

Northamptonshire
Rural
Life

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

WINTER 2016

www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk



Northamptonshire
Rural Housing
Association

Festive Selfie Competition!



**Win
£50!**


facebook
Remember to like
us on Facebook
and see all our
latest news.

'Tis the season to be jolly so don your Christmas jumpers, drape your family in tinsel and make us all smile with your best festive selfies!

We're offering a £50 shopping voucher for the most creative Christmas selfie and we'll be sharing lots of our favourite entries on our Facebook page.

Simply email your photos to sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk by Friday 16th December.

CHRISTMAS CLOSING

Our offices will be closed from 12 noon on Friday 23rd December 2016 and will re-open at 9am on Tuesday 3rd January 2017. Enjoy the festive season!



Universal Credit rollout - are you prepared?

Universal Credit has already started to be rolled-out in various areas and we're finding that claims can take as long as 7 – 8 weeks for the money to come through. Therefore, it's really important to make sure your rent account is a month in advance and, if not, to keep paying extra amounts to build up the credit balance.

Remember, your tenancy agreement states you must pay your rent in advance – whether you receive benefits or not.

If you're already claiming benefits and your circumstances change, you will need to contact your local authority to confirm whether you will continue receiving housing benefit

or will have to make a claim for Universal Credit. Please note that payments will not be backdated so you will need to be ready to make your claim immediately.

If you have any questions about Universal Credit, call the Helpline on 0345 600 0723 or speak to your Housing Officer.

DON'T BE A TARGET

To avoid a visit from opportunist thieves this festive season...

- *Don't leave Christmas presents where they can be seen through a window.*
- *When you go out at night, draw the curtains and leave some lights on.*
- *If you're heading away at Christmas, don't post details on social media.*
- *Park in a secure car park while you're out shopping and hide valuable gifts at the bottom of the boot.*
- *If you've ordered goods online, don't give permission for parcels to be left outside in a visible place. Get them delivered to a neighbour's address if you're not at home.*

REST ASSURED – BE INSURED

While we insure your home, it's your responsibility to get your own contents insurance which covers your furniture and belongings against fire, theft, vandalism or water damage. You can use the insurance company we use - Arthur J Gallagher - or choose one of your own.

For example, if you get a water leak, we'll come and repair it, but you'll need to claim on your contents insurance for any damage caused.

Festive food

Staff have been helping to ensure that local people don't go hungry during the festive season.

Housing Services Assistant, Theresa Chamberlain, organised a food collection for Ashby Foodbank, part of the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network, which provides a minimum of three days' emergency food to local people in crisis.

This year, the foodbank needed basics such as sugar, jam, juice and coffee, so staff generously donated items which were delivered to the foodbank in time for Christmas.



EMAIL NEWS

Some residents have received this newsletter via email as a trial to see whether you like to read it this way. Sending the newsletter out electronically saves us printing and postage costs which can be used for other services.

If you've received a copy in the post and would like it emailed to you in the future, please email

sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk

with your name and home address.

We can send it to more than one email address if you prefer.



HOW TO... Unblock a Sink

The latest guide in our 'How to...' feature to help you keep your property looking great and running well can be found on www.northamptonshireha.org.uk – search How to guides from the home page

CHRISTMAS REPAIRS

During the Christmas holiday period, if you have an emergency repair, we will come out to make it safe or to prevent further damage, but may not complete the full repair as parts are not always available.

Emergency repairs are those needed to avoid immediate danger to your health and safety or serious damage or destruction to your home. These include total loss of water, unsafe electrical fittings, total loss of heating or a blocked mains drain.

Please report emergency repairs by calling 0300 1234 009 or if this number is unavailable call 0203 701 3553.



CONDENSATION TACKLED

Are you having problems with condensation?

Advice on why it forms and simple steps to prevent it can be found at <http://www.northamptonshireha.org.uk/> - search condensation from the home page

Ask us ...

Simon asked: When my shower broke, the workman told me I'd have to wait for it to be fixed. My family use the shower every day.

Why wasn't it fixed straightaway?

David Krause, Development and Maintenance Manager says: When we're called out to a repair, we sometimes need to order a part which may take a couple of days to arrive. Our contractors are called out to a very wide range of repairs and it's not possible to stock every part. Once we've ordered the part needed, we arrange to fit it at the earliest convenient time. We appreciate that showers are used on a daily basis, but there is the option to take a bath instead.

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



STOP COCK CHECK

Make sure you know where yours is before you need it. It's usually under the kitchen sink.



KEEP YOUR HEAT

During the winter months, please be a good neighbour and check that any elderly people in your street are keeping well and warm.

To keep as much heat inside your home as possible:

- Close your curtains in the evenings.
- Put tape over any keyholes which are letting in a draught.
- Place your furniture next to an internal wall not an external one.
- Put a curtain behind your front door if it's draughty.
- Place aluminium foil behind radiators to reflect heat back into the room.
- Move large pieces of furniture away from radiators.

We're here to help

Did you know our Housing Officers now have internet enabled tablets so they can help you to get online when they come and visit?

REPORT ONLINE

Have you read the new digital residents' Annual Report? It's now available online at www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk to save printing and postage costs.

Did you know that 100% of fly tipping reported to us was removed in 7 days? Find out more service facts and figures from the past 12 months in the new Annual Report.

Christmas kitchens

Residents in 14 properties in Crick, Walgrave and Holcot are looking forward to their first Christmas in their brand new kitchen!

More than £76,000 has been invested in the kitchen replacements which have included new units, worktops and vinyl flooring selected by each resident, a full electrical rewire, walls and ceilings plastered, and complete redecoration.

MISSED CALL

If you see a missed call from 0300 1234 009, don't worry! It's just us phoning all residents to check that our records are up to date so that we can ensure our services are tailored to your needs. Please call us back during office hours.

Service standard

We will investigate all reports of anti-social behaviour and keep you informed of progress.

Reindeer Shortbread

Why not try making these fun shortbread reindeer for a simple, tasty treat?

Ingredients

- 125g butter
- 55g caster sugar
- 180g plain flour
- Red smarties and white chocolate buttons

Method

1. Heat the oven to 190°C.
2. Beat the butter and sugar together until smooth.
3. Stir in the flour then make the dough into a ball with your hands.
4. Dust a rolling pin with flour and roll out the dough until it's about 1cm thick.
5. Place a plate on top then cut around it to make a neat circle.
6. Use a knife to mark lines to create 8 biscuits - as if cutting a pizza.
7. Use the back of a fork to press lines around the edge of the circle.
8. Cover with cling film and put in the fridge for 30 mins.
9. Cook the chilled shortbread for 20 mins until golden brown then cool and cut into wedges.
10. Use icing to stick white chocolate buttons on for eyes and red smarties on for noses.



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is published by
Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association,
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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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