

Northamptonshire Rural Life

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

WINTER 2018

www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk



Northamptonshire
Rural Housing
Association



facebook

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

A prize Christmas!

Christmas came early for Claire Chambers who won an Amazon Fire 7 tablet simply by registering with myhomeonline.

"I'm a busy mum and not very up to date with technology, however I found myhomeonline very simple and easy to use. NRHA also were happy to make a home visit to show me how to change my details on the website. It's really simple and quick."

Turn to page 4 to find out how easy it is to access our services through myhomeonline.

CHRISTMAS CLOSING

Our offices will close at 5pm on Friday 21st December and will re-open at 9am on Wednesday 2nd January. See page 3 for details if you have an emergency repair.

For Your Benefit

**FOR YOUR
BENEFIT**

RETIREMENT AGE CHANGES

The age for claiming the State Retirement Pension and Pension Credit has increased to 66 for both men and women. Anyone making a new claim for Attendance Allowance now has to be aged 66 or over, and anyone making a new claim for Personal Independence Payment has to be aged 66 or under.

CITIZENS ADVICE HELP

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is funding Citizens Advice to provide Universal Support from April 2019. The scheme will help claimants through every step of making a Universal Credit claim and will offer the support needed to get their first payment on time and be ready to manage it when it arrives. Visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk to find your nearest branch.

MATERNITY GRANT EXTENDED

You can now claim a Sure Start Maternity Grant up to six months after the baby's birth, instead of three months. This is a one-off payment of £500 to help with the costs of having a new-born baby. You can only get a grant if the new baby is the only child under 16 in the household. To qualify, you must have received advice from a health care professional and you or your partner must be claiming certain benefits. Visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/sure-start-maternity-grant-claim-form

BUDGETING LOANS

If you're already getting certain benefits and need to borrow money for an essential or unexpected expense, such as clothing, furniture or travel expenses for work, you can apply for an interest-free Budgeting Loan from the Social Fund. This can be much cheaper than paying high interest charges for borrowing from payday or doorstep lenders. Visit www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits/how-to-claim

FUNERAL PAYMENTS

If you're receiving certain benefits and have to pay the funeral expenses of a relative or close friend, you might be able to apply for a Funeral Payment. How much you can get will depend on your circumstances including any other money that's available to cover the costs, for example from an insurance policy or the deceased person's estate. Visit www.gov.uk/funeral-payments/eligibility

PAY YOUR RENT

Money is always tight at this time of year but remember that it's important to keep a roof over your head. Pay your rent first before budgeting for everything else.

BE PREPARED!

It pays to be prepared in case things go wrong in your home. Here's a reminder of some of the main items you are responsible for, and a few tips to prevent them becoming a major issue:

- Light bulbs – keep a couple of spares in the cupboard.
- Blocked sinks, baths and toilets – buy a plunger from a DIY store and some drain cleaner.
- Lost keys – leave a spare key with a friend or neighbour.
- Door bells – have a replacement battery ready.
- Internal decoration – store spare paint in your garage or shed so you can touch up any marks.
- Internal door handles, locks and hinges – create a basic tool kit to tackle small DIY jobs.



FOOD DONATION

Colleagues have been helping to ensure that families don't go hungry this Christmas.

Housing Services Assistant, Theresa Chamberlain, has been collecting donations of basic food items, such as pasta, rice, cereals and fruit juice, for a local food bank which provides a minimum of three days' emergency food and support for people experiencing crisis.



HOW TO...

Use up Christmas leftovers

Here's the latest guide in our 'How to...' feature to help you make the most of all your festive food!

- Use up your cheeseboard in a macaroni cheese.
- Crumble Christmas pudding for the bottom of an ice cream sundae.
- Add turkey and veg to chicken stock to make healthy soup.
- Crumble mince pies and layer with whipped cream and berries for a winter trifle.
- Make a classic turkey and potato curry with curry paste and a tin of tomatoes.
- Chop mince pies into little pieces, add to softened ice cream and freeze for a treat.
- Add chopped roast potatoes to the egg mixture to make a Spanish omelette.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS

If you report an emergency repair, we will make your home safe within 24 hours. But it's vital that you are available so our contractor can access your home during this time. We may also need to arrange a further visit to complete the repair.

Emergency repairs are those needed to avoid immediate danger to your health and safety or serious damage to your home.

To report an emergency repair, call **0300 1234 009** or if this number is not available call **0203 701 3553**.

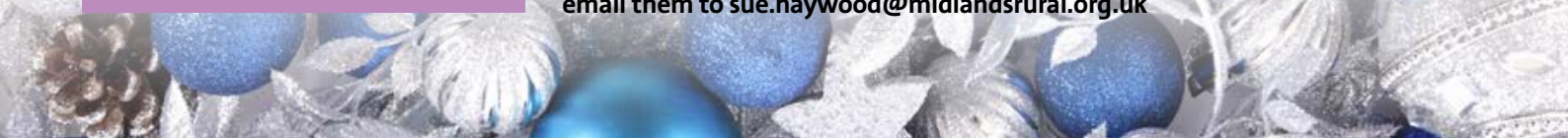
Ask us ...

Barry asked: *I live near some fields and we keep getting mice in the house. Can you help?*

David Krause, Development and Maintenance Manager says:

If you're aware of any holes where mice are getting into your home, our contractors can come and fill them in for you. However, it's not our responsibility to deal with any infestations. You would need to speak to your local council. Leaving food out for the birds can encourage mice and rats, so use bird feeders rather than throwing food on the ground.

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



Service standard

We will carry out inspections on a sample of repairs to check that our contractors are meeting the standards we expect.

'LIKE' US!

If you missed our competition to win an Amazon Fire 7, make sure you don't miss any other news. The best way to read our most up-to-date information is by liking our Facebook page.

SHOW RESPECT

Please remember that we're working to help you. It's important that our colleagues are treated with courtesy and respect. Any aggressive behaviour or bad language used towards our colleagues will **not be tolerated**.

Did you know that

... the average wait time to answer your calls is just 10 seconds?

24 HOUR SERVICES

Don't worry if you didn't manage to register with myhomeonline before the end of October. You can still enjoy all the benefits by registering now through our website.

- myhomeonline is the easiest way to access our services. It's quick and simple to register – all you need is your National Insurance number. Speak to your Tenancy Services Officer to arrange a home visit if you need some help.
- When you've registered, you can use our services 24 hours a day, seven days a week on a PC, tablet or mobile.
- You can check your rent balance and print a statement, pay your bills, report a repair, update your details, set up a direct debit or send us a direct message, along with a host of other services.

Don't put it off – sign up!

FAMILY SUPPORT

Northamptonshire County Council has recruited a team of six Locality Connectors to connect vulnerable children and their families with activities and organisations which can help improve their quality of life and wellbeing. They can provide information about services, groups and activities which are available locally. To find out more, call 0300 126 1000.

WELCOME!

Two new colleagues have recently joined us:



Philippa McKenna is our new Project Delivery Manager. She says: "It's vital that we provide the right homes, for the right people, in the right place, and that's what I'll be focusing on. Residents' views are really important as you can help to shape what's provided in your local areas. If you're affected by rural housing issues, speak to us about the homes you'd like to see in your community for local people."

Cathie Archer has returned as Maintenance Surveyor. She's liaising with contractors and dealing with maintenance related issues, reactive repairs and voids.



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