

Northamptonshire Rural Life

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

SPRING 2018

www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk



Northamptonshire
Rural Housing
Association

Family ties!

**Win
£50!**
See page 3



facebook

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

Devoted grandma Jenny Leeson is thrilled after moving into a bungalow close to her family.

Jenny, aged 69, is busy settling into her new property in Flore, only a short distance away from her daughter, son and six grandchildren.

As well as having several cousins and close friends in the village, her father was born only 100 yards away from her new home!

She says: "I'm really delighted to have moved into my new home. I really do feel at home here already".

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

BANK HOLIDAY CLOSING

Please note that the office will be closed on the two
May Bank Holiday Mondays – 7th May and 28th May.

For Your Benefit

CHILDCARE SAVINGS

Two new childcare schemes are now up and running:

Free Childcare

Working parents are entitled to 30 hours per week of free childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds (for 38 weeks of the year). To qualify, parents must each be earning at least £120 per week. If you don't meet these conditions you are still entitled to 15 hours' free childcare per week.

Tax-Free Childcare

Parents earning at least £120 per week can open a new childcare account. For every £8 you pay in, the government will add an extra £2 up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year towards their childcare costs – that's up to £500 every three months.

Visit <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/> to find out which scheme is best for you.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT LATEST



Anyone starting to claim UC no longer has to wait seven days - your claim will start on the day you apply. You will continue to receive Housing Benefit for the first two weeks of your UC claim to help prevent you falling into arrears.

You can also access up to a month's worth of universal credit within five days via an interest free advance.

DHP APPLICATIONS

Discretionary Housing Payments ended on 1st April. If you've been claiming payments to cover the shortfall in your rent payments due to the bedroom tax, then you will need to reapply for 2018/19. Contact your local authority for more advice.

LHA CAP

The Government has 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.

RENT CHANGES

You should have received a letter from us detailing the rent and service charges you have to pay from April. Please adjust the amount you pay us to match the amount shown on the letter so you don't fall behind with payments. If you pay by direct debit, your payments will automatically change to the new amount.

You'll be pleased to hear if you rent your property we've decreased your rent by 1% again this year to try to keep it as affordable as possible, for leaseholders shared ownership adjustments have been made in line with your lease.

UC IS COMING!

Universal credit is being rolled out in:

- East Northamptonshire in May
- Kettering in October
- South Northamptonshire and Wellingborough in November

We'll be sending out our UC pocket guide with lots of useful information and don't forget to keep an eye on our Facebook page and website for more details. You can also call the helpline on **0345 600 0723**.



**Win
£50!**

FANCY A £50 SHOPPING VOUCHER TO ENJOY THIS SPRING?

Enter our competition and you could be in with a chance of winning. Study the two pictures below and circle the 10 differences. Our contact details are on page 4 for you to



send in your entry, if you photograph it and email it please remember to put your name and address on the email by 31st May 2018.

Name _____

Address _____

email _____

Phone _____



HOW TO...
Look after your work surface

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

There are some simple things you can do to keep your kitchen work surface looking good. **Remember that we don't replace work surfaces which have been damaged.**

1. Prepare food using a chopping board rather than cutting directly onto the work surface.
2. Don't use harsh cleaning products or scouring powders.
3. Wipe up spills straightaway to stop them staining.
4. Put hot pans down on heat-resistant mats or stands to avoid making scorch marks.
5. Don't put electric irons directly onto the work surface.
6. Protect your work surface with a glass or plastic work top saver.

CHEQUE IT OUT

Please note we will only be banking cheques once a week on a Tuesday so this may cause delays in your cheque being cashed. More efficient ways of paying are by direct debit and Callpay. Call the Customer Care Team on 0300 1234 009 for more information.

EMERGENCY CHANGES

From 1st May until 31st October, if you experience a total loss of heating, this will not be classed as an emergency repair.

Ask us ...

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



Daniel asked: My lounge door handle has broken. Do I need to fix it myself or can you do it as a repair?

David Krause, Development and Maintenance Manager says:

Last year we had to revise who is responsible for different types of repair. Internal door handles are the tenant's responsibility so you will need to repair it yourself. As a reminder, tenants are now also responsible for the following:

- Broken or cracked glass in windows and doors (we will board up and possibly recharge)
- Internal doors including locks, bolts and hinges
- Blocked drains, toilets, sinks/wash hand basins, baths, etc
- Floor coverings in kitchens, bathrooms and separate WCs
- Letter boxes.

ON CAMERA

If you're thinking of installing CCTV at your property, please remember:



- You must get permission from us first.
- Any cameras must only record your premises and cannot record any communal area or walkway.
- Don't damage the structure of the building when installing CCTV equipment.
- When you move out, you are responsible for removing any equipment.

YOUR VIEWS

Are we getting it right? Through our perception survey you said:

We provide a service you expect

93% AGREE

We treat you fairly

91% AGREE

We keep you informed about things which might affect you

92% AGREE

We give you the opportunity to make your views known

89% AGREE

We listen to your views and, where possible, act on them **82%** AGREE

Thank you to all residents who took part. Your feedback is excellent and we'll continue working hard to keep our standards high.

NEW HOMES PLANNED

We're looking to develop 36 more affordable homes.

Work is beginning on 10 new homes in Walgrave and our five homes in Yarwell should be completed in May. We're set to start on site in Little Addington in June and are also hoping that planning will be approved for a scheme in Brigstock.

LITERACY HELP

If you struggle with literacy, The Communicate Project can help. It can offer one-to-one support with reading and writing, whatever your age. If you'd like to be signposted to the service, speak to your Housing Officer.

Service standard

We will carry out external decoration to your home every four to five years if necessary.

Top Marks!

Providing a first class service is a top priority and we're pleased that you think our Customer Care Team is doing a great job. In our latest survey, 96% agreed we have friendly and approachable staff. You said:

"Reception staff are always polite, friendly and call back as

"All our communication has been handled expertly"

"May I say how helpful your telephone girls are"

"Your service is 1st class"

GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Could you spare a bit of time to help others in your community or do you know someone who needs some support with shopping and errands or who wants someone to talk to?

We're supporting the District Council's Good Neighbour Scheme and are encouraging residents to sign up and get involved. If you're interested, your Housing Officer can come and discuss it further with you.

Email Monique.Witham@midlandsrural.org.uk or call her on 0300 1234 009.

LET US IN

It's a legal requirement for us to make sure every property has an electrical condition report less than five years old. When your property is due an electrical test, we'll write to you and our contractor will contact you to arrange a convenient appointment.

It is very important that you allow the contractor access to your property. Failure to do so is a breach of tenancy and will result in legal proceedings.

Last year we took a resident to court for continuously failing to allow access and the judge ruled that the resident had to pay £1000 of court costs.



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