

housing news

West



Housing
Executive

Tenants always come first

CONTENTS

- 4-8** News from your area
.....
- 9** How we did in the last year
.....
- 10** Did You Know? All you need to know about your tenancy
.....
- 14** Beat the winter freeze with our practical tips
.....
- 15** Energy advice at your fingertips
.....
- 20** Tenancy fraud. If you suspect a cheat let us know
.....
- 23** Who's who in your area
.....

Welcome to the 2014 edition of Housing News

Housing News is your magazine and to reflect that we have a bumper edition to keep you up-to-date with what's happening in your area and across Northern Ireland.

There's an entire section dedicated to your area, which includes information on the schemes and work that has been taking place in your homes, as well as our annual performance in your council area.

You will also find a section on 'Your Home' outlining your responsibilities as our tenant as well as lots of tips and practical advice. In 'Your Energy' we have included tips to help you save money and how to beat the winter freeze. You will also find helpful advice on using our online services, staying safe, housing benefit, tenancy fraud and other issues that may affect you.

Included in this year's pack is 'Quids In', a magazine which has been specially produced for our tenants. The glossy magazine gives advice on spending, saving, borrowing and earning. Find out how to take the sting out of the festivities and Geordie Shore's Vicky Pattison talks money.

You will also find a leaflet encouraging you to become involved and improve our services to you. The Housing Executive works with community and tenant organisations through the Housing Community Network but we also want to work with individual housing association tenants and local residents.

Whether it's sitting on the new Tenant Scrutiny Panel or becoming a Mystery Shopper, how much or little you want to become involved is up to you but it will all help to deliver an improved service.

And finally in this edition, we introduce you to the staff who work in your area and let you know how to get in touch with us.

We hope you will find lots of things of interest to you in Housing News. But don't forget we're keen to hear from you on a new name for the magazine so make sure to Have Your Say to be in with a chance to win £200.

Name our magazine - win £200 towards your winter heating costs

Housing News was first published 25 years ago and we are looking for a brand new name. If you have any ideas or suggestions let us know. Simply write down your suggestion on the slip below. Send completed entries to the Information Department, Housing Executive, Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB on or before 31 January 2015.

New magazine name

Your name

Your address

Tel number (optional)





Putting our tenants at the heart of our business

“Working together, we can create better housing, improve environments and transform lives.”

Message from the Chief Executive

Our goal is to ensure that everyone has access to a good, affordable home in a safe and healthy environment.

I know this is vital to you, our tenants. I know this, having spent my life working as a housing professional but more importantly, I know this because of my own personal journey and experiences. I hail from the tenements of a tough Glasgow housing estate where, sometimes, paying the rent and keeping a roof over our heads was a struggle for my parents.

That's what drives me every day to ensure that when difficulties arise for tenants, we are here to help.

It has been just over a year since I took up post at the Housing Executive; the path hasn't been smooth but we have turned the page on the past. Our sole focus now and for the future is to ensure we deliver a first-class service, providing you with what you need and consistently exceeding your expectations.

We are making huge improvements to every aspect of our service. Our staff are determined we will focus on what tenants need, that services are easy to use and that not only do we deliver, but we deliver excellence.

There are challenging times ahead for all of us; budgetary pressures for the government and uncertainty over welfare reform in Northern Ireland are just two. But we are determined that every single penny of your rent counts and is invested back into providing you with a better service.

Over the next year, we are investing £160 million in maintaining and improving your homes, installing double glazing to those homes which don't have it, replacing older kitchens and heating

and improving the outside of your home are among some of our priorities.

We need to do a lot of work to secure funding to deliver more for our tenants, continue to improve homes, deliver services which transform people's lives and homes for those who are homeless or in need of housing, helping the vulnerable sustain their tenancies and support our communities.

Last year we spent just over £4m on community involvement, a considerable investment, which we believe is important to make sure we are delivering all we can for local communities. Tenants in communities across Northern Ireland, through your Tenant Scrutiny Panels, are now playing an active role in the delivery of services locally and helping us improve performance.

I have been listening to what you have to say through meetings, feedback and working with the various community forums. Your voice is important and we have reviewed our strategy to make sure you are given a real say.

Working together, we can create better housing, improve environments and transform lives.

Mags Lightbody
Acting Chief Executive



JUNIOR WARDENS hit the trail again

Our Junior Warden project has started again in local primary schools in the city.

The project encourages and provides opportunities for schoolchildren to take responsibility for their own communities. They take part in neighbourhood clean-ups, planting projects, designing anti-social behaviour awareness posters and tours of the city.

Pupils from Newbuildings Primary School were the first to hit the tour

trail this year. On a bright autumn day they travelled from their school to St Columbs Park, Ebrington, across the Peace Bridge to the Guildhall and the City Walls before ending at the War Memorial in The Diamond.

They were led by Adrian Callen (www.derrybluebadgetours.com) from the foundation of the city by St Columba, the building of St Breacan's Church, through Viking raids, the city's long maritime history and onto the famous Siege, and the development of the city to

the modern day.

Our Social Education Officer, Patrick Duddy, said: "The Junior Warden project has been running for a number of years and it's always great to see the enthusiasm the school children have to making a difference in their own community.

"The tours give them the opportunity to see the rich history of their own city," he added.

The project, which receives funding from the Policing & Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) will involve ten local primary schools, and up to 500 pupils each year.



Newbuildings Primary School Junior Wardens meeting St Columba in St Columbs Park

Santa pays visit to Grotto

Over 300 children in the Galliagh area of the city were paid an early visit by Santa Claus, thanks to the efforts of the local women's group.

Galliagh Women's group secured funding of £3,300 from the Housing Executive for a series of events targeted at local women.

The women's project included ten week courses in crochet, healthy living, arts and crafts and a pamper event, attended by up to 150

local residents. The funding also ensured that Santa's Grotto was in place for the local children.

Marie Gillespie, Chairperson of the Women's Group, said: "This is the third year Santa's Grotto has opened its doors to the children of the Galliagh community. As an integral part of the community the group recognises the importance of providing some degree of respite for families at the lower end of the economic scale.

Marie added: "This project focussed on the social enterprise within the area and provided women with activities focussed on training and the arts and also provided them with volunteering opportunities. Whilst the project is a three month venture, it will provide local women with the opportunity to become self-sustainable with the new skills they acquire."

Ellie Stewart visits Santa at Galliagh Women's Group, pictured with Mayor Brenda Stevenson, Michael Doyle, Housing Executive assistant manager and Rosie Doherty, Galliagh Women's Group.



Christmas spirit breaks down interface barriers

HISTORIC barriers between interface communities of the Fountain and Bishop Street in Derry-Londonderry have been broken down with the help of the Christmas spirit.

Derry-Londonderry hosted its own Christmas market as part of a unique project pioneered by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) backed Peace Walls Programme in the city and funded by the Housing Executive to the tune of almost £9,000.

Bishop Street Gate, once the centre for market trading in foodstuff and cattle, once again rang out with the sounds of trading when it hosted to a two-day winter festival in December.

35 residents from Bishop Street and the Fountain took part in a programme of arts and crafts at the Playhouse Theatre and sold their handmade wares at the Christmas market at Bishop Street gate.



Joan Robb and Donna Best

The purpose of this project was to promote good relations in the area whilst also increasing the employability of local people by training them in food hygiene and craft making as well as giving them a taste of a business environment.

Eddie Breslin, the Housing Executive's Cohesion Advisor, said:

"This project embodies everything that the Housing Executive's Cohesion work strives to do – to

create a common vision and sense of belonging for everyone and to value and appreciate people from different backgrounds to promote positive relations.

"The work that has been carried out will bring together residents from across the interface in a positive, relationship enhancing experience that will showcase the range of activities they have been engaged with in the run-up to the Festival."



The kids from Ebrington and Oakgrove Primary Schools with Stephen Proctor, Mark Hunter and Ralph Hamilton, Delia Dougherty, Ebrington PS Classroom Assistant, Ian Hyndman, Lisnagelvin Primary School, Linda Watson, Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group and Lorraine Coulter, Oakgrove Integrated PS.

Small orchard given new life

A small orchard in the Caw/Nelson Drive area has been given new life, thanks to the joint efforts of the Housing Executive, the local community group and schoolchildren.

The Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group and our Grounds team have been working together to create a space for residents to enjoy and relax on the estate and recently enlisted the help of school children from Ebrington, Lisnagelvin and Oakgrove Primary Schools to help with planting.

We have invested over £3500 to create a herb and fruit garden. In addition to the eight apple trees and shrubs which were already on the site, it has been transformed to create a relaxing community area packed with a wide variety of herbs and fruit to

include red and blackcurrants, gooseberry bushes, thyme, sage, rosemary. The new herb garden is now known as the Marie Curie Herb Garden.

Linda Watson, Co-ordinator for Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group, said:

"We were so pleased to have the support of the Housing Executive to help transform the area. The garden will make a real difference to everyday life in the area. There is a tangible sense of community spirit which I hope the garden will sustain and encourage."



EVERY BODY IS BEAUTIFUL 23



The lives and times of the women of Derry have been celebrated in paint as part of a unique Good Relations focused project in the Brandywell area of the city.

Well behaved women rarely make history

The initiative has been facilitated by the Peace III funded Building Relationships in Communities (bric) Programme, a unique collaboration between the Rural Development Council, Housing Executive and TIDES Training.

The mural features a bespoke mural detailing the trials and tribulations faced by women from the city over the last hundred years or so. Located at the site of a 200-year-old forge, the artwork has been designed by the women of the Brandywell.

The one-of-a-kind piece charts key moments in local history including the days of female labour in the shirt factories, women's rights, the civil rights campaign and the Troubles while celebrating the undeniable role women played in the city and its history.

Jennifer Hawthorne, the Housing Executive's Head of Neighbourhoods, said:

"This mural documents the history of the women in this area and how their experiences shaped the future of generations of women to ensure a legacy of hope.

"The project was developed to bring women from all generations together to celebrate women and their contribution to the community. I hope that it will also invoke personal reflection on individual values and beliefs; challenge stereotypes and encourage acceptance and understanding of others.

"This is particularly important for those younger women attending this event today, many of whom will be the advocates for change going forward.

"The Housing Executive very much appreciates the excellent work that has already been done to improve community relations and cohesion in the area and we commend the women of Brandywell for all their work on this inspirational project."



'A fresh start' for city kids

Almost 1,800 primary school pupils in Derry-Londonderry are taking part in the Fresh Start/Tus Maith educational project, giving them an opportunity to make a positive contribution to their community.

The project is a partnership between the Triax Neighborhood management team and the Housing Executive's Social Education project.

During October visits were made to every class in St Eugene's, Long Tower, Nazareth House, St John's, Holy Child, Fountain primary schools and Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir where the pupils were involved in discussions about what makes a good community, and the role they have to play.

In addition to the classroom based talks there is a strong practical element to the project with each school participating in environmental improvement days – with daffodils, tulips and snowdrops planting and community clean ups planned. The bulbs were provided by the Housing Executive grounds maintenance team.

The kids will also be given the chance to highlight the best things about where they live and what they would most like to see improved through a number of art competitions. It is hoped that the winners will be exhibited locally in the New Year.

Colm Barton, Development worker with the Triax Neighbourhood management team, said:

"The Tus Maith project is a fantastic opportunity to work with local school children right across the Triax area and the feedback is tremendous. It is a pleasure and a privilege to help raise environmental awareness amongst local children and the enjoyment they get from it makes it all worthwhile."

street art breaks down interface barriers

Young people living at either side of a Derry-Londonderry interface are using their artistic talents to break down barriers.

The kids, aged 13-17, from the Currynierin and Tullyally estates have come together to design and create a graffiti art mural in a bid to reduce tensions, violence and mistrust.

The 40ft mural 'Interface Life' will focus on the lives and challenges of 20 young people growing up in an area that continues to be affected by the legacy of conflict, a conflict they have not experienced.

Our Cohesion team has funded the venture to the tune of £1700. The project is led by Tullyally Community Partnership, Currynierin Community Association and Londonderry YMCA, working in partnership with IFI funded St

Columb's Park House Peace Walls Programme.

Gary McClean, Outreach Worker, said: **"The support of the Housing Executive will contribute to a marked reduction in interface tensions.**

"It is a credit to the young people that they have had the courage and the foresight to fully engage in this project and it will have huge benefits for their areas and the future generations that follow.



Young people from Curryneirin and Tullyally taking part in a Graffiti Art workshop at Urban Visualz. Also pictured are Carl Porter and Donal O'Doherty, Urban Visualz, (right) Gary McClean and Kirstein Arbuckle, IFI Peace Walls, St. Columb's Park House. Also included are Paddy McGuire, YMCA Youth Service, and Jonny McCallion, Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership.

Mural to represent community life on Strabane estates



DAILY community life on six estates in Strabane is now depicted on a new wall mural.

Melmount Community Forum was awarded over £4000 by our Community Cohesion unit to reimagine a wall in the Ballycolman estate.

The 16ft x 8ft mural replaced an existing small one on the gable wall of the Forum's offices.

It enhances and reimagines an area that had a dilapidated look and was prone to graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

Strabane-based artist Terry Boyle worked with young people and residents on a programme to promote positive actions and reduce negative actions in the Melmount area in order to create their vision

Mickey Cunningham, Community Development Officer of the Melmount Forum, said: "Having engaged with residents and young people we decided that the theme should be community. We focused on inter-generational relationships, local sporting activities including soccer and gaelic, and scenes from the annual St Patrick's Day parade.

Noel McNulty, our manager in Strabane, said: "We are delighted to be funding Melmount Forum for this reimagining project. The group is proactive in carrying out environmental and other community development work in the area.

"This mural will enhance the quality of life for local residents through increased respect as well as building of trust between other neighbourhoods. It will leave a lasting impression of transformation and actively address anti-social behaviour," he added.



Taking a break from class

Sion Mills Primary School pupils took a break from classes before the holidays to show off their green fingers in a Housing Executive and Groundwork NI event, funded through the Ireland Fund.

Karen Kirkegaard, from Groundwork NI, provided her expertise as the kids learnt how to take cuttings from established plants to help cultivate their own and then created some bright and summer pots contain flowering bedding plants, as well as aromatic herbs.

The pupils then had a bit of an extra physical challenge as they helped plant apple trees in the school grounds - with big hopes that they would return after the summer holidays to a bumper apple harvest!

Kids taking part in the planting in Sion Mills.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WEST

HOMES WILL RECEIVE EXTERNAL WORKS
1,141

We're spending
£19m
in West this year

452
HOMES TO BE DOUBLE GLAZED

804
HOMES TO GET NEW KITCHENS

61%
of Housing is owner occupied

Private Rented Housing
16%

19%
Social Housing

HOMES TO GET NEW HEATING
615

We own
9,047
homes in West

Source: DHP13/14

We received
29,987
visitors to reception

31,723
Maintenance call-outs made

This year we plan
625
New Build starts in association with Housing Associations

769
New Tenants signed up

We received
156,638
calls last year in your Region

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

20,000 HOUSEHOLDS IN 50 OF OUR ESTATES INVOLVED IN OUR SHARED NEIGHBOURHOOD PROGRAMME



88 estates are involved in the Building Relationships in Communities programme

2,482
kitchens replaced

436,836
REPAIRS carried out

AMOUNT WE HAVE TO SPEND ON TENANTS FOR 2014/15

160 million

3,200
anti-social behaviour reports responded to



549
tenants bought their HOMES

3,673
HOMES DOUBLE GLAZED

1,299
New homes built, in partnership with housing associations

8,000
Tenants got energy advice from Bryson Energy

6,441
HOMES WHERE OUTSIDE WORK WAS COMPLETED

99%
satisfaction with quality of work from contractors

8,809
homes allocated

88,599
NUMBER OF HOMES WE OWN

89%
of our tenants satisfied with our overall service



£656.78m

We administered Housing Benefit to 67,912 of our households

347,584 PEOPLE VISITED OUR LOCAL OFFICES

'Did you know?'

Our Customer Service Units are there so you can report repairs. However, some things are not the Housing Executive's responsibility. Here are a few examples...

Broken glass

If the glass in your windows or doors has been broken it is your responsibility to arrange for it to be repaired.

Gardens

If you have a garden it is your responsibility to keep it tidy, free of rubbish and ensure the grass and hedges are cut.

Door handles

All internal door handles and hinges, including kitchen cupboard doors and doorways to individual rooms, are your responsibility to maintain and repair.

Gas heating

Make sure there is enough credit in your meter. If the level of gas goes below 15 units your system will lock and it will be up to you to arrange for it to be unlocked. We may be able to help you but you may be charged. Monitor your heating's units, check controls to make sure it is on and see what your temperature gauge is indicating.

Oil heating

To work at its best, try to have 100 litres of oil in your tank. If it is less than 100 litres the system might not work properly. Don't tip your tank, as this will churn up sludge at the bottom and may cause further problems.

External footpaths

Roads Service is responsible for maintaining roads, footways or verges. If gas providers or telephone and electric companies are carrying out work, they are responsible for the safety of pedestrians and other traffic. They are also responsible for making sure the pavement is left in good condition.

Bins and waste collection

Your local council is responsible for the collection and disposal of

waste. Please make sure your bins are regularly out for collection. For more information on this or if they fail to collect your bin contact your local council.

The water is off

If your mains water is not running from the kitchen cold tap, firstly check with a neighbour to see if they have been affected. Usually NI Water will inform you about a planned interruption but they could be carrying out an emergency repair without notification. If you find you, and your neighbours, are unexpectedly without water call Waterline...0845 744 0088.

Finally.....

Re-read your tenant handbook for full details of who is responsible for what. If you need another copy then please contact your local office.

**A Housing Executive repair
Contact our Customer Service Unit:
03448 920 901.**





Photo courtesy of Fermanagh Herald

GET Your Boiler Serviced

It is vital your gas, oil and solid fuel appliances are checked by us once a year.

Gas boilers *must be* serviced annually - we are duty bound to carry out this work for your health and safety - failure to allow access to do this could result in your supply being cut off.

We aim to be as flexible as possible. So if you are not at home when we call and leave a card, please contact us to arrange a suitable time to complete this vital job.

This work is for your safety. If you have any queries contact our Customer Service Unit 03448 920 901.



DON'T tip your oil tank

If you tip your oil tank you risk damaging the pipe, whilst dirt disturbed at the bottom of your oil tank may enter the heating system and cause further serious damage.

If you have been responsible for the damage, you will have to pay for the repairs.

If you are having problems meeting your heating costs, please contact your local Housing Executive office, they may be able to help.

Ensure you're Insured

The Housing Executive is responsible for maintaining and repairing your property, but **NOT** for the contents of your home.

Could you immediately afford to replace carpets, furniture and/or white goods if you have a flood, burst pipe, house fire, or burglary?

For most of us the answer is **NO**.

It is vital to have contents insurance and for little more than £1.60 per week, you could be protected.

For more information on getting home insurance contact your local office, speak to an insurance broker or if you're online harness the power of comparison sites.

Get several quotes before deciding. You may find many will arrange for you to pay weekly or monthly.

Don't delay... insure your stuff today.



Asbestos SURVEYING

Before we carry out work to your home we must, by law, inspect it to determine if there is asbestos – it was commonly used in building work before 1999. If your home has not been surveyed for asbestos, it will not be included in any planned scheme and you may miss out on improvements.

Your local office will contact you when a survey is due and

a consultant will make an appointment to complete it; which normally takes less than an hour.

If your home is scheduled to have an asbestos survey, please let our surveyors carry it out. If we discover any asbestos which requires us to take action we will contact you with the details.

When managed properly, asbestos does not pose a risk to health.

Is it really damp?

People often confuse condensation with penetrating or rising damp. Condensation is caused by water vapour trapped inside your home. If it happens regularly then mould growth will occur and is the main symptom of condensation.

Condensation is most obvious on windows and tiles, but can occur on walls and ceilings, in the corners of a room or behind furniture.

Tips to prevent condensation

Letting air circulate is the key so make sure your home is well ventilated.

- Make your home a little warmer. A small amount of heat for a long period is better than short bursts of heat.
- If there's water lying on your window sills in the morning wipe it up immediately
- Use your extractor fan or open a window when cooking or drying clothes
- Ensure there is ventilation in your home at night
- Open doors occasionally to allow air to circulate
- Check out www.nihe.gov.uk for more info

Damp

There are two types of damp.

A damp patch on the walls or peeling paint may be a sign of **penetrating damp**. It may be caused by a leak in a roof, water pipe, guttering or plumbing.

If you find a white salt-like substance on the surface of your walls up to a metre above ground level, it may be **rising damp**.

If you have either of these in your home call us on **03448 920 901.**

This is what damp looks like

Keep it Tidy



A clean and tidy garden is a wonderful space to enjoy. Having a well maintained garden improves the appearance of your home and neighbourhood. It also helps discourage litter and vandalism in your area.

Untidy and overgrown gardens will have the opposite effect. Just a bit of time keeping grass cut and free of litter will make all the difference.

Remember maintaining your dwelling, including the garden, in a clean and tidy manner is a condition of the tenancy agreement you signed. Overgrown gardens can blight the area and even become a health hazard, attracting litter and/or vermin; if this happens the Housing Executive will be forced to take action.



Photo courtesy of NIFRS

The NI Fire and Rescue Service offers a free Home Fire Risk Assessment. They will arrange to visit your home, at a time convenient to you, and undertake an inspection. The visit may be carried out by active firefighters so don't be surprised if a fire engine arrives at your home!

The Home Fire Risk Assessment visits are completely free of charge and you may find you are eligible for free smoke alarms which will be fitted where required. You will never be sold anything.

FREE
Home Fire Safety Check

For your FREE Home Fire Safety check please call 028 9260 0477.

RENT FIRST

don't risk losing your home

Many people find it difficult to make ends meet and manage money. It is important however to keep paying your rent regularly - if you don't, you may risk losing your home.



If you are having difficulty paying your rent, don't ignore the problem. We are committed to providing every opportunity to help tenants who are experiencing difficulties with paying their rent.

Staff in our local Accounts offices can provide confidential help and advice to anyone who is having difficulty paying their rent. However, it is important to contact us at the earliest possible stage so that an affordable agreement can be made to repay the arrears. The earlier we are contacted the easier it is to tackle the problems. Situations arise where the Housing Executive is required to take legal action to recover rent arrears. Ultimately this could result in you being evicted from your home if you ignore us or have failed to keep an agreement to repay your debt.

We want to help tenants organise their finances so they can pay their rent and meet other expenses too. Our Money Worries – Practical Advice booklet gives useful information on how to stay out of debt, and what to do if you find yourself in debt. It includes information on budgeting, advice about

borrowing and how to save on energy costs.

Our staff are specially trained and can help by providing initial advice. We will then refer you to an advisor in Debt Action NI - an independent face-to-face debt advice service. Advisors from Debt Action NI will make an appointment for you to help you take action on dealing with your debt. The service is free, confidential, independent and non-judgemental. Debt Action NI can be contacted by freephone 0800 9174607, text 'Action' to 81025 or visit their website www.debtaction-ni.net

We would urge anyone with any concerns about their finances to contact our Accounts staff immediately on 03448 920 900 for confidential advice. You will also find a 'Quids in!' magazine enclosed with this year's Housing News, which has lots of tips and advice on managing money.

Adapting your home



If you, or someone living with you in your property, has a disability, an adaptation may help you to live more comfortably in your home. Last year we carried out adaptations in over 5700 tenants' homes.

These can be minor adaptations both inside or outside your home for example, handrails at the back or front doors, widening of paths around the property, additional stair rail or powerpoints, lever handles, lower wall cupboards in the kitchen, or accessible window openings. We can also, if it's required, change the heating system.

You may however require other adaptations which need the approval of an occupational therapist from the Health & Social Services Trust. They will carry out an assessment of your needs and make recommendations based on your needs. Some of these adaptations will be minor such as the installation of a shower or widening of doorways, but some may require more major work such as stairlifts, or a bathroom extension.

If you think an adaptation would help you in your home, contact your local office to 03448 920900.

▶ During spells of severely cold weather it is possible for water pipes in your home to freeze which may lead to a burst pipe when the thaw sets in.

DON'T FREEZE UP THIS WINTER

This can cause inconvenience and damage to your home and belongings. There are some simple precautions you can take to reduce the risk of frozen pipes or deal with situations where pipes burst.

Help prevent your pipes from freezing

- Keep your home as warm as possible, even when you are out, by setting the central heating to come on for short periods throughout the day;
- If you feel you are able to, lift the trap door to the roof space slightly to allow warmer air to circulate around pipes and water tanks; remember to close it again afterwards.
- Open the doors to the sink unit to allow warmer air to circulate round the pipes;
- Allow warm air to circulate round the house by slightly opening doors to all rooms and minimising drafts from outside;
- If you are away from home, ensure that the central heating comes on for regular short intervals and ask someone to check regularly for frozen pipes.

Dealing with frozen pipes

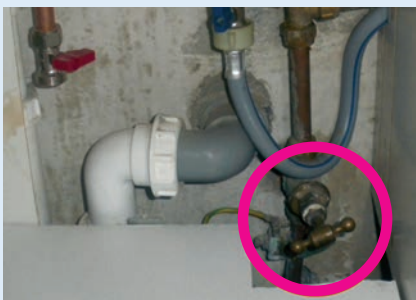
- Turn the water supply off at the stopcock;
- Protect everything around the pipe that appears to be frozen to avoid damage if it bursts;
- Open the tap nearest to the part of the pipe you think is frozen so the water can flow through when it has thawed;
- Thaw the ice in the pipe with a hot water bottle or hairdryer

(taking care to keep it well away from any water), beginning from the tap end and working back towards the cold water tank;

- Never use a heat gun or blow torch;
- If you have a solid fuel room heater, or an open fire with a back boiler, you should let your fire go out;
- If you have oil, gas or wood pellet boilers you should reduce your water usage, but you can continue to run your heating at a low setting.

Find your stopcock

The stopcock is used for turning off and on the cold water system in your home. When you turn the stopcock in a clockwise direction the water supply will be shut off. Stopcocks are usually found in your kitchen, below the sink unit.



However in some houses the stopcock is found in a front or back hall or in a larder unit. It is important that you know where the stopcock is and that it is working.

What should I do if I have no water?

If your water supply fails, the problem may be a burst pipe in your home or there may be a leak in the mains system outside your home. If there is cold water at the cold tap in the kitchen then the mains supply is working.

If you think it is a mains supply problem, call NI Water on 08457 440 088 or email: waterline@niwater.com

If you have a burst pipe

- Turn off the water by turning the stopcock clockwise;
- Turn on all the cold taps and catch the water in the bath or sink to use flushing the toilet later;
- Block the escaping water with thick cloths like towels;
- If the water has come into contact with electrical fittings the electricity should be turned off at the mains if it is safe to do so.

If water has come into contact with the Mains Box, do not attempt to touch and do not use any electrical equipment in the house;

- Turn off your gas or oil heating systems;
- If you have a solid fuel room heater or an open fire, let it go out.



Contact us

Ring our 24 hour repair line

03448 920 901

for further advice or in an emergency.

Report your repair online at www.nihe.gov.uk or Out of hours, email our emergency services unit emergency.services@nihe.gov.uk

or Text to

076 2480 5594

starting your message with the word Repair and remembering to include your address.



Energy tips to save you money



Turn them off

Lights – switch off
when not needed

Electrical appliances
– don't leave on
standby



Careful in the kitchen

Set your washing machine to wash at 30°C and put on a full load

Use a basin to wash up rather than leaving the hot tap running

Don't fill your kettle right up every time – just boil the amount of water you need, but cover the element of an electric kettle

Cut food into smaller pieces to speed up the cooking time

Use the right sized pan for the job and right sized hob ring for each pan




Cooking big batches of food at once is more energy-efficient. Storing spare portions in the freezer gives you a supply of ready meals.



Keep the heat in

Close your curtains
at night

Try not to
block radiators
with furniture



Keep lids on pans as much as you can, to reduce heat loss - turn the heat down when it reaches the boil

Keep the oven door shut as much as possible

Freeze your leftovers if you don't eat them the next day

Let warm foods cool down before putting them in the fridge

Make sure your fridge and freezer are set to the right temperature, not too cold and not too warm.

Don't keep the fridge or freezer door open for longer than necessary

Don't leave your fridge door open and defrost it regularly.

Fuel Save

Why pay more than you have to?

A few minutes research, click of a mouse or a telephone call could save you ££s!

Electricity and gas

You could save money by switching supplier - don't be afraid to shop around. Once you know your current tariff (it's on your bill) then check out Electricity and Gas Price Comparison Tables on the Consumer Council NI's website (www.consumerCouncil.org.uk). Find what's best for you and call the supplier to make the change.

Terms and conditions apply to each offer and will vary - do read the small print!

Oil

Buying home heating oil can be expensive but there are ways to spread the cost and get good deals.

Check oil prices

When you are ready to buy, call a number of suppliers to find the best price - try to negotiate - and/or search online.

Save stamps

Many Councils have oil stamp saving schemes meaning you can spread the cost over the year. Call your local council to find out more.

Form or join an oil club

Get together with other oil users to form an oil club or find out if there's one operating near you - check out www.oil-club.co.uk. Basically, households club together their monthly oil need and auction the total order around local suppliers to get the most competitive price. Individuals or groups interested in forming an oil club can contact Bryson Energy 0800 142 2865.



Be Heatsmart

As our tenant you can have free, independent, heating advice from Bryson Energy.

You can get information on:

- Energy Efficiency - hints and tips to reduce your fuel bills and improve your home's warmth and comfort.
- How to use your heating system - by understanding the controls you can get the best from your heating

Call: 0800 142 2865



8,000+ tenants helped in 2013/14

GIVE IT THE thumbs up!



Is your smoke alarm working? How often do you check it? If you have a smoke alarm, test it on a regular basis

We replace smoke alarms in our properties every 10 years. In the last year (2013/14) we replaced over

7,300 alarms across Northern Ireland

through planned maintenance and have another 6,150 scheduled for installation during 2014/15.

Many lives have been saved by the use of a smoke alarm either battery operated or 'hard-wired' through the mains electricity supply. Everyone should test or check their alarm once a week so let's get back to 'Thumbs up on Monday'!

Remember:

- if your home hasn't a hard-wired alarm install a battery alarm
- keep the grill free from dust so it works properly
- always keep a hard-wired alarm turned on at the meter box
- test/check your alarm every Monday and
- finally if you have an elderly neighbour or relative offer to test their smoke alarms for them.

If you have a query regarding your smoke alarm us on 03448 920 901.

While it may be tempting to reopen a solid fuel fire, it is extremely dangerous to do so.



Hearth & Home

If your fireplace was closed and not maintained or cleaned since then, reopening it could be a huge risk to you and others. For example, the existing flue may not be suitable for the fuel being used or it may need to be repaired or even replaced entirely as it may be blocked or cracked.

Any of these problems could cause your home, and any adjoining property, to go on fire. It could also lead to carbon monoxide leaking into your home potentially poisoning you and others.

If your open fire has been closed please do not reopen it. If you have any concerns, questions or queries then please contact your local office 03448 920 900.

Resolving anti-social behaviour in your community

The Housing Executive works to resolve problems of anti-social behaviour through early intervention and mediation. This approach is often successful, preventing the need for more serious action to be taken.

We want to work closely with the local community to ensure that anti-social behaviour does not take hold and we need people to come forward and report incidents as and when they occur. Unless we know about such incidents, we cannot tackle them.

Who to tell...

Housing Executive	PSNI	Your local Council
noisy and disruptive tenants neglected gardens illegal structures dog nuisance use of our premises for business or illegal purposes	criminal damage assault violence intimidation public drinking	littering dog attacks waste dumping vermin

Hate Crimes or Incidents

This is harassment, intimidation or abuse on the grounds of a person's actual or perceived ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, political opinion or disability.

It can take many forms including: bullying, name calling, offensive graffiti, damage to property, violent attacks, hate mail, hate email or comments on the internet.

Hate crimes or incidents should be reported to the PSNI. You can also contact your local Housing Executive office if you are experiencing hate harassment, or if this is happening in your neighbourhood.

A recent survey* showed that Belfast is the most tolerant city in Europe, with 75 per cent of residents saying that the presence of those from outside the UK living in Belfast is good for the city. We're working with a variety of partners and local communities across Northern Ireland to build on this and tackle hate harassment.

If you're a victim of hate harassment, or know someone who is, Victim Support NI can also help. They offer a free and confidential service, whether or not a crime has been reported to PSNI and regardless of how long ago the event took place. It is an independent organisation - not part of the police, courts or any other criminal justice agency - which works with partner organisations to support victims, advocate on their behalf and also report incidents and crimes to the police.

You can call Victim Support on 028 9024 3133.

“Belfast is the most tolerant city in Europe”*



To report call: PSNI 101/999 • HOUSING EXECUTIVE 03448 920 900

*Urban Audit - Perceptions of City Life in the United Kingdom and Europe, 2012.



All our staff carry photographic ID

Tenants should be extra vigilant as bogus callers are on the increase and theft is usually their aim. These bogus callers will frequently claim to be from a public body, like the Housing Executive or a contractor.

Residents should not allow anyone to enter their home without proper identification.

Our staff and contractors, and those from other public bodies will have a photographic identity card.

Check this carefully, if they have forgotten their ID card they will understand if entry is refused.

If you are in any doubt at all, take no chances, and refuse entry.

You can call us on **03448 920 900**

to check the caller's details if they claim to be from the Housing Executive or you can also phone 'Quick Check', on

0800 013 22 90

a 24 hour freephone service.

BEWARE
bogus callers

Want to move house?



HomeSwapper may help you

Housing Executive and housing association tenants can now use a free online service to look for suitable homes to exchange. It's useful for those who want a larger or smaller home, wish to move to a different area, want a more suitable home and who do not want to wait for a long time on a transfer list.

HomeSwapper is an easy way for you to find the right home. Finding a mutual exchange through HomeSwapper means you won't have to go on our waiting list.

Launched last year in Northern Ireland, it is proving a great success with many successful swaps already completed and hundreds registered, ready to exchange their home. HomeSwapper is easy to use - simply log on to www.homeswapper.co.uk and register to use the service. If you are eligible, you will be able to

advertise your home for exchange. You will be able to see all available homes across the UK giving you greater choice of where to live.

HomeSwapper can automatically match you with others for a possible swap. If a suitable match is found you will be notified by SMS text or email, you then log onto the site, look at the home you've been matched with and decide if you want to view it.

Contact staff at your local office for further information on getting permission to exchange your tenancy and what to do if you find a suitable swap.

Log on today and search for your ideal home.



Get It Right; KEEP IT RIGHT

It is important if you apply for or receive Housing Benefit you provide the correct and complete information. If your circumstances change you must report this promptly.

Incorrect information or unreported changes can result in overpayments which we can recover. Some unreported changes may be treated as fraudulent and may be liable for prosecution.

In the past year 203 Housing Benefit claimants were successfully convicted of fraud and a further 328 claimants received substantial penalties.

To help detection we regularly data match between information held on our system and information held by other agencies and employers. This has helped us detect tenants who have provided incorrect information or failed to report a change of circumstances.

Remember, if you are claiming Housing Benefit it is your responsibility to inform the Housing Executive about any changes in your circumstances. Not all changes will result in less Housing Benefit being paid. Reporting changes immediately means the Housing Executive can pay the correct amount of Housing Benefit and will lessen the risk of overpayment and us having to recover the money.

Any questions about Housing Benefit contact us on

03448 920 902



Most people applying for housing wait their turn - housing cheats don't. They jump the queue depriving those in need and are guilty of fraud.

We need your help to combat tenancy fraud.

If you suspect a cheat, let us know!

Contact us anonymously online at www.nihe.gov.uk - housing fraud - or telephone 03448 920 900.

You do not have to give your name or contact details; anything you tell us is confidential. If you report

DO YOU SUSPECT

a housing
cheat?

online, please make sure you give the address of the property where you suspect tenancy fraud.

It could make all the difference!

What is Tenancy Fraud?

- Giving false information on a housing application to obtain a house
- Unlawful sub-letting
- Living in a property after someone has died without the right to do so
- Non-residence

How do we prevent this?

We actively check records (eg housing benefit, the electoral register, etc) to make sure genuine tenants live in our properties. These checks are ongoing and can happen without warning at any time.

We recently visited over 2,800 of our tenants to confirm residency and recovered 23 properties as a result.

What can you do?

You see what's going on in your area and may know or suspect someone is

committing housing fraud. If you:

- Know somebody has given false information on their housing application
- See rent being collected from your neighbours
- Notice the tenants of a property keep changing or
- See a house standing empty for long periods and not being used by the tenant

Contact us on
03448 920 900
today!

WE
RECOVERED

23

properties
after visiting
2,800 tenants

Why Waste?



DID YOU KNOW...

Almost **50%** of the total amount of food thrown away in the UK comes from our homes.

We throw away 7 million tonnes of food and drink from our homes every year in the UK, and more than half of this is food and drink we could have eaten.

What is food waste?

There are three types:

Avoidable

Most avoidable food waste is fresh, bought with good intentions, but allowed to go off. The average family with children throws away around £60 of food every month. Reducing the amount of food wasted will save you money.

Possibly avoidable

These are things like apple peel and the 'heel' of the loaf, that some people eat and others don't.

Unavoidable

This is food waste that can't be eaten or avoided, no matter how

careful you are and includes egg shells, tea bags, bones, orange peel and fruit stones.

Proper food storage

Along with checking the 'use by' dates on food, learning how to store food appropriately will help it stay fresher for longer and will reduce the amount you waste. For example most fruit and vegetables will last up to two weeks longer if stored in the fridge. Most packaging will provide storage instructions, including if the food can be frozen.

To find out more about how to store food, plan portion sizes or to access hundreds of recipe ideas visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

The Good News...

Between 2007 and 2012 avoidable food waste in the UK was reduced by 21%, over 1 million tonnes...

Proud to support
LOVE FOOD
hate waste

REMEMBER...

With rising food prices, **Love Food Hate Waste** really can help you save money every week.

A quick click...



(www.homeswapper.co.uk) to look for suitable homes available for exchange across the UK. See page 19 for more information.

Do you know someone who's looking for a home?

We advertise properties available for rent now on our PropertyNews (www.propertynews.com/nihe) and Facebook pages. Tell them to take a look...making the move happen!

The more traditional ways...

T: 03448 920 900

E: info@nihe.gov.uk

W: [online contact form at www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

Online services

The services you can access online 24/7 at www.nihe.gov.uk include:

- Report a repair
- Pay your rent
- Report anti-social behaviour
- Report tenancy fraud

If you are not satisfied with the service you receive from us then you can let us know by making a confidential complaint online.

www.nihe.gov.uk

On our website you'll find the information you need. Whether you want to know your rights

as a tenant, request a repair, get support if you're struggling to pay your rent, or access the support and help you need in a crisis, there's advice and information to help you.

It's also the place to find details of the latest Housing Executive news, events, jobs, tenders, publications and research documents.

Our website can be translated into several languages.

Fancy a change?

As one of our tenants, you're entitled to register with HomeSwapper

Be social

Find us on Facebook

and Follow us on

Twitter @nihecommunity



Getting Digital

Over 550 people from across Northern Ireland have been trained as a Digital Champion to help you make the best use of computers, laptops and smart phones.

The Digital Champion project works with communities to help people get online by providing free support, advice, information and training. It identifies potential 'Digital Champions' and encourages them to share their IT knowledge with others. The project

can also provide equipment including laptops and mobile broadband to groups and can direct people to other projects.

They work closely with the Housing Community Network, and the Housing Executive to roll out the project. By working locally the training programmes are accessible to everyone. Those who have taken the IT classes have said they are happier and more confident attending training in a local familiar environment.

Digital Inclusion Officer, Stephanie Brolly, commented:

"A Digital Champion is someone who gives up a small part of their spare time to help others understand the basics of using a computer and to access the wealth of information opportunities online."

▶ Are you interested in taking part?

Contact Stephanie Brolly

E: [stef.brolly@](mailto:stef.brolly@supportingcommunitiesni.org)

supportingcommunitiesni.org

T: 028 7774 0722

West Housing Executive Offices Who's Who

Regional Manager

Frank O Connor

West Area Manager

Avril McAllister

Housing Services Manager

Eddie Doherty

Assistant Housing Services Managers

Noel McNulty - Strabane

Joanna O'Boyce - Waterside

Gerry McCauley - Waterloo Place

Michael Doyle - Collon Terrace

Strabane

40-46 Railway Street, Strabane, BT82 8EH

email: strabane@nihe.gov.uk

Mon - Fri 9.30am- 4pm

Closing at 1pm Thurs

Collon Terrace

14 Collon Terrace, Derry, BT48 7QP

email: collonterrace@nihe.gov.uk

Mon - Fri 9.30am-4pm

Closing at 12.30pm Thurs

Waterside

2 Glendermott Road, Waterside, Londonderry, BT47 1AU

email: waterside@nihe.gov.uk

Mon - Fri 9.30am-4pm

Closing at 12.30pm Thurs

Waterloo Place

Ulster Bank Buildings, Waterloo Place, L'Derry, BT48 6BS

email: waterlooplace@nihe.gov.uk

Mon - Friday 9.30am-4pm

Closing at 12.30pm Thurs

See back page for telephone numbers.

Tenant-led housing panel set up in West

Social housing tenants in the West area will be offered a greater say in the future of their neighbourhoods with the creation of new local tenant-led panels by the Housing Executive.

Tenant Scrutiny Panels are being set up across Northern Ireland giving you a voice to ensure that local offices are delivering the services required in their areas and to the level of quality expected by tenants.

In the West - which encompasses Derry-Londonderry and Strabane - a panel of tenants from across the area will scrutinise services they feel are most important to tenants in the coming year.

Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, Linda Watson, said: "This new panel has given tenants from each of the districts an opportunity to work together to enhance the service provided within the area."

Avril McAllister, Area Manager for the West, said the new panels will ensure that the Housing Executive works in an active and meaningful partnership with communities.



"The creation of the Tenant Scrutiny Panels will give our tenants a real say in making their neighbourhoods better places in which to live.

"The panel will also ensure that we are accountable to our tenants for the delivery of our services and we will be in a position to continuously seek the views of our tenants and strive to improve the delivery of our services."

In addition to Tenant Scrutiny Panels, we have also formed resident and inter-agency partnerships in the area. These partnerships will enable residents to make their estates and areas better places in which to live by taking part in ventures such as joint working groups, community partnerships and estate inspections.

Embracing all our neighbours

If English is not your first language and you need help with interpreting & translation the Housing Executive can provide free services on request, please ask for further details at your local office.

MANDARIN

如果英語不是你的母語，並且你需要幫助來進行口譯和文字翻譯，那麼Housing Executive可以根據請求而提供免費的服務，請在你當地的辦公室詢問進一步的詳情。

CANTONESE

如果英語不是你的母語，並且你需要幫助來進行口譯和文字翻譯，那麼Housing Executive可以根據請求而提供免費的服務，請在你當地的辦公室詢問進一步的詳情。

POLISH

Jeśli język angielski nie jest Państwa językiem ojczystym i potrzebują Państwo pomocy w zakresie tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych, Housing Executive oferuje bezpłatne usługi tłumaczeniowe na życzenie. O szczegóły prosimy pytać biuro lokalne.

PORTUGUESE

Se o Inglês não for a sua língua materna e precisar de ajuda com tradução e interpretação, o Executivo de Habitação pode providenciar serviços gratuitos mediante solicitação, pode obter mais informações no seu escritório local.

LITHUANIAN

Jei anglų kalba nėra jūsų gimtoji kalba ir jums reikia pagalbos dėl vertimo žodžių ir raštu, jums pageidaujant Housing Executive gali suteikti nemokamas vertimo paslaugas; dėl išsamesnės informacijos prašome kreiptis į vietinį skyrių.

RUSSIAN

Если английский не является вашим родным языком и вам требуется помощь с устным и письменным переводом, Жилищное управление может предоставить по запросу бесплатные услуги переводчика. За более подробной информацией обратитесь в ваш местный офис.

SLOVAK

Ak angličtina nie je váš materský jazyk a vyžadujete si pomoc s prekladom a tlmočením, kancelária úradu pre otázky bývania (Housing Executive) vám ochotne poskytne tieto služby bezplatne. Prosím, požiadajte svoju miestnu kanceláriu o viac informácií.

For customers with sensory disabilities, information can be provided in alternative formats like large print, Braille or audio. Sign language interpreters can also be provided, but please give as much notice as possible to allow us to meet your request.

Useful Contacts

Housing Executive

Enquiries 03448 920 900

Repairs 03448 920 901 – open 24 hours

Housing Benefit 03448 920 902

Benefits

Advice line 0300 232 1271

Textphone 0800 232 1715

Emergency Services 999/Textphone 18000

PSNI

Non emergency 101

Crimestoppers 0800 555 111

NI Water

Waterline 0845 744 0088 (interruption)

Leakline 0800 028 2011

Flooding incident 0300 2000 100

Gas

Emergency 0800 002 00

Minicom 0800 731 4710

Electricity

Power cut 03457 643 643

Minicom 03457 147 128

Health & Social Care Trusts

Belfast Area HQ 028 9504 0100

Northern Area HQ 028 9446 5211

South Eastern Area HQ 028 9055 3100

Southern Area HQ 028 3833 4444

Western Area HQ 028 7134 5171

Citizen's Advice NI 0300 1 233 233

Advice NI 028 9064 5919

Debt Action NI 0800 917 4607

Housing Rights Service 028 9024 5640

Women's Aid Helpline 0800 917 1414

