

Housing news for
tenants & leaseholders



NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

voice

ISSUE 12: WINTER 2018



Also...

INTRODUCING NPH'S NEW APPRENTICES

8

MEET THE MONEY SAVING EXPERT

11

NOMINATE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

16



Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of NPH Voice.

In this issue we welcome NPH's first Trades Apprentices. It's also the return of the Community Hero Awards, so please nominate your amazing neighbours and community groups. Save the date for NPH's Tenant and Leaseholder Conference (Thursday 11th April 2019) and find out about a new fund to give community groups a helping hand.

Alongside this edition and the training brochure, you will find a leaflet explaining how we are reviewing the way NPH listens and responds to tenants and leaseholders. I would encourage you to read this and share your honest opinions with the team at NPH, in the free post envelope enclosed or do it online – www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/volunteer-with-us.

Thank you to all contributors to this year's final issue of the Voice. I would love you to share your own articles for future issues.

On behalf of the NPH Communications Panel, I wish you all the best for the festive season and a happy, healthy new year.

Thanks, Keith

Keith Bennett – Tenant Chair Service Improvement Panel (SIP) – Communications



NPH's Contact Centre Christmas opening hours:

Monday 24 December – Closed
Tuesday 25 December – Closed
Wednesday 26 December – Closed
Thursday 27 December – Open as normal

Friday 28 December – Open as normal
Monday 31 December – 9am – 4pm
Tuesday 1 January 2019 – Closed



NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

Voice Editor, Northampton Partnership Homes,
Westbridge Depot, St James Mill Road, Northampton, NN5 5JW

T: 0300 330 7003

E: voiceeditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk



@NPH_news



www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

02

NPH Voice Issue 12 Winter 2018

At a glance...

In your Neighbourhood

4

A festive theme for this season's issue as we speak to volunteers and tenants giving up their time to help others!

Housing Advice Sessions

6

They're back! Find out when and where you can meet your Housing Officer.

NPH's Apprentices

8

Meet our brand new trades apprentices and hear how they're settling in.

Cuckooing

10

Spot the signs of cuckooing and who might be at risk in your neighbourhood.

The Big Interview

11

Now that Universal Credit has fully arrived in Northampton, meet our money advice expert Jonathan.

Large print?

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

0300 330 7003



Reader Friendly

Notice board

Save the Date

The Tenant and Leaseholder Conference 2019 is fast approaching. Keep free Thursday 11th April 2019. More information to follow in the next issue.

Boost for Social Housing

The government has lifted the borrowing cap on Council Housing Revenue Accounts, meaning local authorities can now borrow more money to build new homes. Housing Associations have also been promised £2 billion to build new homes.

NPH is working with NBC to build more new homes in Northampton.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit went live in Northampton on 14th November for all new claimants. You will need to be online to apply for it and have a bank account.

Take a look at our website for tips and information:

www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/universal-credit

To talk about your rent, phone our Rent Income Team on 0300 330 7003.

Social Housing Green Paper

The government published a Green Paper on Social Housing on 14th August. The Green Paper is about making sure homes are safe and decent, residents are empowered, and that stigma is tackled.

At NPH we committed to engaging with our tenants and leaseholders from the beginning. We also think it's important to keep up with the times. For this reason, and in light of the green paper, we are currently reviewing the way we run our customer engagement service.

Check out the leaflet enclosed in this issue to find out more.

Winter Fuel Payment

You may be eligible for money off your energy bills this Winter with the Government's winter fuel payment.

If you were born on or before 5 November 1953 you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. Visit: www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment.

Reminder

There are 2 advantage* weeks in December.

If you're ahead with the rent, you don't need to pay a thing. Staying in credit (in the plus numbers) means you can save a little each month for when you need it most.

*Advantage weeks are the weeks starting 17th and 24th December. **If you are in rent arrears or have a payment method set up, you will still need to pay your rent during these weeks.**

In your Neighbourhood

Tony Barrett

– A friend of the park!



Tony, who founded the 'Friends of Victoria Park Group' wants to make sure his local park is a nice space for everyone to visit!

Earlier this year, Tony won a silver medal at 'Northampton in Bloom' and he is so proud of what he has achieved with his team of volunteers.

Whether he's litter picking, campaigning for better facilities or putting in planters, Tony wants to see Victoria Park be the best it can be.

If you see Tony around, make sure you say hello and give him a hand to help keep the park tidy.

We salute you Tony!

The Goodwill of St Barnabas Social Club!

For over 7 years, Iris Virgo and the lovely people of the St Barnabas Social Club have been giving out Christmas hampers for those who need them most.



The group lead by Iris, John and Barrie love to help their members and people all over Spring Boroughs. This year, they will be giving out around 30 hampers filled with tea, coffee, jam, cheese and crackers, tins of food and lots of other bits to brighten someone's day.

Iris, who formerly worked in the care sector, wants to make sure that nobody is forgotten, especially at this special time of year.

“ I do it because it helps people, and it's nice to help those that need it most. I want people to know that someone does care about them and they don't have to be alone. ”

If you would like to join a social club or get involved with local groups in your area, get in touch with the friendly NPH team on 01604 837836 and we'll help find the right place for you!

Christmas at Emmanuel Church Foodbank

As we approach the busiest time of year for Northampton Foodbanks, it is important to remember the service that their fantastic volunteers deliver.

At Emmanuel Church alone, they helped over 20 people last Christmas and they are expecting around double this year.

Simon Burgess, tenant panel vice chair, and his fellow volunteers will be giving up much of their time over the festive period to help with a variety of tasks;

- Packing Christmas parcels, including an advent calendar for children

- Being at the Foodbank to support service users and answer any questions they may have
- Collecting donations from Weston Favell Shopping Centre and other stores around the town
- And taking part in Carol singing to help raise more funds

Apart from just giving out food parcels and basic household items, Emmanuel will also help with topping up gas and electric accounts to help people stay warm over the festive period.



Simon wants anyone who might be worried about coming to the Foodbank to know that they will get a warm, non-judgemental welcome.

“We are here to help anyone who needs us, we want all of our users to feel happier and more confident after seeing us.”

The Emmanuel Church Foodbank are always looking for new volunteers. If you have time and a smile to share, please get in touch on 01604 402150 or contact the NPH Customer Engagement team on 01604 837836 to find out more.

In honour of a much loved colleague

In September, staff raised over £400 for Cynthia Spencer Hospice by holding an “Office Olympics”. The event paid tribute to a former colleague who passed away after spending their final days at the Hospice.

The Office Olympics challenged staff to a series of light hearted games during their lunch breaks, designed so that everyone could get involved. The “Olympic” events included Bean bag in a bucket, a general knowledge quiz and Bat the Rat.





NPH Housing Advice Sessions

Your Housing Officer will be holding an 'advice session' every month at a central location where you can go and speak to them about any housing related need.

- **Do you have a question you'd like to ask your Housing Officer?**
- **Need to talk about your tenancy?**
- **Need some advice paying for your rent and service charges?**
- **Do you feel unsafe in your neighbourhood?**

These monthly sessions are the perfect time for you to let your Housing Officer know.

They are of course free to attend and you don't need to book. All you need to do is turn up and take a seat!

We want you to feel comfortable and happy in your home and neighbourhood, and we hope these sessions will be a good chance for you to share any concerns with us. We also love good news, so if there is something great going on in your neighbourhood, come along and let us know.



For more information on your Housing Officer and their advice sessions, please visit:
www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/your-housing-officer

Natalie Simmons

Lings, Lumbertubs, Overstone Lodge, Southfields & Standens Barn

Brookside Community Hub, Billing Brook Road, Northampton, NN3 8NQ

1st Tuesday of the month 9-11am

Yvonne Gatu

Arlbury Road, Woodfield, Blackthorn, Rectory Farm, Great Billing and Little Billing, Cherry Orchard, Goldings

Blackthorn Children's Centre, Longmead Court, Northampton, NN3 8QD

1st Wednesday of the month 1-3pm

3rd Wednesday of the month 1-3pm

Alexis Newlin

Abington, Thorplands, Thorplands Brook, Kingsley

Thorplands Community Cafe, 28 Holmecross Road, Thorplands, NN3 8AW

2nd Monday of the month 10-12pm

Abington Library, Lindsay Ave, Northampton, NN3 2SJ

1st Friday of the month 2-4pm

Emma Hall

Bellinge, Billing Road, Great Houghton, Town Centre, Weston Favell

Market Street, Exeter Place, Northampton, NNI 4BG

1st Friday of the month 10-12pm

Bellinge Community House

1st Tuesday of the month 10-12pm

Duty Housing Officer

Collingtree, Dallington, Duston and Hopping Hill, Hardingstone, Hunsbury Heath, Rye Hill, Wootton

Eastfield Close Community Hub, Duston, Northampton, NN5 6TJ

1st Wednesday of the month 10-12pm

Montague Crescent Community Hub, Hawksmoor Way, Lodge Farm, Northampton, NN5 7RG

Last Tuesday of the month 1-3pm

Liz Percival

Spring Boroughs, Spencer

Spring Boroughs Community Hub, St Peters House, Bath Street, Spring Boroughs, Northampton, NNI 2SH

Last Thursday of the month 1:30-3:30pm

Spencer Dallington Community Centre, Tintern Ave, Northampton, NN5 7BZ

1st Thursday of the month 10-12pm

Dan Bush

Briar Hill, Camp Hill, Kingsthorpe Hollow

Briar Hill Community Hub, The Springs, Northampton, NN4 8SX

2nd Tuesday of the month 1-4pm

Karl Owen

Cottarville, Eastfield, Ecton Brook, Headlands, Lakeview

Eden Close Community Hub, Lakeview, Northampton, NN3 6NS

1st Thursday of the month 2-4pm

Duty Housing Officer

Kingsthorpe, Obelisk

St David's Church, Eastern Ave, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, NN2 7QB

1st Thursday of the month 9:30-1pm

Pippa Grainger

Sunnyside, St James

Hinton Road Community Hub, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, NN2 8JL

1st Thursday of the month 10-12pm

Kathryn Lomas

Kingsheath, Paget House

Free2Talk Hub, Park Square, Kingsheath, NN5 7LQ

Tuesday 6th November 2018 1:30-4pm

Tuesday 11th December 2018 1:30-4pm

Tuesday 15th January 2019 1:30-4pm

More dates to be added in the New Year.

Tania Mills

Delapre, Far Cotton, Semilong

George Nutt Community Hub, George Nutt Court, Far Cotton, Northampton, NN4 8JP

1st Wednesday of the month 10-12pm

Alliston Gardens Youth and Community Centre, 2 Adelaide St, Northampton, NN2 6AR

1st Friday of the month 10-12pm



You're hired!



Meet our new Trades Apprentices

Finn, Harry, Jordan, Jake, Peter and Callum started with NPH in Autumn as apprentices in the repairs team.

They are the first ever apprentices to join our repairs team.

Finn and **Callum** are training to be carpenters;

Harry and **Jordan** are training to be plumbers;

And **Jake** and **Peter** are training to be electricians;

The super six are currently being mentored by experienced members of the repairs team. They are learning the tools of their trade and getting to meet tenants at repairs appointments.





Their apprenticeships include one day a week at college where they are working towards a formal City & Guilds Trade qualification.

Jake and Peter:



“Everyone has been so welcoming. We're really enjoying the practical work and having the opportunity to practice.”

Lee Burdett, Repairs Manager at NPH:



“The new recruits are already offering something different to the team. We're upskilling from within. This will really benefit our tenants in the years to come.”

Get work experience in construction

Are you looking to learn a trade or work on a building site? NPH and ENGIE offer work experience to residents who are interested in starting a career in construction. Contact us on: comms@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

ENGIE – NPH's Major Works Contractor hire their first Apprentices



Engie also hired their first Apprentices in Northampton this year. The new members will be working on NPH's construction projects around the town. Many of the apprentices live in NPH homes.

Help NPH and Northants police keep your neighbourhood safe.

Knowing the signs of “cuckooing” really can help prevent the exploitation of vulnerable children and adults.

Cuckooing is how the police describe a particular type of crime that has become more common in Northampton and could be happening in your neighbourhood. It is where gangs travel from their home city to other locations and take over the homes of vulnerable people to use as a base for selling drugs. They usually befriend the resident or supply them with drugs to initiate the relationship before taking control of their home. Often people with mental health problems or addictions are targeted, sometimes the criminals simply target loneliness or isolation to take advantage of their victims.



Don't let drug dealers use your home!

Signs to look out for:

- Lots of people coming and going from a property
- Communal doors being wedged open
- Evidence of drug use
- Noise nuisance or disturbances
- Drastic changes in the way a neighbour is behaving

If you are concerned about a neighbour or what is happening in a property near you, call us in confidence on 0300 330 7003 or call 111.

Did you hear the one about the Parrot called Jazz who lived in Daventry?

Jazz's clever impersonation of a smoke alarm triggered an emergency visit from Northants Firefighters in November. When the fire service came, they found a parrot mimicking the sound of the alarm.

Although this is one way of raising the alarm, we always recommend checking the real smoke alarm at least once a month! It is the responsibility of the tenant or leaseholder to do this testing.



How to test your smoke alarm:

- Push and hold the test button on the smoke alarm for 5 seconds.
- Wait for the alarm to sound.



If there is no sound, your smoke alarm needs to be reported to NPH on 0300 330 7003.

Always take the time to test your smoke alarm and make a fire safety plan so you know what to do in the event of a fire. Planning ahead saves time and saves lives in the event of a fire.

THE BIG INTERVIEW

Meet Jonathan,
Support Officer and
“Money Saving Expert”

Universal Credit went live in Northampton in November. Many new benefit claimants of working age will receive Universal Credit over the coming months.

Jane, NPH Tenant,

“Jonathan was great.
He was like Martin
Lewis, the money saving
expert off the TV.”

My name is Jonathan Swann.
I'm a Support Officer at NPH.

Hi Jonathan. Tell us about your job?

I help tenants in need when they are struggling to manage their money. NPH's Rent Income Team signpost people to me when they fall behind with their rent.

What sort of help do you offer?

I help people make the most out of their income. I meet tenants at home

and we make a budget planner together to work out how much money is available. I talk to benefit workers to make sure that they are getting everything they are entitled to. I also talk to the utility bill provider – TV, phone, electricity, gas and water to see if they can save any money on a lower tariff. Often it's not just money advice that someone needs help with. I make sure they have the support they need from partner agencies.

Why is the help important?

There are lots of reasons why someone can fall into debt. What's important is accepting help when you need it. If your debt gets really bad and you don't pay your rent each month, you may lose your home. I'm here to stop that happening.

What is your favourite part of your job?

Helping people. I like problem solving too. I want to give people the power to overcome their issue. That's a nice feeling.

What would you say to people who are struggling to pay their rent?

It's a sensitive issue but don't feel embarrassed. If you can't do it alone, seek help from us or ask family and friends to help. If you're applying for Universal Credit, there are organisations out there that can help too. You can contact the Community Law Service in Northampton for debt advice on **01604 621038**, Northampton Borough Council's Money Advice Team on **01604 838578** or CAB (Citizens Advice) on **03444889629**.

Talk to NPH about your Rent:

Phone: NPH's Rent Income Team on **0300 330 7003**.

Visit: www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/benefits-and-housing

Planned Investment update

Take a look at Planned Investment projects going on near you.

Thorplands

Thorplands is one of this year's Neighbourhood Investment areas. Homes will be getting new cladding, windows and doors, and new rooflines (guttering, fascia and soffits). Check out the first homes in the area to receive the refurb!

Communal gardens are also being developed and we are improving the waste management options for flat blocks in the area.



Lakeview

We're building 45 new homes at Churchill Avenue. The development is almost complete. It includes accessible homes for people aged over 55, outdoor space and parking. We'll be welcoming our first tenants in the new year!



Scaffolding is down and stairways are about to be added to the outside.



Little Cross Street and Moat Place (Spring Boroughs)

New homes at Little Cross Street and Moat Place are almost ready. Tenants will soon be moving in to the 9 maisonettes and 9 flats on this street. Thank you to everyone in Spring Boroughs for your patience during the work.

St Katherines Court (Spring Boroughs)

St Katherines Court has been refurbished both inside and outside. This includes new cladding, winter balconies, bike and bin storage and attractive gardens around the outside of the building. The front entrance has been extended and is now a welcoming space.



East Hunsbury

We can announce work has started at Overslade House to turn the existing accommodation into family housing. We are building a fourth floor, creating accessible ground floor apartments and adding more parking.

Still to come...

We're consulting with residents in **Lings**, **Lumbertubs**, **Blackthorn** and **Lakeview** on planned investment to homes and neighbourhoods in the area for 2019.

For a regular update on works in the area, visit: www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/planned-works.

Happy to Help



Happy to Help is NPH's new community interest company, which has been set up to benefit people and neighbourhoods in Northampton. We have our own Board, including four tenant members, to make decisions and make sure that the work we do fits with our aim to "improve the health, wellbeing, economy, environment and opportunity for our customers and communities".

Community ideas fund

Happy to Help has a grant fund aimed at helping NPH customers and community groups carry on helping others in the community.

There are two ways the fund can help:

- Grants, awarded up to a maximum of £250 per financial year
- Purchasing items or services on behalf of your community or group

Your idea could benefit a youth club, community garden, sports or social club, school or something we haven't even thought of yet. As long as it benefits the local community, it's worth having a go. We can't wait to hear your ideas.

We can only make grant payments to groups, not to individuals. However, don't be put off! If you've got a good idea we may be able to support you to set up a new group.

How to apply

It's really easy. Head to www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/happy-help-cic and complete the online form. There are only a few questions and it won't take longer than five minutes. If you don't have internet access, give us a call on 01604 837026 and we'll pop a paper copy in the post.

If the small print is your thing, there's loads more information on our website.





Engagement Review



Our tenants and leaseholders help shape the housing service we provide. From the feedback we receive, to the volunteers who join our panels, your involvement keeps us on our toes and makes sure our services stay focussed around you.

Customer Engagement in the Housing sector is changing. We want to make sure we stay up to date and offer opportunity to everyone in our community. Getting involved is the way to do this! By telling us

what went right or wrong, or volunteering to view and critique our ideas, you are taking part in our decision making process. At the same time, you are making sure that your community is heard.

Sign me up!

If you have the time or a voice to share, we want to hear from you! Online, offline, face to face... there are loads of ways you could help us.

Inside this edition of NPH Voice is a leaflet called "Help us shape your services". You'll read about the ways you could get involved in NPH in the future. If you'd like to be a part of this, tell us. You can let us know what you want to be involved in or what we may have missed, by replying to us in the pre-paid envelope also inside. We'll be collecting all responses until Friday 18th January.

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

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

- ☐ CALLING BIRDS
- ☐ CHRISTMAS
- ☐ DAYS
- ☐ DRUMMERS
- ☐ FRENCH HENS
- ☐ GEESE
- ☐ GOLDEN RINGS
- ☐ LADIES
- ☐ LORDS
- ☐ MAIDS
- ☐ PARTRIDGE
- ☐ PEAR TREE
- ☐ PIPERS
- ☐ SWANS
- ☐ TURTLE DOVES
- ☐ TWELVE

For your chance to win **£20s in Love 2 Shop Vouchers**, can you find all the Christmas related words?

Best of luck with this winter wordsearch put together by NPH Tenant Oscar Woodcock. And congratulations to the autumn wordsearch winner, Terence Bradshaw!



*To be in with a chance of winning, send your completed wordsearch to NPH by Friday 11th January 2019. You can post your wordsearch to our address, email a photo of your wordsearch to the Voice Editors, or drop the wordsearch off when you next visit the Guildhall One Stop Shop.

Community Hero Awards



Returning for 2019 – Voting is open for NPH's Community Hero Awards.

Do you know someone who goes the extra mile to make their community a better place to live? Nominate them now for a Community Hero Award.

There are two categories you can choose from:

Great Neighbour

Have you got the best neighbours in the world?

- Is there a person who provides support and companionship?
- Who is it that regularly makes your day?

Community Champion

Who helps the community?

- Community Champions may run a community group, volunteer in the area or give up time to improve things for everyone.

How to Nominate

You can send your nomination to either:

- Online at www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/get-involved
- Give our team a call on 01604 837836
- Email us at participation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

We will be announcing 2019's heroes at the Tenant and Leaseholder Conference on 11th April 2019. The closing date for nominations is Thursday, 28th February 2019.

We will be contacting you to find out more information about your nomination after this date so please provide a telephone number or email address.

Your vote must be for an NPH tenant or leaseholder.

Your name:

.....

Your address:

.....

Your telephone number:

.....

Nominee name:

.....

Category: (tick below)

☐

Great neighbour

☐

Community champion

Tell us why they deserve the award?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



My nomination for NPH's Community Hero Awards is enclosed. Voice Editor, Northampton Partnership Homes, Westbridge Depot, St James Mill Road, Northampton, NN5 5JW. Email: voiceeditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

We can't wait to meet your community heroes! For full terms and conditions head to www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk