



Home for Christmas

**HAPPY
CHRISTMAS**



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latest news.

Dad Simon Herbert is pleased to be settling into his new home with his young daughter in time for Christmas.

Simon was left searching for somewhere to live after his landlord decided to sell the property he was renting privately.

So he was delighted when he was offered a two bedroom house in Little Harrowden, within walking distance of his parents' and sister's homes.

He says: "My four-year-old daughter, Abbie, lives with me

for 50 per cent of the time and this house will be perfect for both of us!"

Read the full story at www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk

CHRISTMAS CLOSING

Our offices will be closed from 12 noon on Friday 22nd December and will re-open at 9am on Tuesday 2nd January. Enjoy the festive season!



For Your Benefit

**FOR YOUR
BENEFIT**

UC *Universal Credit*

The Budget in November announced that from February

2018, anyone starting to claim UC will no longer have to wait seven days. This means that your entitlement to universal credit will start on the day you apply. From April 2018 you will also now continue to receive Housing Benefit for the first two weeks of your UC claim to help prevent you falling into arrears.

From January, claimants will be able to access up to a month's worth of universal credit within five days via an interest free advance.

Although universal credit is continuing to be rolled out, it will be introduced more gradually than originally planned and won't be complete until December 2018.

LHA Cap

The Government has now scrapped plans to cap housing benefit for social housing tenants. Housing benefit was due to be capped to a rate called the Local Housing

Allowance (LHA) from April 2019, but this is no longer going to happen.

Warm Home Discount

If you're eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme, you could get £140 off your electricity or gas bill during the Winter. This discount doesn't affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment. There are two ways to qualify for the discount scheme – if you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit or if you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria.

Visit www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme to find out more or call 0345 603 9439.

UC ARRIVES!

Universal credit is due to be rolled out to all households in East Northamptonshire in February. If you have any questions, call the helpline on 0345 600 0723.

POST-CHRISTMAS SAVING

Christmas is always an expensive time of year but there are ways to ease your financial hangover in the new year!

1. Start the new year with a new budget so you know what you have available to spend each month.
2. Picking up Christmas essentials like crackers, cards and decorations in the January sales can lead to big savings.
3. Plan early for next Christmas by putting money aside each month to avoid having to borrow later in the year.
4. If you've any unwanted presents or items you or your family no longer need, why not sell them through sites such as ebay or Gumtree to raise some cash?
5. Change your mobile phone plan. If you're not using your free minutes and data, speak to your mobile phone provider about downgrading to a cheaper plan.
6. Try to always pay your credit card bill on time. Then put the interest you're saving into a savings account.
7. Switch your bank account. Some banks are offering instant cash if you move your account to them.

DEBT ADVICE

If you're struggling with debt or just need some money advice and support, the Community Law Service can help.

It offers free help and advice on a host of debt and money issues. Visit www.communitylawservice.org.uk for more information and details of your nearest office.

Don't forget that your Tenancy Services Officer, Monique Witham, can visit you at home to offer basic help and information such as a benefits check, budgeting advice and signposting and referring you to other organisations.

WATER SAVINGS

At this time of year, every penny counts. Here are some ways to save money on your water bill:

- If you've not already got a water meter, check whether one could save you money. Use the water usage calculator at www.ccwater.org.uk/watermetercalculator/
- Look at ways of using less water, such as have showers not baths, and make sure you don't have any water leaks which are making your bills higher.
- If you're having problems paying your water bill, talk to your water company as soon as possible. They might be able to set up a payment plan for you.
- Ask your water company if they have any hardship schemes to help you pay off your bills.



HOW TO... Bleed a radiator

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

If your gas central heating isn't warming your home properly, or your radiator feels colder at the top than at the bottom, it could be because there are air bubbles trapped in the system. This means you need to bleed your radiator.

1. Turn off your central heating and wait for the radiator to cool down.
2. Find a radiator key. You can buy one cheaply from most hardware stores.
3. Look for a small valve at the top of one end of your radiator. Insert the key and turn it counter-clockwise to open the valve. You should hear a hissing sound as air escapes.
4. Hold a kitchen towel or cloth under the key to catch any drips of water.
5. When a steady stream of water squirts through the valve, retighten it.

ANNUAL REPORT ONLINE

Ensuring we provide a first class service for you is always top of our priorities and we think the figures speak for themselves.

Have a look under 'publications' on our website, where you'll find our annual report which gives a snapshot of our performance over the past 12 months.



BE SAFE

Following the tragic Grenfell tower block fire, we want to reassure residents that every month we check the emergency lighting in communal areas and ensure that they are kept clear to allow a safe exit in the event of an emergency.

Our checks have shown that some residents are still blocking fire escape doors and windows as our photo shows. Please do not put yourself and others at risk. Communal areas must be kept clear.



HAMPER HELP

People in need will be given a bit of festive cheer thanks to our colleagues.

Once again, Theresa Chamberlain, Housing Services Assistant, has been collecting donations of food for Vineyard Community Church Food Bank in Daventry. All the items are being used to make Christmas hampers, with mince pies and Christmas puddings being donated as well as basics such as tinned and packet food.

The hampers will be given to local people in crisis this Christmas.



Service standard

We will always say our name and be polite at all times. We will give you our full name if you wish.

REPAIRS UPDATE

Our latest performance figures show that 99% of our residents surveyed think that we are providing a good repairs service overall, but that only 88% of you are happy with the repairs you've had completed, which is below our target of 90%.

NEW CONTRACTOR

We've recently appointed PJ Lilley as our new day to day contractor.

They'll mainly be covering reactive and void works on properties and will, initially, be working with us until May 2018.



FESTIVE EMERGENCIES!

If you have an emergency repair during the Christmas holiday period, 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. If this number is not available, call 0203 701 3553.

FACEBOOK CODE



Are you following our Facebook page which brings you all our latest information and news, as well as useful posts from other organisations?

We've drawn up a strict code of conduct for using Facebook and continuously monitor the content posted:

- We will reply to any comment posted within 24 working hours.
- We will remove any comments which are defamatory, which include swearing and which violate the rights of others.
 - No personal references can be made to staff or other residents.
 - We reserve the right to remove any other content which we deem inappropriate.
 - Please remember that your name and photo will appear next to your comments.



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Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association,
Whitwick Business Centre,
Stenson Road, Coalville,
Leicestershire LE67 4JP.

Tel: 0300 1234 009 **Fax:** 01530 278086

E-mail: enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk

Website: www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk

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