

# Northamptonshire Rural Life

The residents' newsletter for  
**Northamptonshire Rural  
Housing Association**

**AUTUMN 2017**

[www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk](http://www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk)



Northamptonshire  
**Rural Housing**  
Association



## Family bond



**David Butcher was so pleased to be offered his ideal property that he moved in within 48 hours!**

David had moved to Whitby to be near his son, Oliver, but was desperate to return to Northamptonshire after Oliver and his wife relocated there.

"When I was offered a flat in Long Buckby, my son helped me load everything into a van and I moved in

immediately!," says David. "It's absolutely ideal. Living close to my son means everything to me.

"It feels as if everything has finally fallen into place."

• Read the full story at  
[www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk](http://www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk)

# For Your Benefit

**FOR YOUR  
BENEFIT**

With Winter approaching, eating properly and keeping warm are more important than ever.



### Food Bank support

When times are tough, local food banks are there to help. If you're struggling to feed yourself or your family, they can provide a minimum of three

days' emergency food.

The Trussell Trust runs hundreds of foodbanks where food is donated by local communities for people in need. They can also signpost you to other services which can help. Talk to your Housing Officer about gaining a foodbank voucher or visit [www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org) to find out about the foodbanks near you.

### Stay warm / save money

To save money on your energy bills, and help you afford to heat your home, make sure you regularly check you're on the most competitive energy tariff.

If you've changed from storage heaters, remember to move away from an Economy 7 tariff and look for something more suitable.

Visit [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com) and enter your postcode to compare energy deals or look at [www.goenergysshopping.co.uk/energy-tariffs-and-deals/comparison-sites](http://www.goenergysshopping.co.uk/energy-tariffs-and-deals/comparison-sites) for links to Ofgem accredited energy price comparison sites.

### Cavity wall insulation

Insulating your home is one of the most efficient ways of reducing your heating bills. In April, the Government's Affordable Warmth Scheme introduced free cavity wall and loft insulation for housing association tenants living in properties with an EPC Rating of E, F or G. You must be claiming certain benefits to qualify.

To find out more, visit

[www.affordablewarmthscheme.co.uk](http://www.affordablewarmthscheme.co.uk)

### Universal Credit

**Remember - if you need any help or advice about Universal Credit, call the Helpline on 0345 600 0723 or contact our office and speak to the Housing Management Team.**

## DON'T BE FINED!

Did you know you can be fined up to £1,000 if you are caught watching TV without a licence?

You must have a valid TV licence to receive or record television programmes as they are being shown on TV - whether you're receiving the programmes via TV, your mobile phone or a PC.

It costs £147 for a colour TV licence and £49 for a black and white licence, but you can pay in instalments using a TV Licensing Payment Card. Call 0300 790 6115 or visit [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk) to find out more.

If you choose to pay by monthly direct debit or cash instalments, the cost of your first licence is spread over six months.



You'll then start paying for your next licence straight away, in smaller even payments, spread over a year.

[tvlicensing.co.uk/payinfo](http://tvlicensing.co.uk/payinfo)





## HOW TO...

### Top up your boiler pressure

Here's the latest guide in our 'How to...' feature to help you keep your property looking great and running well.

If your central heating isn't working, it could be because your water pressure is too low. The pressure gauge on the front of your boiler should read between one and two bars. To top up your system and increase the pressure:

1. Find your filling loop - a silver/grey flexible hose underneath your boiler.
2. Make sure the boiler is switched off and the system is cool.
3. Check that the valves on each end of the hose are securely attached.
4. Use a screwdriver to open both valves to allow cold mains water into the system.
5. When the pressure gauge reaches 1.5 bars, close both valves.

If you are unsure, speak to our Maintenance Team.



## FIRST CLASS SERVICE

Our Customer Care Team continuously works to provide a first class service for you, and we're pleased when our resident surveys show that you think they're doing a great job.

During National Customer Service Week (2nd – 6th October), which raises awareness of the importance of excellent customer service, the team received some special treats to say thank you.

National Customer Service Week



## WELCOME

We've welcomed two new Tenancy Services Officers to the team who will be working closely with our Housing & Income Team Leaders to provide help and support to residents.



**Monique Witham** covers the Northamptonshire Rural area. She says: "I've worked in housing for 15 years and absolutely love the variety and challenge. I also really enjoy rural walking and walk regularly with a variety of groups and friends."

To contact your Officers, call 0300 1234 009.

## STAY SAFE

The safety of our residents is a top priority. We:

- Complete annual gas safety checks of all homes.
  - Fit smoke detectors in all homes.
  - Carry out electrical safety testing on a five year cycle.
  - Conduct regular fire risk assessments and checks of communal areas.
  - Service and test emergency lighting.
- To stay safe in your home:**
- Take care when cooking – most fires start in the kitchen.
  - Never leave candles burning.
  - Make sure you put cigarettes out properly.
  - Check your smoke detectors regularly.

## Ask us ...



**Jean asked: Do I need to take out my own home insurance?**

**David Krause, Development and Maintenance Manager says:**

We provide buildings insurance, but you need to take out home contents insurance to cover your furniture and belongings against fire, theft, vandalism and accidental damage. You can use our insurance company - Arthur J Gallagher - or choose one of your own. One of our residents suffered a fire recently and she didn't have insurance. She had to pay a substantial amount to replace her flooring and other damaged items in her home.

Have you got a question about your home or the services we provide? If so, ask away! We'll be answering one of your questions in every newsletter. Simply email them to [sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk)

## NEW REPORT

Watch out for our new look annual report which will be posted on our websites in October.

## CHECK IT OUT

It won't be long before you're relying on your heating, so turn it on now to check that it's working properly. If there's a problem, give us a call.

## Service standard

We will use plain language and avoid the use of jargon.



### ALWAYS BE ON YOUR GUARD FOR EMAIL SCAMS.

Fake emails often contain a threat that your account will be closed unless you act immediately. They may just say 'dear customer' and may ask for personal information such as your user name, password or bank details. Never give these out.

If you think you've received a fake email, do not click on any links in it, do not open any attachments and do not reply to the email or contact the senders in any way.

## GARDEN FEEDBACK

How is our communal gardening service working? We're looking for residents to become mystery shoppers to monitor the service and provide feedback. It simply involves ticking boxes on a short monitoring form and returning it to us.

If you're interested, please email [Theresa.Chamberlain@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:Theresa.Chamberlain@midlandsrural.org.uk) or call Theresa on 0300 1234 009.

## LESSONS LEARNT

Whenever we receive a complaint, we log the lessons we have learnt from it so that we can continue to improve.

**Complaint:** There is a lack of information on Voluntary Right to Buy.

**Lessons Learnt:** We will ensure information is always up to date on our websites and will include regular updates in our newsletters when there have been new government announcements.

## SAFE AS HOUSES

To ensure your homes are kept safe, secure and fully modernised, we carry out a programme of planned maintenance every year.

During the past 12 months, six properties had their front and back doors replaced with very strong and secure composite doors, nine properties had UPVC double glazed windows fitted, and one property received new front and back doors and replacement windows.



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Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association Limited is registered as a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society with charitable status 27416R



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## STOP PRESS ...

We have a new contractor, Laker, who have taken over from Princebuild looking after day to day repairs.

