

NB Housing Issue Summ Tenants Newsletter 2017

Issue 11
Summer Edition
2017

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2017

Enclosed you will find your Tenants Satisfaction Survey. This is your opportunity to voice your opinion and views on the services NB Housing offers. It will assist us to make improvement where necessary and therefore it is important we get your feedback. Should you require any assistance in completing the form please let us know and a staff member can arrange a visit. As a thank you for returning the survey with your comments before 17th July 2017 you will be entered into a free prize draw! The lucky winners will receive £100 (1st prize), £50 (2nd prize), £25 (3rd prize).



Tenant Participation: Lets Get Involved!

Community engagement is also part of tenant participation and we recently held a number of tenant participation events . NB Housing is keen to set up a group of interested tenants who want to make a difference to the areas in which they live. This could include;



Community clean up schemes



Estate walkabouts where you can accompany us on inspections



Tenant satisfaction surveys, like the one included in this Newsletter



Mystery Shopper



Policies & procedure reviews

Whatever way you want to get involved please speak to your Housing Officer. Or 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

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July Office Closure

NB Housing will be closed on Wednesday 12th July-Thursday 13th July.

We re-open on Friday 14th July.

In the event of an out of hours emergency repair, please call Fold Telecare

on 08007313081

Introduction of Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new payment for working aged people, aged 18 to 64, who are on a low income or out of work. It will be introduced in Northern Ireland on a phased geographical basis from September 2017.

Universal Credit will help make sure you are better off in work than on benefits and give you the help you need to prepare for work, start work or earn more money. It will include support for the cost of housing, children and childcare, as well as financial support for disabled people, carers and people who are too ill to work.

It will remain your responsibility to do everything you can to find work or increase your earnings.

Benefits being replaced by Universal Credit

- Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income-related)
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credits
- Working Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit (rental)

Benefits not being replaced by Universal Credit

- Jobseeker's Allowance (contribution-based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (contribution-based)
- Child Benefit
- Pension Credit
- Carer's Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Who can get Universal Credit?

To get Universal Credit in Northern Ireland you must:

- be living in Northern Ireland
- be 18 years of age or over
- be under State Pension age
- not be in full-time education
- not have savings or capital over £16,000

When will Universal Credit be introduced?

Universal Credit will be introduced for new claims on a phased geographical basis from September 2017 to September 2018.



Details of when it will be rolled out in the Belfast area are set out below:

28 May 2018	Knockbreda, Newtownabbey and Shankill
11 June 2018	Corporation Street, Falls and Andersonstown
25 June 2018	Shaftesbury Square, Lisburn and Larne

Getting ready for Universal Credit

If you currently receive benefits or credits that are being replaced by Universal Credit, the Department for Communities will contact you to guide you through the steps you need to take when your claim is ready to move to Universal Credit. You will claim Universal Credit online, so you will need access to a computer. Should you not have access to a computer or not know how to use one then please contact us at NB Housing.

Work Allowance

Unlike the current system, benefits will not suddenly be removed if you start work. A certain amount can be earned before a Universal Credit payment is reduced. This is known as your Work Allowance. For any money you earn over your Work Allowance, your Universal Credit will be gradually reduced. This allows you to take temporary or seasonal jobs without making a new claim or having gaps between paydays as you move in and out of work.

Universal Credit Payments

Universal Credit will be paid twice a month to a household, however you can request a monthly payment. A household could be a single person, a couple or a family. If you are part of a couple you may request a split payment into separate bank accounts.

If your Universal Credit claim is successful, you will get your first payment between five and six weeks after you make your claim.

You can find details of how payments are worked out by visiting nidirect.gov.uk

Rate rebate scheme

Rates are presently paid by Housing Benefit, when Universal Credit starts this will be replaced by the Department of Finance Rate Rebate Scheme.

NB Housing would greatly appreciate it if you could inform us of any notification or letters you get regarding Universal Credit or change in benefits. This will help us to help you avoid getting into rent arrears.

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The **biggest** and **best** way to swap your home!

If you have spare bedrooms in your house then you will have been receiving less Housing Benefit and a supplementary payment in its place. This is known as the bedroom tax and some of you may wish to consider trying to reduce the amount of bedrooms you have spare. The supplementary payment runs out in March 2020 and you will have to pay the bedroom tax yourself from this date. You can register with www.homeswapper.co.uk as many of our tenants have already done so. This means you can swap with people from any social landlord such as another housing association or NIHE tenant.

Please do not swap with anyone without NB Housing approval.

NB Housing may not approve a swap where for example, there are rent arrears or if the tenant is in breach of their tenancy agreement.

Top Tips for HomeSwapper

1 Re honest

When filling out details of your current home, BE HONEST! It will save you and other swappers a lot of time in the long run if your advert is an honest and realistic portrayal of the property.

2. Add photos

90% of successful swaps last year had at least one photo of the home— if you're serious about swapping, add a photo. It shows you're keen and it helps screen out people who won't be interested. Try to show your home at its best though—nobody wants to see a close up of dirty dishes in the sink or a blurry image of the fence (both real photos seen on HomeSwapper!)

Ask yourself "what does this show someone who has never seen this room before." Hold the camera in the corner of the room to try and get as much as you can in the picture. If you're worried for any reason about your home being identified, upload photos of the inside or a garden, and make sure you use the description box (tenant comments) to add information about the outside of your home.

3. Add extra info

When filling in your home details there is an additional text box. Use this to describe your surroundings to sell the location as well as the property.

- Do you have nice neighbours?
- Do you have any extra space? E.g. Shed, Garage,
 Parking Space
- Do you have any close transport links? E.g. Bus stops,
 train stations

- Do you have any local facilities? Church, school, shops, gym, playground
- Are pets allowed in your property?

4. Re realistic

Be realistic about what you are swapping from and to and make sure you read the other tenant's requirements before contacting them. Look for what you need in a property rather than what you want. Consider the bedroom tax and the extra costs you might be able to avoid and think about the potential with a lick of paint.

5. Be flexible if you can

No matches? This is usually because you've made your search area too small. If you set up one location within 0.1miles, we can only show you homes on that particular street and they may not come up very often. Check your current account too—lots of people have the rent they're prepared to pay at £125/month. Also, remember you might have to be patient as we can only provide you with properties in that area if they are on the site.

Are you receiving matches for somewhere you don't want to live? This is usually because you've added a location and then a large search radius around it. Even if you've specified the areas you're happy to live in the comments, the system doesn't know this and will show you everything within the search radius you've indicated. If you want to be more specific, try adding more locations but with a smaller radius around them. HomeSwapper let you go as small as 0.1 miles which is a street. Be aware though that this will reduce the matches you get and sometimes it's worth being flexible.

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Recycling is Easy: Advice from Belfast City Council

Many tenants in the city worry about their recycling and if they are doing it right. At first it can seem complicated, but really it's quite simple.

Depending on where you live, you will either have recycling bins or recycling boxes. If you live in an apartment, you might share your recycling with other residents in the building. There are a few differences in what materials can be recycled in bins compared to boxes.

We recently ran a campaign to encourage all residents to start recycling their food waste. All houses should have either a brown bin or a small green food bin to allow you to recycle your food.

Not all apartment buildings have a food waste collection yet, but we are working on this. There is a special apartment's team focused on getting food collections into apartment blocks. If you live in an apartment and do not have a food waste collection don't worry. There will be no checking for food waste in your black bins until you have a food waste collection.

It is very important that everyone plays their part. Where people don't recycle, the general waste bins can become overfilled and this can lead to other problems. Recycling is also much cheaper than sending waste to landfill and as much of the material is

If you have Recycling Bins

Recycling Bin	Compost Bin		
Paper (no wallpaper)	Food waste		
Dry cardboard	Grass cuttings		
Aerosol cans	Plants & flowers		
Plastic bottles	Leave, twigs & small branches		
Food & drink cans	Hedge trimmings		
Food & drink cartons e.g. milk or juice	Shredded paper		
Clean aluminium foil & foil dishes	Takeaway pizza boxes (torn up)		
Magazines/ catalogues	Cold ashes		
Biscuit tins	Teabags & coffee grounds		
Soft back books	Egg shells		
Toilet roll tubes	Fruit & vegetable peelings		
Cardboard food boxes (such as cereal boxes)	Bones		
Plastic pots, tubs & trays (such as yoghurt pots, ice-cream tubs and fruit punnets			

If you have Recycling Boxes

If you live in an apartment, you may have shared box stands. Boxes in the stand are labelled to show what material goes in each box.

Black recycling box	Red recycling box	Green food waste bin
Paper (no wallpaper)	Cardboard	Meat, fish & cheese
Plastic bottles	Glass bottles & jars	Fruit & veg
Plastic pots, tubs, trays (such as yoghurt pots, ice-cream tubs and fruit punnets)	Textiles*	Bread, cakes and pastries
Food & drink tins	Batteries*	Rice, beans & pasta
Aerosols	Hand tools	Teabags & coffee grounds
Clean aluminium foil*		Potato & vegetable peelings
Food & drink cartons e.g. milk or juice		Any other leftover food

^{*}Please put in a separate bag.

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"We are a values-based organisation and believe in our values that support the way that we build homes and communities."

At NB Housing our values shape our behaviour, how we work and how we interact with our tenants. We ensure that our tenants are treated with respect and do our upmost to work co-operatively with others.

OUR VALUES:

Leadership

We will demonstrate our leadership through the excellence of our housing and services, and the professionalism of our team.

Aspiration

We encourage the aspirations of our employees in their own personal and professional development. In the same manner we encourage communities to aspire to better standards of housing and regeneration.

Personal

We build homes not houses. We consider the needs of families, individuals, and the community before anything else in our developments.

Esteem

We value more than the physical regeneration of housing stock, but the restoration of esteem that people have for themselves, for their home, and for their community.

Community/ Togetherness

We will listen to and respect each other working together to achieve a vibrant and prosperous community. We act collectively as one team to support one another, working co-operatively, respecting each other's views, and making our work environment enjoyable.

Integrity

We will be accountable and transparent to our customers, respectful of our tenants, and proud of our service delivery.

Community Meeting Attendance

NB Housing attends community meetings where we can speak out against issues that matter to our tenants such as anti-social behaviour, drugs, litter, and dog fouling. These meetings are well attended by local political representatives, community workers, housing associations, NIHE, PSNI, Community Restorative Justice, Belfast City Council and others. We aim to work together to solve community issues.

We attend the Upper North
Inter-Agency Meeting held
fortnightly across rotating venues
such as Ardoyne Community
Centre, Wolfhill Centre at Ligoneil
and the Sacred Heart Parochial Hall
on the Oldpark Road.

We also attend the PACT (partners and community together) meetings in the Lower Shankill Community Centre held on the last Thursday of every month. This is also a very well attended meeting with a similar list of attendees as the Upper North meeting concerning the Shankill area.

If you have any community issues you want to raise then please contact us.





Flax Foyer currently have vacancies!

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.

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Advice from our Maintenance Team

Repair Reporting

You may report a repair either in person, by telephone, by fax, email or in writing. When contacting NB Housing, please ask to be put through to the Maintenance Department. If necessary, NB Housing may contact you for further repair information and access arrangements.

NB Housing tries to ensure 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 the Association
- Replacement of defective/ blown light bulbs

Annual Gas Boiler Servicing



It is a legal requirement for a landlord to complete an annual service to a gas boiler or appliance to ensure it is working safely. In order to fulfil this legal duty, the association will no longer accept tenants failure to grant access to its workmen to facilitate this work. With immediate effect, NB Housing shall be implementing a recharge policy to recover all costs properly incurred in attempting to get access. Where access is not obtained after three attempts NB Housing shall disconnect the gas supply and consider legal action to recover the property.

We hope that tenants work with us so that a valid service can be completed and the tenant will benefit from the comfort that their boiler is working safely and efficiently.



Crime Prevention



Please remember to keep all doors and windows locked which may provide access to intruders. If you live in an apartment building, 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 any member of the NB Housing 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 930 properties is kept up to stringent standards and we ask tenants to respect timescales as to when works can be completed.

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A recent **Stock Condition Survey** has been completed and we shall be reviewing the data provided to enable planning of future Major projects to our stock. Works shall be a continuous process over the forthcoming years.



A photo of our recent kitchen replacements

Currently NB Housing has a number of Planned/Cyclical Maintenance projects on site which include:

- → External decoration of over 200 properties
- → Replacement of kitchens to over 70 properties
- → Future consultations shall be taking place with tenants for proposed external door replacement scheme to over 30 properties along with fascia/soffit upgrade to over 20 properties.

Access for Contractors



It is vital that all tenants provide access to NB Housing contractors (in particular annual Gas Boiler Servicing) to enable work orders to be completed. If failure to do so NB Housing may recharge the tenant and if no access continues then possible capping of services or legal action could take place to take possession of the property could occur. If you are unable to facilitate a contractor attending contact the Maintenance Team on 028 9035 1131 so alternative arrangements can be made.



Stay Gas Safe this summer: Advice from Gas Safe Register



With 52% of Brits planning to barbecue on average five times for family and friends this summer, we're looking to ensure that the public are aware of the symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

Recent research has found that carbon monoxide dangers are a long way down in the priorities of most people, with 80% not identifying CO poisoning as a potential danger when barbecuing. This compares badly to other highly regarded dangers, such as food poisoning (67%), burns (51%) and drunken accidents (27%). Even worries about damaging the garden and plants were only just behind CO concerns on 19%.

CO is known as the 'silent killer' as it can kill quickly and without warning— it has no taste, colour or smell. It is a by-product of gas and charcoal barbecues burning and can pose great risk to health if it builds up in enclosed spaces. Don't ever be tempted to bring a barbecue inside with you, even if it's cooling down— they can give off CO for several hours after cooking. Always leave it outdoors, in a well-ventilated area.

Jonathan Samuel, chief executive of Gas Safe Register said:

"Barbecuing is one of the nation's favorite pastimes but it can also be dangerous and cause CO poisoning if not done correctly. It's important that barbecues are never brought into an enclosed space and that people are aware of CO poisoning symptoms."

Stay safe this summer by following our barbecue tips:

- → Never use a barbecue inside
- Don't take a smouldering or lit barbecue into a tent, caravan or cabin.
 Even if you've finished cooking, keep it outside.
- → Always ensure you can see your barbecue while lit and don't leave it lit whilst sleeping
- → Use your barbecue in accordance with the operating instructions. Find out further advice on barbecues and LPG at https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/ help-and-advice/lpg/
- Make sure you're aware of the signs of CO poisoning—headaches, nausea, breathless, dizziness, collapse and loss of consciousness.

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How to avoid scams

Advice from the Consumer Council

Nearly 1 in 5 consumers in Northern Ireland has been taken in by a scam in the last 3 years. The Consumer Council and NB Housing want to help tenants stay safe and avoid becoming victims of a scam.

What are the different methods and types of scams?

The most common method to scam consumers is by telephone, but you can also be targeted by post, email, doorstep sellers and charity collectors, and online scams.

Sadly we're seeing that scams are becoming more and more sophisticated but the aim remains the same – to take money from innocent members of the public.



How can you avoid scams?

The Consumer Council is part of the ScamwiseNI Partnership, an initiative established to raise awareness of scams in Northern Ireland. For more information visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/scamwiseni. The Consumer Council has produced, in conjunction with the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Trading Standards Service, 'Scams – Know the Sign ... Stop the Crime" - which provides information on the different types of scams, what to look out for and how to report them. You can download a copy from www.consumercouncil.org.uk/publications or contact The Consumer Council on 0800 121 6022 to request a copy.

Here are some pointers to alert you to a possible scam:

- → Your bank will never contact you to ask for your PIN or your password, or send a courier to your home to collect cash, your PIN, card or chequebook.
- Your bank will never ask you to transfer money to a new account because of suspected fraud on your account.
- → Never click on links in emails that take you to another website, it's better to enter a website address yourself into the internet browser.
- → If you haven't bought a lottery ticket you can't win it!
- → You should never have to ring a premium telephone number or send money to claim a prize, not even the cost of a stamp.
- → Telephone scammers will often ask you to call another number, but then stay on the line. Check the number is genuine and call a friend first to ensure the line is clear.
- → Genuine computer firms do not make spontaneous phone calls to help you fix your computer.
- → Use the "Quick Check Service" by calling 0800 013 2290 to see if doorstep callers are genuine.

What should you do if you have been caught out by a scam?

If you have been caught out by a scam or you think a friend of family member has been affected, contact Consumerline who can give advice and, if necessary, pass the matter onto the Trading Standards Service.

Consumerline

Telephone 0300 123 6262 Web <u>www.nidirect.gov.uk/consumerline</u>

Bogus callers should be reported to the PSNI; scams should be reported to Action Fraud.

PSNI

Telephone 101 (or 999 in an emergency) Web www.psni.police.uk

Action Fraud

Telephone 0300 123 2040 Web <u>www.actionfraud.police.uk/contact-us</u>

If you have any information about unknown doorstep callers, call **Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111**. Your call is free, you are not obliged to give your name, and you may receive a reward.

There are also useful websites with tips for protecting yourself and reducing unwanted mail and calls, including:

<u>www.consumercouncil.org.uk</u> has guides to download, including 'Guide to Shopping Safely Online' and 'Safer Ways to Pay'; <u>www.getsafeonline.org</u> has tips on how to protect yourself online;

<u>www.tpsonline.org.uk</u> is the Telephone Preference Service, a free service to get your number removed from unsolicited sales and marketing callers; and

<u>www.mpsonline.org.uk</u> is the Mailing Preference Service, a free service to get your address removed from lists used by direct mail companies.

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Protecting Our Community

If a fire occurs in your home you may have to get out in dark and difficult conditions. Escaping from a fire will be a lot easier if you have already planned your escape route and know where to go Involve everyone in the house
The normal way out is the preferred choice
Keep your escape route clear of obstructions
Protect your escape route by closing all doors into it, especially at night
Practice using the agreed plan
Select a safe meeting place outside
Make everyone aware of how to call the

Fire & Rescue Service.

If you are unable to use the normal way out, consider alternative routes: Rear doors Patio doors Windows

If you are cut off by fire, try to remain calm:

Close the door and use towels or sheets to block any gaps Try to make your way to the window

If the room becomes smoky, crawl along the floor Open the window and try to attract the attention of others If possible:
Close the door of the room where the fire is
Get everyone out as quickly as possible
Telephone Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue
Service on 999 from a neighbour's house
or mobile phone
Never go back into a house until a Fire
Officer has told you it is safe to do so

Make sure everyone is aware of these alternatives. If you discover a fire, or the smoke alarm sounds, you will only have a short time to get out.



Smoke alarms should be tested weekly



Smoking in your Homes: Never leave a lit cigarette or pipe unattended – it may fall onto an armchair or carpet which will soon catch fire and give off dense smoke and fumes. Never smoke in a chair if you think you may doze off. Never smoke in bed.



If you have consumed **alcohol**: Do not cook chips or fried food as you might fall asleep before you finish cooking. Take extra care if smoking. Do not smoke in bed or in a comfortable chair; it is too easy to fall asleep.



Electrics: Do not overload electric sockets or use multiple extension leads. If a socket is heat damaged, there is a fault; get an electrician to check it. Use the correct fuse. Only professional tradesmen should repair faulty electrical appliances or wiring.



Candles: Never leave a candle unattended. Use a suitable holder that will not allow heat to pass through. Do not place candles on plastic surfaces or leave near soft furnishings.



Chip Pans and Grill Pans: Use a thermostatically controlled chip pan. Never leave cooking unattended when the heat is switched on. Never fill a pan more than one third full of fat or oil. Keep your grill pan clean and never leave it unattended. If your pan does catch fire: Do not move it. Turn off the heat if safe to do so, but never lean over the pan. Never throw water on the fire. Get out, get the fire service out, and stay out.



Matches: Keep matches and lighters away from children so that they cannot play with them.



Clutter: If there is an unreasonable amount of papers, newspapers and magazines, the risk of a fire is increased. Take time to tidy and remove clutter to make your home safer. If any exit routes are blocked by stored items these should be cleared so that escape routes are not compromised.



Heaters: Do not dry clothes close to electric heaters. Gas heaters that use a naked flame are much more dangerous than oil-filled radiators. Replace these to improve safety.



Further information can be obtained from https://www.nifrs.org/fire-safety/fire-safety-check-form/home-fire-safety-check-form/

Kids Corner!

With Trolls being one of the most popular kid's movies in 2017, 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:

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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

NIHE:

03448 920 900

Phoenix Gas:

0845 455 5555

Power NI:

08457 455 455

Belfast City Council Pest Control

02890 270 431

Noise Control: 02890 373 006

Waste Management:

02890 270 657

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 BT7 2FX
- Blackstaff Way 1 Blackstaff Way BT11 9DT
- Ormeau 6 Park Road
- 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.nbhousing.org), can contact us via email: info@nb-housing.org or can text us on 07498202221