

YOUR VOICE



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

Issue 25 | Spring 2023

HOUSING NEWS FOR
TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS

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Welcome

to the spring issue of Your Voice



It's been a busy start to the year at NPH and I'm delighted to

introduce the 2023 spring edition of Your Voice.

Our regular newsletter is full of useful information about your housing services and you'll get to meet more fellow residents who have fantastic stories to share – it's your newsletter and we wouldn't be able to produce it without your contributions.

Before you get stuck in to the latest edition, I wanted to share that this will be my last as Chief Executive. I'm stepping into retirement after eight wonderful years at the helm of NPH – and many more in housing.

Together, we've achieved great things, as Northamptonshire Partnership Homes continues to go from strength-to-strength, and I'm confident we will continue to do so under new leadership.



And with that in mind, I'm pleased to announce that Steve Feast has been appointed as NPH's new CEO. Steve's career spans more than 25 years in housing and has worked with ALMOs, local authorities and housing associations across the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the North West – you can find out more on p15.

I'll look back at my time at NPH fondly (you can read some of the highlights on p12) and I know the organisation will be in safe hands, as it continues to support residents living in West Northamptonshire.

A fond farewell.

Mike Kay
Chief Executive



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES**

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Let us know by completing this form:
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**IF YOU'RE WORRIED
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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

Nothing quite like a Spring Clean

March saw millions of people take to their communities across the UK for The Great British Spring Clean – and we joined NPH residents in and around West Northamptonshire to help do our bit too.

Litter-picking is a simple way to make an immediate and visible difference to your area - with 85% of people joining in with the national campaign saying that taking part made them feel more pride in their local community.

At a pick in Spring Boroughs, colleagues were joined by West Northamptonshire Council, Veolia UK and local Wardens plus councillors Danielle Stone and Jamal Alwahabi.

Thank you to everyone who took part in litter picks across Northampton.



16 bags of litter were collected at this pick in Spring Boroughs.

It's Cooking Good...

NPH residents have been brushing up on their cooking skills and meeting new friends at the 'Cooking Good' cookery skills workshops.

We've partnered with Cooking Good CIC since June last year to provide people with the skills to make healthy, nutritious food on a budget.

Everything is provided and our Resident Involvement team offers support for people

who need help getting to the venue. No previous cooking experience is necessary either. In fact, the course is well suited to beginners – however, anyone is welcome.

We hope to run these courses again in 2023/24.

To register your interest, please call the Resident Involvement Team on **01604 837 836** or email **getinvolved@nph.org.uk**



Vegetarian pizzas were on the menu at this Cooking Good workshop in our Leicester Street Community Hub in March.

More homes to benefit from energy efficiency retrofit

More people will be able to benefit from a range of measures that help make their homes more energy efficient after we were awarded £1.25 million in Government funding.

An example of some of the first homes to benefit from the Whole House Retrofit project.

The money's come from Wave 2 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) to retrofit external wall insulation, loft insulation, better ventilation and new windows and doors to another 101 older solid wall council homes in the town over the next two years.

It's part of our 'Whole House Retrofit Project' with West Northamptonshire Council.

We're focusing on homes typically built in the 1920s and 1930s, which are often more expensive to heat and energy inefficient – with an EPC rating in Band D or worse – due to the way they were built.

We'll also install a smart device, which will keep an eye on the internal air quality, temperature and humidity.

It's the third time we've been awarded the funding as part of SHDF for the retrofit project, taking the total investment in Northampton from this fund to over £10 million, since it started in 2020.

Previously, hundreds of older homes in the St James, Kingsley, Kingsthorpe and Abington areas of the town received energy efficiency upgrades as part of the project.

Mensah lives with his family in a terraced house in Northampton, one of the first homes to have benefited from the retrofit project. He said:

"Since the work has been done, the house has felt a lot warmer and more comfortable."

"We've already seen our energy bills go down but it's not just about bills, the refreshed exterior of the house is beautiful and the new windows and doors make a big difference – we're now very proud of our home."

"We're so grateful to have received the improvements and would absolutely recommend the retrofit measures to our friends, neighbours and family."

NPH will write to residents living in homes that are eligible for these improvements in the next few months with more details.

Make Things Right



Everyone deserves a home that is safe, secure and well-maintained – and anything less is unacceptable.

It's the basis of the Government's new 'Make Things Right' campaign and something that NPH, as a responsible social landlord, takes very seriously.

We strive to deliver an outstanding service to our residents, however we know things sometimes go wrong and can lead to complaints. We use this feedback to help enhance our services and the way we do things.

'Make Things Right' aims to help make more social housing tenants aware of how they can make a complaint if they're unhappy with how things have been handled when it comes to issues such as health and safety, customer service or repairs and maintenance.



The Government has launched the 'Make Things Right' campaign.

Addressing wait times for non-urgent repairs

Currently, there's a high demand for repairs appointments, leading to longer wait times than usual for non-urgent repairs. However, you can continue to report these in the usual way including on our website at www.nph.org.uk/report-repair

We're working hard to reduce this wait while we continue to make sure we keep residents who need emergency repairs safe. To help reduce current wait times for non-urgent repairs, we're introducing a new way of working, alongside a new repairs policy.

We've included a summary below to give you an idea of how we approach repairs and how you can help us too:

1. We will prioritise any urgent situation – call us on **0300 330 7003** for urgent repairs
2. We rely on information from residents to help explain the situation, from both a property and people perspective – the more information we have available to us (including photos), the easier it will be for us to understand what's required
3. We're working with more sub-contractors to help us meet the current demand for non-urgent repairs
4. Please report your repair straight to us, rather than through other routes such as a legal disrepair claim. It will mean our budgets are spent on repairs rather than legal fees
5. We've carried out a full review of the management and response to Damp, Mould and Condensation, and have created a useful guide (see page 8) about what causes it and what you can do to help

What happens if I do need to make a complaint?

Occasionally things can go wrong and, if you do have a complaint, please get in touch with us first and we'll do everything we can to put things right. You can find our complaints policy on our website at:

www.nph.org.uk/give-us-feedback

If you're not happy with the response, you can escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, who will investigate fairly and impartially.

You can find out more about the Make Things Right campaign and more information about how to escalate a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, here:

www.gov.uk/social-housing-complaints



We will prioritise any urgent situation - call us on **0300 330 7003** for urgent repairs

Repairs Roadshows

We've been running a Repairs Roadshow on our Community Bus recently, as another opportunity to report a new repair or find out about an existing one.

In April and May, we visited areas including Ecton Brook, Lumbertubs, Semilong, Kings Heath, Hardingstone and Kingsthorpe.

And in June, we're visiting areas including Briar Hill, Camphill, Spring Boroughs, St James and Rectory Farm. You'll find the full details on our social media sites nearer the time and we'll also send an email or text to residents in the run-up to each visit.



HELP ON HOW TO STOP DAMP, MOULD & CONDENSATION



What causes it?

Many of us will unfortunately experience damp in our homes at some point.

These are some of the main causes of damp, mould & condensation in the home.



Excess moisture



Rain seeping in from damage to the roof



Rain coming in from damaged window



Building defects



Poor ventilation through the property



If your home isn't getting enough heat

What you can do:

There are some easy things you can do around your home to try to prevent damp and mould.

We recommend trying all of these things to actively prevent mould build-up.



Always cook with lids on pans



Keep bathroom and kitchen doors closed and open windows



Dry clothes outside on an airer



Wash areas affected by mould



Dry windows and windowsills



Use your heating system to keep your home as warm as possible



Need to report damp and mould?

Get in touch with our team on 0300 330 7003 or report online at www.nph.org.uk/report-repair

More new homes

We're continuing to build more quality new homes for NPH residents across West Northamptonshire.

Here's a quick update about some of our current projects.

New Southbridge Road

Work on 28 new one and two-bedroom apartments on New Southbridge Road have started on site – we expect to be finished during spring 2024.

Castle Street

We'll shortly start construction work on 24 new family homes in Castle Street, Spring Boroughs. We anticipate welcoming the first residents in late spring 2024.

Roof Gardens, Spring Boroughs

A revised planning application for 102 apartments at Roof Gardens has been submitted to West Northamptonshire Council. Subject to approval, work on this project will begin after 24 family homes are completed in Castle Street.

Avenue Campus

We're building 170 new homes right next to the Racecourse. Contractors have been busy with demolition of the former university building, as well as removing asbestos and sorting out the diversion of utilities, so that construction can begin this summer.



A reminder of our plans for Avenue Campus, near The Racecourse.



HAPPY TO HELP

PROJECT UPDATES

Have you heard of Happy to Help?
It's a social enterprise subsidiary of NPH and aims to improve the health, wellbeing, economy, environment and availability of opportunities for the benefit of NPH residents and their communities.

This means helping some of our residents with essential items and support to help them through a period of crisis, when referred by NPH housing support or financial inclusion teams.

It provides volunteering and training opportunities through our Paint Shop in Kings Heath or can give small grants and support to residents and community groups through the Communities Fund. Happy To Help can also offer support with gardening and odd jobs around the home.

We can't believe it's turning five years old this summer, so we thought it was a good time to share a few highlights of what it's achieved in the last 12 months.

Highlights in 2022/23

Between April 2022 and March 2023, Happy to Help has:

Installed 9 defibrillator units into community hubs

After an NPH resident had the idea to install a defib unit on their local community hub, the team worked with East Midlands Ambulance Service to identify nine hubs in areas where units were not already accessible to the community.

The defibs are installed in locked cabinets that can be opened by an access code, which would be shared by the 999 operator, allowing members of the community to use the units in an emergency.



Supporting 164 households via our handyperson service

Our handyperson service means there is someone trustworthy you can call who doesn't charge a fortune. Jobs are subsidised and the cost based on the job you need and your individual circumstances.

Last year, the service supported 164 households with tasks such as putting up shelves, building flat-pack furniture, decorating and attaching curtain poles, amongst other things.

Find out how to book our handyperson service on our website: www.nph.org.uk/handyperson-service



Diverted 4,194 litres of surplus paint from landfill

We've teamed up with Community RePaint to collect reusable, leftover paint and sell it to members of the community for a much reduced price. You can pick up a tin of paint for as little as £1-£2, saving the paint from going to landfill.

In 2022/23, The Paint Shop has diverted 4,194 litres of surplus paint from ending up in landfill and has also helped 558 households to decorate on a budget.

Thanks to everyone who has donated paint over the last 12 months or has visited The Paint Shop on Park Square in Kings Heath.



Some of the other projects Happy to Help has supported over the last year include:

- Buying 15 bleed kits and cabinets for the community
- Distributing £45,200 of Household Support Fund vouchers on behalf of the Community Foundation
- Supporting local foodbanks with £10,500 of funding
- Funding 28 community projects and initiatives, benefitting around 840 people

**Watch
this
space!**

We'll share more details about how we'll be marking Happy to Help's fifth birthday shortly.



GARDENING SERVICE

NEED HELP WITH HEDGE CUTTING?

Great news! Our Gardening Service is able to help with hedge cutting jobs this summer.

Our Gardening Service is subsidised and provides you with peace of mind. Contact us to request a quote by phone, email or online form.



Cost and information

- £15 per hour
- £60 for half a day
- £100 for a full day
- We require a 10% deposit for half and full day jobs
- Customers can make a pay-what-you-feel donation on top if they wish, which helps us to keep the prices low



How do I book?

Fill in the form on our website:
www.nph.org.uk/gardening-service

Or call our friendly team on **01604 837 836**.

0300 330 7003

happytohelp.nph@nph.org.uk



A trip down memory lane...



As Mike Kay hands over the keys after eight years at the helm, we asked him to share his highlights of his time at NPH...

I was asked to provide a short summary of my key highlights, which to be honest is a bit of a tall order, as there's been so many, but here goes...

Our brilliant staff

NPH staff are brilliant. We have a great culture here, but it's not by accident, and one of the ways we grow the teamwork is through our Employee Forums.

I have great memories of these - like the time Frank Bruno hosted with me or the time the Reverend Richard Coles (once in The Communards) presented; experiences I'll never forget.

My first Board meeting

It was actually two months before I formally joined – an eight-hour round-trip and a 4-and-half-hour meeting, getting home at 2.30am. Definitely an interesting introduction!



NPH's first new build development at Little Cross Street...

Our first ever new build

The opening of our first-ever new build housing scheme at Little Cross Street is certainly up there!

The development of 18 family homes, known as Little Cross Terrace, nine flats on Little Cross Street and nine maisonettes on Moat Place, were officially opened on Friday 21st December 2018 with residents and Andrew Lewer MP.



When Mike Kay met Frank Bruno...

Our first award

Our Procurement Team scooped our first award at the Chartered Institute of Procurement Supply Management Awards back in 2017. They were named winner of the Best Procurement Consultancy Project for work with a construction firm. Exciting stuff!

And we're very grateful to have been recognised for lots of other awards since then too.

Our fantastic tenants

And last, but not least, being able to support our fantastic tenants – you're the reason we exist today, and it's been an absolute pleasure and privilege for me to be part of your journey.

I wish you and NPH all the very best for the future.



Protect the things you love with home contents insurance

No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen, so home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind.

NPH is responsible for insuring the building you live in, but not the things you own inside your home.

We've teamed up with an insurance provider who offers a policy specifically designed for tenants. It's low cost and has some special features you won't find elsewhere.

They also offer:

- Flexible payment options
- New for old cover
- Low minimum sums insured
- A range of cover options

Friendly advisors from Thistle Tenant Risks and Ageas Insurance Limited can explain how it all

works and help you make an informed decision about whether you'd like to sign up.

The Crystal Insurance scheme can offer home contents insurance cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

You can call Thistle Tenant Risks on **0345 450 7286** or visit their website at **www.crystal-insurance.co.uk** for more information.

There's also the opportunity to request a call back so you're not waiting on the phone.

The small print

The Crystal Insurance Scheme is a product name arranged and administered by Thistle Tenant Risks, a trading style of Thistle Insurance Services Limited. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority Firm Reference Number 310419. Registered in England under No. 00338645. Registered office: Rossington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is part of the PIB Group.

Getting to know... Joan Jones

Joan Jones (right) with her good friend Pauline (left).

At 99-years-old, NPH resident Joan Jones continues to enjoy an active social life, so we sent our reporter Emma Matthews to find out the secret to staying healthy and happy...

Sitting in the bright communal lounge at her Lakeview home, I was introduced to Joan by her long-term friend Pauline.

"Joan has always been good at keeping active, she shows us younger ones a thing or two in the keep fit class, organised by our neighbour John," said Pauline.

Joan was born in Northampton. Growing up, she lived in the town centre where she recalls going to a mixed school: *"In those days, getting something new like a pair of shoes was a very rare, big treat,"* Joan said.

She spent much of her adult life taking care of her five children and looking after the household with her late husband John, who served in the army before becoming a butcher.

"Just before the Second World War began, I worked as a photo re-toucher, editing photos by hand," added Joan.

Next to the window overlooking the beautiful gardens at Lakeview, Joan explained how she's

been friends with Pauline for 18 years and how they've enjoyed many good times together.

And what's the secret to a long and happy life, according to Joan? She said: *"My life has been about people. I try not to judge others and I try to be kind. I like helping people where I can because, like others, I've had my ups and downs."*

"I love being in the company of friends and have always enjoyed the keep fit classes. Being a full-time mother to five children meant I was always running around and doing the housework."

Joan says she loves living at Lakeview where she has made new friends and she shares a garden with her neighbour. She also enjoys coffee mornings with her neighbours.

Nowadays, Joan loves spending time in town at her favourite place - Caffè d'Italia on Fish Street.

If, like Joan, you want to get involved in community activities near you, find out what is happening at NPH's community hubs by contacting the resident involvement team on **01604 837 836** or email **getinvolved@nph.org.uk**

Introducing NPH's new CEO

Earlier in this edition, Mike Kay shared news that he's retiring from NPH and that Steve Feast has taken over as Chief Executive from 1st May. We spoke to Steve before his first day to find out more.

Thanks for taking the time out to have a chat with us Steve and welcome to NPH.

Could you tell us a little about yourself first of all?

I grew up in Barnsley, I'm married and have two teenage boys. I love music, seeing bands and watching football - I've also been a qualified junior football coach for 10 years. I love travelling and exploring new places.

You've worked in housing for a while now, haven't you?

I've spent my entire career working in housing including ALMOs like NPH for 15 years and housing associations for 10 years, doing everything from rent collection to housing patch manager and area manager to a regional manager and a deputy chief executive.

What do you think is the most important aspect of what you do?

Always putting the resident first. It's important to look at how we continuously improve our services for residents and how we provide more housing. I'm certainly not afraid to embrace technology, as long as it helps residents' experience.

What attracted you to working at NPH?

It's a fantastic organisation already and I'm really looking forward to building on the strong foundations that have already been put down here. As an Arms-Length Management Organisation (or ALMO), there's a real focus on improving services, which is really important to drive forward.



Quick fire questions

Here's a few answers to quick fire questions we didn't want to leave out...

Favourite film: The Usual Suspects

Favourite music: Rock (Stone Roses and Radiohead particularly)

Favourite book: Anything by Ken Follet

Superpower would most like: To see into the future

On the bucket list: Follow F1 around the world





Spring Wordsearch

There's a spring theme to our wordsearch.
Can you find all 10 words?



L	A	M	B	S	A	B	U	Q	M	C	N
B	D	P	W	G	C	U	H	D	A	L	O
O	W	A	L	K	S	N	V	A	J	I	R
H	J	T	N	M	K	N	D	F	L	U	T
O	U	Z	S	F	P	I	E	F	N	Q	H
F	D	T	P	Q	O	E	S	O	E	B	A
K	R	Y	R	V	X	S	B	D	U	W	M
Y	W	F	I	K	E	N	A	I	O	T	P
S	H	E	N	G	C	J	R	L	G	B	T
I	Z	L	G	P	L	P	Q	S	R	C	O
M	A	Y	E	N	K	F	K	Y	V	S	N
H	X	A	R	C	J	C	U	B	F	B	I
A	Z	S	U	N	S	H	I	N	E	M	Y
N	W	Q	V	T	I	K	P	A	R	K	G
B	L	O	O	M	H	A	X	Z	E	D	P

- ☐ Bloom
- ☐ Bunnies
- ☐ Daffodils
- ☐ Lambs
- ☐ May
- ☐ Northampton
- ☐ Park
- ☐ Spring
- ☐ Sunshine
- ☐ Walks

We'll share the answers on our
Facebook page, **NPH Connect**, shortly.

