when you are hungry
9. If you have anything left over after Christmas, why not buy next year's cards and wrapping paper in the New Year sales?
10. If you do get into debt, pay it off as early as you can

Get the gift of a handy budgeting tool to help you manage Christmas spending

Setting and keeping to a fixed budget can ease your worries and will reduce financial strains that can last well into the New Year. To help you stay within your budget, The Consumer Council has put together a Christmas budget planner. The planner will help you plan your budget for gift and food shopping.

The Consumer Council's Christmas gift

To download a free copy of the planner, visit www.consumercouncil.org.uk/publications/Christmas-Budget-Planner/.

Alternatively, call The Consumer Council on 0800 121 6022 to request a copy.





Tenancy Fraud

What is it?

Every year in Northern Ireland, people on the waiting list are being denied a home because someone is being dishonest about their housing needs. Tenancy fraud is where a social home (either Housing Executive or Housing Association) is occupied by someone who is not entitled to be there.



Tenancy fraud can take several forms:

- Abandonment of the property and living elsewhere
- Succeeding a tenancy, often on the death of a tenant, by falsely claiming to have been living there for some time
- Providing misleading information on an application to purchase the property
- Not telling the truth when applying for a home and or falsely claiming to be homeless
- When a tenant rents their home to another person without our knowledge or permission (sub-letting)
- When a tenant leaves their home empty without informing us



What happens when someone commits tenancy fraud?

- They are likely to lose their tenancy and may not be entitled to apply for social housing in the future
- Depending on how serious the fraud is, they could be fined and or sent to prison
- They are preventing someone who may be in greater need of housing from getting offered a home



What is NB Housing doing to combat Tenancy Fraud?

- Requesting photographic ID of tenants before signing the tenancy agreement
- Completing early home visits 6 weeks into their tenancy. ID is checked again at this visit
- Carrying out unannounced tenancy visits
- Housing Officers investigate any tenants who have not allowed access for essential servicing e.g. gas boiler servicing
- Investigate all reports of tenancy fraud
- Take legal action which can result in NB Housing regaining possession of the property



Do you suspect that someone is committing Tenancy Fraud?

Please contact us for further information

(Contact details are available on the last page of the newsletter)

Kids Corner!

With Halloween right around the corner, we thought that we would put your colouring skills to the test! Why not colour in the picture, return to our offices (Gatelodge or Crumlin Road) and we'll put the returned entries on our Facebook and Twitter pages! Happy colouring!



Name: _____

Age: _____

Useful Information...

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

Useful Numbers & Websites



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

Recycling Centres (Do not accept commercial waste)

- | | |
|--|---|
| → Alexandra Park Avenue
180 Alexandra Park Avenue, BT15 3GJ | → Ormeau
6 Park Road
BT7 2FX |
| → Blackstaff Way
1 Blackstaff Way
BT11 9DT | → 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

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**

You will not be charged for their advice and any information that you give or receive is treated in the strictest confidence.

Gatelodge Office

8 Flax Street
Belfast
BT 14 7EQ
Tel: 02890592110



Crumlin Road Office

282-290 Crumlin Road
Belfast
BT14 7ED
Tel: 02890351131

Did you know you can contact us through the 'Getting in Touch' tab on our website (www.nb-housing.org), can contact us via email: info@nb-housing.org or can text us on 07498202221

