

Housing news for
tenants & leaseholders



NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

voice

ISSUE 5: SUMMER 2016



THE INVOLVEMENT
ISSUE

Also...

PROUD TO BE A TENANT 03 PLANNED INVESTMENT 04 OUR NEXT TENANT BOARD MEMBER 06

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the fifth edition of NPH Voice.

This edition is all about how you can get involved with Northampton Partnership Homes! We'll be introducing you to some of the fantastic tenants we already work with, and sharing with you ways to get involved in shaping your housing service.

Inside, you'll also find out about a great opportunity to join our Board as a Tenant Board Member (Pages 6 and 7).

If you have any feedback or suggestions for NPH Voice, get in touch.

Remember – you don't have to wait for the next edition to find out what's going on at NPH, visit our website at www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk.

Best wishes

*Hannah
& Alex*

"We will continue our work with you to improve housing services for all"



**NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES**

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Large print?

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

0300 330 7003



Reader Friendly

At NPH, we are proud of our tenants and we want everyone to know it. So, for the summer edition (on a wet and windy day in June!) we had the pleasure of visiting Catherine Dye in her lovely home.

Catherine has been a tenant in Kingsthorpe for three years and has truly settled in, having spent lots of time making her flat feel like home. After NPH launched, housing officer Kelly Freeman told Catherine about customer engagement and how easy it is to get involved.

Catherine, being a relatively new tenant, was interested in finding out more about NPH so decided to go along to her first Tenants' Panel meeting and has been a regular member ever since.

"I look forward to going to Tenants'

Panel meetings and I've met some really nice people. It's also a chance to meet the directors and managers of NPH – I like that they are open to any question they are asked and listen to what people have to say to them."

Catherine loves spending time with her two sons, two grandsons and the "grand-dog"! Although they keep her pretty busy, Catherine finds the time to look after the communal gardens for all the residents. With help from her friend and neighbour Sheila, the gardens look fantastic for everyone in her block to enjoy.



Catherine told us that she is proud to be a tenant because "NPH are doing a lot of work to improve our homes. I am lucky to have a home for as long as I need it, it makes me feel safe."

The big interview

How did you come to work at NPH?

I worked for a company that fits PV solar panels but when the changes to feed in tariffs were announced, they let a load of us go. It was just before Christmas, so I went to get some temp work through an agency and they offered me six weeks at Northampton Borough Council. 4 years later, I was still here and when NPH took over the management of the housing stock, I was offered a permanent job.

What do you like about working for NPH?

I like that I meet a variety of people and get to help them. It's a really rewarding job. I like the job satisfaction of turning up when there's a problem and leaving when it's fixed.

So, what do you do when you're not at NPH?

I have three children – 7, 9 and 12 years old so I love spending time with them. My partner owns a micro pub in Daventry called Early Doors. It's a converted shop, it only takes 45 people to fill it up and I really enjoy helping out there!

We usually ask for a dream dinner party guest, but based on your last answer, who would you most like to have a pint with?

I'd love Tom Kerridge to come for a drink at Early Doors – it would be a great endorsement.

Are you a music fan?

I love dance music but wouldn't rule out any genre – if I like something I'll listen to it. I'm liking Gorgan City at



Neil Hawkey
Electrician

the moment. I took the kids to Camp Bestival and got to meet Rob da Bank and DJ BBQ. The musical highlight was Slaves, they were brilliant.

Do you have a favourite holiday destination?

Well, I lived in Brisbane, Australia for a year and that felt like a really long holiday. While I was there I went to amazing beaches but nothing matches Cornwall for the coastline.

What's your pet hate?

I don't like it when people don't do what they say they're going to do.

If you didn't work at NPH, what would your dream job be?

I would love to own and manage a pub – a free house where I could sell my pick of beers!

Planned Investment update

The Planned Investment Team have been busy since the last edition of NPH Voice.

From a demolition at Lakeview to consultation on a massive improvement plan for Spring Boroughs, there really is never a dull moment! Read on for a quick round up of projects in your neighbourhood.

Spring Boroughs

If you live in Spring Boroughs you couldn't have missed our team in the area recently. We have been going door to door to hear your views and held a mobile consultation event on 24th May. 5 planning applications have now been produced with exciting plans to develop new homes in Little Cross Street, Lower Bath Street and Althorp Street and for a ground floor extension to St Katherine's Court.

The redevelopment will include 14 three bedroom and 2 four bedroom houses as well as 9 two bedroom maisonettes with private terraced gardens and 9 one bedroom apartments. St Katherine's Court and Cooper Street blocks will be upgraded to improve security and communal areas in addition to significant external renovations.

Full plans coming soon to our website: www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

Before and After, Little Cross Street



Before and After, St Katherine's Court



Lakeview House

This former care home has been vacant since it was closed in 2009. The site is now owned by Northampton Borough Council with NPH acting on their behalf.

After the asbestos was removed safely, demolition started. At the same time we have been assessing bids from contractors for building much needed housing for older people on the site.

Dover Court

The refurbishment of the existing flats will be complete by the end of June, with work continuing to add two extra flats to the block. All flats have been updated with new kitchens and bathrooms along with improvements to communal areas, storage facilities and security.

Broadmead Avenue and Eastfied blocks



We are upgrading the external and communal areas of blocks across these areas, making sure that all blocks are improved before our contractors leave the estates.



Eleonore House

It will be a Merry Christmas at Eleonore House when internal works will be complete to update the existing accommodation and add six new flats.

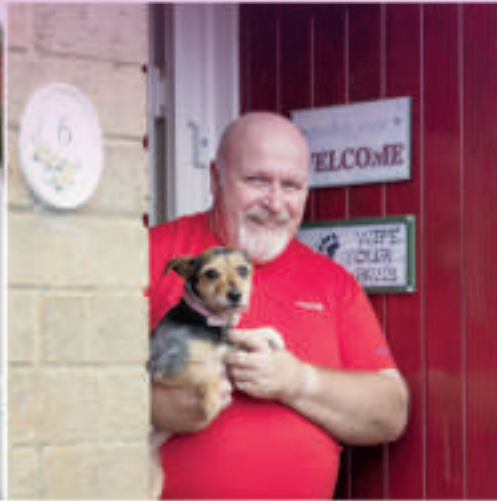
Abbey Street blocks

Works are going well at Abbey Street and will be complete late summer. Residents are looking forward to better insulation, new balconies, upgraded communal areas and new windows.



Get on Board with NPH!

Could you be our next Tenant Board Member?



**Are you passionate
about improving housing
services in Northampton?**

**Can you bring a tenant
viewpoint to decisions
about the future of NPH?**

**If you would like to find
out more, come along
to our information
session at 5pm on
Thursday 14 July at
Westbridge Depot.**



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Contact us on
01604 838583 or
visit our website at
**[www.northampton
partnershiphomes.org.uk](http://www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk)**

Become a Tenant Board Member

This is an exciting opportunity to join NPH as a Tenant Board Member.

If you're passionate about improving housing services in Northampton and want to make a difference, this could be the role for you.

You need to be enthusiastic, passionate about housing and have time to commit. Board Members are volunteers and do not get paid, however in return this role will offer new experiences, training & development, and the opportunity to be at the forefront of the decision

making process at NPH. All out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed.

If you think you could be the person we are looking for, why not come along to our information session on Thursday 14 July at 5pm? Location: Northampton Partnership Homes, Westbridge Depot, St James Mill Road, NN5 5JW. You can meet some of our current Board Members, hear about their experiences and learn about what they do on the Board.

To register your interest in this role, you can get in touch with our Governance Team on 01604 838583 or by email at: governance@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

If you would like to apply but have no experience of filling in application forms, please don't let that put you off! Our friendly team are offering support to all applicants.

What our current Tenant Board Members say:



John Connolly

"Tenant Board Members bring a tenant perspective to all discussions; something that I feel is not only necessary but vital to getting things right for tenants! It has given me a great front row seat into just how much work goes into the running of NPH every day."



Tony Mallard

"It is an enjoyable experience. I now have a closer relationship with NPH's staff".

Clare Whitehead

"I joined NPH's Board because I wanted to contribute and ensure its success by working collaboratively with NPH"



Eileen Daley

"Being involved with NPH's Board has built my confidence up and I've come on in leaps and bounds"

Tenant Participation

At NPH we're committed to tenant and leaseholder engagement for two reasons...

Firstly, talking with the people who receive our services is the best way to develop them. We believe that by listening to what tenants and leaseholders want, we can learn and improve.

Secondly, whether it's an estate or a block of flats we know that people don't just live in homes, they live in communities. At NPH we believe in improving both of these and engaging with you is the best way to do this.

Whether you're interested in getting involved to improve our services or whether you'd like NPH to support

you to improve where you live, we'd like you to get involved and talk to us.

We already have a number of passionate and dedicated tenants involved in a range of panels but we'd like even more of you to get involved.

We've introduced our Open House events to provide a forum for

leaseholders to have their say on NPH services and the opportunity to be more involved with how those services are delivered.

Coming soon, we'll also be providing some other ways for you to engage with what we do – whether that's online or in your neighbourhood.

Want to know more?

Email us at participation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk, check the website at www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/your-views or call our Customer Engagement Team on 01604 837836.

What our tenants say?

Oscar - Member of the Access to Services SIP:



"I got involved with Tenant Participation 9 years ago and initially it was purely and simply to give me something to do.

Other tenants who were involved seemed to know a lot about housing whereas I didn't, but they made me feel welcome and helped me pick up the thread. The free training courses NPH offer were an aid in adding to my knowledge.

I have come to know how the Housing Service functions, why things are done in a certain way and - on the other side of the coin - the reasons why some things can't be done.

Being a member of a Service Improvement Panel allows me to work with other tenants in partnership with NPH to explore ways and means of making the services that are delivered even better.

It is a win/win situation; I get out of the house, make new friends and help to create a better Housing Service!"

Carole, Alex & Sarah - Members of the Tenants' Panel:

Carole – “I got involved in the Tenants’ Panel because I wanted to have a say on how council housing is managed in Northampton. Being on the Tenants’ Panel I get to know more about how my housing service works. I enjoy meeting different tenants and hearing about news and information from a tenant perspective.”

“My son, Alex and myself are also involved in NPH’s Service Improvement Panels where we

meet with staff to discuss how housing services can be improved. I am noticing the difference. Since I’ve been reporting it, fly tipping has eased in my area!”

Alex – “I heard about the Tenants’ Panel through my mum, Carole. My girlfriend Sarah and I were really keen to take part. I would say that I’ve learnt a lot at the panel meetings about welfare reform and the changes being introduced. I also enjoy being part of the Neighbourhood SIP and feeding back ideas on how neighbourhoods can be improved.”

*Carole,
Alex &
Sarah*



The NPH training programme

free to all tenants and leaseholders

Whether you are looking for practical skills to help you get into work or want to build your confidence in professional situations, our training programme can help. There are also courses to help with your wellbeing and life skills, which are all completely free!

Tuesday 28th June 10am – 1.30pm at Leicester Street Community Hub	Healthy Eating On A Budget Provided by: Ingredients4Health This course aims to increase your understanding of basic nutrition principles, increase menu planning skills, and improve skills in creating healthy balanced meals on a budget.
Tuesday 5th July 1pm – 4pm at Montague Crescent Community Hub	Stress Management Provided by: Ingredients4Health This course aims to develop your skills in managing change. You will develop skills and strategies to deal with stressful events in a more positive manner.
Thursday 7th July & Thursday 4th August , 10am – 12pm at the Jeffrey Room, the Guildhall	Managing Your Money Provided by: Northampton Borough Council These workshops aim to give you the tools to manage your own finances. You will learn how to create a successful budget, as well as how to manage your outgoings to ensure that you can minimise the risk of debt.
Thursday 8th September 9.30am – 4.30pm at Goldcrest Court Community Hub	Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering Provided by: Northamptonshire County Council This course is aimed at individuals looking to work or already working within the food production and manufacturing industries. Learners will be able to satisfy legal requirements by taking this course for the food catering industry.
Thursday 8th/15th/22nd/29th September (4 week course) 2pm – 4pm at Abington Centre of Education, Stimpson Avenue	ESOL Online Provided by: Abington Centre of Education This is a pre-designed suite of online courses for beginners of ESOL (English for speakers of another language). You will learn basic English language rules, vocabulary and grammar.
Thursday 15th September 10am – 1pm at The Liburd Community Hub	Speaking With Confidence Provided by: Engage Associates The course is designed to help increase your confidence with public speaking. You will explore ideas around body language, tone of voice, clarity of ideas, preparing in advance and the principles of assertiveness.
Tuesday 13th/20th/27th September & 4th October , 5pm – 7pm at Montague Crescent Community Hub	Brushing Up Your Maths Provided by: Abington Centre of Education This is a classroom-based basic mathematics course. The course will cover: number order, simple adding and taking away, measuring, percentages and fractions
Wednesday 14th/21st/28th September (3 week course), 9.30am – 11.30am at Options Training on 60 Gold Street	Skills4Work Provided by: Options Training A three-week programme of workshops to help increase your success in getting the job that you want. The programme covers: Career Management, CV Workshop & Interview Skills.
Tuesday 20th September 1pm – 4pm at Leicester Street Community Hub	Mental Health First Aid Provided by: Northamptonshire County Council This workshop will provide information on a range of mental health issues and give guidance on how to recognise that somebody may be developing poor mental health.

How do I enrol? Call NPH's Customer Engagement Team on 01604 837836 or email participation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk. Why not visit www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/learn-something-new and read all about our free training courses!

Getting involved in your area

Have you thought about joining your local Residents' Association?

Joining a Residents' Association is a great way to be a part of your local community, represent your neighbours and have a say on housing improvements in your area. Northampton has many affiliated Residents' Councils and Residents' Associations you can get involved in.

Tony Mallard, who is Chair of the Northampton Federation of Residents' Association (NFRA), can speak from experience on the benefits of Residents' Associations. The NFRA



provide information and advice to residents in Northampton who are thinking of joining a Residents' Association or wanting advice on getting their voices heard.

"Residents' Associations are today even more necessary with the issues caused by welfare reform and the town expansion. Today the federation encourages new groups how to start, and use the power a Residents' Association can exert, for the good of the community. I became Chair of the NFRA six years ago after being involved in voluntary work and customer panels for many years. Age is no barrier. I have had a very

varied career. You can put your life's experience to use for the benefit of your community." – Tony Mallard, Chair of the NFRA.

If you'd like to get involved in your local Residents' Association or find out about other community forums in your area, contact Alice Morgan Community Development Officer at Northampton Borough Council on 01604 837795 or email forums@northampton.gov.uk

Tenants help shape our new Complaints Policy

NPH and the Tenants' Panel have recently reviewed the way complaints are dealt with and a new policy will be launched at the beginning of July.

We still aim to put things right when you first tell us that something has gone wrong. The big change is that tenants will now be directly involved as part of a new Complaints Panel. 9 tenants are now members of the panel and have been through in-depth training on resolving complaints,

listening skills, the Data Protection Act and Equalities. Our newly trained complaints experts had their first meeting on 13th June, where they met with members of the Board of Directors and Executive team to find out more about how they will work together to get the best outcome for customers.

Look out for full details of the policy on our website in July.



Useful contacts for making a complaint:

Website: www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/give-us-feedback
Or Email: customerfeedback@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 330 7003

Preparing for Universal Credit?

1
Get a bank account

2
start saving a small amount regularly

3
Get online



You may remember in the last edition of NPH Voice, we focused on the first of the three things you need to do to prepare for Universal Credit. This time, we are looking at saving.

If you need to claim Universal Credit, you won't receive any money for a whole month because it's paid in arrears. It's never been more important to save a small amount regularly so that you can pay important bills such as rent, council tax and utilities for the first month of your claim.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could start saving with a not-for-profit organisation that benefits the local community? Well, you can! Northamptonshire Credit Union (NCU) is a community bank, which is owned and run by its members.

It offers savings, banking and loans to local people.

You can save as little as £1 per week and withdraw your savings at any time. NCU has a team of friendly, fully trained volunteers who can talk to you about the different accounts they offer. They have a town centre office as well as service points in Bellinge and Weston Favell.

One of our first tenants to join NCU was Brian Haddock. He started putting away a little bit each month into a savings account so that he could eventually pay his rent monthly. As it turns out, he was able to do much more...

"I put away a little bit at a time with a plan to save enough money to be able to pay my rent by direct debit. Last year, I decided to approach NCU

for a loan to cover travel costs to the USA so I could be with my sister who I hadn't seen for 14 years. I had £500 saved up already with NCU and I asked them for a loan to cover twice this amount. I knew the interest at NCU is really low so it didn't seem like a risk. It meant I was able to see my sister after all these years!"

For more information, you can visit the NCU website www.northamptonshirecu.co.uk or call on 01604 250016.

The next instalment of our Universal Credit series will point you in the right direction if you need help getting online. If you need any advice in the meantime, you can call NPH on 0300 330 7003, visit our website at www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk or drop into the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall, St Giles Square.

Do it online

You don't have to wait until the next edition of NPH Voice to catch up on our latest news, you can visit www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

Did you know that you can report a repair, pay your rent, report ASB and much more on our website? We are also planning to send NPH Voice by e-mail to customers who have subscribed, so if you would rather view the next edition online, just click the button on our homepage.

There is a whole section of our website dedicated to getting involved, so if this edition of NPH Voice has

inspired you, take a look and get in touch!

