Northamptonshire rurallife

Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association
Residents' Newsletter | Autumn 2026

Northamptonshire
Rural Housing
Association



T. 0300 1234 009 / E. enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk / www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the autumn edition of Northamptonshire Rural Life.

There's lots to share with you, from the work progressing on new affordable homes in Kings Cliffe and Collyweston and catching up with some familiar faces from our team.

With winter on its way, we've also included plenty of practical information to help you stay warm and look after your home, alongside details of the financial support available if you need a helping hand. And, because your views really do matter, you can find out how to get involved and help us make our services better.

We hope you find this issue useful and, as always, if there's anything you'd like to talk to us about, please get in touch.



Colder weather can increase the risk of condensation in our homes. To help, we've enclosed a damp and mould leaflet with information on reducing condensation, recognising the signs of damp and mould, and getting help if you have concerns.

Please take a few minutes to read the leaflet and keep it handy for future reference.

If you notice damp or mould in your home, please report it to us as soon as possible so we can help.

In this issue:

1. Meet the team
2. Thistle home contents insurance
3. Time to get your home ready for winter
6. New homes taking shape in Kings Cliffe
8. New affordable homes planned for Collyweston
10. How we're performing… Your home: what we achieved in 2025–26
12. Gas service appointments
14. Using AI? Keep it simple

    Helping us to put things right
15. Making information easier to find with STAIRs

    Could you help us make services better?
16. Cost of living support

hello!

"Claire has always gone above and beyond to help me in any situation that's occurred. She is such a lovely lady."
NRHA resident

Say… to a few members of our team







Claire and David, your housing officers

Claire is our Housing Officer for residents living in the West Northamptonshire Council areas: Daventry, and South Northamptonshire.

Claire always goes above and beyond for residents, and is one of the calmest and most helpful people you could meet.

David is our Housing Officer for residents living in the North Northamptonshire Council areas: East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough.

David is great at finding solutions in challenging situations and his background in specialist housing support is a great benefit to our residents.

Both Claire and David co-ordinate all things to do with housing and tenancies, including allocations, advising on rent queries, scheme visits, benefit notifications and anti-social behaviour.

… and Lindsey, your Maintenance Surveyor

Lindsey has been part of the Northamptonshire Rural Housing team for just over three months. She oversees day-to-day maintenance, getting empty homes ready to relet and working with contractors to keep everything safe and running smoothly.

She's super organised, very friendly and will always go above and beyond to help with any questions or concerns, making sure they're handled quickly and used to improve our service.

Could you afford to replace your belongings?

THISTLE TENANT RISKS



Unexpected events such as storms, burst pipes, fires or burglaries can cause damage to the things in your home. If this happens, contents insurance can help with the cost of replacing your belongings.

While we insure the building itself, it's your responsibility to arrange insurance for your home contents. Home contents insurance includes cover for items such as furniture, electrical appliances and other household possessions.

The National Housing Federation has teamed up with Thistle Insurance Services to provide the 'My Home' contents insurance scheme, designed specifically for people living in social housing. The scheme offers flexible and affordable cover, with a range of payment options available.

To find out more, visit:
www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/contents

Time to get your home ready for winter

Inside your home:

Test your heating

Turn it on for 20-30 minutes to make sure it's working properly. If you spot a problem, **let us know** before the cold weather arrives.

Check your radiators

Cold at the top but warm at the bottom? Sounds like they need bleeding. Take a look on our website for a 'how to' guide. If you have any concerns, **let us know**.

Find your stop tap (just in case you need it!)

If a pipe bursts, you'll need to turn the water off quickly. It's often under the kitchen sink, but may also be in a cupboard, downstairs toilet or under the stairs.

Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

Press the test button regularly. If you have any concerns, **please contact us**.

Outside your home:

Clear leaves from gutters and drains

Leaves can cause blockages, leaks and damp. **Report** any blocked or damaged guttering.

Protect outdoor pipes and taps

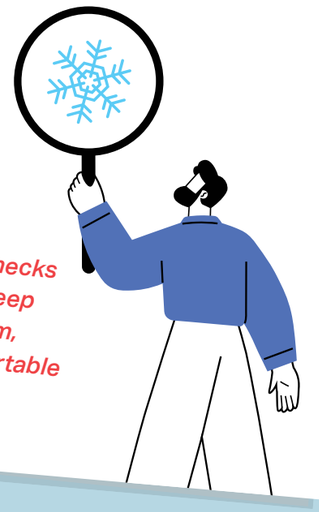
Use pipe insulation to help prevent freezing.

Secure garden furniture and toys

Strong winds can move loose items and cause damage.

Check outside lights are working

If any are broken, **let us know** so we can repair them.



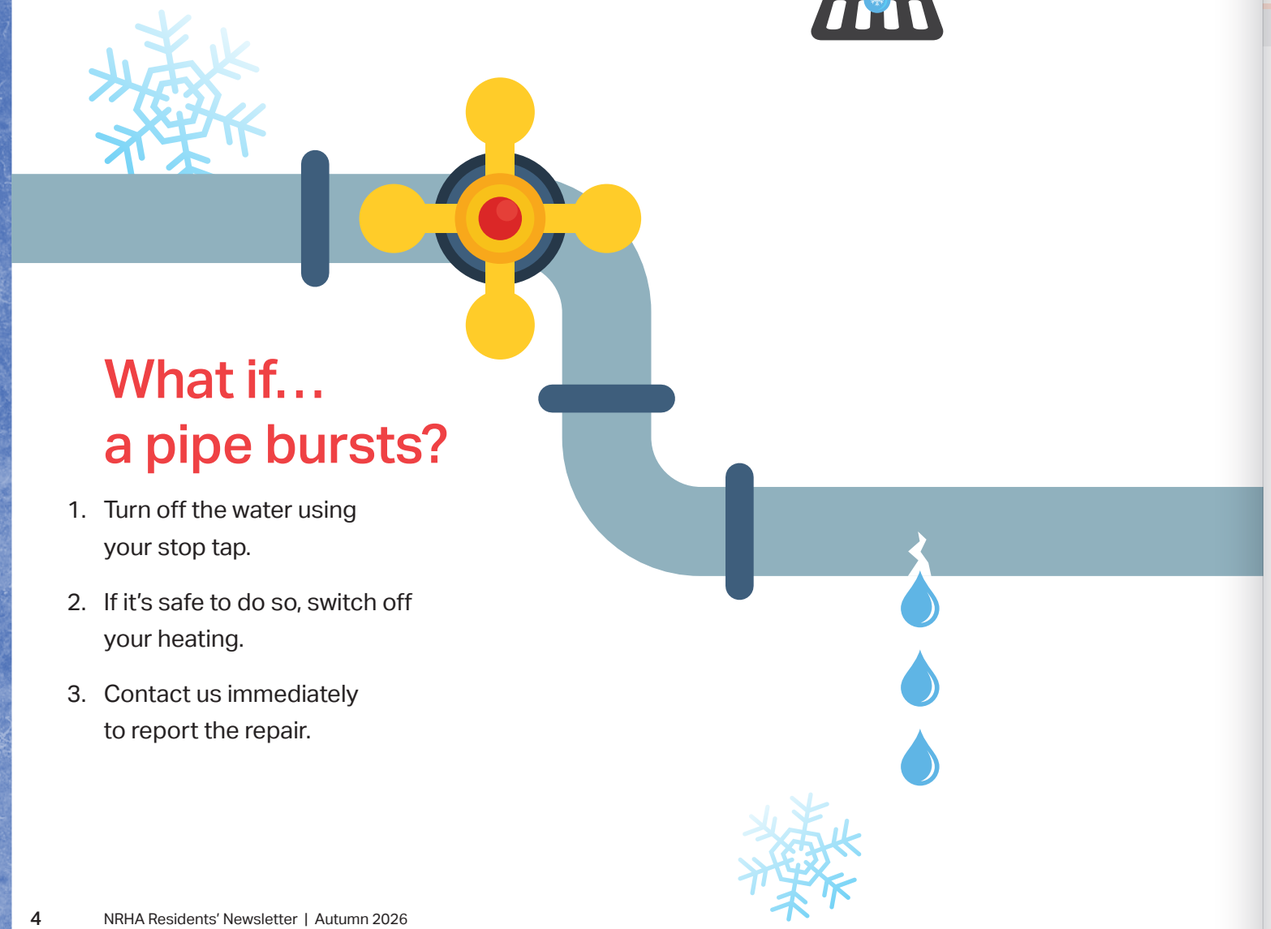
A few simple checks now can help keep your home warm, safe and comfortable this winter.

What if… your boiler stops working in freezing weather? *A frozen condensate pipe could be the cause…*

1. Find the small plastic pipe running from your boiler to an outside drain.
2. Pour warm (not boiling) water over the frozen section.
3. Reset your boiler.
4. If the pipe has thawed, your boiler should start working again.

   If your boiler still isn't working, please contact us.

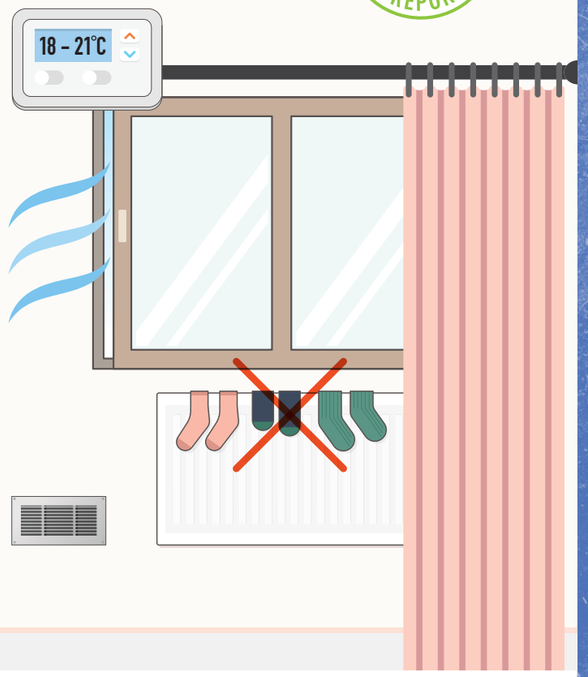




What if… a pipe bursts?

1. Turn off the water using your stop tap.
2. If it's safe to do so, switch off your heating.
3. Contact us immediately to report the repair.

Keeping your home warm and well ventilated



A warm home is usually easier and cheaper to heat than a home that gets very cold and then has to warm up again.

- Use your thermostat to keep your home at a comfortable temperature.
- Don't block radiators with furniture, thick curtains or clothes.
- Close curtains at dusk to help keep heat in.
- Open windows for a few minutes each day to let fresh air circulate and help reduce condensation. This can help prevent mould from forming.

Do you have a combi boiler?

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

TOP TIP!

Got an air source heat pump?

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



Need to report a repair?

Winter is our busiest time for repairs. Small issues can quickly become bigger ones during cold, wet weather, so if you notice a leak, damaged guttering, faulty heating or any other repair issue, please report it as soon as possible.

A little preparation now can help prevent bigger problems later.

NEW

New homes taking shape in Kings Cliffe



Work is progressing well on our new affordable housing development in Kings Cliffe, with construction now well underway.

The scheme, located on Millwood Way, will provide 10 new homes for social rent:

- 8 two-bedroom houses
- 2 one-bedroom maisonettes

The recent good weather has helped the contractor make excellent progress. All drainage and foundations have now been completed, providing a strong start for the next phase of construction.

The homes are being built to high energy-efficiency standards and each will include:

- Air source heat pump
- Solar panels
- Electric vehicle charging point
- Off-road parking for two vehicles

The homes are expected to be completed and ready for new residents in spring 2027.

Find out more about the homes we're building at www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/new-homes





Kings Cliffe

- **Plots 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8:** 2-bed houses
- **Plots 9, 10:** 2-bed houses
- **Plots 3, 4:** 1-bed maisonettes. Plot 3 is ground floor, Plot 4 is first floor.

Interested in one of the new homes?

If you're interested in being considered for one of the new Kings Cliffe homes, you'll need to be registered on Keyways, the North Northamptonshire Council's (NNC) housing register before the homes are advertised.

1. Complete the registration application form on the Keyways website: www.keyways.org.uk
2. If you're eligible, you'll be added to the NNC housing register.
3. The Kings Cliffe homes are expected to be advertised on the Keyways website around two months before they're ready.
4. When they're advertised, you'll need to place a bid through the Keyways bidding system.
5. NNC will then nominate eligible applicants for the homes.

If you think you may need affordable housing, we'd encourage you to register with Keyways. Don't wait for the homes to be advertised.



For more information, please contact: David Kolodynski on 0300 1234 009 enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk

NEW



Eight for social rent:

- **Plot 1:** 2-bed house
- **Plot 2:** 2-bed house
- **Plot 3:** 2-bed house
- **Plot 4:** 2-bed house
- **Plot 6:** 1-bed house
- **Plot 7:** 1-bed house
- **Plot 8:** 3-bed house
- **Plot 9:** 2-bed bungalow

One for shared ownership:

- **Plot 5:** 2-bed house

Find out more about the homes we're building
www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/new-homes

New affordable homes planned for Collyweston



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: Collyweston

NEW HOMES: Nine affordable homes

SOCIAL RENT: Four 2-bedroom houses, one 3-bedroom house, two 1-bedroom houses and one 2-bedroom bungalow

SHARED OWNERSHIP: One 2-bedroom house

BENEFITS FOR NATURE: Over 50% biodiversity net gain

PLANNING PERMISSION: Approved

POTENTIAL START ON SITE: Early 2027 (subject to final approvals)

We're pleased to be making good progress on plans for nine new affordable homes in Collyweston.

The new homes will form the second phase of The Drove development, building on the successful scheme completed in the village almost ten years ago.

Planning permission has now been approved. We're currently finalising funding and costs, with work on site potentially starting in early 2027, subject to final approvals.

The plans have been shaped by local housing need and designed to fit well within the village. The scheme includes additional green space and is expected to achieve a biodiversity net gain of more than 50%. This means the site will support significantly more wildlife and natural habitats after the homes are built than it does today.

We'll continue to keep you updated as the project moves forward.

How we're performing…
Your home: what we achieved in 2025–26

Our work is about more than looking after buildings. It is about providing safe, comfortable and well-maintained homes where people can build their lives.



1. Keeping you safe
Keeping residents safe is our first priority.

2. Repairing your homes
We know how important a reliable repairs service is.

1,690 repairs completed this year

93% satisfaction with our repairs and maintenance service

71 damp and mould cases reported and resolved

69% of non-emergency repairs completed within the target time

71% of emergency repairs completed within the target time*



*Of residents who filled out a satisfaction survey after work was completed.

Interested in how many complaints we've had and what they are about?
We publish our complaints performance every three months on our website. Take a look:
www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/complaint-performance

3. Improving your homes
We continued to invest in safe, comfortable and good-quality homes.

These figures apply to homes owned by Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association.

57 homes externally painted

40 new bathrooms

11 replacement gas boilers

4 homes with new doors



12 homes fully retrofitted**

**Air source heat pumps, solar panels, loft insulation and fans.

1 new kitchen

100% satisfaction with our planned maintenance service*

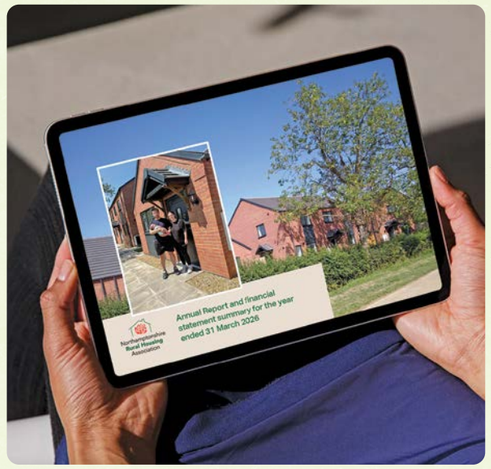
3 new or replacement air source heat pumps

Read more in our Annual Report

The figures on this page are just a snapshot of how we invested in and maintained your homes between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. To read more about our overall performance, investment in homes and how residents' feedback is helping shape our work, download our latest Annual Report.

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 or call 0300 1234 009.



"I told you I wouldn't be home, so why did the engineer still come?"

We're often asked this, and we completely understand why it can be frustrating.

Gas service appointments

The answer is that annual gas safety checks are a legal requirement. We must make sure a gas safety check is completed every year. We also need to keep records showing we've made repeated attempts to gain access to your home before the gas safety certificate expires.

Sometimes this means an engineer must still visit and leave a calling card, even when you've already told us you won't be home.

We know this can seem frustrating, so here's how the process works.

Around two months before your gas safety certificate expires, our contractor, Phoenix Gas, will send you an appointment by letter.

If the date isn't convenient, please contact Phoenix as soon as possible (their details will be on the appointment letter).

Depending on engineer availability, Phoenix may be able to rearrange the appointment straight away.

However, this isn't always possible. To meet our legal responsibilities, we need to make and record a series of attempts to gain access to your home before the gas safety certificate expires. These attempts must take place at different times during the lead-up to the gas safety certificate expiring.

Why might the engineer still visit?

If rearranging your allocated appointment would move it to a later point in the process, the original appointment may still need to go ahead, so that we have evidence that an access attempt was made at that time.

If the original appointment needs to go ahead, the engineer will attend and leave a calling card if nobody is home.

We know this can feel frustrating when you've already told us you won't be in. Please be assured that we aren't ignoring your request to rearrange. If we can move the appointment, we will.

What happens next?

When you call Phoenix, let them know your upcoming availability. Once the original appointment date has passed, they will call you to confirm a new appointment.

Our aim is always to work with you to find a suitable date and complete the gas safety check as quickly and conveniently as possible.



At a glance:

What happens if you can't make the first allocated appointment?

Step	What happens?
1. Can't make your appointment?	Contact Phoenix as soon as possible and let them know your availability.
2. Appointment reviewed	Phoenix will check whether your allocated appointment can be rearranged.
3. Original appointment may still go ahead	In some cases, the engineer may still need to attend the original appointment as part of the gas servicing process (even if you're not home).
4. New appointment arranged	Phoenix contacts you to confirm/arrange another appointment (if needed).
5. Gas safety check completed	Once the check is carried out, the process ends until next year's service is due.

Why annual gas safety checks are so important!

- They help keep your home safe
- They ensure that your boiler and gas appliances are working correctly
- They help protect you, your household and your neighbours

What happens if we can't get access?

We and Phoenix will continue trying to contact you and arrange further appointments.

If we still can't gain access before the gas safety certificate expires, we may need to take legal action to gain entry and complete the safety check.

We always want to avoid this, which is why we start the process early and make several attempts to contact you first.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation. We know the process isn't always straightforward, but these checks play an important role in keeping you, your household and your neighbours safe.

Find out more about the process on our website: www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/gas-service

Using AI?

KEEP IT SIMPLE :)

When you contact us about a problem, concern or complaint, the most helpful thing you can do is explain it clearly in your own words.

Many people now use AI tools, such as Copilot or ChatGPT, to help write emails and letters. These can be useful for putting thoughts into words, but they can sometimes make assumptions, include incorrect information and create very long messages, making it harder for us to quickly understand what's happened and how we can help.

You don't need to write a formal letter, quote legislation, refer to policies, or use legal language.

The clearer the information, the quicker we can understand what's gone wrong and work towards a solution.

If you'd rather talk things through, give us a call. We're happy to listen, ask questions, and discuss the issue with you.

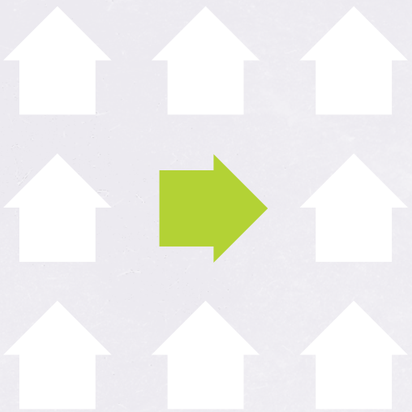
Contact us in whatever way works best for you, whether that's by phone, email or letter, we're here to listen and help.

A SIMPLE CHECKLIST

BEFORE YOU PRESS SEND, ASK YOURSELF:

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- How has it affected me?
- What would I like Northamptonshire Rural Housing Association to do?

A few clear details can help us resolve things more quickly for you.



Helping us to put things right

Sometimes things don't go as they should. If that happens, please let us know so we can look into your concerns and work to put things right.

Our Complaints Policy and Complaints Process explain what you can expect from us if you make a complaint. You can find them on our website at: www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/complaints

If you'd like the information in another format or need support to make a complaint, please get in touch.

Making information easier to find with STAIRs

SOCIAL TENANT ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

STAIRs, which stands for *Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements* was introduced in October 2026 by the Regulator of Social Housing. It's designed to make it easier for social housing households to find information about how we manage our homes and services.

You can now find key information about how we're run, how we spend money and about the services we provide **on one page on our website**.

If you think information should be included on our STAIRs webpage but you can't find it, you can ask us to review it.

Looking ahead

From 1 April 2027, customers will have a new right to ask us for specific information about the management of their home. We'll share more details about this before April.

Find out more at: www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/STAIRs

Could you help us make services better?

Residents help shape our services in lots of different ways.

Some review draft policies before they're introduced. Others give feedback on proposed changes, complete surveys, or help us choose new contractors and services.

We keep things flexible. Rather than holding formal panel meetings, we contact residents when opportunities arise and invite them to take part in areas that interest them. You can choose how much or how little you get involved.

The feedback we receive helps us make better decisions and improve our services for everyone.

Would *you* like to **have your say?**

Visit our website to find out more about the different ways you can get involved, or give us a call on 0300 1234 009.

www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/have-your-say

Cost of living support

Help with heating costs this winter.



Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before 27 June 1960, you could receive a Winter Fuel Payment of £100 to £300 to help with heating costs this winter. Most eligible people will receive the payment automatically.

For full details and to check your eligibility, visit gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment

Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount is a £150 discount on your electricity bill for eligible households. If you qualify, the discount is applied directly to your bill, so you do not receive the money separately.

Most people who are eligible will receive the discount automatically. The scheme is due to reopen in October 2026 for winter 2026/27.

For more information and eligibility details, visit gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme



Beware of scams

Never share your bank details or personal information in response to unexpected calls, texts or emails about energy schemes or energy bill support. If you're unsure, contact the organisation directly using its official contact details.

Need a helping hand?

If you're struggling with the cost of living or need support to settle into a new home, our Customer Support Funds may be able to help.

Emergency Support Fund

Help with essential costs such as food, energy bills and household items.

Opportunity Fund

Help with training courses and interview expenses to support employment opportunities.

New Home Tenancy Support Fund

Available to residents with a starter tenancy who need help with the costs of moving into their new home. The fund can help pay for essential items such as a fridge, cooker or washing machine.

"Thank you so much for the help with the voucher. I managed to get a new fridge freezer which I wouldn't have been able to do without that help. It is really appreciated."

Interested?

Visit www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/csf or call 0300 1234 009 to find out more.

The Emergency Support Fund and Opportunity Fund are available to tenants and shared owners.
The New Home Tenancy Support Fund is available to eligible starter tenancy residents only.

Community funding available

Do you know of a local project, group or organisation that helps bring your community together and would benefit from funding?

Thanks to a community donation through our partnership with EEM, we have funding available to support initiatives across our villages.

Funding is available for a wide range of community initiatives, including warm hubs, lunch clubs, youth groups, village projects and wellbeing activities.

To apply for funding, complete our short online form at: **www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/community-donation**

Applications close on 30 November 2026.

Please note that submitting an application does not guarantee funding.

(EEM is a not-for-profit organisation that helps housing associations and public sector organisations buy goods and services more efficiently.)

Our office will be closed on the following dates…



Friday 18 December

For Christmas and New Year we close at 12 noon on Thursday 24 December and reopen at 9am on Monday 4 January 2027.

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 01452 922927 for our out-of-hours service.

Not sure if it's classed as an emergency repair?

Visit: www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk/report-repair

Could MyHomeOnline work better for you?



Take our two-minute survey and help us understand what residents need from our customer portal. **It doesn't matter whether you use MyHomeOnline regularly, occasionally or not at all. We'd still like to hear from you.**

Scan the QR code to take part, or give us a call on 0300 1234 009. **If you take part, you'll be entered into a draw to win one of five £20 shopping vouchers.**

No heating?

We make it a priority in winter.

Between 1 October and 31 March, a total loss of heating is classed as an emergency repair, and we'll aim to attend within 24 hours of you reporting the issue.





For the safety of our staff and contractors, please make sure dogs are kept under control whenever we visit your home. This helps us carry out visits, repairs, inspections and servicing safely and efficiently.

We're here to help

Need to report a repair, update your details or ask a question? You can contact us on MyHomeOnline, by phone, email or online.

T. 0300 1234 009
E. enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk
www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk
@NorthantsRural