

Housing news for
tenants & leaseholders



NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

voice

ISSUE 8: AUTUMN 2017



CHECK OUT
OUR NEW
TRAINING
PROGRAMME
INSIDE

Also...

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Welcome

“ We probably won't notice it immediately but soon we will be stepping out of summer and moving into autumn, the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness ”

John Keats

In this edition of NPH Voice we'll be looking back over the colours of summer with the results of our first gardening competition. I'm not going to give you any teasers, but what I can say is that all 28 gardens were amazing. Everyone who entered should be proud of their efforts in their gardens!

We will also be sharing with you the latest on planned investment news and advice on fire safety. Finally, Dahlia one of our leaseholders has written a guest article all about upcycling furniture.

We have somehow managed to squeeze in all the other regular features as well so please do read on!

Thanks, Oscar

Tenant Chair of NPH's
Communications Service
Improvement Panel.



**NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES**

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Large print?

If you would like a version of this magazine in large print, or another language, please call

0300 330 7003



Reader Friendly

PROUD TO BE A TENANT

We'd like to welcome Dave Cooper to this issue's Proud Tenant.



Dave's a retired driving instructor with a passion for cycling. He's the founder of the Northampton over 60's Cycling Club. The group set up in 2015 are helping older people to stay fit and healthy and meet new people.

Dave has always loved the outdoors and meeting people. Born in Camberley in Surrey, Dave's first job was with London Transport as a bus conductor greeting people as they came on the bus. He became a bus driver for a while before switching careers as a driving instructor for the next 20 years. He took the decision to

leave Surrey and move to Wales to become a publican and manage a hotel by the beach before taking the trip to Northampton to be closer to his family.

Dave decided to take up cycling after he got the news from his doctor that he had back problems.

"The doctor said to me, find something to do. I'd been really active before then. My wife said to me we could do the gardening together at weekends and to go out and find something in the week to do that won't hurt my back. That's when I took up cycling".

Cycling is really good exercise and is almost impact-free on joints and muscles. Dave's over 60's Cycling Club has 65 members and is free to join. You don't have to be aged over 60 to join and Dave regularly welcomes families too. They go out most days across Northampton on their bikes.

You can find out more info on the Northampton over 60's Cycling Club by searching for them on Facebook. You can also pick up a flyer at Halfords at Sixfields.

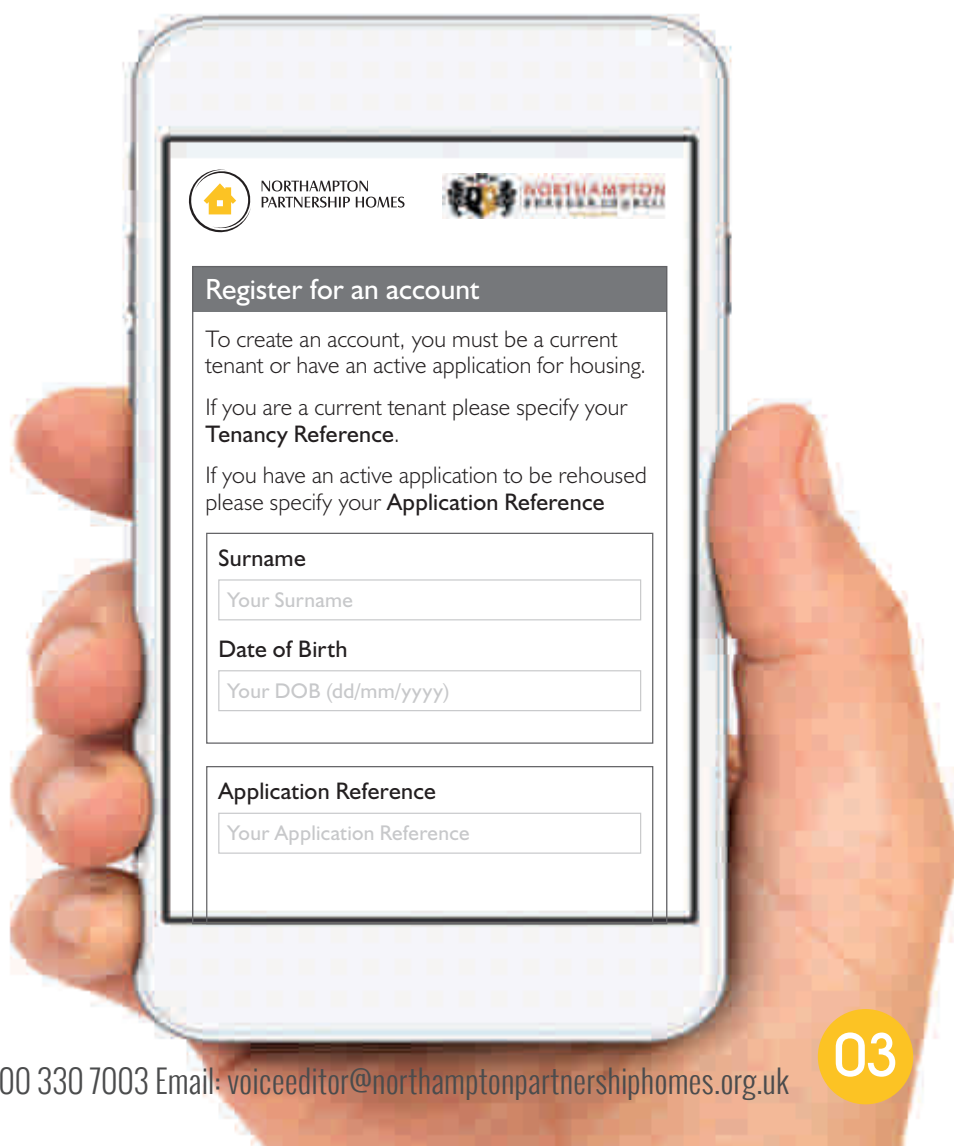
Do it online

Did you know that you can now register to view your rent account online at **www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/your-nph-online**

You can also access our other online services using our new-look home page.

If you already access your rent account using NBC's Citizens' Account, you don't need to register again, just carry on doing what you're doing!

Want to know what's going on at NPH? Get daily updates by following us on twitter or sign up to our news updates at **www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/latest-news**



Meet our gas safety contractor...

My name's Abdul Razzak, I'm a Resident Liaison Officer for PH Jones.

Hi Abdul! How did you come to work at PH Jones?

Before PH Jones I was working as a complaints handler for a courier company. I enjoy working with lots of different people but I wanted a new challenge. I came across the resident liaison officer role with PH Jones and applied, got the job and 8 years on I've never looked back!

What do you enjoy about your job?

Well the role is really varied. I'm out and about meeting new people, all the time. I love meeting different residents and helping them however possible. I like the everyday challenges that I'm faced with and the great people I work with too.

Who are PH Jones?

PH Jones work with NPH to service and maintain the gas appliances in your home. We carry out annual gas appliance safety checks once a year at tenants' homes and we're on hand from our offices in Northampton if there is an emergency to the appliance.

What does a Gas Appliance Safety Check involve?

If a gas appliance doesn't burn correctly then it could produce carbon monoxide, which is poisonous. So a gas safety check is there to check for things like this and make sure the appliance is in good working order for when you want the heating on.

Every year PH Jones makes contact with residents to book an appointment. We'll be in touch two months before the appointment is due to arrange a suitable time to visit. Once the appointment is confirmed, one of our gas safe registered engineers will visit your home to test the appliances. Our gas engineers always wear ID so you know who we are when you answer the door.

The engineer will begin by doing a visual check of the appliance. All the components will be tested to make sure the appliance is compliant and working correctly. We'll also check the gas pipework to make sure this is all safe.

Abdul's top tips

What top tips do you have for tenants who may be switching their heating back on this autumn?

Autumn through to winter is PH Jones' busiest time of the year. We advise to test your heating before you decide to use it so you know that it's all working okay. My tips would be:

- to check the radiators are switched on and the thermostat turned up.
- You may find if the radiator is hot at the bottom and cold at the top that the valves on the radiator may need a little bleed to get the air flowing inside.
- If you use a pre-payment meter try not to let it run out of gas completely, the gas appliance can take a little longer to get going again.
- If you find there is no heating, check the boiler for any error codes. Telling us the code helps to identify the problem.
- Still no heating? Check for any visible leaks in the piping or radiators. These are useful clues to help us find the problem.

PH Jones offer an Out of Hours Emergency Service if you have a major uncontrollable water leak to your heating appliance.

However, if you smell gas or are concerned there may be a Gas Leak, contact National Grid as soon as you can on **0800 111 999**. They'll give you important advice on what to do next.



You can call PH Jones about your gas appliance and find out when your service is next due on **01604 588 811**. You can also visit their website www.phjones.co.uk.

Fire safety

Since the devastating fire at Grenfell Tower we, like all other housing providers across the country, have been reviewing the safety of our blocks.

At NPH, we have one high rise block; St Katherines Court. The block is currently being refurbished and has cladding fitted to the outside.

The cladding is not the same type used at Grenfell Tower and was found to be compliant with fire regulations when independently tested.

We will be installing a sprinkler system at St Katherines Court to offer extra peace of mind to residents. We would like to thank all of the residents for their co-operation throughout the refurbishment works.

Whether you live in a flat or a house, it's really important that you have an escape plan. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service can visit you at home to give advice on how to do this. It's a free service and we would encourage all of our tenants to book an appointment.

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

01604 797000

enquiries@northantsfire.org.uk

General advice on fire safety in the home:



www.gov.uk/government/publications/make-your-home-safe-from-fire

www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/your-safety

If you have any questions or concerns about fire safety in your own home or a neighbour's, you can talk to us on 0300 330 7003.

Our tenants are Bl



Susan Selden and Bob Clarke, winners of the Best Garden Category



The winners of our first gardening competition have been revealed after the judges chose their favourites. We received 28 entries into this year's competition including pristine lawns, colourful containers, and scrumptious fruit & vegetables!

Congratulations to Ms Susan Selden & Mr Bob Clarke, Bellinge Community House, Mr Rashmi Shah, Mr & Mrs Crane, Mr & Mrs Gore and Jack Brett whose gardens all won the top prizes.

Our judges Johnnie Amos (BBC Northampton Gardening Expert) and Sarah Passam (Voluntary Impact Volunteering Manager) were very impressed with the standard of

everyone's gardens as well as the amazing stories behind each and every gardener.

A big thank you to all who entered! Next year we want even more green-fingered tenants and leaseholders to get involved. Keep a look out for details of next year's gardening competition from spring 2018.



Jack Brett, Best young gardener

Mr and Mrs Crane, Most Environmentally Friendly Garden



ming Marvellous!

The winners:

Best Garden

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|--------|---------------------------|
| Gold | Susan Selden & Bob Clarke |
| Silver | Anthony & Courtney Boyce |
| Bronze | Liz Bowering |

Best Communal Garden

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| Gold | Bellinge Community House |
| Silver | Ekins Close Communal Garden |
| Bronze | Julie Walker |

Best Container Garden

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|--------|---------------------------|
| Gold | Rashmi Shah |
| Silver | Rose Mullings |
| Bronze | Joan Thomas & Doris Berry |

Best Fruit & Veg Patch

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|--------|---------------------|
| Gold | Richard Gore |
| Silver | Brian Burrowes |
| Bronze | David & Angela Paul |

Most Environmentally Friendly Garden

| | |
|--------|---------------------|
| Gold | Janet & Gary Crane |
| Silver | Sally Johnston |
| Bronze | David & Angela Paul |

Best Young Gardener

| | |
|------|------------|
| Gold | Jack Brett |
|------|------------|



You can view all the pictures of this year's gardens at www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/garden-competition-winners-announced

Is your neighbour a star? Do they go the extra mile to support the community?

We're planning to launch a competition to recognise and honour residents who go the extra mile. If you know someone who makes a difference in your area, we can help you show your appreciation for all the good neighbours out there.

Keep a lookout in the next issue of NPH Voice for more info. Registration will be open later in the year to nominate them for an award!

Try Upcycling

NPH Leaseholder Dahlia talks about restoring an unloved piece of furniture into a showpiece in your home.



I have always been a fan of vintage. There is something I like about each item. A bit of the past brought to life. Buying vintage can also be a good way to save money (as long as you do not buy antique, expensive pieces). Also when I'm looking for furniture I can never find any items that match. Some of the items are different colours. Sometimes a piece of furniture is scratched or discoloured badly. And there's no chance I can buy a nice set of the same for that price!! So I thought to myself "what if I refurbish the furniture I buy?".

I started with no experience of upcycling but I found plenty of tutorials online. In my search for second hand furniture I was lucky to find a lovely carved chest of drawers and 2 bedside cabinets at a local RSPCA shop for £90.

I thought these items would look good in the bedroom.

Another occasion and I caught sight of a member of staff coming out of a side room with this big, yellow cabinet - 2 doors, 3 drawers and curvy legs - exactly what I wanted! The staff said it was not for sale. But I insisted.

They went to speak to the manager and returned with an offer I couldn't refuse.

I got the whole thing for £10!

The writing bureau you see in the picture. Well, the surface couldn't be painted (it was a kind of plastic) so I found some vintage music paper and I learnt on the internet how to decoupage (cutting the paper and applying it on to the furniture). I paid £35 for this item.

All this got me thinking about other areas of my home. My laptop could do with a desk and I had the space for it. I bought a desk online in a nice shape. I sanded this back, removed some of the white paint, darkened the wood with wood dye and added a bit of pale metallic "glitz".

My top tips.

- Don't take the risk with upholstered second hand furniture. The fabric may be infested with bugs. Go for something with a hard surface instead.
- Fabrics, throws and cushions can change the furniture's appearance to match the paint of wooden pieces.
- If you get bored with your furniture, repaint it another colour. It is worth buying good quality paint and varnish before you start.
- Upcycling doesn't cost much apart from your time. What's more, you are supporting local charities each time you buy!



Tenants involved in how complaints are handled.



Join the Complaints Panel

We're looking for more Tenants to join our Complaints Panel. The panel was set up to give tenants a voice and direct involvement when it comes to reviewing complaints.

You've got to be a good listener and be able to make fair decisions based on the facts.

If you think you have the skills we need, we'd like to hear from you!

Who to Contact

To register and find out more, contact our Customer Engagement Team on **01604 837836** or email tenantparticipation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk.

The closing date to express your interest is 6th October, so make sure you don't miss out and get in touch with us before then! Full training before you start is provided.

Meet Chris from the Complaints Panel:

So Chris, what made you take the plunge and apply to be part of the Complaints Panel?

I didn't know if I would be the ideal candidate, but it felt like the right thing to do. I had experience of dealing with complaints from working in the retail sector so I wondered if those skills would be useful

How did you feel when your application was successful?

I didn't have any pre-conceptions about the role and didn't really know what to expect, I just hoped that I could put my skills to good use.

How has being part of the Complaints Panel helped you personally?

It's been a great experience to hear feedback from tenants and leaseholders. My listening and communication skills have improved and I have learned a lot about working in a team. I have really enjoyed being able to mediate in real life situations and help resolve conflict. I know that this experience will help me with the things I want to do in the future.



Inside the Factory

Tenants take the Offsite Tour



Anyone who has watched Greg Wallace on BBC 2's "Inside the Factory" will know that factories can be quite fascinating inside!

Well, our tenants from the Planned Investment Service Improvement Panel got a taster of what it's like. They visited the Fusion Factory at Moulton Park in July to look at off site methods of building with steel. It's how the structures to new homes at Little Cross Street will be built.



Empty properties at Little Cross Street in Spring Boroughs were demolished earlier this year. Work has already started to build 18 new apartments and maisonettes.

Looking the part in high vis and hard hats, tenants had a guided tour of how a coil of steel begins life in the factory and through the many processes, becomes the structure that will form the walls and floors of these new homes.

Bob, tenant on the Planned Investment SIP said

“

I'm impressed by the concept of building custom-built units for homes offsite. It was really nice to meet the team behind the build and have them value my opinions. It's good to see NPH's plans becoming reality to improve and build new homes in Northampton.

”

Look out for work starting in autumn.

Why off site steel frames for Little Cross Street?

- Building with steel has many benefits. It is a really strong material, so great for building houses and keeping homes in good condition in the future.
- Steel is readily available and good value for money. The steel NPH will be using is 100% recyclable. It has a really high efficiency rating too, which is important for keeping a home warm and safe.
- When we spoke with residents in the area, they told us that no one likes the noise and disruption of a busy building site. So we decided to look at options to reduce this. The steel at Little Cross Street will be built offsite and made to measure so that when it comes to fitting them together, it will take less time to build. The frames will be delivered and fitted in a matter of days.



- Fusion, the company producing the steel, is a local business who will be working with our contractors Wilmot Dixon at Little Cross Street. They will be employing local people to help us carry out the build.

Keep an eye on the developments in Little Cross Street and Spring Boroughs regeneration. Visit our website www.northamptonpartnershiphomes/latest-news and sign up for the latest news to your mailbox.

Housing for older people

Check out the new Eleonore House! We've talked about plans in previous editions, so it's great to start showing you some of the finished results.



£1.75m has been spent on the refurbishments at Eleonore House in Eastfield to update facilities inside and out.



We've been really conscious of making sure the refurbishments work for older residents. Eleonore House is an older persons housing scheme, accommodation that will provide safe and secure housing in the future for many older residents in Northampton.

There are six new apartments, including 4 apartments for people with limited mobility. Outside, we've created more space for residents to relax and enjoy the views over Eastfield Park.



The building has a new look reception area and residents' lounge so that family, friends and residents can socialise in a welcoming space.

Residents celebrated in style on 16 June with food, drink and music sung by St Gregory's Primary School Choir.



It was great to see so many people in attendance. Michael Ellis MP who formally reopened the building, also joined in to thank residents for their time and input throughout the work and to unveil a new plaque to commemorate the day.



Thank you to everyone who came along. We hope you like the new facilities. Look out for our next older persons housing scheme, a new build of 45 apartments on the former site of Lakeview Care Home.

In an English Country Garden

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For your chance to win a £20 Love 2 Shop Voucher, can you find all the flowers of an English Country Garden?

- ☐ ABELIA
- ☐ ANTIRRHINUM
- ☐ BEGONIA
- ☐ CHRYSANTHEMUM
- ☐ DAPHNE
- ☐ FOXGLOVE
- ☐ FUCHSIA
- ☐ GAZANIA
- ☐ HYDRANGEA
- ☐ LAVATERA
- ☐ PETUNIA
- ☐ PHLOX
- ☐ RUDBECKIA
- ☐ ZINNIA

*To be in with a chance of winning, send your completed wordsearch to NPH by 1 October 2017. You can post your wordsearch to our address (which can be found on page 2), email the Voice Editors, or drop the wordsearch off when you next visit the Guildhall One Stop Shop.

Charity Boat Race

We've been fundraising for Cynthia Spencer Hospice, the charity our staff voted to support this year. We've run a variety of fundraising events, from charity football matches, to fun runs and office competitions.

Were you at Billing Aquadrome for the Dragon Boat Festival this year? NPH Staff entered two boats:

"In it to Win it" & "Rag N Boat Man"

Congratulations to "In it to Win It",

who won the women's final and have the trophy to prove it! The event raises vital money for the Warwickshire & Northamptonshire Air Ambulance charity so they can continue to provide helicopter support for medical emergencies across the county.