



NB Housing

Homes that build community

Tenants Newsletter

ISSUE 27
JUNE 2021

The Wildflower Bunch at Holyrood House



Summer Break

As you are aware our offices are currently closed to visitors to comply with government guidelines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff are working from home to ensure continued service delivery to our tenants.

- July break: Monday 12th July and Tuesday 13th July
- August break: Monday 30th August.

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

Our New Homes

An update from the Development Team

The Development Departments' role within NB Housing is to source and deliver new housing opportunities. Our Development Strategy sets an ambitious target of 150 new units to meet the increasing housing needs. Below we have highlighted some of the recent properties we have been working on.

The Brae, Ballygowan

Our latest new build development is The Brae, Ballygowan. The handover of the scheme took place in May 2021. The scheme provided 3 new build family homes.



Emerson's Mill, Ligonell

We recently completed a development scheme at Emerson's Mill, Ligonell. The scheme contained 2 new build family homes and we were delighted to hand the keys over to the new tenants.



Future Developments

Crumlin Road , Belfast

NB Housing has acquired a site to provide 14 new build family homes on the Crumlin Road Belfast. Subject to planning we hope to commence on site this year.



Lower Clonard , Belfast

We have purchased a small site to provide 2 family homes, works are expected to commence in August 2021.



If you would like to keep up to date with our latest development sites please like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter!

NIFHA GOES GREEN CAMPAIGN

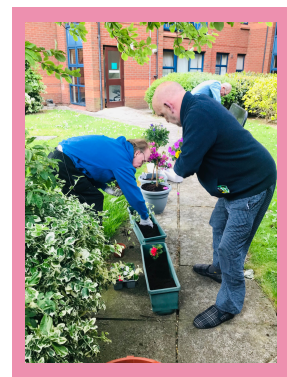
The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, has recently launched its #NIFHAGoesGreen campaign. Throughout the campaign the federation will highlight all the good work Housing Associations and their tenants are doing to help our environment. They will focus on four categories, Green Spaces, Wildlife, Health and Wellbeing, and Energy.



At NB Housing residents are getting busy, in particular the residents at Holyrood House who have started a planting scheme. Residents, who have named themselves, "The Wildflower Bunch" have been planting wildflowers that will not only brighten their surroundings for summer, but will create a haven for bees, insects and birds. Not to mention the ducks who came a visit!



Residents have enjoyed the first session of the project which has provided exercise, social interaction and improved well being following a long period of lockdown. Next on the agenda for the Wildflower Bunch is a vegetable patch. We look forward to seeing the results. .



Do you have a project you would wish to showcase to help our environment? It can be big or small as long as it falls under one of the four categories of Wildlife, Green Spaces, Energy or Health and Wellbeing. We welcome any ideas that can be shared with others so we can all make a difference.

Staying in Northern Ireland if you are an EU Citizen

The UK government reached an agreement with the EU, EEA states, and Switzerland that protects the rights of those citizens and their family members living in Northern Ireland by 31 December 2020.

If you are an EU (other than Irish citizens), EEA, or Swiss citizen you will need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to stay in the UK before the 30 June 2021 deadline.

Those failing to apply within this deadline, may lose eligibility to receive benefits. Information and application forms can be found at

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/staying-northern-ireland-if-youre-eu-citizen>

Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024

We have included a copy of our new Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024 with this edition of our newsletter. The strategy aims to inform tenants of methods of engagement that can effect change, influence decision making and to gather suggestions or ideas in improving services to meet the ever-changing needs of our tenants.

We encourage you to have a read and get involved. Our Community Development & Tenant Support Officer, Sadie Reid, has delivered many projects involving tenants during COVID-19 and is excited about expanding this engagement. We look forward to hearing from you, please give Sadie a call on 028 90 592110.

Our Tenant Participation Strategy is also available in the documents section on our website www.nb-housing.org

There are also two organisations in Northern Ireland, Advice NI and the Stronger Together EUSS Support Project, which can provide you with free, confidential advice and support, including:

- Immigration advice
- Practical help and support, including interpreting services and online access to help you complete your application

Contact details are:

- Advice NI free EU Settlement Scheme helpline 0800 915 4604 or email advice@adviceni.net
- Stronger Together EUSS Support Project by phone 028 8775 0211 or email info@strongertogetherni.org

In addition to the above, please feel free to contact your Housing Officer on 02890 592110 should you require further information.

Welcome To The NB Housing Team



We have the pleasure of welcoming Pauline Campbell as our new Housing Manager. Pauline will manage our team of Housing Officers, Tenant Support and the Reception team at the Gatelodge office. We wish Pauline every success in her new role.

We would also like to express our thanks to George Morris who leaves the organisation following 5 years' service. We wish George all the very best for the future.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results

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

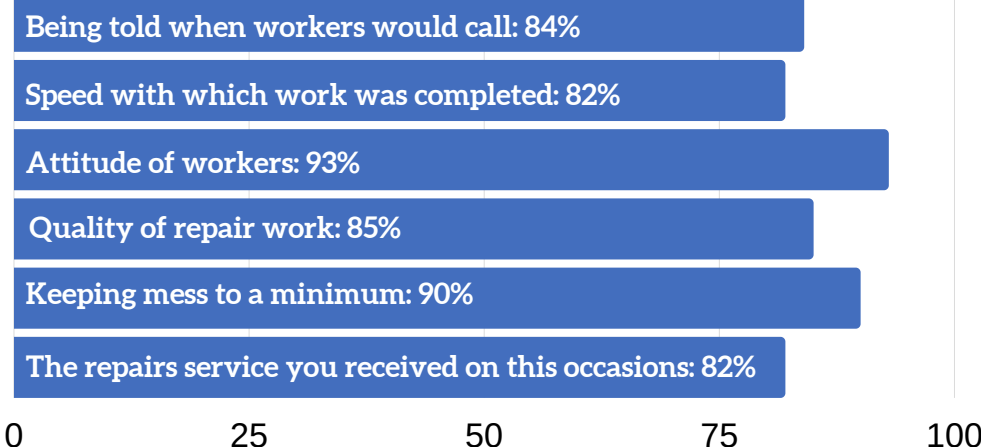
A total of 134 tenants responded to the surveys which represents a 13% return. We seek to continually engage with our tenants to ensure that they are kept informed of our services and that their views are taken into account.

Whilst the satisfaction levels are 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.

84% of tenants surveyed were satisfied with the overall service provided by NB Housing

79% of tenants surveyed were satisfied with their accommodation

Contractor Performance



80% of tenants surveyed said when they last had contact it was easy to get hold of the right person

86% of tenants surveyed said that staff were able to deal with their query

76% of tenants surveyed were satisfied that NB Housing is keeping them informed

95% of tenants surveyed said that they found staff helpful



An Update From Our Maintenance Team

Working through COVID-19

The past year has been challenging for all of us given the pandemic and the ramifications from the national lockdown. The new working arrangements had a negative impact on our performance in providing maintenance services. Across the response maintenance categories our response target performance dropped by 9.67% which is very disappointing and frustrating for all involved.

The pandemic caused the full lockdown of all housing construction and maintenance (excluding essential health safety repairs) for a period of 7 seven weeks during March 2020 through to May 2020. After this period, response maintenance recommenced but the resulting backlog and new working arrangements to ensure safety for you, our staff and our contractors took a significant toll on our contractors capacity to deliver as their staff weren't immune to the effects and out workings of the pandemic. Although we now appear to be over the worst of the pandemic, the ongoing ramifications will take time to resolve.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic we had the issue of Brexit and the difficulties being experienced with the new trading arrangements within the UK and with the EU. This is further complicated by global shortages in some raw materials and supplies due to significant demand from all sectors. This has led to longer delivery times and increased costs. Despite these pressures we continue to provide a good service to our tenants as represented in an average satisfaction level of 90.6% recorded from tenants feedback.

Our contractors have put in place a plan to address any backlog that remains and so far, this year we have seen improvements in the delivery of this service.

We thank you for your patience over the past year and look forward to better times ahead.

Planned Maintenance

Given the COVID-19 pandemic all our internal planned maintenance was placed on hold. Limited planned maintenance was completed to external door and decoration works.

As the restrictions start to ease we hope to recommence planned maintenance over the summer of 2021. These works will include:

- Replacement bathrooms & showers
- Replacement boilers
- Upgrading door entry systems
- Replacement doors & windows
- Electrical inspections
- Replacement heating
- Replacement kitchens
- External and communal area decorations

All works will be subject to public health advice, full consultation and a risk assessment with tenants to ensure the works are completed as safely as possible.

Internal Decoration

The internal decoration of homes is the tenant's responsibility, and you should keep the property in good decorative order. Tenants will be charged for any repairs caused by carelessness, neglect or wilful damage. If you move out of the house, you should leave it in a good re-lettable condition.

All gas/electric top up cards must be returned with your keys. When you submit your termination notice, a member of the Maintenance Team will make contact to arrange an inspection. Please refer to the tenants' section of our website to view our Termination of Tenancy leaflet for more information.

Gardens

Tenants are also responsible for maintaining their gardens both front and back. Grass should be kept neat and tidy and rubbish should be kept to a minimum.



Fire Safety

Our role as a Landlord

As your landlord, it's our responsibility to ensure your home meets all relevant fire safety standards.

We carry out regular fire safety checks in the communal areas of apartment buildings. Depending on the type of property you live in, these checks may include smoke detector tests, fire panel servicing, portable electrical appliance testing and checks on fire-fighting equipment (e.g. fire extinguishers). These are just some of the checks we do. There are many more.

What part do you play?

There are things you can do to help keep your home and building safe from fire:

- please be aware of fire hazards in your home and what you can do to reduce the risk
- make sure you know where the exit routes are for your property

Fire Doors

- Fire doors are critical in containing a fire in a flat or to stop the spread of fire into a flat.
- Never tamper or cut a fire door. If it is damaged contact us immediately.
- If you live in a flat, your front door will be a fire door and must close unaided by a door closer (i.e. be self-closing).
- You should not change the letter box as they are a special type to seal in smoke.
- The door or frame has a small strip of fire seal material which will help stop smoke if there is a fire. These strips should never be painted over.
- Door closers are an essential part of your front door. They ensure the door always closes behind you, creating a barrier to protect you and others in your block. These should not be removed by tenants
- Check to make sure your closer is in a good working order and the door fits in the frame.
- There are different types of door closers and yours may not be at the top of the door, but they all work in the same way.
- If your flat door doesn't have a self-closer or is broken please contact the Maintenance Team on 028 90351 131 or repairs@nb-housing.org

Fire & Smoke Alarms

Checking your smoke alarm;

- Each month press the button on your smoke alarm to check it still works.
- Never put a cover over a smoke detector
- When vacuuming gently clean the front cover of the detector.
- Press the button to test it; if there is no sound report it to us.
- If your smoke alarm goes off by mistake, do not take out the batteries. Just wait for it to stop.
- If there is a fault with a smoke or carbon monoxide alarm, please report to our Maintenance Team.

Apartment Living- Common Areas

The common areas in apartment buildings are not to be used by tenants to store personal belongings. Any items found in the common areas will be disposed of. All corridors should be clear and not prevent or restrict free movement as these are protected escape routes.

Leaving clutter/furniture in the communal areas can:

- Get in the way of emergency escape routes
- Block fire doors
- Create slipping or tripping hazards
- Pose a climbing danger for children.
- Be unpleasant to look at for other residents.

If we find any clutter/furniture in communal areas, we will ask the tenant to remove it straight away. If you don't, we will remove it, and dispose of it and may pass on the costs of doing so to the you.

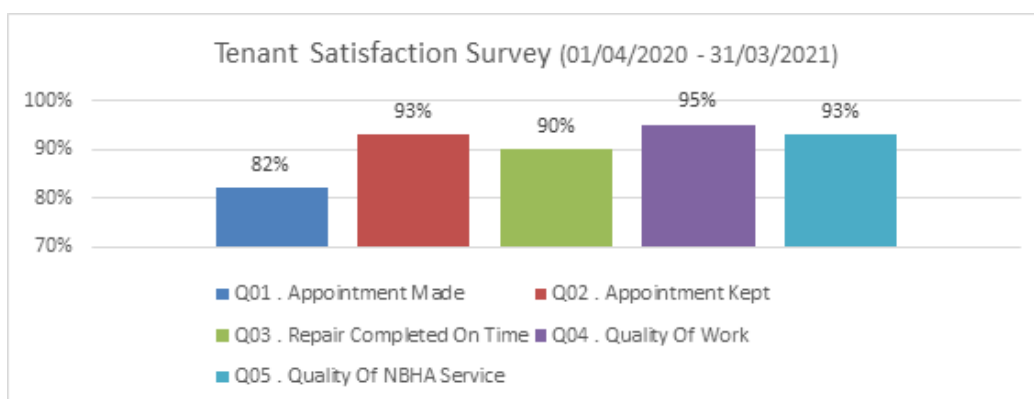
Things you should never keep in communal areas:

- Baby buggies
- Pets
- Bikes
- Rubbish

If you have any further questions about the information above please contact your Maintenance Officer on 028 9035 1131

Tenant Satisfaction Surveys

To improve our services to you, NB Housing monitors the satisfaction levels of our repairs service, the table below indicates our repair order satisfaction results for 2020/21:



Once a repair is reported to us, tenants will receive a text or a letter confirming the repair order number and estimated completion date. Upon completion of works the contractor should request that you complete a satisfaction survey for them. You will also receive a short text survey from us to gain feedback on our service. We would request that all tenants complete both surveys to inform us on how to improve our services to you.

Protect Your Belongings With Contents Insurance For Your Home

We encourage all tenants to protect their personal belongings and items while renting their home. Contents insurance policies will differ from one provider to another, however generally contents insurance protects you against damage to and theft of your items in your home.

Most insurance policies will cover damage to your contents caused from storms, flooding, fire, explosions, theft, riots and vandalism. It would also usually cover the cost of spoiled food if your freezer breaks down and the replacement of cash stolen from your home.

Contents policies also usually give you legal liability protection as the occupier of the home. This means that as part of the contents policy, the insurer will cover you and your legal costs if a visitor to your home is seriously injured and it's deemed to be your fault. It is important to check any policy you are considering as each will differ. NB Housing shall maintain structural insurance on your home but contents insurance is the responsibility of the tenant.

We strongly recommend that all tenants insure their contents against loss, theft and damage as the Association is not responsible for any item belonging to the tenant.

For peace of mind and to protect the contents of your home search comparison sites for the best prices and policies and remember to read to fine print to ensure your policy is tailored to what you need.

Aids & Adaptations

If you require any adaptations to your home, please note that in most cases we will require a formal recommendation from an occupational therapist. However, there some scenarios where we can proceed without the input of the occupational therapist. To establish if you can avail of this service please contact our Assets Officer on 028 90592110 who will be happy to advise.

Contact Details

Please ensure that we hold the correct mobile telephone number, this will ensure that you're kept up to date through our texting service.

If you would prefer to be contacted by post or email, please let us know.

How Is My Rent Calculated?

NB Housing has adopted a calculation that set rents at the lowest possible level. The rent will be compared against other housing providers in the area with similar properties and the rent will vary depending on the type of building, the number of rooms, and any additional characteristics.

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

- All management related cost including overheads, staff salaries, stationery, office costs, office running costs, etc.
- Day to day maintenance of your property.
- Income lost through void properties and bad debts.
- Costs of future planned and major repair work, such as kitchen or heating replacement.
- Insurance costs excluding home contents insurance.
- The costs associated with servicing of loan repayments and interest charges*.

*(the association received government grant assistance for a proportion of the costs for new stock and remaining sum is financed through private finance)

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.

Your rent is charged weekly on a Monday

How is my service charge calculated?

If your property is in a mutli-dwelling (i.e. more than one property in the same building) or your property has a communal area you will be charged a service charge each week.

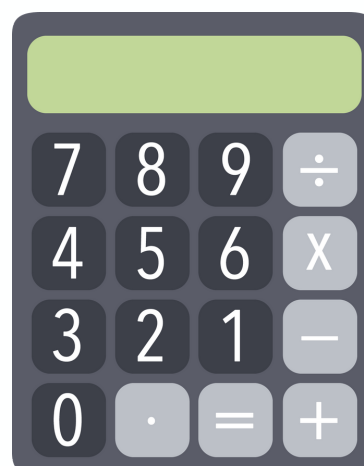
The costs that NB Housing seeks to meet from service income are as follows:

- Heat, light, repairs and cleaning of communal areas
- Maintenance of grounds and lifts
- New Equipment in apartment if supplied by the association.

The basis of calculating the service charge are as follows:

- Each year the association will review the projected costs for the year and set a charge will cover all expenditure.

If you have any further questions about how your rent or service charge is calculated please contact our Housing Team on 028 9059 2110





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.



As a tenant of NB Housing 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)
- 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.

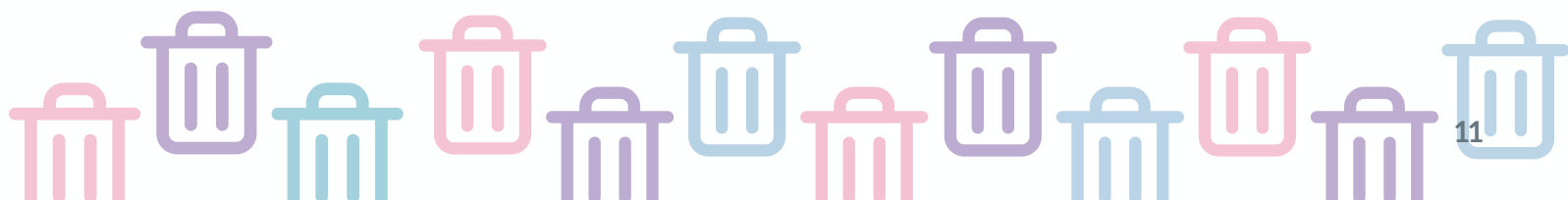
- If you live in an apartment building and arrange collection of a bulky item, the item must be kept in your flat until the day of collection and presented at the agreed collection point with the council.
- Within apartment buildings tenants have the responsibility to dispose of large items appropriately and to ensure common areas are kept free of personal items. In an apartment building please ensure all corridors and landing areas are free from rubbish and or obstruction. The common areas must be kept clear at all times, our caretaking team are instructed to remove any items found in the common areas, any item(s) removed may incur a charge to the tenant of £50.

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.



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

Recycling Centres

- **Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council:**
<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/recyclingcentres/>
T: 028 9446 3113 & T: 028 9034 0000
- **Ards and North Down Borough Council:**
<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/bins-and-recycling/recycling-centres>
0300 013 3333
- **Belfast City Council**
<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/recycling/centres>
0800 032 8100
- **Mid and East Antrim Council**
<https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/resident/waste-recycling>
0300 124 5000
- **Mid Ulster Council**
<https://www.midulstercouncil.org/resident/bins-recycling/recycling-centres>
03000 132 132

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), can contact us via email: info@nb-housing.org or can text us on 074 9820 2221