

# NPH Voice

Issue 3 » Winter 2015

Housing news for Northampton tenants & leaseholders

**Proud**

to be a tenant

**Christmas traditions**

around the world

Training

**update**

What's going on in

**the community**





# Welcome

As 2015 draws to a close, it's time for the third edition of *NPH Voice*. We had lots of fun producing this festive edition, especially hearing about different Christmas traditions from our tenants and staff. If you like a challenge, then why not have a go at our Christmas Quiz and see if you can bag some shopping vouchers to spend in the January sales!

We've included a couple of important messages amongst the fun stuff – advice to help you protect your home as well as improving fire safety in your communal areas. There is also great news about what NPH have been doing to improve your communities.

We are excited about the new year at NPH and will continue our work with you to improve housing services for all. If you are interested in getting involved, read on for details of two new panels – complaints and scrutiny.

If you have any feedback or suggestions for *NPH Voice*, we would love to hear from you – please contact [voiceditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:voiceditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)

Remember – you don't have to wait for the next edition to find out what's going on at NPH, visit our website at [northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](http://northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)

## Best wishes

NPH Voice Editorial Panel



## Large print?

If you would like a version of this magazine in large print, or another language, please call **0300 330 7003**



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# PROUD TO BE A TENANT

At NPH we are proud of our tenants and we want everyone to know it! If you are proud to be a NPH tenant, we want to hear from you and help you tell your story.

The NPH Voice editorial team recently had the privilege of spending some time with two of our long-standing tenants. May we introduce you to Lewis Sander and Albert Brawn.

## Lewis Sander

Lewis has lived in council housing all of his life and has this year, celebrated a very special anniversary.

As a teenager, Lewis was diagnosed with a heart defect and when his health deteriorated in 1988, the consultant calmly told him that “we can fix it and put another one in”! Two and a half years later, while Lewis was playing bowls with his friends, his pager beeped and he knew that the time had come. He made his way to London and underwent a very successful heart transplant operation. 25 years later, Lewis’ heart is still going strong. In fact, during a recent check-up, his doctor commented that Lewis’ arteries are so strong his heart could easily last another 25 years!

Lewis, who has also received a kidney transplant and recovered from cancer had to give up his job in car sales, but has kept himself busy by helping others in the community. Lewis was a volunteer driver for elderly people attending medical appointments for ten years and has helped on the committee

of two local football clubs. Lewis is also the tenant representative at Eleanore House and volunteers for the Alzheimers Society.

Lewis is proud to be a NPH tenant who looks out for other people and values his community.



They have enquiring minds! They work together as a group to get things done! Their mission...to make sure that our services deliver and provide value for money. They are...

## The Scrutineers!

Do you have what it takes to join their ranks?..





### Albert Brawn

Albert has always been a social housing tenant and, like Lewis, has also recently celebrated an incredible anniversary – his 104th birthday!

Albert has fantastic stories to tell and is full of happy memories of his “lucky life with his lovely wife Lilly”.

Albert’s son Don visits him every day and Albert reminisces about the fun they had driving to clubs and pubs all over the country, when Don was performing his singing and tap dancing acts.

Albert has lots of interests – he loved playing football and even had a trial for Northampton Town. Although he didn’t get signed, he remained a fan and held a season ticket for many years. He played tennis, loved camping and was his wife Lilly’s biggest fan as she was also a singer – talent must run in the family!

Albert’s career was in the Northampton leather trade where he made armaments for the troops in WW2.

Albert is proud to be a NPH tenant and still takes part in the community at the amazing age of 104.



If you would like to get in touch and share your story, you can contact the communications team on **01604 838136** or e-mail [comms@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:comms@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)

## We are now recruiting NPH tenants to become members of our new and exciting Scrutiny Panel.

The Scrutiny Panel will work closely with NPH staff to review our performance and the feedback that we receive from customers. They will then make recommendations for improvement based on their findings.

Don’t worry if you’ve never done anything like this before – you’ll receive training for the role and support throughout your involvement with the panel.

**Think you’re up for the challenge?**

**Come and find out more at one of our Scrutiny Open Day sessions:** Wednesday 27th January 2016, 2pm – 4pm or 6 pm – 8pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall



## Put your home at the top of your Christmas list

**Christmas is a wonderful time of the year but it can also be the most expensive. With decorations, presents, food and parties, it can end up costing a small fortune!**

It's not surprising that every year some people opt for a quick fix at Christmas and miss rent payments to use the money for other things. It doesn't take long to

get into debt and can seem to take forever to repay. **If you are struggling to make ends meet, please get in touch by contacting us on 0300 330 7003.** We can help to ensure that you are getting all benefits that you are due to, help you prioritise your outgoings or refer to other agencies for specialist support. Choosing not to pay is another matter – we will take action and you could ultimately lose your home.

## Great news



We have improved the direct debit service and you can now choose any day from 1st – 28th of the month to pay your rent. You can download a copy of the form by visiting our website at [northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](http://northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk) or contact the rent accounting team on **01604 837104**.

# The big interview

## Mike Gallucci,

Property Maintenance Team Leader  
and Employee Board member



### Tell us how you came to work at NPH?

I was born in Wellingborough and because my birthday falls on 31st August, I ended up leaving school at the age of 15 to start my apprenticeship in carpentry and joinery. I did a bit of work on building sites before realising that there was money to be made doing ground works, so I got a job travelling round the country digging road trenches for cable TV ducts. I then had a car accident that aggravated previous gymnastics injuries and went into sales, which wasn't really the job for me, so I returned to what I knew best – maintenance – on a self-employed basis before joining NPH as a tradesperson in 2012 – and I've never looked back.

### Hang on a minute, did you say gymnastics injury?

Yes, I was a County gymnast as a lad. Bet you didn't know that!

### What does working at NPH mean to you?

I love the team spirit at NPH and the sense of purpose we have in providing a service to people who really need it. I feel lucky that I get paid for doing something valuable for others.

### You're also an Employee Board member – how has that been so far?

It's been a steep learning curve but I'd like to think I've helped make a difference – not only for tenants but being able to share the views of employees to allow them to be considered.

### So, that's work – what about play?

Mainly spending time with friends and family – I love cooking for them.

### What's your speciality?

Well, I lived with my Italian grandmother way back when I was doing my apprenticeship so I can cook a mean cannelloni. She wouldn't write her recipes down for me though – I had to learn by watching her cook.

### What about entertainment?

I love a good thriller like Criminal Minds and CSI. I'm a music fan and wouldn't rule out any genre but reggaetón is a particular favourite – it's a blend of reggae, dancehall, hip-hop and electronica originally from Puerto Rico.

I like sport and follow Juventus – I saw them play in Turin in the early 80's – my first football match!

### What's your favourite place to visit?

Easy question – it's Celle di San Vito in the South of Italy, where my dad comes from. It's the only place I feel completely at home.

### Who are your dream dinner party guests?

Pitbull (I love it that he doesn't take himself seriously and is out to have fun!), Gianluigi Buffon (goalkeeper and captain for both Juventus and the Italian national football team) and my whole family – it would be great to get them all in one place for dinner!

### Do you have a dream job?

I'm happy where I am, doing what I do.



## Christmas traditions around the world

As the festive season approaches, we want to wish all of our tenants and leaseholders a very Happy Christmas and New Year! Our staff and customers have been talking to the NPH Voice editorial team about how they celebrate Christmas, we even managed to get them to part with some of their favourite recipes.



### Agnes Piatek-Bednarek

Wigilia is the traditional Christmas Eve supper in Poland. After the First Star appears, family members begin the celebration with a prayer and breaking of oplatek - the Christmas wafer.

This symbolises the old

Christian tradition of sharing bread and wishing each other good fortune in the new year.

The traditional Wigilia meal in Poland includes twelve meat-free dishes based on traditional and seasonal products available in winter. The feast includes red borscht (beetroot soup), carp, herrings, perogi (filled dumplings), cabbage rolls and deserts such as piernik (gingerbread) and makowiec (poppy seed cake).

We like to practice the tradition of leaving an extra place-setting for an unexpected guest. This celebrates the virtues of hospitality and inclusion. The empty seat is left free just in case a traveller, family member, or friend knocks on the door. After Wigilia it's customary to attend the Roman Catholic midnight Mass, Pasterka.

It's then time to open gifts left by Santa Claus under the Christmas tree, before spending Christmas day feasting with the family. So, after Wigilia, we are lucky to still have two more days to celebrate!

*We've added Agnes' recipe for traditional borscht to the budget recipe section of our website - we hope you enjoy it.*



### Aleksandra Kostina

Russian Christmas is mostly celebrated on January 7th, according to the Orthodox calendar. New Year's Day precedes the Russian Christmas and is often celebrated as a more important holiday. However, some Russians observe two Christmases and even two New Year's - the first Christmas

observed on December 25th, and the second New Year's observed on January 14th. Any public trees, like the Christmas Tree in Moscow's Red Square, will also serve as a symbol of the New Year.





## Sonia Godoy

My South American friends and family know how to party and Christmas is no exception! It's the Chilean summer when Christmas falls, so it's extremely hot! Much like we do here, Christmas trees and lights are put up everywhere.

The celebration starts on Christmas Eve, when families gather together for the festivities and the barbecue is lit to cook a variety of meats with

plenty of different salads to go with them. Chilean families tend to be big, so food is served buffet style.

There is dancing and laughter and toasts are made with our traditional Chilean cocktail "Colo de Mono", which translates as Monkey's Tail and is made with coffee, cream and fire water. We exchange gifts at midnight and there is plenty of dancing, especially of La Cueca – Chile's national dance. On Christmas morning, children often find an extra little treat from Santa under the Christmas tree.

*If you fancy trying a new cocktail this Christmas, you can find the recipe on our website at [northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/recipes](http://northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/recipes)*

Two important traditional Christmas dishes are Куття (Kutia), a sweet grain pudding and Взвар (vzvar), a beverage made out of stewed fruit. Kutia is a symbol of remembrance of the deceased, while Vzvar is served to celebrate a birth. Serving both dishes on Russian Christmas eve is a celebration of the birth, life and death of the Saviour. Kutya and Vzvar are usually served at the beginning of the dinner on Сочельник (Sochelnik) or Christmas Eve.

Father Frost - Дед Мороз (Ded Moroz) brings presents to children and is always accompanied by his Granddaughter (Snegurochka). On New Year's Eve children hold hands, make a circle around the Christmas tree and call for Ded Moroz. We do a lot of dancing and celebrating.

*If you're fed up of Christmas pud, why not try Kutia this year?*

## Recipe for Kutia

### You will need:

- 400g cleaned wheat berries
- 200g of poppy seeds
- 80g honey
- 120g sugar
- 120ml hot water
- 65 grams of walnuts
- 65 grams of pecans

### Here's how it's done:

Wash the wheat berries in cold water and soak overnight in six pints of water.

The next day, bring the water to a boil then simmer for 4 to 5 hours, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. The wheat is ready when the kernels burst open and the fluid is thick and creamy.

Chop the poppy seeds in a food processor or grinder and set aside. Mix the honey, sugar and hot water – then add to the chopped nuts and wheat. You can, if you wish, add more honey to taste (optional).

Your Kutia can be refrigerated for up to two weeks.



# Fire Safety

If you live in a block of flats you may have noticed new signs adjacent to the communal door. The signs make it clear that items must not be stored in communal areas and if any are found they may be removed without notice. This measure is being taken as part of the NPH commitment to fire safety, which requires us to remove obstructions or fire risks within communal areas.

We need to ensure that we have taken reasonable precautions to protect the safety of our residents. We are aware of incidents in other parts of the country where items stored in communal areas have caught fire with sometimes tragic consequences.

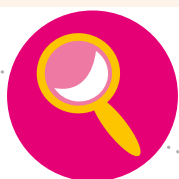
We expect all communal areas to be kept clear and free of obstruction and would ask that you report any items you may see to us immediately by telephoning us on 0300 330 7003.



Your Housing Officer and Estate Services Officer will be vigilant and ensure that fire safety is not compromised. If items are left in communal areas they will make every effort to identify the owner. If this is unsuccessful, a sticker will be applied to advise that the item will be removed.

If we remove any item then we reserve the right to dispose of it or to place it in storage for collection. If we store any item then we may charge for this before we release it.

If you live in a block of flats, we would ask that you play your part in keeping all communal areas clear and free of obstruction – it really could be a matter of life or death!



## Training update

NPH and the Rotary club are working in partnership to deliver three brand new training courses. All are free of charge to tenants and leaseholders and travelling expenses can be provided. There are also places left on a number of our other free courses, full details are listed at [northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/learn-something-new](http://northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/learn-something-new). **Booking is essential – you can contact the Customer Engagement Team to book your place on 01604 837837.**

### Job Club

This pilot Job club starts on Saturday February 13th and will provide support and guidance covering everything from CV writing to preparing for an interview.

Come along and make use of the business knowledge and experience that members of the Rotary Club are keen to share with you.

**Date - Saturday 13th and 20th February**  
**Time - 10:00 – 12:00**

**Venue - Eastfield Close Community Hub, Eastfield Close, Duston, NN5 6TJ.**

### What to do when someone dies

This seminar will provide practical advice to tenants and leaseholders on how to manage their affairs when they lose someone close to them.

The session will equip you with the knowledge required to deal with the practical issues encountered when you suffer bereavement.

**Date - Wednesday 17th February (start time TBC)**  
**Venue - The Liburd Community Hub , Corner of Whilton Road/Holdenby Road, Kingsthorpe, NN2 7SB**

### Starting your own business

Have you ever been tempted to start your own business but been daunted by the administration? Then this seminar is for you! You will be given an overview of tax returns, VAT returns and business plans.

**Date - Wednesday 10th February (start time TBC)**  
**Venue - The Liburd Community Hub , Corner of Whilton Road,/Holdenby Road, Kingsthorpe, NN2 7SB**



## Reduced energy bills for hundreds of tenants

NPH is currently installing solar photovoltaics (PV) to a number of homes around Northampton. The project is already underway and will continue into the new year. The good news is that due to Government funded Feed-in Tariffs, the project will pay for itself in approximately 12 years.

These tariffs are due to become less favourable in January 2016, which means that we are working to a tight deadline to complete as much of the programme as possible before the end of the year. Our contractors, Keepmoat and Low Carbon Exchange are doing a great job on site to deliver this challenge!

### If you've never heard of solar PV, here are some facts!

- **Solar photovoltaics (PV) capture the sun's energy using photovoltaic cells.**
- **These cells don't need direct sunlight to work. They are still able to generate electricity on a cloudy day (an essential feature considering the Great British weather!)**
- **PV cells are made from layers of semi-conducting material, usually silicon. When light shines on the cell it creates an electric field across the layers. Of course, the stronger the sunshine, the more electricity is produced.**



- **The cells convert the sunlight into electricity, which can be used to run household appliances and lighting.**
- **The photovoltaic systems generate free electricity that can be used to power lighting and home appliances.**

PV systems provide benefits for residents and the natural environment. They can help to tackle fuel poverty by reducing typical electricity bills by around £200 per year. Carbon emissions could be reduced by 0.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually per property.

We will be focussing our efforts to install PV in areas of the greatest deprivation, where households are at higher risk of being in fuel poverty.

We have started the programme with properties designed for elderly people for this reason – we hope to help combat the risk of our elderly residents struggling for fuel this winter.

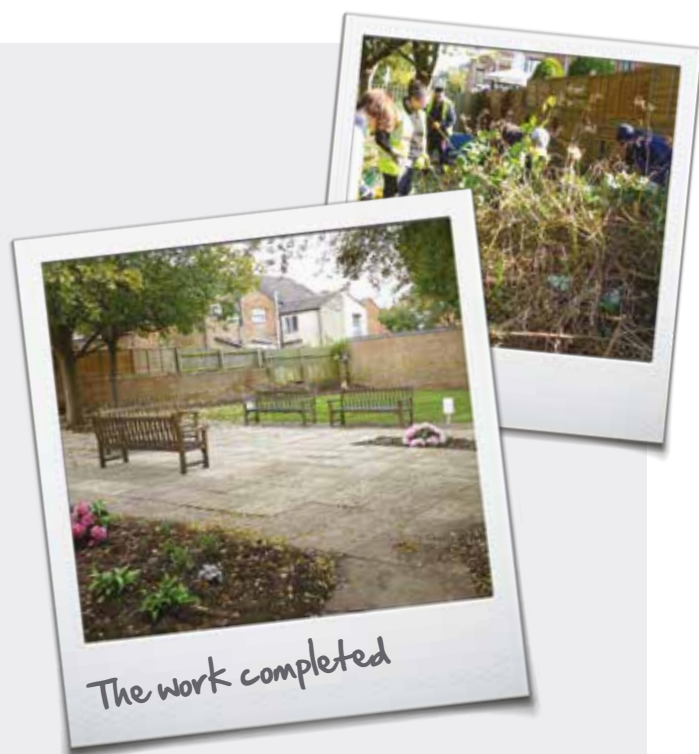
# What's going on in our community

Our community development officers like to keep themselves busy – from digging up brambles to managing refurbishment projects – they are always looking for opportunities to establish partnerships and enrich your communities. Read on for a few examples of the fantastic work that has already been completed and watch this space for more to come!

## Leicester Street Community Hub and Garden

The community hub at Leicester Street has been completely redecorated thanks to the hard work of a group of young people. As part of the Prince's Trust development programme, the team raised funds to buy materials and carried out all of the work themselves. This not only resulted in improved facilities for the whole community but gave the young people an opportunity to learn new skills.

Residents of Leicester Street also have use of a community garden, which had unfortunately been neglected and left to become overgrown. NPH teamed up with Ricoh UK, The Hope Centre and Zimwomen to provide 75 volunteers over five days. They all got their hands dirty and threw themselves into the huge task of clearing 6 foot high brambles, levelling the ground, laying turf and planting borders to create a beautiful space for the whole community to enjoy.



## Delos Community Café

After another refurbishment courtesy of the Prince's Trust development programme, the community café has become a permanent fixture at Cardigan Close community hub. Delos provides support to people with learning difficulties and the community café (run as a social enterprise) offers personal development opportunities to service users.

If you would like to sample the delicious cakes on offer and meet with other people in your community, the café is open to all from 11:30 – 13:30 every Wednesday. We hope to see you there!

## Goldings Youth Project

With funding from Northants Community Foundation, Growing Together and Cllr Meridith's empowerment fund, treasury services from Blackthorn Good Neighbours and youth work from NAYC and Free2Talk – this is an example of true partnership working.

The project is open every Tuesday from 17:00 – 19:00 at Goldcrest community hub. It's free to attend and young people have a range of activities available to them – they can learn to cook, play board games with friends, access computers for gaming and learning, take part in arts and crafts sessions, go on trips to local parks, use the tuck shop and there are plans to buy a pool table. Education sessions have been set up following consultation with the young people, where they can ask for help with homework or simply have a quiet space to concentrate.

Three of our young people have recently completed NAYC's emerging leaders training and were presented with certificates to celebrate their achievements.

The youth project also offers opportunities for children and young people to meet the team at Free2Talk who provide targeted support when issues such as safeguarding, poverty and bullying are identified.



Prince's Trust



Winners certificates



A new 'emerging leader'



I.T. facilities for all

## Eastfield Close I.T. Suite

When a team of NPH officers were relocated, we were able to make space for an I.T. suite to be installed. This enables us to deliver free I.T. training to tenants and leaseholders – you can find out more about the training programme by visiting our website at [northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/learn-something-new](http://northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/learn-something-new)

Are you involved in a community initiative in your area? If so, we want to hear all about it - contact us on [comms@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk](mailto:comms@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)

# Making it count

## The feedback

On 2nd November NPH held its first tenants' conference at the Park Inn! We were delighted to see so many of you at the event, as well as a number of partner organisations who held exhibition stands to raise awareness of the support services they offer locally. The theme of the day was "Making it count" – with the arrival of Universal Credit for some benefit claimants in Northampton, we wanted to take the opportunity to reassure you that help is at hand.

### **We asked Keith Bennett, Chair of the NPH Tenants Panel, to say a few words about how he found the day...**

"Thanks to the hard work of the Engagement Team, the first Northampton Partnership Homes tenants' conference was a success, with over 50 tenants who had never attended an engagement event before.

After Chief Executive Mike Kay addressed the Conference, there were presentations on a variety of money related subjects. These short talks gave useful information in light of the introduction of Universal Credit, due to take full effect in Northampton in the next 18-24 months.

A hard hitting drama production highlighted the financial difficulties that can be experienced and the ways to deal with the difficulties – be strong and seek advice – you're not alone.

A third of the 'first time' attendees have expressed an interest in joining the Tenants' Panel, the Service Improvement Panels or Sub-Committees so I look forward to working with them soon.

After 'post-it note' questions were answered by NPH Officers (mostly one – well done Shirley Davies!) the conference closed and tenants were given the opportunity to further visit the exhibitors stands and speak to NPH Management and staff."

"Very informative and interesting. The staff were professional and friendly"

"All the information provided was very helpful. Thank you!"

Customer  
Engagement  
Team



"Very good, relevant and enjoyable. I did not know that Universal Credit existed until today"



We're looking for tenants and leaseholders to work with us as part of our

## Complaints Panel

**Are you...** Passionate about good customer services? Able to see things from another person's point of view? Fair, objective and able to challenge constructively? Good at absorbing and interpreting information?

As a panel member you'll hear complaints, look at evidence and make sound, reasoned judgements. You'll work with NPH staff, acting as a 'critical friend' to help find solutions to complaints and make recommendations that could prevent future complaints occurring.

### Want to find out more?

Come and find out more at one of our Complaints open day sessions:

**Wednesday 27th January 2016, 2pm–4pm  
or 6 pm–8pm in the Holding Room at the Guildhall**

# The fun stuff

## The NPH Christmas Quiz

### Win £20 of shopping vouchers

The winner will be the person with the most correct answers. In the event of a tie, a winner will be chosen out of the hat! The deadline for receiving completed entries is **Friday 4th January** and we'll announce the competition winner in the next issue of NPH Voice.

To submit your entry simply go to our website and click on the 'competition' image on our homepage. Postal entries received on or before the closing date will also be accepted. **Good luck!**

Please send postal entries to: **Customer Engagement, Westbridge Depot, St James' Mill Road, NN5 5JW.**

### Round 1. General Knowledge

1. What date is the Feast of Stephen, when Good King Wenceslas looked out?
2. Which country presents the Christmas tree that stands in Trafalgar Square?
3. Which Christmas carol was written in Austria by Joseph Mohr and Franz Gruber, and first performed in 1818?
4. The first Christmas King's Speech was made by which king in 1932?
5. How many times has Cliff Richard had the number one single at Christmas; 3, 5 or 7?
6. When did it become illegal for shops bigger than 3000 sq ft to open on Christmas day; 1904, 1954 or 2004?

### Round 2. Film and TV

1. To Hull and Back and Miami Twice were special Christmas episodes of which TV show?
2. Which 1984 film starring Zach Galligan and Phoebe Cates involves an unusual Christmas present?
3. The action of which film takes place during the staff Christmas party at Nakatomi Plaza?
4. Which character's mental health issues were the central part of the 1986 Christmas Day episode of Eastenders?
5. Which 1946 film tells the story of an angel called Clarence trying to stop a man committing suicide on Christmas Eve?
6. Which 2011 animation follows the attempts of Santa's younger son to deliver a forgotten present?

### Round 3. Food and drink

1. The turkey originates from which continent?
2. Which British cheese can only be made in 5 dairies, none of which are in the village that the cheese is named after?
3. Pork pies made in which Leicestershire village have European Designation Protection, meaning pies made elsewhere to the same recipe can't use the name?
4. Which Christmas fruit loaf originates in Milan?
5. Which country is the biggest producer of Brazil nuts; Columbia, Bolivia or Brazil?
6. Which confectionery assortment was first sold in 1936, and takes its name from a play by J.M Barrie?

#### 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)



**NORTHAMPTON  
PARTNERSHIP HOMES**