

2015

# streets ahead



news for our tenants

**Housing**  
Executive

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### Housing Executive

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## Welcome to Streets Ahead!

**Streets Ahead is the new name of your magazine, renamed by one of our tenants in a competition organised last year** (details below).

This bumper edition keeps you up-to-date with what's happening in your neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland. This includes our investment in your homes and your areas as well as our annual performance so you know how we are doing.

There's a section on **'Your Home'** with articles on our Homeswapper service, gardening advice, fire checks and guidance on how to winter proof your home.

In **'Your Community'** we are looking for social enterprise entrepreneurs. If you have an idea to establish a social housing enterprise in your estate, or want to develop an existing enterprise, then we want to hear from you.

We introduce you to our Good Relations Officers working in your areas, showcase the rural areas which picked up awards at the recent community conference and there's news on tenancy fraud and anti-social behaviour.

In the **'Energy Advice'** section there are lots of tips on how to save money, join an oil club and information on getting free, independent heating advice. Over 7,500 tenants made use of this service – Heatsmart – last year.

Under **'Your Finances'** check out our top tips for budgeting, advice on housing benefit, paying your rent, home insurance and lots more.

Included in this year's pack is the **'Quids In' magazine** which has been specifically produced for our tenants. The glossy magazine has lots of advice on spending, saving, borrowing and earning.

**We hope you will find lots of things of interest to you in Streets Ahead.**

## Housing News is now Streets Ahead

Last year we ran a competition asking you to help us re-name our magazine. The Housing News magazine was first published 25 years ago for all our tenants across Northern Ireland, and is produced yearly to tell you about the housing services we provide, how we performed and various initiatives. Mrs Moore's entry – **Streets Ahead** – was selected as the best and most appropriate from the many suggestions we received.

Mrs Moore, from Berlin Street in the Shankill area of West Belfast, was delighted to **WIN £200** towards her heating costs. She has been a tenant for over 50 years, and explained how she came up with the name:

*"I like to read a lot, and was looking at the tenant magazine whilst watching the workmen putting the gas heating into a tenant's home across the street. I just thought they (the Housing Executive) were streets ahead keeping their homes up to date. It came to me as easy as that!"*

The local Housing Officer for the area, Ellen Megarry, presenting Mrs Moore with a winning cheque for £200 at her home.





“We will strive to deliver quality services, better homes and foster vibrant communities.”



## Welcome to the first edition of Streets Ahead, a new look magazine for our tenants.

As the new Chief Executive of the Housing Executive I am keen to make sure that you all keep up to date with those matters which interest and affect you. Last year was an exceptional year of achievement for the Housing Executive and as the new Chief Executive I am committed to continuing to make improvements to every aspect of our services.

The housing sector continues to face a number of challenges in the current economic climate but we are committed to working in a way that goes beyond ‘bricks and mortar’. We will strive to deliver quality services, better homes and foster vibrant communities.

This will include further investment in our homes. Over the past year, we have invested over £100 million in maintaining and improving your homes. This has included installing double glazing, replacing older kitchens, installing modern heating systems and improving the outside of your homes. These remain some of our priorities.

We are also committed to service excellence for every customer every time they contact us. We want our staff to know our customers, build relationships with them and add value for them and we are hopeful that the new approaches we take will transform our service to you.

We will continue to work with communities to improve community safety and relations and build confidence in our housing estates. We work with over 600 community groups through the Housing Community Network. And, in all of our 13 areas we have established Tenant Scrutiny Panels which play an active role in the delivery of services locally and helping us improve performance.

I am looking forward to speaking and meeting with many of you in the months ahead to make sure that you are given a say, that your voices are heard and that together we can create better home in communities that are safe and welcoming communities to all.

*Clark Bailie*

Clark Bailie  
Chief Executive



## Last year we delivered a large planned maintenance programme across Northern Ireland.

We undertook work at 29,000 homes including the installation of double-glazing, maintenance to the outside of homes, the upgrading of heating systems to new more energy efficient ones and the fitting of new kitchens.



### Grounds Maintenance

For the Housing Executive maintaining homes goes beyond the fabric of the house. We contribute considerably to the local environment through our grounds maintenance programme. Last year we spent over £9m supporting schemes to improve the environment across Northern Ireland which enhance the well-being of local people.

During the summer the Minister for Social Development, Mervyn Storey MLA, took the opportunity to visit a scheme we funded in Irvinestown to commemorate the Co Fermanagh victims of the Great Famine (1845-1850). He is pictured with Breege McCusker of the Irvinestown Famine Committee.



### Double Glazing

Ensuring full double glazing to all our properties was a priority for us and we installed new windows in 7,800 homes. One of our tenants from the Lurgan area, Shauna Maguire, who had glazing installed this year was delighted with her new windows telling us: *"It was great to see the new windows go in and I've already noticed the benefits of a warmer home and less noise. I am looking forward to seeing lower heating bills too."*

Shauna Maguire with her son Enda and Jackie McAlernon from the Housing Executive who called with her after her double glazing had been installed.



### Kitchen

Over 5,000 homes were provided with new kitchens last year and the fitting of new kitchens, where necessary, continues. Prior to work starting, we consult with our tenants so they have an input into what finishes (doors, handles, worktops, tiles) they would like. This has been well received and feedback on the kitchens positive.

Annette Dinsmore, from the Maghera area, was delighted with her new kitchen: *"It was great to be offered the opportunity of a new kitchen. It's been very exciting getting to pick the new look and I'm delighted with the overall result."*

Trevor Gilmour from the Housing Executive consulting with Annette Dinsmore on her new kitchen.

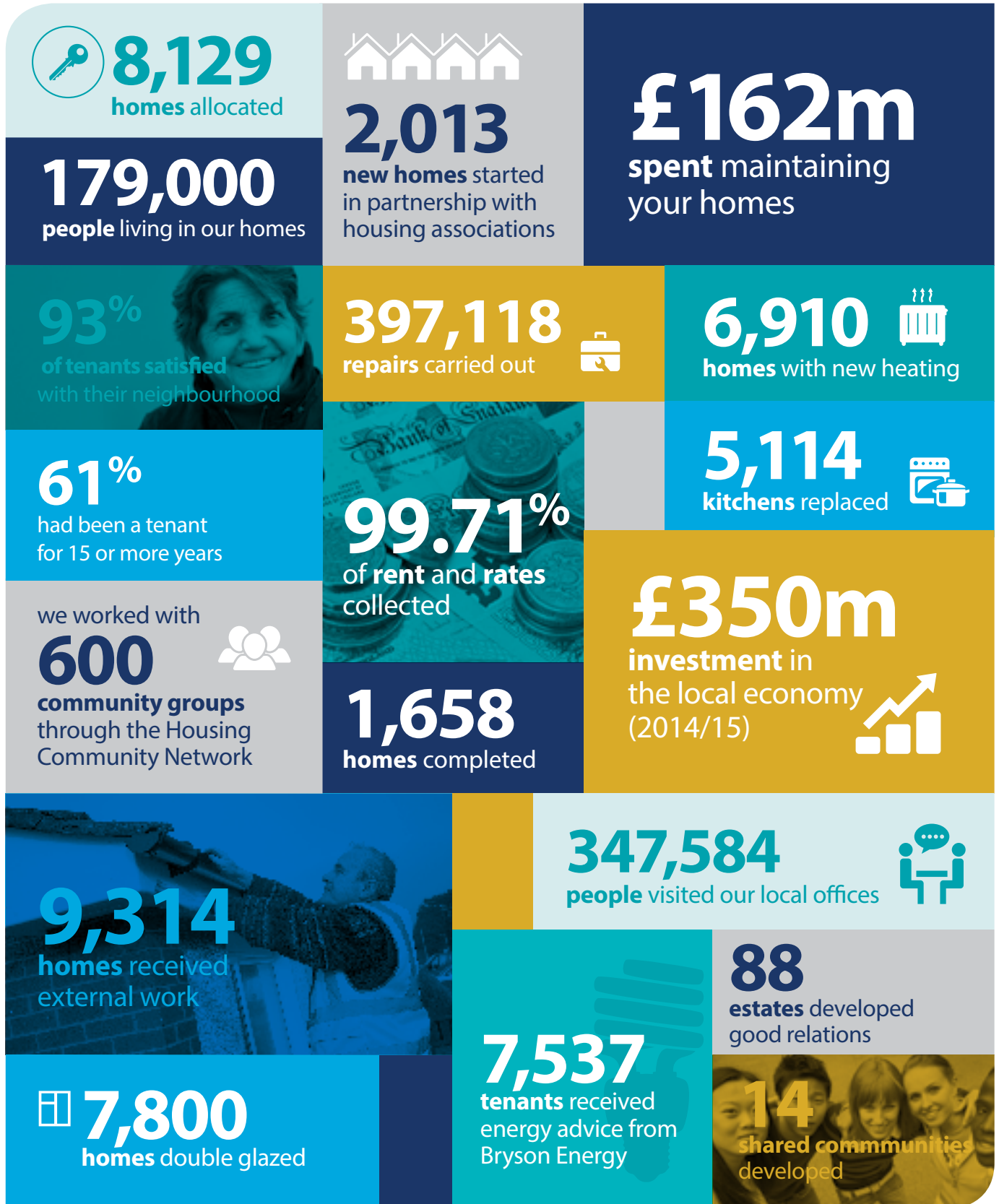


### Heating

The Housing Executive installed 6,910 modern heating systems last year. We are committed to improving homes and acting to reduce fuel poverty across Northern Ireland. We have a continuous heating upgrade programme for our properties and install 'A' rated boilers which prove more cost effective to run for our tenants. In the last year we made excellent progress particularly with replacing 15-year old boilers. Where possible we connect our homes to gas but where not we use highly efficient oil boilers or in some cases wood pellet boilers.

The Housing Executive's Norman Craig called with our tenant, Laverne Mawhinney, shortly after her new heating system was installed.

# What's happening in Northern Ireland





# Save on Energy Save ££s

## Did you know the Housing Executive is the Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) for Northern Ireland?

This means we are responsible for promoting energy efficiency in all housing.

During **Energy Week 2015** we highlighted many useful hints and tips to help people save money and our environment. The following are a few of the simple ones you can do...

## Did you know...

- More than half (53 per cent) admit to leaving the TV on in a room when we're not watching!
- You can save around £30 a year by remembering to turn your appliances off; - not just leave on standby.
- The average number of gadgets in people's homes has increased by 31 per cent since 2010.
- An advanced set-top box left on standby for 20 hours a day could cost around £20 a year alone just in standby mode.<sup>[1]</sup>
- Switching energy supplier could save you up to £200 per year, perhaps more!
- Spending one minute less in the shower each day could save as much as £10 off your energy bills each year.
- The number of kitchen gadgets in people's homes has increased by 58 per cent.

Figures courtesy of Energy Savings Trust

<sup>[1]</sup> Based on a Virgin Tivo box, which consumes 20W when in standby, left on standby for 20 hours a day for a year.



## Things you can do...


- 
**Check if you are on the right tariff...**  
 It's easy to switch your electricity and / or gas supplier and there are a number of websites you can use:


Consumer Council  
[www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/energy/electricity-gas-price-comparison](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/energy/electricity-gas-price-comparison)


PowerToSwitch  
[www.powertoswitch.co.uk](http://www.powertoswitch.co.uk)

ENIRGY  
[www.enirgy.info](http://www.enirgy.info)

- 
**Join an oil club**  
 Buy in bulk and save... Find out if there is one near you by calling our partner Bryson Energy on **0800 1422 867** for more information.

- 
**Buy Energy Efficient Bulbs**  
 As a bulb blows in your home consider upgrading it to an energy saving light bulb. Once all are replaced you could save up to £35 a year!

- 
**Get Moving**  
 If you move furniture away from radiators it lets warmth radiate more easily into the room.

- 
**Boiling over**  
 Only fill the kettle up with as much water as needed can save on your energy bills – remember to cover the element of an electric kettle.

- 
**All awash**  
 Set your washing machine to wash at 30°C and make sure it's a full load.





**1,200+**  
households  
have joined

**12½%**  
savings  
(approx £22) per  
500 litre Of fill\*

## Join an oil club!

**If you use oil then why not find out if there's an oil club in your area. You'll be able to budget for oil and you could find you save ££s.**

Membership is free so whether you're our tenant, an owner-occupier, a housing association tenant or privately rent if you use oil and there's a club nearby you can join.

From April to October 2015

- **27 clubs established**
- **1,200+ households have joined**
- **67 purchases made**
- **300,000 litres of oil bought**
- **12½% saving (approx £22) per 500 litre oil fill\***

The clubs are funded by the Housing Executive and managed by Bryson Energy. They are simple but effective; the more people

who buy oil together the more the cost can be reduced. Even better, households can buy as little as 200 litres of oil at a time which makes it a lot easier to budget for fuel.

When all orders are put together a better price can be obtained and the saving made is passed on equally to all.

We want more households to 'join an oil club!' So if you have oil heating then contact Bryson Energy on Freephone: **0800 1422 867** or Email: **oilclubs@brysonenergy.org** today.

\*the equivalent of £22.31 on 500 litres of oil when compared to the Consumer Council average price for 500 litres.

## Get smart... Get Heatsmart

**Free, independent, heating advice exclusive to our tenants**

Thanks to a partnership with Bryson Energy the Housing Executive is able to offer our tenants the opportunity to learn hints and tips which will help reduce fuel bills whilst at the same time improve a home's warmth and comfort and make the best use of the heating system.

Over the last year we have installed nearly 7,500 new heating systems in our tenant's homes. We have a rolling programme of heating replacement and our Heatsmart programme is there to help tenants benefit fully from their new more efficient systems.

Eddie Ferguson from Coleraine is just one of our 7,500+ tenants who benefitted from free energy advice last year. He is pictured with Carol McCabe, Bryson Energy Advisor, and Pamela Mullan the Housing Executive's Causeway Area Housing Services Manager.

**7,500+**  
Heatsmart visits  
made in the last year



**As you are our tenant why not see if you can save money and help the environment by getting Heatsmart today.**

**Freephone: 0800 142 2865**





# Need help setting up a **social economy business?**

**Are you interested in setting up a social housing enterprise business in your estate? Then we want to help.**

We have launched an innovative new plan to develop economically vibrant and self-sustaining communities through the creation and development of social housing enterprises. It's investing almost £400,000 to develop the local social economy and create more community-owned social enterprises.

Ward Erwin, Social Investments Manager, said:

**"We are very keen to hear from you if you have an idea to establish a social housing enterprise in your estate that will benefit the community.**

**Equally, we want to hear from individuals who also have a business idea or simply want to hear more about our Strategy**

**and the help we could provide in developing a local social housing enterprise.**

**Whether you need training, education or help to start up a business or want to develop an existing social enterprise then get in touch with us.**

**The Social Investments Team intends to support the transformation our communities and the lives of those living there by empowering people through entrepreneurship and social enterprise."**

**If you're interested or want to find out more contact Ward or Connor on 028 9031 8333 or email [socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk)**



## **Meet the Community Cohesion team**

**50**  
shared communities

**£4m**  
investment made through community involvement

**300**  
community houses/lets



## There are five levels of funding available:

### ▶ **Education Grants (up to £500):**

There are 26 grants available to support individuals to learn about business and organisational development, including the payment of course fees.

### ▶ **Business Start-Up Grant (up to £1000):**

There are 26 grants available to support a business proposal and create a social housing enterprise.

### ▶ **Embryonic Business (up to £10,000):**

There are 5 grants available for new or under-developed social housing enterprises.

### ▶ **Emerging Business (up to £20,000):**

There are 5 grants for businesses which require support to grow their business.

### ▶ **Established Business (up to £50,000):**

There are 3 grants for enterprises which are well developed but require significant funding to grow the business and realise full potential for the community.

**Our award-winning Community Cohesion team's work is aimed at building better relations, cohesive communities and neighbourhoods that are safe and welcoming to all. Its community led good relations project work takes place all year round.**

The Community Cohesion team work across 5 key themes:

- Residential segregation/Integration
- Flags, emblems, sectional symbols
- Race Relations
- Interfaces
- Communities in Transition (CIT)

In the last year we have showcased a number of very successful community led projects including a major public art project in the

## Tenant Scrutiny Panels – they work for YOU!

**Tenant scrutiny is based on the principle that the views and priorities of tenants should be at the heart of our business.**

Our Tenant Scrutiny Panels give you, as our tenant, a voice to ensure your local office is delivering the service required in their areas to the level of quality expected by you.

Representatives from all our local offices meet regularly with their respective Tenant Scrutiny Panel, and good progress has been made reviewing our services to ensure they are tailored to local needs and priorities. The Panels meet regularly

to discuss local issues, policies and procedures, maintenance, customer service units, repairs and homelessness.

### **Are you interested in what your Tenant Scrutiny Panel does?**

Your local office would be happy to give you information and advice on what services your Tenant Scrutiny Panel is currently looking at. Telephone **03448 920 900** and ask for your local office for more details.

## Crimestoppers provide invaluable service to community

Since its launch in September 1996 the independent charity Crimestoppers has provided an invaluable service to local communities across Northern Ireland with an astounding record of achievement. During the 19 years, there have been almost 36,000 actionable calls leading to 1,942 arrests and the recovery of £7million worth of property and drugs.

### **What is Crimestoppers?**

Crimestoppers is the only UK charity dedicated to helping solve crime. The Crimestoppers message is simple: **if you have information about criminal activities, you can call Crimestoppers anonymously and safely. You will not be asked your name and your call will not be traced or recorded.**



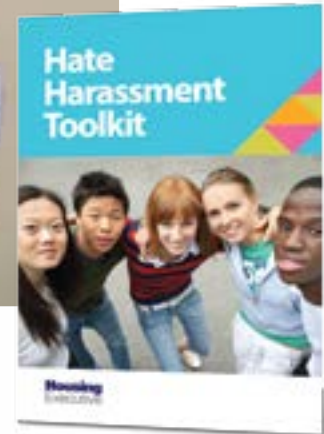
Lower Shankill and Mid Shankill; the reimagining of Lord Street in East Belfast, Clonard in West Belfast and Queens Park in Newtownabbey; supported communities to re-imagine their areas with the help of a visioning tool and a series of planning for real events and enabled engagement through community led initiatives such as the Men's Shed in Omagh and the Hen's Shed in Richhill, in Armagh.

We restored the Civil rights mural at the People's Gallery in the Bogside, funded a very successful cross-community winter market at the Fountain/Bishop Street interface.

Jennifer Hawthorne is the our Head of Communities and leads the team with Deirdre Crawford,

the Neighbourhood and Cohesion Manager. They are ably supported by Christine Boyle, Administrative Support and Lauren McFaul, Finance Support.

In your area the Good Relations Officers (GROs) are Eddie Breslin, West and Causeway; John Read, GRO for East area and South Antrim; Michelle Hazlett, GRO for South area; Christine Davis, Belfast, who is also Assistant Neighbourhood and Cohesion Manager for Lisburn and Castlereagh and Marilyn Giboney, GRO for South and mid Ulster. Gail Green is our Interface Officer; Dave Elliott is our Areas at Risk Co-Ordinator and Linda Hutchinson is our Race Relations Officer.



## Hate Harassment Toolkit to help victims launched

**A Hate Harassment Toolkit offering guidance and practical information to improve support for people experiencing hate harassment, has been launched by the Housing Executive.**

The toolkit aims to provide a wide range of practical information and advice to staff, community workers and other professionals throughout Northern Ireland to help provide a comprehensive service to victims and witnesses of hate harassment.

Our Director of Landlord Services, Gerry Flynn, said:

**“We aim to provide a safe environment within our estates where residents, their families and visitors can live in peace and quiet. All crime and harassment is clearly wrong and we are working to deal with all types of anti-social behaviour in our estates.”**

Copies of the Toolkit can be downloaded through the Housing Executive website or email [Christine.Boyle@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:Christine.Boyle@nihe.gov.uk) to request copies.



## Band of Brothers mural

Iconic imagery immortalising the efforts of Polish airmen during World War II was unveiled on the International Wall in Belfast marking the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

The mural, the work of Belfast artist Ross Wilson, forms part of the ‘Band of Brothers’ anti-racism project, devised by RAF historian Pete Bleakley and funded by the Housing Executive.

The spirit of the 1940s was captured at the Lower Shankill launch when a replica Spitfire, provided by the Ulster Aviation Society, was rolled into Beverley Street. Residents and visitors joined in by wearing attire from that era.

The Band of Brothers project aims to capture the public’s attention to remind them of the valiant exploits of Polish 303 Squadron, later stationed in Northern Ireland.

Young people from the Shankill and Polish communities across the city came together to take part in a series of workshops.

The project will also see an anti-racism tool kit produced and distributed to local communities to help tell the story of the Polish community’s contribution to our society.

# Do you Suspect a housing cheat?

**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](http://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 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.

Last year we visited over 2,500 of our tenants to investigate suspected Tenancy Fraud and confirm residency. Our investigations resulted in the recovery of 466 properties.

### **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

We recovered **466** properties



Contact us on **03448 920 900** today!



## 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, including repossession, 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

- 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





## Showcase of community projects

**Over 200 community groups recently gathered for the annual Community Conference, an event organised by the Housing Community Network in partnership with Supporting Communities and the Housing Executive.**

The conference, now in its 16th year, provides an opportunity for community groups to come together and showcase the important work that is happening and to show how vibrant communities are being fostered. This year's theme was 'People in Partnerships - Communities Making a Difference.'

Six community projects that have been developed over the past year in your areas were showcased at the event.

They were:

- **South Belfast Alternatives** created a photographic exhibition, *That Photo Thing – Reframing the Negatives*. The exhibition features 19 framed portraits of local people who have been migrants, in countries from Sudan to France, and each portrait is accompanied by a short personal story of their experiences including positives, negatives and challenges.
- **Factory Forum Group** in Larne launched a 'Fitness in the Community' initiative which provided a variety of exercise classes and nutritional advice to suit the whole family.
- **Cosy Club**, based in Derry-Londonderry, organised an obesity awareness campaign including healthy eating workshops and a fun storybook aimed at children and parents.
- **Ballybeen Men's Motivation Group** in east Belfast established a state-of-the-art gym and a bike repair workshop for residents in the local community.
- **Carrowshee Park and Sylvan Hill Community Association** (Carrosyl Centre) in Lisnaskea has run a number of cross border and cross community projects including a trip with young people from Lakeview/ Castlebalfour to the Folk Park in Omagh.
- **Space** in Newry created a retro vintage charity shop on Monaghan Street which among various services upcycles preloved goods to Housing Executive tenants, creating volunteer opportunities and where tenants support other tenants.



## Award Winning Rural Communities

**Winners of the Housing Executive's Rural Community Awards 2015 were announced at the annual Community Conference in Ballymena.**

Presenting the winners with their £1,000 cheques, the Minister for Social Development, Mervyn Storey, said:

**"It is a great pleasure for me to be invited to present these Rural Community Awards. I am acutely aware of the invaluable work carried out by local people in rural communities to make them better places to live and raise a family."**

The winners were:

- **Community Spirit Award:**
- Small Village: Toome: TIDAL
- Large Village: Cloughmills: Cloughmills Community Action Team

### Cleaner and Greener Award:

- Small Village: Cairns, Cushendall: Cairns Residents Group
- Large Village: Saintfield: Saintfield Development Association

The Housing Executive was delighted with the interest shown in what was the second year of the Rural Awards. The competition entries highlighted the tremendous work being carried out in rural communities across Northern Ireland with each and every entry highly commendable.

The awards illustrated the high level of community activity by those who are making a contribution to improving, not just the environment, but also the community spirit within rural areas.

## 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](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) for more information

### 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**

## 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.**

**03448 920 900**

# Don't freeze up this winter

**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.**

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 03457 440 088 or email: [waterline@niwater.com](mailto: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](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)**

or Out of hours, email our emergency services unit

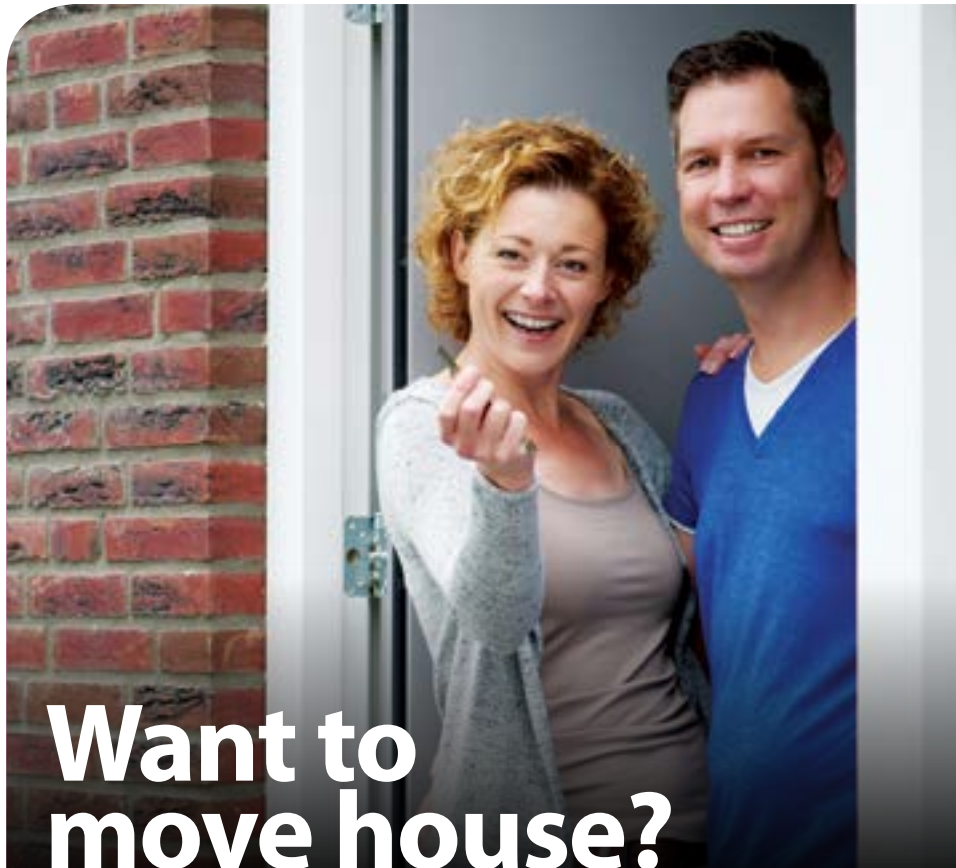
**[emergency.services](mailto:emergency.services@nihe.gov.uk)**

**[@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:emergency.services@nihe.gov.uk)**

or Text

**076 2480 5594**

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



# Want to move house?

HomeSwapper may help you

Housing Executive and housing association tenants can 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 two years ago 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](http://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 on **03448 920 900** 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.**



## Hearth and Home

**It may be tempting to reopen a solid fuel fire, but please be aware it is extremely dangerous to do so.**

If your fireplace has been closed and not maintained or cleaned for some time, reopening it could be a huge risk to you and others. For example, the 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 on **03448 920 900**.





# Your Garden

**A clean and tidy garden is a wonderful space for you, your family and friends 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 but don't worry, you don't have to spend lots of money on shrubs, pots and plants. Just a bit of time keeping the grass cut and the outside area free of litter will make all the difference.

Remember, maintaining your dwelling in a clean and tidy manner is a condition of the tenancy agreement you signed, and this includes your garden. 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.



## Would you like a **FREE Home Fire Safety Check?**

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service offer 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.

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

# Beware bogus callers

## All our staff carry photographic ID.

Beware of bogus callers - think twice about allowing a stranger into your home.

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. Only a bogus caller will insist on entry without proper identification.

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

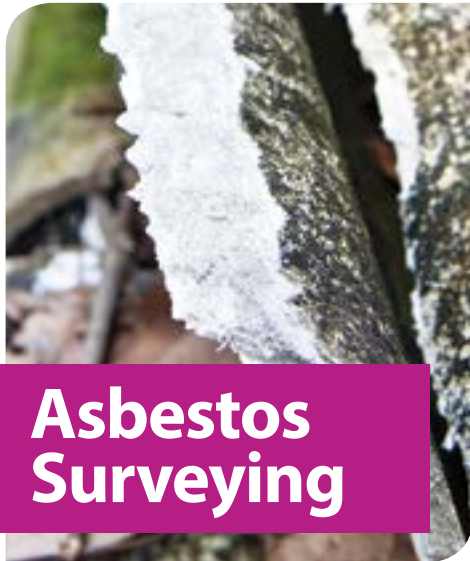
**'Quick Check', on**

**0800 013 22 90,**

a 24 hour freephone service.

**If in doubt, keep them out!**





## Asbestos Surveying

**We have carried out asbestos surveys on the majority of our properties. Before we carry out work to your home we must, by law, survey it to determine if there is asbestos – asbestos was extensively used in building work before 1999. If your home has not been surveyed for asbestos, it may 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 the survey, which normally takes less than an hour. You should not give access to the consultant surveyor unless they have shown you identification.

## Adapting Your Home To Meet Your Needs

If you, or someone living with you in your property, has a disability an adaptation may help you live more comfortably in your home. Last year we carried out more than 5,000 adaptations in tenants' homes.

These can be minor adaptations, both inside and outside your home, for example, installing handrails, additional stair rails and power points, or lowering wall cupboards in the kitchen. We can also, if it's required, update the heating system, making it more energy efficient.

- You should also be aware that your home may already have had a survey and we are updating our records.
- If we are carrying out improvement work to your home it may be necessary to carry out a follow-up survey.

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.

### What if I want to buy my own home?

If a survey has been carried out to your property the Housing Executive will provide you with a copy of the survey and relevant information.

### What if I want to carry out works to my home?

Contact your local office in line with your tenancy agreement. If available, a copy of any survey will be provided and if not, one will be requested for your benefit. You should not start work until you have received a copy of the survey.

If you have any concerns about asbestos in your home or need further advice please contact us, telephone **03448 920 900** or email **asbestos.management.unit@nihe.gov.uk**



However, some adaptations need the approval of an occupational therapist from the Health & Social Services Trust, who will carry out an assessment of your needs and make recommendations. These types of adaptations include showers, ramps, stairlifts and bathroom extensions.

**For more information contact your local office on 03448 920 900**



## Test your smoke alarm!

**Is your smoke alarm working?  
How often do you check it?  
Do you test it on a regular basis?**

We replace smoke alarms in our properties every 10 years. In the last year (2014/15) we replaced over 4,344 alarms across Northern Ireland through planned maintenance and have another 6,629 scheduled for installation during 2015/16.

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 testing!

### 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 week 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 call us on

**03448 920 901**



# 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.

Call: Freephone **0800 917 4607**

Text: **'Action' to 81025\***

Log onto: **[www.debtaction-ni.net](http://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 magazine, which has lots of tips and advice on managing money.

\* Local network charges apply.  
Texts will be charged at your normal rate.



## Housing Benefit

### – are you receiving the right amount?

**It is important if you apply for or receive Housing Benefit that 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 20 Housing Benefit claimants were successfully convicted of fraud and a further 13 claimants received substantial penalties.

To help detection we regularly check your details on our system against 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. Last year some 1,896 claimants were detected, and between them had to repay overpayments totalling £4.1m.

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?**  
**Call 03448 920 902**





**8m**

people in the UK currently have problems with debt

## Spend or Save?

### How often do you buy something you don't really need – and barely pay any attention to doing so?

Those invisible buys we all give into could include simple snacks – chocolate bars, fruit and crisps – to shop-bought food; a takeaway cappuccino, magazines, and takeaway food. But you could be costing yourself up to **£948\*** a year!

Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat and the temptation to overspend comes too. But there are ways to make your festive season spend fun, rather than frightening.

- **Pay your rent first**
- **Set your budget**
- **Make a list before buying**
- **Shop around**
- **Avoid high interest credit, including store cards**

Around 8 million people in the UK currently have problems with debt but just one in six of them are seeking help. So if you're concerned you're not alone.

### Don't do debt... there are people here to help

Managing money is not always easy. Balancing the books to make sure everyone is paid can be difficult so if you find you're having problems then please do not avoid dealing with it.

Call: Freephone **0800 917 4607**

Text: **'Action' to 81025\*\***

Log onto: **[www.debtaction-ni.net](http://www.debtaction-ni.net)**

\* The average UK adult spends £18.23 on 'invisible' items a week, which adds up to £947.96 a year, according to research by insurance and savings provider Aviva.

\*\* Local network charges apply. Texts will be charged at your normal rate.

## Don't be out of pocket - insure your home

### Tenants can buy peace of mind for less than two pounds per week, by insuring their home contents.

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

Floods, fires and burglars can strike without warning - tenants should ask themselves, 'can I afford to immediately replace carpets, furniture and/or white goods?'

### 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 purchasing home insurance contact your local office on **03448 920 900**, Supporting Communities on **028 2564 5676**, speak to an insurance broker or search comparison websites online. It's best to get several quotes before deciding. You may find insurance companies are happy to arrange for you to pay weekly or monthly.

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







# Waste Control

Throwing food away is a pure waste of money.

## Love Food Hate Waste has five easy ways to save food and money...

### Get familiar with your fridge and friendly with your freezer

Keep an eye on 'use by' dates and where possible freeze what's left over or what you're not going to eat in time.

### Be Storecupboard Savvy

Keeping your store cupboard and freezer well-stocked is a great idea for handy meals, but ensure that you are incorporating these items into your weekly meal planner to ensure they don't go past their best.

### Go for Carb Control

If you aren't sure how much to cook check the portion calculator on [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com). Pasta and rice are regulars for over cooking! And best of all, there is no need for kitchen gadgets, an average mug filled with rice serves four people.

### Love your leftovers

It's amazing how many meals one chicken can give! Enjoy a Sunday roast but pick off the remains to make a great curry or delicious risotto and there's always enough for a sandwich. If you're really keen the carcass can be boiled up for stock to make soup.

### It pays to plan!

Planning meals is one of the most effective ways to cut waste and food bills. Before you go shopping

## Did you know in the UK...

**7m tonnes** of food and drink is thrown out of our homes every year

**4.2m tonnes** of perfectly edible food and drink is wasted

**1.5m sausages** are thrown away every day

It is estimated the average family throws almost **£60 of food** away every month!

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

Facts courtesy of Love Food Hate Waste.

check what you have in the fridge, freezer and store cupboard. From this work out a weekly meal plan then write a list...is it as long as it used to be?

To find out more about how to store food, plan portion sizes or to access hundreds of recipe ideas visit [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)

### The Good News...

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



### REMEMBER...

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

# A quick click...

**Housing  
Executive**

## Online services

The services you can access online 24/7 at [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://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](http://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.

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

We advertise properties available for rent now on our PropertyNews ([www.propertynews.com/nihe](http://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](mailto:info@nihe.gov.uk)**

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

## Putting the 'social' into social media

Do you use the Internet for shopping? Use social media to talk to your friends? Did you know that you can also share your experiences with the Housing Executive and make use of our online services to pay your rent or report a repair?

We use social media, including Facebook and Twitter, giving followers the opportunity to interact with us on topics that matter to you.

On Facebook we share lots of tips and practical advice on using our services and what we are doing. And we want to hear about the positive projects that our tenants are involved with.

On Twitter, we showcase much of the work that we are doing across communities in Northern Ireland.

Social media allows everyone to communicate with us instantly and it's a great way for us to get feedback on our services.

We currently have over 6,000 followers on social media and want to continue to grow this number. We want to hear more of the great stories happening on our estates and the positive experiences that tenants have in their neighbourhoods.

**Check out our Facebook page**

**f [www.facebook.com/housingexecutive](http://www.facebook.com/housingexecutive)**

**or follow us on twitter**

**t [@nihecommunity](https://twitter.com/nihecommunity)**

**68%**  
of people  
in Northern Ireland  
have at least one  
**social media  
account**



**Supporting™  
Communities**  
Empowering Society

**Supporting Communities, which has been in existence for over 35 years, is an INDEPENDENT voluntary sector organisation which aims to achieve MEANINGFUL participation in the social housing sector by developing community groups and promoting effective tenant & community involvement.**

The key area of Supporting Communities' work focuses on the establishment and support of community/residents groups, it assists groups to; form, become constituted, register with the Charity Commission NI, become sustainable, productive and show the impact or the difference they are making to and for their communities.

Supporting Communities staff will support groups develop action plans, reflecting the needs of their communities, focusing on housing, social, environmental and economic concerns.

Supporting Communities gives support to over 500 community groups across Northern Ireland with liaison officers providing a vital support service in ensuring these groups continue to play an active role within their own communities.

#### **Our Services:**

##### **Administration**

We provide a high quality and efficient administration service to staff, communities and other organisations through the provision of:

- A PAYE service
- Financial Assessments
- Administration of meetings
- Survey Analysis
- Report Writing

##### **Group Work**

Through our 'grass roots, self-help' approach, we continually EMPOWER communities by enabling them to make changes within their communities. This is done through:

- Support to individuals and groups
- Supporting groups through AGM's, Committee Meetings
- Facilitating Housing Forums and Inter-agency work

##### **Housing Executive Support**

Supporting Communities provides a comprehensive independent support service to the Housing Executive through a Central Service Level Agreement (SLA). Each of the Housing Executive's 13 Areas also have a SLA with Supporting Communities which outlines the service to be provided to Area Managers.

Among the key services provided to the Housing Executive are:

- To support and facilitate the tiers of the Housing Community Network (District / Area / Regional / Central)
- Independent Support and advice to the 450 Groups involved in the HCN
- Comprehensive Scrutiny Panel support and Training to 13 Area Scrutiny Panels
- Digital Inclusion support and Training
- Mystery Shopping Exercise
- Customer Journey Mapping
- Housing Executive Staff support
- Best Practice Sharing
- Benchmarking

##### **Training**

We provide a wide variety of training to individuals, organisations and collaborative groups across Northern Ireland. The training we provide can be accredited or non-accredited. We have a specialist team who are available to design and deliver bespoke training best to suit your needs.

Supporting Communities is an OCN accredited centre.

##### **Digital Inclusion**

Through our partnership with the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) we are able to offer accredited and non-accredited Digital Training to communities across Northern Ireland, thus empowering individuals to address the issues and barriers surrounding Digital Inclusion.

##### **Funding Service**

Through our funding support service to staff, communities and stakeholders we can provide:


- Funding enquiry services
- Funding Bulletins
- One to One funding support
- Funding E-News
- Factsheets
- Funding Clinics
- Training

##### **Policy and Information Service**

We provide an expert policy and information service to our stakeholders by providing:

- Information Factsheets
- Fortnightly E-zine
- Bi-Annual News Letter
- Policy and Consultation responses impacting the sector
- Website
- Facebook
- Twitter

For further information on any of these services, please get in touch.

 **028 2564 5676**

 **info@supportingcommunities.org**

 **www.supportingcommunities.org**

 **Supporting Communities**

 **SuppCommunities**

**Empowering  
Society**



# 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

如果英语不是你的母语，并且你需要帮助来进行口译和文字翻译，那么Housing Executive可以根据请求而提供免费的服务，请在你当地的办公室询问进一步的详情。

## 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 žodžiu 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

Textphone: 18001 03448 920 900

Repairs: 03448 920 901- open 24 hours

Housing Benefit: 03448 920 902

### Benefits

Advice line: 0800 232 1271

Textphone: 0800 232 1715

Emergency Calls: 999/

Textphone 18000

### Crime

PSNI non emergency: 101

Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111

### NI Water

Waterline: 0345 744 0088

(interruption)

Leakline: 0800 028 2011

Flooding incident: 0300 2000 100

### Gas

Emergency: 0800 002 001

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 9442 4000

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: 0808 802 1414