

# NPH Voice

Issue 1 » Summer 2015

Housing news for Northampton tenants & leaseholders

Helping our  
**young people  
grow**

Getting  
**involved**

**Meet Mike Kay -**  
The big interview

Property  
**improvements**



# Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of **NPH Voice**. This quarterly magazine is ultimately to give you, our tenants, a voice.

Whilst we may borrow the odd page here and there to update you on important issues and developments in your communities, we want the majority of the content to come from you. Each edition should be crammed with fun, interesting and important content – things that matter to you and most importantly, stuff you actually want to read!

I hope you enjoy the feature about Youth Work across Northampton and the fantastic work that local charities do to help on page 4, which gives real insight into how partnership working has helped people in the community. Elsewhere, we speak with the new Chief Executive of NPH – an interview carried out by Oscar – one of our tenants.

As you will see, there are also some updates about ongoing property improvements on page 10, how to get involved more in your community and lots of other great stuff.

I'm sure you'll find something of interest in this issue and if you have any suggestions or contributions for future issues please contact [voiceeditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:voiceeditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)

## Best wishes

NPH Voice Editor  
Northampton Partnership Homes



Reader Friendly

## Large print?

If you would like a version of this magazine in large print, or another language, please call **0300 330 7000**



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# Helping our **young people grow**

NPH work with numerous partners that provide support services for tenants and create and run projects. In this issue we thought we would cast some light on 2 projects specifically for youths in the community.

## Goldings Youth Project

This newly formed youth group is held every Tuesday between 5 and 7pm at the NPH Community Hub @ Goldcrest Court and is free of charge to young people aged 8-12. The project, funded by Northants Community Foundation, Growing Together and NAYC, was delivered in partnership with a charity called Free 2 Talk.

## Free2Talk

Free 2 Talk is a local charity that provides support for young people and for parents in Northampton. They offer individual support for young people that may be in difficulty and need to talk to someone to help work out their next steps in life.

For parents they offer support with partner relationships and parenting strategies to help with any challenges they may be having with their children.

Free2Talk run trips, community events and projects shaped for young people, by young people. They have regular weekly free sessions in Blackthorn, Bellinge, Lings, Lumbertubs and Goldings and are looking to spread their coverage all the time. Activities are enjoyable but at the same time provide the quality support young people need to grow into confident adults.

Volunteers are always welcome, so if you want to give something back whilst gaining new skills, please contact [jodie.low@free2talkkcic.org](mailto:jodie.low@free2talkkcic.org) for more information or check our website [www.free2talkkcic.org](http://www.free2talkkcic.org).

## Princes Trust – community room refurbishment project

NPH Community Development Officers have been working in partnership with the Princes Trust to refurbish two community hubs this year at Leicester Street & James Lewis Court. The project is part of a 12 week course run for young people aged 16-25 years who are not in education or work.

It offers young people the chance to take part in a community project and to learn about fundraising, project planning, decorating and garden landscaping, plus how to work as part of a team. They also complete a work placement and receive interview training with Barclaycard, gaining a qualification by the end of the project - some have even ended up in employment.

All Partners involved in these projects are





## The big interview

Mike Kay, the new Chief Executive of NPH, gave up some time for tenant Oscar Woodcock to delve into his life and learn a little more about himself.

*Q Can you tell us a bit about who you are and where you are from?*

I am Mike Kay, CE of NPH and I am a 54 year-old Yorkshire man born and bred in Harrogate. I am married with 2 daughters aged 19 and 23

*Q How did you do at school?*

I left St Aidan's Secondary Modern School at 16 to work in the building sector as a trainee architectural technician gaining an ONC and HNC in building studies at York College, working during the day and studying in the evening. I also obtained a RICS professional qualification, taking me a further 4 years, to become a Chartered Surveyor and then progressed to an MBA (Master of Business Administration) from Bath University – again all whilst working.

*Q What did you want to be when you were a young boy?*

I wanted to be a footballer and used to like the sport but now it has changed beyond all recognition with diving and where tackling has all but disappeared from the game and with the players being paid more than brain surgeons it is simply ridiculous.

*Q Do you have any hobbies?*

I like horse racing, spending time with my family and walking our dog Oto. Oto is a rescue dog who was

found abandoned in a bus station in Turkey and with Oto being the Turkish word for 'bus depot' we thought it highly appropriate to give him that name.

*Q What is your favourite holiday destination?*

For a city break I'd have to say Venice and anywhere in Italy would be fine for a holiday but I'd have to plump for the Greek island of Kefalonia as my favourite destination.

*Q What are your tastes in music, TV and films?*

I don't really go for music and television - especially the soaps but I do like films of the action genre. My favourite film would be Gladiator.

*Q What really annoys you?*

People letting me down; saying that they'll do something then not doing it (NPH staff members - you have been warned!)

*Q If you could have a one-to-one with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?*

Martin Luther King because he had a dream, a vision of how he thought the world should be. We spend too much time looking back on how things used to be and not enough time thinking of the future and what we can make it.

**Do you want to conduct The Big Interview in our next issue? Email us at: [voiceditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:voiceditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)**



# Building better communities

If all tenants, their household members, guests and visitors treated others living in their neighbourhood fairly, and in a way that they would like to be treated themselves, neighbourhoods would quickly become better places to live.

## Anti-social behaviour

At NPH we are fully aware that anti-social behaviour can be the bane of many a tenant's life. Working closely with Northampton Borough Council and the newly created Neighbourhood and Estates SIP, we are doing all we can to help reduce its impact in all communities. (See page 9 for more information on SIPs).

### What can you do?

Get to know your neighbours – and work together to become a closer, better community. If you experience anti-social behaviour in your neighbourhood speak to your neighbours and see if you can deal with it as a group of like minded people – although we would advise you to be careful approaching a large group of people.

## Reporting it

You can always report anti-social behaviour by speaking to your housing officer or by visiting our new website and clicking on the 'Report anti-social behaviour' button on the homepage.

## Being a good neighbour

**“ Being a good neighbour means being respectful and considerate to others but also being tolerant of the lifestyle of others, especially when they are different to your own”.**

There may be occasions when relations with neighbours can become strained because of disputes over issues such as car parking, dog barking or overgrown gardens. Wherever possible we would advise you to try to speak to each other directly in order to deal with neighbour disputes.



"The referral to Mediation was the best thing I could have done - we went in on our own, and then left together!"

"My housing officer was very straight, always keeping me updated with information. She took action right away and I think that was very good because some people need to be told what they are doing wrong".

If you do have a dispute with your neighbour that you have been unable to resolve directly with them then you can contact your Housing Officer who will try to help. They will talk to both you and your neighbour and, if appropriate, arrange mediation. In order for mediation to work both parties need to be open-minded and want to find a solution.

To demonstrate a commitment to being a good neighbour we encourage all new tenants, and where appropriate existing tenants, to sign a Good Neighbour Agreement.

You can download one of these from the document library on our new website – just search for **'Good Neighbour Agreement'** at [www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](http://www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)



# What's been happening at NPH

This year we really have been very busy! We have restructured – taking on new Board members and staff to ensure we deliver on our promises. We have moved offices – our staff have left the Guildhall and moved to Westbridge Depot.

But most importantly we have worked really hard to change the culture regarding the way we engage with tenants and involve them in what we do.

## Tenant involvement and empowerment strategy (TIES)

The recently completed tenant involvement and empowerment strategy sets out how NPH aims to increase tenant empowerment which will ultimately enable tenants to work alongside NPH and ensure the delivery of high quality tenant services.

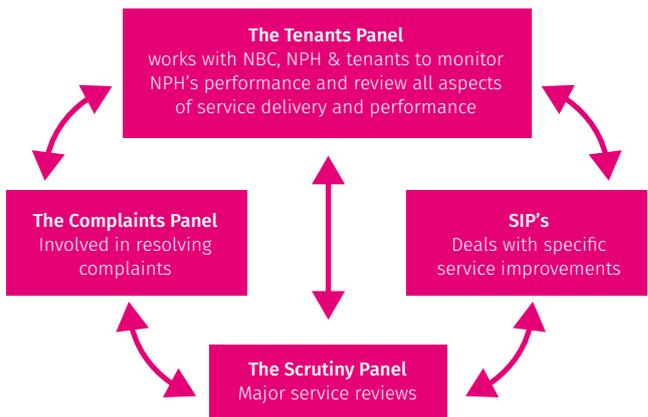
## What does that actually mean?

Well, it means tenants will be given as many opportunities as possible to be active partners in shaping NPH's Housing Service with the NPH Board as the decision-maker. TIES will ensure that tenants are genuinely involved and empowered. In practice, this means staff and tenants working alongside one another as equal partners.

## How does it work?

There are a variety of opportunities where you, the tenant, can get involved:

- The **Tenant Scrutiny Panel** will take an in-depth look at NPH's strategy and policy.
- The **Service Improvement Panels** seek to improve operational aspects, of day-to-day service delivery.
- The **Tenant Complaints Panel** will help to resolve individual complaints and may act in the role of a 'Designated Person' under the Localism Act.
- The **Tenants' Panel** is an over-arching tenant forum. It will receive reports from the other Panels, and will work in partnership with NPH and will pass on to the relevant Panel any issues they need to deal with. It will assist and inform NBC's formal monitoring of NPH's performance.



## Brand new website launched

As part of our commitment to move towards a more tenant focused organisation we have launched our brand new website. For 'phase 1' we have created a site that is easy to navigate around and that focuses on giving you key content that is important to you. In some places you are still directed back to the NBC site, but 'phase 2' will change that and we will have a fully stand alone site where you can even pay your rent and view your statements.

Visit [www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](http://www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk) now

### SIPs in more detail

The SIPs are panels made up exclusively from tenants, that enable you to raise concerns with NPH about the services and service standards delivered by NPH, and to find solutions that ultimately lead to happier tenants and better communities.

Once a month each of the panels currently in operation meet with NPH to discuss the most recent challenges and concerns that tenants face and how to best deal with them. The SIPs focus on the following service areas:

- Access to Services SIP
- Neighbourhood and Estates SIP
- Voids SIP
- Rents and welfare SIP
- Neighbourhoods and Estates SIP

Want to be involved in the creation of the Scrutiny or Complaints panel or Want to join a SIP or the tenants panel, then simply call 01604 837836

## Wary of the web? Get free help

NPH and Northampton Borough Council are continually striving to provide a more efficient way to access all the services on offer to you, so if you are confused by computers, intimidated by the internet or wary of the web, worry no more! Working closely with Barclays Digital Eagles help is now on hand via drop in sessions we are holding at the Guildhall one-stop-shop where you will be taught how to:

- Set up a community group
- Set up an email account and keep it safe
- Use search engines effectively
- Do your shopping online
- Stay safe when using the internet
- Use YouTube and watch TV and films online
- Use Skype to save money on phone calls

These sessions are available 9:00 -16:00 Monday - Friday on the following weeks:

**27th August, 1st October, 29th October and 26th November**

In-depth classroom training can be arranged and will take place between 10:00-12:00 or 15:00-17:00 or 18:00-19:00 on 27th August or 1st October and 29th October, in the IT training room at The Guildhall

Call Customer Services on 0300 3307000 to discuss your requirements or to book onto a free training course

## What's been happening with you?

### Keepmoat School safety visits

"Many thanks for your visit last week. The children really enjoyed your talk and we felt it raised their awareness of the dangers around building sites"

– Elaine Ford Deputy Head Teacher Ecton Brook Primary School

Decent Homes contractor Keepmoat recently held some site safety talks at Ecton Brook Primary School. The talks were to promote awareness of the dangers of playing on building sites. The children aged between 5 and 11 watched a video on site safety and then played an interactive game which included guessing the hazard and dressing up in protective clothing. The children have also been asked to design their own safety posters – the winners will be picked by the Decent Homes SIP in May.

# Property improvements



## New energy efficient outdoor lighting

We are currently carrying out a wide scale programme across the Borough to refurbish existing communal lighting, installing new, energy efficient LED lighting.

With LED lighting we are able to ensure there is sufficient, controllable lighting in our blocks of flats, whilst reducing the energy consumed and reducing the maintenance costs as there are no lamps to replace or time clocks to alter or change. The installations have been designed to provide optimum lighting throughout the day and night.

To avoid introducing lots of different fittings and adding to costs, a single light design that suits all the environments is being installed which has a built in dawn till dusk sensor and a 'corridor function' sensor which automatically detects movement.

## Community centre improvements

The users of Market Street Community Room are really delighted with their new kitchen; it makes a real day to day difference to their activities at Market Street, particularly the youth group who have now started cooking sessions, learning about nutrition and healthy eating.

The works were carried out by contractors Keepmoat and Lovell, who have both done an amazing job. We were impressed by their level of communication with us, which resulted in an exceptional result. The tenants who use these rooms now have kitchens that are fully functional, clean, inviting and a place that they are happy to be in.

A massive thank you to all contractors and their staff for the work they carried out on this project.

The light works at 10% output all of the day and will increase to 100% for a timed period when the natural light fades and when somebody uses the corridors. This means the lights deliver energy efficiency while still providing good illumination.

The lighting has running costs at approximately 40% of that of the previous fittings and will last considerably longer than the old lighting even with the 10% on at all times facility. Where required some of the lighting also incorporates an emergency facility so if there is a power failure in the block they will illuminate for up to three hours by means of a built in battery.

We have identified all of the communal areas across the Borough that have not yet had their lighting improved since 2011 and are aiming to complete the programme by February 2016. You will receive a letter 5 days prior to the works starting.

**If you have any queries or concerns regarding the new lighting please call the contact centre on 0300 330 7003**



## Do you have what it takes?

**We are looking to recruit tenants and leaseholders to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.** The role of panel members is to investigate different aspects of the housing service and recommend improvements to NPH.

### What's in it for you?

Getting involved will give you the opportunity to improve your knowledge and develop your life and work skills whilst being part of the decision making process in the delivery of NPH services.

**Call The Customer Engagement Team now on 01604 837836** – they can answer any questions you have and send you an application form.



## WIN £1,000! Don't miss out

Pay your rent by Direct Debit and you could win £1,000 in shopping vouchers!

Ever wondered what you would do with £1,000? Well, 2015 could be the year you find out as NPH is joining a national campaign run by BACS, the not-for-profit organisation behind Direct Debit in the UK.

The housing rents initiative encourages people to switch to the ease and convenience of Direct Debit, with a fantastic prize of £1,000 in Love2shop vouchers up-for-grabs. To be in with a chance of winning you simply have to be a new or existing Direct Debit payer - it really is that easy!

Direct Debit is a simple and convenient way to pay regular outgoings, such as your rent, with payments taken automatically so you don't have to worry about falling behind with your bills. Once set up you can relax, safe in the knowledge that you won't forget those important payments.

No queues, no filling out forms each month, simply set the Direct Debit up and that's it, your rent will be collected each month - just think of the time you'll save. And, thanks to the Direct Debit Guarantee, you are protected in the unlikely event of an error being made with a payment.

**To be in with a chance of winning this fantastic prize, switch to paying your housing rent by Direct Debit before 30 October 2015.** To set up your Direct Debit simply call Customer Services on **0300 3307003** or visit the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall - it will only take a couple of minutes.

## Photography competition

To all you keen photographers out there... We are holding a competition, so why not grab your camera and get snapping!

The theme is **Scenes of Summer** and our winner's photo will be published in the next edition of NPH Voice in October. In addition, whoever receives the top prize will not only get **£20 worth of Love2Shop vouchers**, they will also be invited to be one of our **official photographers at one of our future events**.

Judging the competition will be: Chris Webb (tenant editorial panel member), Shirley Davies (Executive Director, Housing Management), Kirsty Edmonds (NPH event photographer).

Send your digital images to:

**[voiceeditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:voiceeditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)**

All entries must be received by **July 31st 2015** and we will announce the winner in the next edition, good luck!

## Feedback

Many of you will have completed customer feedback forms, some of you may have had reason to complain about our service and some may have complimented our service and or staff performance... But have you ever wondered what actually happens when you give feedback to us?

When we receive a complaint we investigate, look for a resolution and inform the complainant of the outcome. This in itself is important but it doesn't stop there. We use the feedback to try to improve our service, we look at trends in the types of complaints, assess where we failed and incorporate the information into future training and staff briefing sessions to try to prevent the same mistake being repeated.

**If you have any suggestions, compliments or complaints, you can contact us as follows:**

Email - **[customerfeedback@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:customerfeedback@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)**

Phone - **030 0330 7003**

Face to Face - **One Stop Shop, Guildhall, Northampton**

Write - **Northampton Partnership Homes, The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE**

# The fun stuff

## Wimbledon word search

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

ACE  
 BASELINE  
 CHAMPIONSHIPS  
 CREAM  
 DEUCE  
 FAULT  
 GAME  
 HAWK EYE  
 LOB  
 LOVE  
 MIXED DOUBLES  
 QUALIFIER  
 RAQUET  
 RUBBER  
 STRAWBERRIES  
 UMPIRE  
 WILDCARD  
 WIMBLEDON  
 WINNER

### Enter now and WIN a £20 Love2Shop Voucher

Please return your completed entry no later than **July 31st 2015** to [Customer Engagement, Northampton Partnership Homes, Westbridge Depot, St James Mill Road, Northampton, NN5 5JW](#)

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

#### Contact us:

Customer Engagement, Northampton Partnership Homes,  
 Westbridge Depot, St James Mill Road, Northampton, NN5 5JW

t: 0300 330 7003 e: [participation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:participation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)



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