

Northamptonshire Rural Life

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

SUMMER 2015

www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk



Northamptonshire
Rural Housing
Association

The perfect home

**One year on, our development in
Croughton is proving the perfect home
for the Waters family.**

Louise, Martin and baby Cameron were living with Martin's parents in Croughton but really needed their own space in the village. They applied for one of the new two bedroom properties and were delighted to move in last June.

They're now celebrating their first anniversary in their new home. Louise says: "We're enjoying being part of the Croughton community and we already feel very settled here."

Following the General Election, the new Conservative Government is carrying on the welfare reforms...

- Universal Credit is still being rolled out nationally starting with single people making new claims. For advice and support, call the national Universal Credit helpline on **0345 6000723**, visit our website or speak to your housing officer.
- If you lose your job, go straight to the Job Centre to make a claim for Universal Credit as payments cannot be back-dated. You also need to let us know by calling **0300 1234 009**.
- There are plans to reduce the Benefit Cap from £26,000 to £23,000 per year. This is the total amount of certain benefits you can get if you are of working age.
- The 'bedroom tax' will continue.
- For 18 - 21 year olds, there will be new changes to Housing Benefit.

Watch this space for more details.

Credit where it's due

Remember - your tenancy agreement says you must pay your rent in advance. If you pay by standing order, you'll need to increase the amount you pay if you've not already done so.

You can easily view your rent account through My Home Online. It's simple to register – visit www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/living-in-your-home

MAKE A CLAIM

If you have an 18-year-old who is leaving full-time education this summer and not going into employment, they will be classed as a 'non-dependant' and need to make their own claim for benefits. Otherwise your housing benefit will be affected.

Buzz off!

Summer's here and so are the wasps and bees! If you find a wasp or bees nest in your home and need help to remove it, please get in touch with your local authority. There will be a charge for this service.



Caring for you

A big welcome to Sarah Field, our new Customer Care Co-ordinator.

Sarah, who previously worked in the care industry, says she's thoroughly enjoying taking your calls and helping with everything from housing repairs to tenancy queries.

She says: "It's an interesting job and I like interacting with our customers and doing my best to help."



Our part and your part

We all have a part to play in creating great communities:

Our part

We will ensure your communal areas and gardens are kept tidy and are maintained to a good standard.

Your part

Please keep your gardens tidy and free from rubbish.

Keep it tidy



It's that time of year when you might want to get out and tidy any overgrown trees and bushes. Before pruning or cutting back any trees in your garden, please contact your local authority to check whether they are covered by a Tree Preservation Order.



Fun in the sun

Sunny summer days are perfect for enjoying time in the garden but always remember to respect your neighbours. They will want to enjoy their own gardens too!

CALL US



Don't forget to call us on our new number

0300 1234 009

whatever your query.

If you're calling from a landline, it's just the standard call cost, and if you're using a mobile, it can be included in your free minutes.

PIPE DOWN!

We are responsible: for the waste water pipes (drains) which are under your house, garden and driveway. They take the waste water away from your property. This is not the case for shared owners who are responsible for their own.

Your local water company is responsible: for the large sewers under the road or pavement, as well as the sections of sewers and pipe which you share with your neighbours.

The county council is responsible: for dealing with blocked highway drains and road gullies which are causing flooding.

If you receive a letter inviting you to join a water scheme, just ignore it. If you think one of the sewers is blocked call day or night your local water company. Depending where you live it may be Severn Trent Water on **0800 783 4444** or Anglian Water on **0345 714 5145**.

Zero hours contract help

New regulations were brought in on 26th May for people working on a zero hours contract.

If you have any concerns or want more information, contact the ACAS helpline on **0300 123 1100** or visit www.acas.org.uk/zerohours

Noticeboard

IDEAS WELCOME

Got a great idea for improving your neighbourhood? Why not apply for funds from the Tenant Led Improvement Scheme?

Previous requests have included hiring a skip for a day, purchasing a communal shed and improving an overgrown wild flower meadow. What could you do locally?

To apply for funds, email mark.boon@midlandsrural.org.uk with your suggestion.

Service standards

Our staff and contractors will always show identity badges when visiting you.

OUR PERFORMANCE

We're committed to improving our service for you. How have we done during the past financial year?



Complaints

8 formal complaints were received.

2 were upheld and 2 were partially upheld.



Calls

93% of calls were answered within 20 seconds (target 90%). Repairs are the most common reason for residents calling.



Repairs

Overall repairs satisfaction was **97%** (target 90%).



Out of hours repairs

96% of out of hours calls were answered within 25 seconds (target 95%).



Rent arrears

Rented **1.14%** (target 4%).



Compliments

8 compliments were received.

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Hello Cathie!

A new Development and Maintenance Officer, Cathie Archer, has joined the team!

Cathie will be on the other end of the phone to oversee general maintenance queries.

She'll also be dealing with planned maintenance programmes such as window replacement, stock condition surveys and scheme risk assessments to ensure our new and existing properties are maintained to the highest possible standards.



Need a translation?

If you need a copy of Rural Life newsletter in another language we will happily provide a translation for you. All you have to do is call the office on **0300 1234 009** with your request.



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CLAIMS EXPLAINED

If you're a shared owner, you're responsible for the maintenance of your property except when it's been damaged by natural disasters such as a storm or flood. This is covered under our buildings insurance policy.

If you want to make a claim, or find out whether damage is covered, call Lewis Cave at our insurers, Arthur J. Gallagher, on **0845 2187871**. If it is covered by our insurance policy, they will notify us. If it's not covered, you are responsible for carrying out any necessary repairs.

It's important that you take out your own contents insurance so your possessions are covered if they're damaged or stolen.

