

# Northamptonshire ruralife



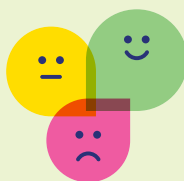
Northamptonshire  
**Rural Housing**  
Association

Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association  
Residents' Magazine | Winter 2023



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## Staying safe, warm and well this winter



*Merry  
Christmas*

And a Happy  
New Year!



# Welcome to our special printed edition of Northamptonshire Rural Life.

We moved to a digital format for newsletters last year, to save money, make it easier to provide links to essential information on our website and to be more environmentally friendly.

However, some customers have told us they don't use the internet. So, to ensure all customers get news updates, we'll send one printed newsletter each year, and the other editions will continue to be sent by email.



If we don't already have your email address, please contact the customer care team on 0300 1234 009 and they will add it to your account.

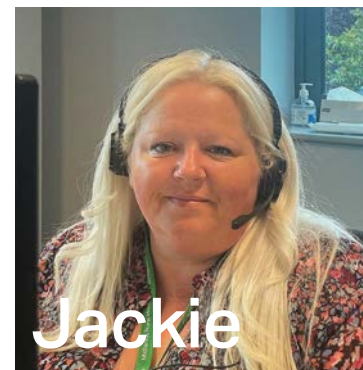
## In this issue:

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### Damp and mould

We've also enclosed a separate leaflet about controlling damp and mould. It includes lots of useful information and tips. And there's also details about how to let us know if you notice signs of damp and mould in your home and what we'll do about it.



Jackie

We have three new team members to introduce...



Lee



Adam



### Jackie joined our Customer Care Team in June.

If you've called the office recently, you may have spoken to Jackie. She's covering for Leonie, who's on maternity leave.

She's extremely kind and patient. She's previously worked in the care industry and her hobbies are crafts, countryside walking, cooking and baking, weekends away exploring different cities (especially in Spain) and spending time with her grandson.

She's enjoying speaking to our customers and helping with your queries.

### Adam comes from a private rental background and has joined us as a Tenant Liaison Officer.

This is a brand-new role in the maintenance team, which will see Adam focusing on supporting customers through planned improvement works.

Adam has a keen interest in the great outdoors, enjoying hiking and wild camping. He also enjoys taking any opportunity to play guitar (although his family may not agree about the enjoying part!).

### And the latest addition to our team is Lee, our new Senior Maintenance Surveyor.

Lee has worked in the world of social housing as a project and contract manager for over 10 years. He's led teams to deliver high-quality repairs, void works and planned maintenance. He previously worked for one of our contractors, so already has experience and knowledge of our homes and our suppliers.

His role with us is another new one, created to manage and support our contractors and our team of maintenance surveyors in operational delivery, to provide a service we can be proud of.

If you meet Lee, you can quiz him on his interests – all things history or anything to do with sport! Or his favourite topic... his daughter!

### We've listened to what you've said...

...and we're increasing our maintenance team to help provide a better service.



Customer Support Funds



Customer Support Funds

**With increases to household bills showing no sign of easing up, we've introduced Customer Support Funds to help our customers.**

Our **Emergency Support Fund** provides financial support to those struggling with key living costs such as food, energy and essential household items.

We'd also love to support you if you're looking for employment, whether or not you're already in a job.

Our **Opportunity Fund** can provide financial support for training courses and expenses for interviews.

Funds are available until the end of March 2024. Tenants and shared owners can apply for funds. All applications are subject to a further assessment by phone and funds being available.

### How to apply

If you feel this is something that could help you, please visit [www.northamptonshire-rha.org.uk/csf](http://www.northamptonshire-rha.org.uk/csf) where you can complete an initial application. Or call the Customer Care Team on 0300 1234 009 and they will take initial details from you.

Your initial application will be reviewed by one of our housing team, who will then get in touch with you to discuss further.

## Worried about paying your rent?

We are here to help. If you're having difficulty paying your rent or household bills, please get in touch with us.

Please talk to us. Your housing officer can:

- ▶ provide guidance to help reduce your debts and manage your money
- ▶ refer you to free services that provide specialised support
- ▶ help you with grant and benefit application forms.

There's also lots of support information on our website: [www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/support](http://www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/support)

**LOOK OUT FOR OUR ANNUAL COST OF LIVING SUPPORT GUIDE WHICH WE'LL SEND OUT IN JANUARY.**



## Your home Your voice



## You know more about living in your home than we do!

There are lots of ways you can get involved and help shape our services, such as surveys and discussion groups. It won't take up much time and there's no commitment to regular meetings.

If you'd like to find out more about becoming an **involved customer** please visit: [www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/get-involved) or call us on 0300 1234 009.

## We're listening and making changes

We're listening to our customers and working with you to continually improve our services. Here's a few of the changes we've made following your recent feedback.

### You said:

"Getting repairs done is hard work and the quality of workmanship is sometimes poor."

### We did:

- We've recruited a senior maintenance surveyor.

This new role has been created to manage and support our contractors, to help improve the service they provide.

### You said:

"When we moved in, we were given B&Q vouchers for decorating, but don't have a car, so it was hard to use them."

### We did:

- We're changing how we offer decorating support. More info to follow soon!

### You said:

"I don't have the internet. I'd like to receive more updates by post."

### We did:

- We've introduced this annual printed newsletter.

If we have an email address for you, most communications are sent by email. If we don't have an email for you, ALL essential communications are sent by post.

## Tenant satisfaction survey



Thank you to everyone who took part in the recent **Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey.**

The survey is part of a set of new measures created by The Regulator of Social Housing to look at how we, and all social housing providers in England, are performing.

At the end of September, we sent a survey to all customers who live in a home owned by Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association (NRHA). If you live in a home owned by emh (and managed by NRHA), emh may have sent you the survey.

Your feedback is really appreciated and will be used to help us improve. We're currently reviewing the results and will share them with you in our next newsletter.

Congratulations to Natalie Zilka who has won the £100 shopping voucher!



"I was delighted to win the prize (I don't usually win anything). It only took a few minutes to complete the survey. I've used the voucher to start my Christmas shopping and get some things for the house."

**Your Idea Matters** is an easy way for you to send us your ideas.

**We're looking for the big, the small, the simple, the grand!**

**YOUR IDEA MATTERS**

## How does it work?

1. Send us your idea.  
You can use our quick online form at [www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/your-idea-matters](http://www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/your-idea-matters) or call on 0300 1234 009.
2. Every three months, all ideas are reviewed by a panel of managers.
3. A winning idea will be chosen and implemented.
4. If your idea is chosen, you'll get a £20 shopping voucher!

**HAVE AN IDEA ABOUT HOW WE CAN IMPROVE? PLEASE TELL US!**





# Get ready for winter

Now is the best time to check your home is ready for the colder months, before the really wintry weather kicks in. Here's a checklist to help you get your home winter ready.



## 1. Check your heating

- ☒ **Test your heating** – if you haven't used it for a while, turn it on for 20-30 minutes to make sure it's working properly. **If there's a problem, let us know so we can fix it.**
- ☒ **Check your radiators** – if they're cold at the top but warm at the bottom, air may be trapped inside, which means they won't work efficiently. If they feel like this, please let us know.
- ☒ **Has your boiler had its annual service?** If you have gas in your home, we'll carry out an annual gas safety check, which includes servicing your boiler.

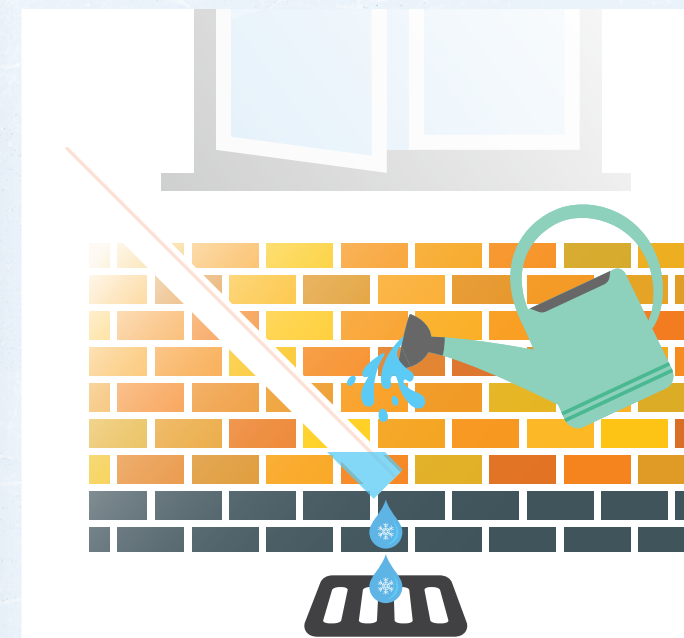
*If your appointment is scheduled please make sure you're home for it. These checks are legally required, important for your safety and help your heating run efficiently.*

*If you've missed your appointment please get in touch to rebook as soon as possible.*



## 2. Prepare your outside

- ☒ Check your gutters are clear of leaves. If any gutters are broken, please report it straight away.
- ☒ Check your outside lights are working ahead of the dark evenings, and report any that are broken.
- ☒ Secure garden items that may cause issues in high winds such as furniture or toys.



### How to safely thaw a frozen condensate pipe

If your boiler has stopped working in freezing temperatures, there's a good chance that your condensate pipe has frozen.

Luckily, this isn't a big problem and you can easily resolve it yourself:

- Look for an outdoor pipe connected to your boiler. It's usually white, plastic, connecting to an external drain.
- Pour warm, not boiling water along the pipe.
- Reset your boiler. It should work normally if the pipe is defrosted.

## 3. Think about your pipes and plumbing

- ☒ Isolate the water supply to your outdoor tap during winter (if you're not using it) and protect exposed pipes and taps with insulation.

**Do you know where your stopcock is?**  
**If not, please take a minute to find it.**

If a pipe bursts, you'll need to switch the water off at the stopcock / stop tap. It's usually under the kitchen sink, but could be in a kitchen cupboard, downstairs toilet, garage or under the stairs.

**Winter is our busiest time for repairs!**  
**Check your home now and let us know about any repairs straight away.**

## 4. Keep your home warm

- ☒ Check you know how your thermostat and radiator valves work – if you need any help, please get in touch.

### Got a combi boiler?

Set your heating to between 18° and 21°C.

### Got an air source heat pump?

Leave your heating on at a minimum of 18°C **all the time.**





## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A POWER CUT

POWER CUT?  
CALL 105

Having a power cut can be frustrating and worrying. They are caused by issues from the distributor, not your energy supplier.

Here's what to do if you're faced with a power cut.

If your electricity hasn't come back on after 10 minutes, call 105 which will connect you to your distributor. They will take some details and let you know an estimated time for your power to be back on.

YES

IS YOUR METER WORKING?

YES

CHECK YOUR FUSE BOX!  
ARE ALL THE SWITCHES FACING THE SAME WAY?

NO

NO

You'll need to call your energy supplier. You can find their number on your top up card or on your bill.

If a switch is facing the wrong way, it means an appliance has probably 'tripped' the electricity. The switch will trip off to break the electricity supply. As a rule of thumb, the last appliance or light fixture you used is likely to be the cause and you'll need to identify it to reset the electricity:

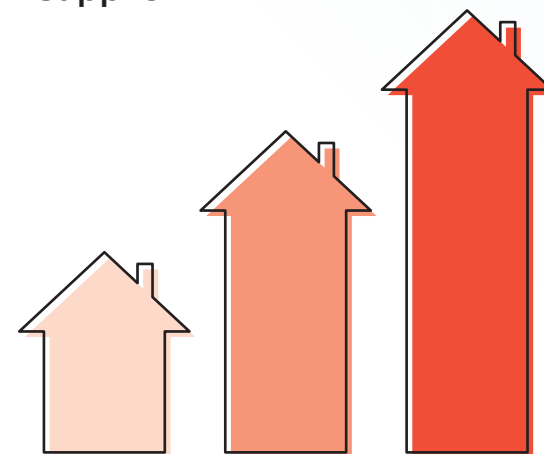
1. Unplug recently used appliances and try resetting the fuse switch.
2. Once reset, plug your appliances back in one at a time and switch them back on.
3. If the switch trips again, you'll know it's the last appliance that you plugged in and switched on.
4. Turn off and unplug the appliance, before resetting the switch. Don't plug it back in – it's likely there's a fault with its wiring that will need replacing.



## Have you heard of the Priority Services Register?

- ! The Priority Services Register is free to join.
- ! It helps utility companies, including energy suppliers, and water networks to look after customers who have extra communication, access, or safety needs.
- ! It helps them tailor their services to support households who need extra help with everyday energy matters like bills, and also in the unlikely event of a power cut, gas, or water supply interruption.

- ! To join the Priority Services Register you will need to contact your energy and water supplier.



## Check you have home 'contents' insurance

The British winter weather often means storms and freezing temperatures, which can cause things to go wrong in your home – such as burst water pipes! If this happens, you may need to claim for the damage or loss on your contents insurance. **It's your responsibility to organise your own home contents insurance.**

The National Housing Federation has teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks, who provide 'My Home' contents insurance, a flexible and affordable home contents insurance for social housing residents.

**Protect your home contents and belongings. Call My Home and apply for cover on 0345 450 7288.**

**Or visit: [www.thistlemyhome.co.uk](http://www.thistlemyhome.co.uk)**



## Our office will be closed on the following dates...

Friday 15 December.

Christmas closure: We close at 12pm,  
Friday 22 December and reopen at 9am,  
Tuesday 2 January 2024.



**CLOSED**

If you're a resident with an emergency repair request during this time,

please call **0300 1234 009** and select the option to report an emergency repair.

If this number is unavailable, please call **0203 7013 553** for our out-of-hours service.

## Important information about emergency repairs

Emergency repairs are defects or issues which put your health, safety or security at immediate risk.

- ⚠ From 1st October to 31st March, a total loss of heating and hot water in your home is classed as an emergency for everyone.
- ⚠ We aim to complete emergency repairs within 24 hours from the time it's reported to us. You should make yourself available during this time to ensure our contractors can gain access to your home.
- ⚠ Please let us know about any health problems or disabilities in your household, so we can update your records and respond to enquiries and emergencies appropriately.



**Emergency repairs can be reported 24/7, 365 days of the year by calling 0300 1234 009.**



## Annual Report to Residents

Each year we produce a report for residents to show how we've performed during the previous year and how we've continued to invest in and improve our services.

Although 2022-2023 was another challenging year, we're very proud of what we achieved. Our annual report, which explains how we performed between April 2022 and March 2023, is now available to read at: [www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/annual-reports](http://www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/annual-reports)

If you'd like a hard copy of the report, or any further information, please email [enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk) or call us on 0300 1234 009.

## Ways to get in touch with us...

Phone: 0300 1234 009, 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday

Email: [enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk)

[www.myhomeonline.org.uk/midsrur/www/dashboard](http://www.myhomeonline.org.uk/midsrur/www/dashboard)

Facebook: @NorthantsRural

Like us on Facebook to see all our latest news

We only have one phone number – it's the same one for routine enquiries and emergency requests.