



NB Housing

Homes that build community

Tenants Newsletter

ISSUE 29
OCT 2022

Fundraising for Foodbank!

On Sunday the 7th of August, Eamonn, one of our Support Workers from the Flax Foyer, took part in an abseil at Belfast Castle to raise funds for the Ashton Centre to support their community food bank.

"Firstly, I would like to thank all those who donated to the cause, helping to raise vital funds for a much-needed community resource.

Over the last few years people's lives have been gripped by the Covid-19 pandemic and just as things felt like they were beginning to ease, we were hit with a cost of living crisis which has thrown local people into turmoil as they battle rising costs in energy and food prices.

With inflation and energy prices set to rise, it is clear that many people will struggle to heat their homes and keep their families fed this coming winter.

As a Support Worker in the Flax Foyer, I have seen firsthand the impact rising prices has and will continue to have on those most vulnerable within our communities, as they continue to wonder whether they should choose between heating their homes or keeping themselves fed.

As demand for services such as Foodbanks grow, the strain on these services to provide will inevitably increase, making it harder for people to secure help and support.

I took part in the abseil event because I wanted to raise vital funds and spread awareness of the issues that will be facing us all this coming winter.

During the month of September, the Foyer will be finalising plans for a food drive to help those most vulnerable and lessen the impact this winter's financial burden will bring for many.

Our aim is to support those most in need with the hope that we can remove some of this financial burden. We also hope to remove some of the pressure that will be caused for local organisations providing support within our communities."



Help To Make Your Money Go Further

The cost of living crisis is impacting us all. As winter fast approaches, we have seen food prices on the rise and energy costs soaring as we attempt to manage budgets on fixed incomes. The struggle is real as some are choosing to “eat or heat” and some even losing their homes due to an inability to pay for their housing costs.

There are many organisations providing advice and information on how to ensure we can maximise income, manage bills and even prevent debts increasing. We have provided some suggestions and contacts below that may assist you.

As always, your Housing Officer is also available should you need any further advice and can be reached on 028 90 592 110, via email on info@nb-housing.org or via or website www.nb-housing.org.

Make the Call

Are you receiving all the benefits, services and support you are entitled to?

A benefit advisor can carry out a full assessment for you and advise accordingly. You may be entitled to additional income you were not aware of.

Calls are free on 0800 232 1271 or email makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk. Make the call today!

Consumer Council

The Consumer Council also offers energy advice for consumers during these difficult times and provides an independent energy price comparison tool. You can save by switching supplier, tariff, payment methods, how you receive your bills or a combination of all these.

Tel: 028 9025 1600

Website:

<http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/energy>,

Advice NI

Advice NI can provide advice on a range of benefit issues as well as information on benefits for carers, those with disabilities, being out of work, housing etc. Contact on 0800 915 4604 or email advice@adviceni.net. Local Advice Ni members include:

- Ardoyne Association Advice Centre:
028 90 715 165
- Advice Space: Andersonstown Road and Shankill Road:
03001233233
- Community Advice Lisburn:
02892662251
- Community Advice Ards & North Down
03001239287
- Mid and East Antrim/
Ballymena/Carrickfergus
02896001333



Dealing with Debt

There are a number of agencies that can help you if you are in debt and assist you with how to budget effectively. You should seek some advice if,

- You regularly use payday loans or cheque cashing services
- You do not want to open letters, bills and bank statements
- You borrow money to pay bills
- You borrow from friends or family without being certain you can pay this back.
- The situation won't get any better until you do something about it. A debt charity could help you negotiate with the people you owe money to, work out if you're entitled to any benefits, help you understand how to budget properly, or work out repayment plans to help clear your debts.

Paying your rent should be your main focus. If you fall behind on these payments you could easily lose your home. At NB Housing we can set up a repayment plan to help you reduce your debt and get you back on track. Don't delay get in touch today!

Belfast City Council Fuel Stamp Scheme

Belfast City Council's fuel stamp scheme helps householders save for home heating oil, by spreading the cost of their fuel.

Residents can buy oil stamps from participating retailers, collect them on a savings card and use the value of the stamps to pay for all or part of an oil purchase when placing an order.

Website:

<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/housing/home-heating>

- Advice NI can provide advice at any of the the contacts listed above.
- Step Change Debt Charity are available by contacting 0800 138 1111. Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 4pm
- Contact your Housing Officer at NB Housing on 028 90 592 110, we are here to help! info@nb-housing.org



Office Re-Opening

We will re-open our offices to visitors from Monday 3rd October 2022 from 9.15am-1pm Monday to Friday.

Should you wish to speak to a specific member of staff during this time, we recommend that you make an appointment to ensure the staff member is on site.

NI Direct Tips on how to save on energy costs around your home

The NI Direct website provides some simple tips that can assist to help you use energy more efficiently and potentially save you money around your home.

In the kitchen;

- Only use the amount of water you need when boiling the kettle (cover the element of an electric kettle)
- Put lids on pots and turn down the heat when the water starts to boil - lids not only keep heat in a pot but also cut condensation in the kitchen
- Where possible, use the oven for more than just one item and remember you can cook at a higher temperature at the top of the oven, and simultaneously at a lower temperature at the bottom
- Remember every time you open the oven door to check cooking you lose 20 per cent of the accumulated heat
- Defrost your fridges and freezers regularly and avoid putting hot food in the freezer. Never leave the fridge door open.
- There's emerging research that using a microwave rather than a conventional oven to heat up a small amount of food may save you energy

Appliances

- Never leave mobile phones on charge overnight
- Make sure computer equipment is switched off and unplugged when not in use
- Electrical appliances on standby cost money - switch off on the appliance itself or turn it off at the plug if possible

Washing Clothes

- Washing clothes at 30 degrees can be just as effective for a normally soiled load
- Run your washing machine or dishwasher with full loads

Heating and hot water;

This advice can help you cut energy loss from heating and hot water:

- Turning your central heating down by one degree could cut your heating bills by up to 10 per cent
- Turn down your immersion heater temperature by one degree - you will save energy and you're unlikely to notice the difference
- Close curtains at night to keep heat in
- Do not block radiators with furniture
- Never leave the hot water tap running
- Use the shower, if you have one, rather than the bath

Lighting

These tips can help you cut energy use:

- Use energy efficient light bulbs - if every UK home installed three of them, it would save enough energy to power all the UK's street lights
- Try to remember to switch the lights off every time you leave a room
- Use 'task' lighting rather than whole room lighting when only a small amount of light is needed



The Housing Executive provides an advice line on how to be more efficient with our energy use and has tips on how to save money. Contact the NI Energy Advice line on Tel: 08001114455 or Email: NIenergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk, website: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Community/NI-Energy-Advice>

Tenant Engagement Activities

This past quarter we have been involving our tenants in the Community Empowerment Partnership on how to become more environmentally friendly!

Custom made raised planting beds have been placed at Holyrood House and Flax Foyer. In collaboration with the Mens Shed these will be filled with seeds to grow some delicious vegetables for winter soup making.

We will also be producing our very own honey from new hives soon to be located within the gardens at Holyrood House. Our residents will participate in training on helping the environment and protecting our wonderful bee population!

My Tenancy

My Tenancy is an online portal where you can view information related to your tenancy at NB Housing 24/7. This information will include your current rent balance, repairs on your home, important documents, contact information etc. You will also be able to pay your rent and request any repair work for your home.

The portal can be accessed through our website www.nb-housing.org. Before creating an account, you'll need to ensure that you have:

- Access to a valid email account
 - Provided NB-Housing with your date of birth and your valid email address
 - Your tenant reference key/account code.
- If you do not know your account code, just give us a call and we can let you know what this is.

Why not set up your account now and enjoy access to your account whenever you need it.

Street Clean Up

The tenants of Flax Mews organised a street clean up and summer street party. Everyone enjoyed the event with bouncy castles, face painting, food and refreshments. NB Housing were happy to make a donation to the cost of the event which was gladly received by all. Tenant engagement such as this demonstrates great community spirit and pride in the areas in which our tenants live. Well done to all involved.

If you would like to organise a community event or just want to get involved please let us know by contacting our housing department on 028 90 592 110.



Farewell to Sadie Reid

As many of you know, Sadie was our Community Development & Tenant Support Officer. Sadie has recently left us for pastures new and we at NB Housing wish her all the very best for the future. We are all very appreciative of the hard work Sadie did with supporting and engaging with our tenants.

Our New Homes

An update from the Development Team

We would like to highlight some of the projects recently started on site.

197-203 Crumlin Road

Works are progressing well at our new build project on the Crumlin Road in Belfast. The scheme is on target to complete in August 2023 and represents a total investment of £2.37 million, with £1.38 million received in Housing Association Grant.



Bridge Street, Lisburn



This new build scheme consists of nine, 1-bed apartments and is due to commence on site in September. The estimated cost is £1.45 million, with £917,000 provided by Housing Association Grant.

Langley Street, Belfast

This new build scheme will consist of 1 x 1 bed apartment, 2 x 2 bed apartments and 3 x 2 bed houses and is due to commence on site in September. The total investment is £1.1 million with £538,000 provided by Housing Association Grant.



Gobrana Lane, Glenavy



NB Housing has agreed to purchase twenty 3-bed family homes in the village of Glenavy. The cost of the scheme is £3.8 million with £2.1 million provided by Housing Association Grant. The scheme is expected to complete late summer 2023.

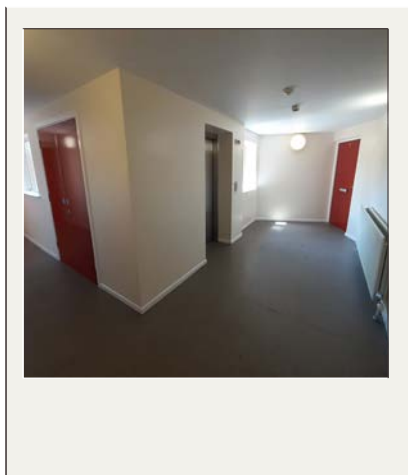
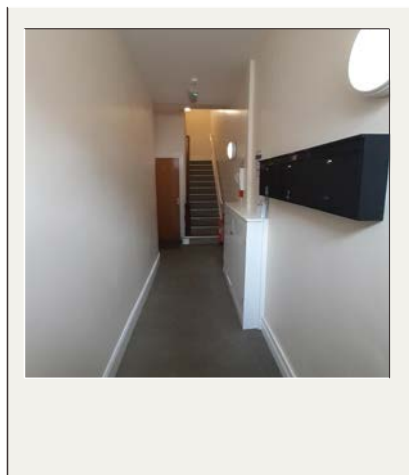
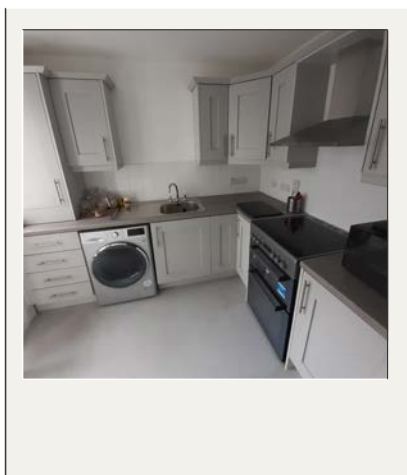
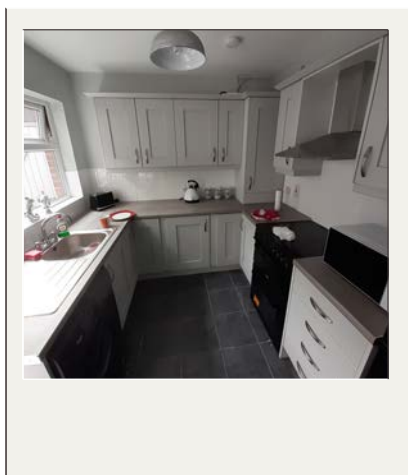
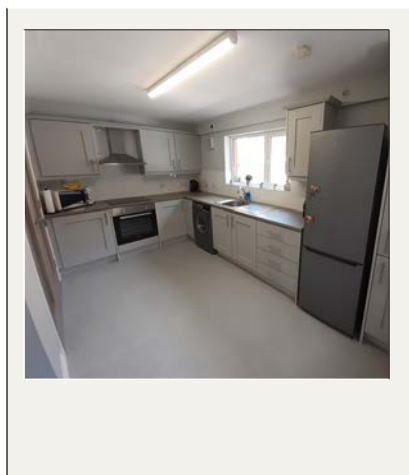


If you would like to keep up to date with our latest development sites please like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and take a look at our website!



Investment in our Homes

Over the summer we were able to recommence planned maintenance to our homes. The works included replacement kitchens and internal re-decorations to our apartment buildings. These works represent an investment of £162,000.



Stock Condition Surveys

WH Stephens has been appointed to carry out a stock condition survey of our housing stock. This exercise is vital to inform future maintenance requirements and we would appreciate in the event that your home is selected for survey that access is granted.





Boiler Services and Access for Contractors

It is vital that all tenants provide access to NB Housing contractors to enable works to be completed. It is particularly important that you grant access for your annual Gas Boiler Service. This is a health and safety requirement and is essential to ensure the safe operation of your boiler. It also ensures that your boiler is working efficiently and given the high cost of fuel, it is in your interest to have this completed on time.

Failure to provide access will result in abortive call outs. If access continues to be an issue, the Association may instruct the capping of the gas supply at your home until the boiler service is complete. Please note all additional costs associated with these actions will be deemed recoverable from tenants.

If you are unable to facilitate a contractor attending, please contact NB Housing so alternative arrangements can be made.

End of Tenancy Repairs

When terminating your tenancy, NB Housing expects properties to be left in a good standard. This includes the property being cleared from belongings and any gas/electric top up cards provided for the next tenant.

A member of our Maintenance Team will carry out an inspection and if any defects or non-standard items remain in the property which are tenant responsibility, we will ask these to be made good or else they will be recharged to the outgoing tenant.

Alterations to Properties

You should not make any alteration to your property without requesting the Associations written permission and it may be necessary to carry out an inspection to review your request. An alteration may involve works such as:

- Removing internal walls
- Erection of railings
- Conservatories
- External decoration
- Changes to electrical fittings
- Hard landscaping

Please note that the Association will not provide any permission for a conversion to the loft/attic space to occur.

If you carry out any works without permission then you will be responsible for making good any work completed that has not received the permission of the Association.

If you have any queries then please do not hesitate to get in contact with the Maintenance Team.

Home Insurance

The Association insures the building you live in against damage, however we do not cover tenant belongings. We encourage all tenants to take out home insurance so that your own belongings and furniture is adequately covered.

Home contents insurance can be purchased for as little as £63 per year and we encourage you to shop around for the best deal.

Maintenance Backlog

We are currently working hard to address the backlog of maintenance that has accumulated over the past two years during the covid pandemic as we still experience delays in getting repairs completed. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

Broken Glass



Broken glass is tenant's responsibility regardless of cause. We urge all tenants to ensure that they have adequate home insurance in place.

Respect our Staff

We have recorded an increase in verbal abuse towards our staff which is unacceptable. When dealing with our staff or contractors please treat them with respect and dignity.

Our staff and contractors are dedicated to ensure a high level of service standards to all our tenants. NB Housing staff members treat all our tenants with upmost respect and we would ask for the same back.

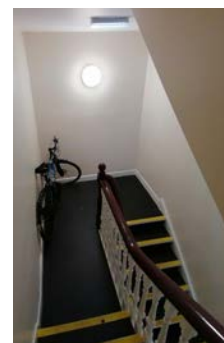
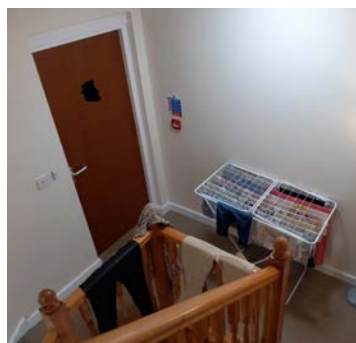
Contact Details

Are your contact details up to date? Please ensure that we hold your current telephone number and email.



Common Areas

Common areas of apartment blocks should be kept free from tenant belongings and rubbish. You must not store items such as bikes or prams in hallways. Any item found in the hallway will be removed by our caretaking team.



Bin Stores



Bins stores in apartment schemes are for the sole use of residents. It is essential that all rubbish is placed into the appropriate bins. The number and size of bins provided in each scheme is determined by the local council and NB Housing has no control over those decisions. Each scheme has recycling facilities and we urge all tenants to use these to reduce the amount of waste.

Removal of Large Items

Any furniture that requires disposal should be arranged with your local council who will provide a bulky waste collection. Any item for disposal should be kept in your home until the day of collection as agreed with the council.

Adaptations

We have designed our properties with our tenants' needs in mind. However, situations can change and you may find that you need to make alterations to your home to help you carry on living independently. These are called adaptations.

Examples of adaptations:

- Replacing a bath with a walk-in shower.
- Extra handrails inside and outside your home.
- Ramps at the entrance of your home.

How we can help

Please contact our maintenance team on 028 9035 1131 and you can talk to one of our staff or email repairs@nb-housing.org to find out more about how we can help.

How to apply for an adaptation

There are different ways to apply for adaptations, depending on what you need.

In most cases, you need to be referred by an Occupational Therapist. The referral should include the type of adaptation that you need. For some smaller adaptations, like grab rails, you can complete a 'self-referral' request – please contact us and our team will assist.

Once the referral is received we will let you know if the referral can go ahead and provide an indication of the likely timescale to have the adaptation completed. Some cases, such as major extensions are subject to formal appraisal and take longer to assess and approve.

Meet the Team!



In this new quarterly feature, we hope to introduce you to the team at NB Housing to enable you to put a 'face to the name' and know the staff that are here to help you. Janet joined NB Housing in July 2022 as an Assets Officer.

Janet will assist tenants with all aspects of planned/cyclical maintenance, grounds maintenance, cleaning/estate services and disabled adaptation requests. Janet brings with her a breadth of experience in housing having been in the sector since 2016.

Janet is the mother of two grown up children one of who lives in Milan so visits to there are fun. Janet is lucky to live so close to the Cavehill and enjoys long walks and picnics with the family. Janet is a keen gardener and has fun little corners with gnomes and fairies. At the weekend you will always find Janet in the kitchen cooking up new recipes for family and friends.

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

INSEC Security: 028 9020 0080

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