



# NB Housing

Homes that build community

## Tenants Newsletter

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### NB Housing Receives Gold Investors In People Accreditation

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Gold

Investors in People is delighted to award NB Housing, We invest in people, GOLD accreditation. Gold accreditation means that we've got the policies in place but more than that, it means everyone working at NB Housing takes ownership for making them come to life.

Only 16% of Investors in People accredited organisations achieve Gold. Paul Devoy, CEO of Investors in People, said: "We'd like to congratulate NB Housing. Gold accreditation in *We Invest In People* is a fantastic effort for any organisation, and places NB Housing in fine company with a host of organisations that understand the value of people."



Caroline Keenan-Jackson, Director of Housing & Corporate Services, said "We are all delighted to have achieved GOLD accreditation. We have demonstrated the value we see in our staff team and recognise that a culture of high performance through our people delivers excellent services to the tenants and communities we serve. The award has provided a wonderful sense of achievement to all our staff and we confidently move forward on our journey of continuous improvement."

*Merry Christmas from NB Housing!*

Our offices will close at 1pm on Monday 23rd December. Our offices will be closed on 24th December, 25th December, 26th December and 1st January 2020.

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



# Be Prepared For Winter

## *Advice from our Maintenance Team*

Below are some maintenance tips for the winter period:



### **Find your stopcock**

The stopcock is a valve for turning off and on the cold water system in your home. When you turn the stopcock in a clockwise direction the water supply will be cut off. You can turn the water supply back on by turning the stopcock in an anti-clockwise direction.




### **Prevent your pipes from freezing**

The following precautions will help stop the pipes in your home from freezing:

- Set your central heating to come on for short periods throughout the day to make sure the temperature in each room is reasonably high
- Lift the trap door slightly from the roof space to allow hot air from the main house to get into the loft
- Open the doors to the sink unit to allow warmer air to circulate round the pipes
- Allow warm air to circulate round the house by slightly opening the doors to the individual rooms
- If your home will be empty during the colder weather ask someone to go in and turn the heating on for a short time and check for frozen pipes or drain down the cold water tank

### **Dealing with frozen pipes**

- Most frozen pipes are found in the roof space and below sink units
  - Turn the water supply off at the stopcock
  - Thaw along the pipe starting from the end nearest the tap
  - Put hot water bottles or a thick cloth soaked in hot water over the frozen pipe
  - Don't use a blow lamp or any naked flames; this may cause damage to your pipes or lead to a fire in your home
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### **If you have a burst pipe**

- Turn off the water supply by turning the stopcock clockwise
- Try and block the escaping water with thick cloths like towels
- Drain the system
- If the water has come into contact with electrical fittings the electricity should be turned off at the mains

If you are unable to resolve any issues with freezing pipework then please contact our office on 028 9035 1131 or Radius Connect on 0800 731 3081 if our office is closed.



### **Weather Conditions & Limitations of Works**

During the winter period contractors may have limited access to external elements of the property. If this is the case, contractors will carry out temporary works to ensure the property is in a safe condition. Additional works will take place when weather conditions permit.


Access to properties may also be affected by weather conditions so appointments may be delayed if there are hazardous conditions on the roads etc. NB Housing can be contactable if you are concerned with any appointments being missed.

Due to staff holidays for NB Housing & Contractors some work loads of non-Emergency priorities may not be carried out until after the holiday period. NB Housing staff members will be able to discuss any concerns you may have by contacting the Crumlin Road office on 028 9035 1131.



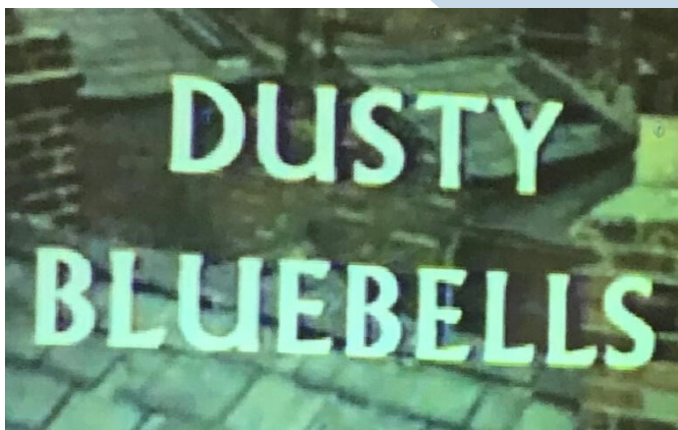
### **Waste Management**

It is vital that we all properly dispose of our waste appropriately over the Christmas period due to changes in collections to accommodate the holidays. Ensure all recyclable materials are separated and disposed into the correct bin/box. All other items should be disposed into the appropriate bins. See Belfast City Council (or local Council) website for some helpful tips/information.





## Digital Film in Holyrood House



Belfast Libraries came to Holyrood House on Monday 11th November and screened some old footage from their Digital Film Archives. It included film such as The Old Mills, and the Shipyard but our tenants really enjoyed The Family Life footage which included Dusty Bluebells and other street games. The tenants sang along and most of them remembered all of the songs and could remember playing the same games with their friends when they were young girls and boys. The tenants all went home with a smile on their faces and are looking forward to the Christmas edition on 16th December.

## Recycling in Holyrood House



Julie from Belfast City Council came to Holy Rood House and gave our tenants some useful tips on making recycling easier. She did this by doing a Bingo game, which we all loved!

## Tenant Training with the Red Cross



Patricia Lyons, the Community Development and Tenant Support Officer recently organised a training session on First Aid through the Red Cross. The course was delivered by Gary Nugent of the Red Cross, who put all the participants at ease and answered lots of questions. All participants gained certificates after completing the course.

The course gave great advice and instruction around CPR, choking, recovery position and when to use it, burns, broken bones and bleeding. First Aid is not only physically helping another, whether that be performing CPR but it can entail reassuring someone who is injured while awaiting an ambulance. The Red Cross have free apps that you can download onto your phone which provide information you when require if a first aid situation develops: there is a specific app for helping children.

There will be further training and workshops with tenant participation meetings in the New Year organised by Patricia, which will be advertised on our Facebook page and in the both offices. If you wish to contact Patricia please phone 028 90 592110.

## Bedroom Tax Payments & Benefit Cap Mitigation Payments are stopping!

Bedroom Tax supplementary payments and Benefits Cap supplementary payments are coming to an end on the 31/03/2020. On 1st April 2020, you will be required to make up any shortfall in your housing costs.

Our Housing Team will be contacting all of our tenants affected by this upcoming change. As there are exceptions to both the bedroom tax and benefit cap it's important to seek advice and information. Furthermore, you may wish to contact your Housing Officer on 02890592110 about transfers or swaps to reduce any liability.



# Rubbish and Waste Disposal

We receive many complaints about rubbish disposal so here is a guide to help you know how to dispose of your rubbish in the correct way. Disposing of your rubbish in the correct way keeps living areas clean and tidy which minimises the opportunity for vermin.

As a tenant of the association you are reminded to:

- Deposit recycling into the receptacles provided. Proper separation of recycling items will free up space in the large Eurobins/ domestic bins for other waste (information on recycling is included below)
- Ensure any black bin bags are tied up securely and deposited in the Eurobins/your domestic bin provided
- Bin bags are not to be left on the ground of the bin area, this poses a health and safety risk for all tenants and will attract vermin
- Discarded household items are not to be left at the bin area. Tenants have a responsibility to dispose of large items appropriately. Belfast City Council can be contacted on 028 9027 0230 to arrange the collection of items such as sofas, other furniture and mattresses.
- If you live in an apartment building ensure all corridors and landing areas are free from rubbish and or obstruction

Please contact our office on 028 9059 2110 or 028 90351 131 and report anyone illegally dumping on NB Housing property.

## Guidance on recycling

Recycling is easy to do and really can make a difference. Recycling is vital and stops bins overflowing and all the associated issues such as rats, odours, unpleasant appearance and fire hazards.

Recycling reduces landfill. When we recycle, recyclable materials are reprocessed into new products, and as a result the amount of rubbish sent to landfill sites decreases which reduces emissions of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

When it comes to recycling your food waste remove all food packaging before putting the waste in your food waste bin. Remember to rinse and recycle the packaging, if possible only use the food waste bags supplied by your council - they decompose with the food waste and most councils supply them free of charge.

If you need more food waste bags, please tie your last bag to your food waste bin.

## Recycling in apartment buildings

If you have recycling boxes and 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. Many tenants 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. All properties should have either a brown bin or a small green food bin to allow you to recycle your food waste.

## Putting the wrong materials into your bins or boxes?

If you put the wrong materials into your recycling bins or boxes, the council won't be able to collect them. It can contaminate the collection and all the waste in the lorry may have to go to landfill. The council will put a non-collection tag on it telling you why it wasn't collected. Please remove the offending item, dispose of it correctly and put your bin or box out on the next collection date.

Further guidance and tips can be found at:

- <https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/bins/>
- <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/binsand-recycling>
- <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/bins-recycling/binsrecycling.aspx>
- <https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/resident/waste>
- <https://www.midulstercouncil.org/resident/bins-recycling>

Should you have any questions about bin provision or recycling then contact our Crumlin Road office on 02890 351131.

# Rent and Service Charges

## How is my rent calculated?

Your rent is charged weekly on a Monday. NB Housing has adopted a calculation that will set rents at the lowest possible level. This will be benchmarked against other housing providers in the area with similar properties.

The costs that NB Housing seeks to meet from rental income are as follows:

- All cost including overheads, associated with managing our properties. This includes staff salaries, stationery, office costs, office running costs, etc.
- Day to day maintenance requirements of your property.
- The income lost through void properties and bad debt.
- The association puts aside revenue for future planned and major repair work.
- The costs associated with servicing of loan repayments and interest charges.
- Insurance costs.

The basis of calculating the rents are as follows:

- Each new development project will be subject to an economic appraisal, and long term cash flow. The cash flow will predict scheme costs, private finance requirements, management & maintenance allowances and voids. Income from rent shall be set to cover all outgoings relating to the scheme.

If you would like further information on your rent or service charges please contact our Gatelodge Office on 02890592110.

## How is my service charge calculated?

A service charge may be charged in addition to rent. Service charges will only apply where a development includes a common area, such as a communal car park or garden, lift and common areas.

The service charge will account for replacement, maintenance and servicing of:-

- CCTV
- communal boilers
- communal heating and lighting systems
- door entry systems
- emergency lighting
- fire alarms and extinguishers
- gate entry system
- intruder alarms
- laundry equipment (If installed)
- lift
- alarms
- semi-automatic doors

And provision of:-

- communal cleaning
- redecoration of communal corridors,
- replacement flooring
- communal coin operated telephones
- communal grounds
- maintenance including bin collection
- heating & lighting of external and or car parking
- insurance
- line rental (lifts /
- fire alarms / CCTV)
- payphone / broadband (line rental if installed)
- white goods (replacement cost of items only supplied by the association)
- window cleaning of communal areas

# Want to save money on your electricity and gas bills?

## • Advice from the Consumer Council •

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

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

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

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

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

The Consumer Council also publishes a weekly Home Heating Oil survey showing the highest, lowest and average costs in Northern Ireland, as well as the average cost for 300L, 500L and 900L in your local area. For further information or advice visit our website [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk), contact us on freephone 0800 121 6022, email [info@consumerCouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@consumerCouncil.org.uk) or find us on Facebook and Twitter.

The Consumer Council offers a free Energy Price Comparison Tool



In under 5 minutes, you could save:

up to  
**£91**  
on Electricity



up to  
**£25**  
on Gas

[www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk)



## Tenants Forum

We are recruiting for our Tenants Forum which meets once per month. If you would be interested in joining the forum please contact Patricia Lyons on 028 9059 2110.

The next meeting is scheduled for 13th December at 3pm in the Gatelodge office, 8 Flax Street, Belfast BT14 7EQ. The aim of the forum is to ensure tenants views are represented.

Travelling expenses are reimbursed to those who attend and training will be provided if required.

## Find out more about Flax Foyer!

We aim to provide temporary supported accommodation with access to training, education and employment opportunities from which young people are empowered to become socially and economically active citizens.

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 028 9059 3301, email us at [info@flaxfoyer.com](mailto:info@flaxfoyer.com) or find out more on our website <https://www.nb-housing.org/flax-foyer-help-for-young-people>



## Fire Safety this Christmas!

**Christmas is a special time of the year for celebrations, with family and friends coming together to enjoy the festivities. However, candles, overloaded electrics and cooking all increase the risk of fire within the home at this time of year.**

- Have a working smoke alarm fitted on all levels of your property. A working smoke alarm will give you and your family the vital time needed to escape a fire.
- Never leave cooking unattended and avoid cooking whilst under the influence of alcohol.
- Check your Christmas lights are in good working order and conform to the British Standard. Look for the BS Kitemark to ensure that your lights meet the appropriate standard.
- Never overload sockets and always turn Christmas lights off before going to bed or if you are leaving the house. Remember one plug per socket.
- Don't buy fake electrical goods. Look for the British Standard or CE mark to ensure equipment and chargers comply with UK or European Safety Standards.
- If you are using extra heaters during the winter months, make sure they are kept away from soft furnishings and Christmas decorations.
- Keep candles away from soft furnishings, decorations, Christmas trees and wrapping paper. Ensure they are out of reach from pets and children unattended.
- Make sure cigarettes are extinguished correctly and never smoke in bed, particularly if you have been drinking alcohol.
- Empty ashtrays safely.
- Make a fire escape plan and discuss it with your family.
- Ensure any visiting family and friends are aware of the escape plan too; tell them where you keep door keys.
- Keep your escape routes clear; it's easy for exits to get blocked with Christmas trees and presents.
- Check on older relatives and neighbours this Christmas to ensure their safety at this time of year.

**Remember, if a fire starts, get everyone out of the property and close all doors behind you. Dial 999 and ask for the Fire & Rescue Service**

### **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 Connect 24** (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