

Northamptonshire Rural Life

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

SUMMER 2018

www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk



Northamptonshire
Rural Housing
Association



Family ties



facebook

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

Four generations of one family have been brought together by our brand new affordable housing development in Yarwell.

Kayley and David Lovett, and their two children, applied for a home on the new development to be nearer Kayley's mum and dad. And so did Kayley's grandma! Now they're all living on the same road.

All four generations joined us for a celebration tea party to help mark Rural Housing Week and the completion of our latest development.

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

BANK HOLIDAY CLOSING

Please note that the office will be closed on
**August Bank Holiday Monday and Tuesday (27th and
28th August).**

For Your Benefit

**FOR YOUR
BENEFIT**

UNIVERSAL CREDIT U-TURN

The Government has changed its mind! Now, all 18 to 21 years olds will be entitled to claim support towards their housing costs within Universal Credit. You don't have to meet certain requirements any more. And anyone starting to claim UC receives support from day one of their claim, which is great news.

UC *Universal
Credit*

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

There are new regulations regarding free school meals. A household must now have an annual net income of no more than £7,400 to be eligible. Children already receiving free school meals may be protected if certain social security benefits are claimed.

BEDROOM TAX

WHAT IS A BEDROOM?

It's been decided that before applying the bedroom tax, a local authority must assess whether a bedroom can actually physically fit in the number of children expected to sleep in it as a bedroom.

PIP APPEALS

A new pilot service has been launched for submitting personal independence payment (PIP) appeals online. It's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week in certain areas and online appeals will reach the DWP quicker than a postal appeal. For more information, visit www.gov.uk/government/news/submit-your-personal-independent-payment-appeal-online

TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

Local authorities will be required to help all eligible applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, under the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into force in April.

The Act says that a local authority must take reasonable steps to help a person keep their current accommodation if they are threatened with homelessness. And if a person is already homeless, it has to help them secure accommodation for six months and draw up a plan.

TV LICENCE FEE INCREASE

Enjoy watching TV? Don't forget that the cost of the TV licence fee increased to £150.50 (colour fee) and £50.50 (black and white) in April. The over 75s still get their TV licence free. If you pay for your licence on an instalment scheme, such as a monthly direct debit or weekly cash payment, you won't have to pay the increased fee until your licence comes up for renewal.

BENEFITS CHECK

Are you receiving all the benefits you're entitled to? If you'd like a full benefits check, either over the phone or via a home visit, call your Housing Officer, Monique Witham, on **0300 1234 009**.

FIND A JOB

Universal Jobmatch, which lets people search and apply for full or part-time jobs, has been renamed 'Find a Job'. The free government recruitment service will continue to connect jobseekers with thousands of employers across the UK.



HOW TO...

Keep your paths nice

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

During the Summer months, weeds can get out of control on paths and drives. Here's how to keep them at bay.

1. Cut grass back to a neat edge using a weeding knife or lawn-edging tool so grass and weeds don't spread across a path.
2. Tackle weeds quickly before they have chance to release seeds.
3. Get a sharp knife and push it as deeply as possible into the gaps in the path to hook out weeds, roots and soil.
4. Use a stiff broom to collect the moss, weeds and soil.
5. If you have a gravel drive, push a hoe back and forth to remove weeds.
6. Apply weedkiller. If you need to dilute it, use a separate watering can just for chemicals, not for watering.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

A free, confidential helpline is available for people aged over 55, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Set up by Esther Rantzen, the Silver Line helpline provides information, friendship and advice, and can link callers to local groups and services, as well as befrienders.

Call **0800 4 70 80 90** anytime or visit www.thesilverline.org.uk

BETTER BATHROOMS

We've invested £84,000 in fitting new bathrooms in 19 properties recently. What a difference!

We've also changed the specification to give residents more choice. You can now choose from six different wall tile designs and four floor tiles, and all new bathrooms include an electric shower.



GET COVERED

We want you to be safe and secure, so we insure the structure of your home against fire, storms and floods.

But if your personal belongings, carpets and furniture got damaged, could you afford to replace them? It's important that you take out your own contents insurance so you don't have to pay for any damage.

Did you know the average cost for home contents insurance is around just £11 per month? Don't put it off!

FURNITURE SERVICE

Spencer Contact is offering second-hand furniture and household items to families in hardship living in areas with a NN1 – NN7 postcode. The charity collects unwanted furniture and supplies it to people in need. To find out more, call **01604 587589** or visit www.spencercontact.com

PRIVACY PROTECTED

We respect your privacy and manage your personal information carefully. New laws regarding data protection came into force in May so please read our new privacy policy on our website. More information about the new laws can be found at ico.org.uk or speak to your Housing Officer.

We will be calling you to make sure we have your correct details.

Ask us ...

Joe asked: If you find a wasps nest, who should you speak to?

David Krause, Development and Maintenance Manager says:

You can contact your local council if you have a problem with any pests in your home or garden. Some councils offer free pest control services, but others may charge. You might be able to deal with some pests yourself, such as slugs or ants. Have a look at the products on offer in your local supermarket or garden centre.

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



NEW ON THE JOB

Robyn Jarvis has been promoted to Maintenance Surveyor and will be overseeing the repairs service and managing the planned works programmes and the performance of our contractors.

She says: "I'm looking forward to this new challenge as I really enjoy working with colleagues and residents here."



WINNER!

Congratulations to the winner of our Spot the difference competition in our last issue. The lucky resident from Braunston, who won £50 of 'love to shop' vouchers, said: "Thank you for the lovely surprise on our return from holiday. We also heard that my husband's five year cancer scans had come back all clear, so we had a happy homecoming. For a change we didn't have the post-holiday blues."

PERFECT PETS

If you're thinking of getting a pet, please ask us for permission first.

- Be mindful of your neighbours, especially if you own a larger pet, such as a dog.
- Make sure you clean up after your dog, both in your own garden and when you're out and about.
- Exercise your dog regularly – at least twice a day.
- Try not to leave a dog at home for long periods of time as they may bark or whine and disturb your neighbours.
- If you go away on holiday, make arrangements for your pet to be cared for.
- Check your garden is secure so any pets can't escape.



Service standard

We will monitor service failures on a monthly basis and formal complaints on a quarterly basis.

OWN YOUR HOME

If you're a shared owner and have lived in your home for a while, it could be time to consider 'staircasing'. This means buying more shares of your property so you own a greater proportion of your home and pay less rent.

Try using the free online calculator at www.shareto-buy.com to see whether you can buy more shares, or call us on 0300 1234 009.

HOW WE'RE PERFORMING

The service we provide for you is very important to us. This is how we've done during the past financial year:

- Four formal complaints were received. Only one was upheld and a replacement renewable boiler was fitted and two were partially upheld.
- Eleven compliments were received: 8 for repairs, 1 for allocations, and 2 for housing management.
- 92% of calls were answered within 20 seconds and more calls were resolved at the first point of contact compared with last year.
- Overall repairs satisfaction was 84%.
- Our perception survey showed that 96% of residents think we have friendly and approachable staff and 89% feel we give them the opportunity to make their views known.
- We were pleased that 91% of our residents would recommend NRHA to others.



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Did you know... Our website had 3,905 new visitors during the last financial year and we reached 5,267 people via Facebook.

