

On hand to help you move home

Applying for social housing in Nottingham is easy. Homelink – the 'choice based' lettings service run by Nottingham City Homes – means you only have to fill in one form for 11 different housing organisations.

But actually getting a new home can be hard. With more than 13,000 on the city's housing register, but only 2,800 new lettings a year, some people have to wait a very long time.

If you, or your friends or family want to move, do you know how?

This issue tells you more about what we are doing to help you find a home – including building the first new council houses in Nottingham in 14 years, speeding up the time it takes to repair and let empty properties, and helping people who might find it difficult to make bids.

You can also find out more about the advantages of sheltered housing, and how

we're working closely with tenants to improve standards and services.



Customer satisfaction survey

Thank you to those of you who have taken the time over the past couple of months to complete the customer satisfaction survey we sent you.

Known as the STATUS survey, we send this to thousands of tenants each year to get your views on our services.

Housing office changes

Lenton, Bilborough and Victoria Centre housing offices are now open at different times.

We asked tenants and leaseholders in these areas what they thought about their local housing offices, which are the least visited in the city. After listening to their ideas and suggestions we are now starting a trial of reduced opening hours.

You can find out more about the pilot on page three.

Gardening competition winners announced

It is time to see whether you and your garden have been judged as a winner of this year's Best Garden competition.

The 76th annual gardening competition has been very competitive this year with more than 100 entrants entering categories from Best Garden to Best Window Box Display.

The winners and runners up will be presented with their awards at a special ceremony taking place on Thursday 22nd October.

See page 12 for the full results.



Our Commitment to Homelink



It has been a busy few weeks for Nottingham City Homes as we continue to plough on with the decent homes programme, the modernisation of our repairs service and improvements to the Homelink system.

September also saw our Annual General Meeting (AGM) take place. At this meeting I was re-elected and joined by a new tenant Board member, David Bennett-Bull and council Board member, Cllr Hassan Ahmed.

Our Independent Board members, Paul Rowe and Ade Aderogba MBE were both re-elected and join us for another three years to make sure Nottingham City Homes is

providing excellent services to all its tenants and leaseholders.

At the AGM I was also appointed as the new Chair of the Board. I take over the reigns from Paul Rowe who has done a fantastic job over the past three years.

All Board members are non-executive directors who volunteer their time to help steer the company in the right direction. It is challenging, but rewarding work. I look forward to the next year and working alongside the senior management team and all NCH employees to improve our services.

One of the services many of you will have used is Homelink, the choice-based lettings system that allocates properties. We let 2,432 properties last year through Homelink, with more than 70% of you bidding for properties on-line.

This system is very fair and once you are registered you can start bidding for properties every week. Everyone is put into different 'bandings' which is based on your circumstances and your level of need. This helps us award properties to the bidder with the

highest level of need who has been on the housing register the longest.

Homelink was given a 'clean bill of health' by the Audit Commission in January this year, but we know there is still a lot to do to improve. We are committed to improving the Homelink website and reducing the amount of void properties by making them available-to-let quicker.

The next few weeks will bring us Halloween, Diwali, Bonfire Night and Goose Fair. There is a lot to look forward to, but they also bring with them shorter days, darker nights and cold weather. So make sure you and your family stay safe, keep warm and enjoy the festivities.

Janet Storar
Chair of the Nottingham City Homes Board

Board meeting update

In September, the Nottingham City Homes Board met to discuss the month's issues. Here is a summary of what they discussed:

- The Company Secretary asked the Board to confirm the appointments of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board and the membership of the Board to its committees for the coming year (see page three for details)
- The Chief Executive gave an update on key issues currently in the organisation, including: the financial health of the company and the 2010/11 budget, an update on the work Nottingham City Homes is doing to support the Government's worklessness agenda, the results of the staff survey and an update of the review of the allocations policy
- The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the Audit Committee Annual Report to the Board
- The Director of Organisational Development presented the Human Resources Committee Annual Report to the Board
- The Chair of the Performance and Regulatory Committee presented the Performance and Regulatory Committee Annual Report to the Board
- The Head of Business Improvement and Development provided an update on the planning timetable for the 2010 – 2013 Business Plan.

All minutes and agendas for Board meetings can be found on the Nottingham City Homes website in the 'About us' section.

Get involved and have your say

Welcome everybody!

As you can see from reading this newsletter there is a lot going on at Nottingham City Homes this year. I'm sure you will have noticed a lot of work taking place in and around our estates for the Secure Warm Modern programme. The repairs and maintenance team is also working on a number of projects to modernise the repairs service and there are plans to further improve HomeLink.



I have been involved with Nottingham City Homes for a couple of years. And when I see all the improvements being made across the city I am pleased that I was able to influence those changes.

When you get involved with Nottingham City Homes you have the chance to have your say and let the staff and management know what matters to you. If they know what is important to tenants and leaseholders, they can shape their services to meet our needs.

Any tenant or leaseholder can get involved with Nottingham City Homes. It's easy. From filling in surveys at home, to joining forums and committees, and even becoming a tenant service inspector, there are so many ways you can get involved. They even have a team dedicated to working with tenants and leaseholders and

making sure your views count. So why not give it a go?

One thing that matters to us all is ridding our streets of anti-social behaviour. It is something that sadly many of us will have experienced at some point, but we should not accept this. We need to take action.

Taking action doesn't mean standing up to perpetrators yourself. You should always keep safe and leave that to the police. To report anti-social behaviour contact your area housing office, or call Nottingham City Homes on **0845 330 31 31**. You can also make a report via their website www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk or by contacting the ASB helpline on **0115 915 2020**. They will then work with their partners at the police and the council to tackle the problem.

If you're interested in joining the customer care group or would

like to find out more about the many ways you can get involved to make a difference contact the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement team on:

Address: 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham. NG1 7BA

Tel: 0115 915 7380

Minicom: 0115 915 7447

SMS: text INVOLVE to 60066, followed by your name and address

E-mail: gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Web: www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Jean England
Chair, Tenant and Leaseholder Congress

Changing Chair marks end of an era

After three years as Chair of the Nottingham City Homes Board, Paul Rowe will now be handing over the reigns to tenant and fellow Board member, Janet Storar.

Paul's expertise, knowledge and experience have been instrumental in making improvements at the company.

He took over the role of Chair in June 2006 during an incredibly challenging period for us. Thanks to his strong leadership and commitment, he steered us in the right direction.

Since Paul took over we have made huge strides, including:

- Halving the city's rent arrears, taking it from more than £5 million in 2006 to under £2.5 million in August 2009
- Recruiting a brand new senior management team and Chief Executive

- Setting up a robust, fair choice-based lettings system (Homelink) that has been given a 'clean bill of health' by the Audit Commission
- Achieving 'two stars with excellent prospects for improvement' in our November 2008 inspection
- Unlocking £165 million of government funding for decent homes programme to improve thousands of council homes across the city
- Encouraging more than 2,000 people to get involved with NCH
- Beating private sector firms to win Nottingham City Council's £142 million five-year repairs contract
- Creating more than 100 apprenticeships across the business and with our decent homes contractors
- Halving the number of empty properties across the city

- Increasing the amount of estates that reach at least a 'two star' standard from 36% to 95%
- Significantly increasing the amount of anti-social-behaviour cases resolved on our first intervention from 18.6% to 67.7%.

Paul Rowe said: "I am a founding member of this Board and the difference in the company from April 2005 to now, is remarkable. This is an ideal time to hand over the reigns of Chair. The role I'm sure will benefit from a fresh perspective and I'd like to offer my full support to Janet."

The new Chair was announced at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on Thursday 24th September 2009. Janet Storar is a Nottingham City Homes tenant and already a Board Member. She has a real commitment to the company and is keen to achieve our mission to 'deliver excellent services.'

Janet said: "I am delighted to become Chair of the Nottingham City Homes Board. It has been a pleasure to be involved with the company as it has made such fantastic progress over the past couple of years.

"The determination of Board members, senior management and staff to further improve services, is fantastic to see. The role of Chair presents a challenge to me, but I look forward to facing it."



Paul Rowe

Changes to meet customers' needs

Last year our customer survey told us that eight out of ten of you prefer to contact us by phone.

We've been reviewing our local housing office network to find out how regularly they are used, the cost of running them and whether they provide value for money.

In March 2009, following consultation with local tenants, we closed Southglade Housing Office. This office was only used by a small number of tenants and did not offer you value for money.

Over the spring and summer we have been reviewing Victoria Centre, Bilborough and Lenton housing offices, as these are the least used.

We consulted with tenants, leaseholders, Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) and Area Panels and acted on the feedback received.

We are now piloting part-time opening hours at these housing offices. The three-month pilot began on Monday 7th September and we will review the results in early 2010.

The offices are open on the following days:

Bilborough: Monday, Wednesday (from 10.30am) and Friday

Lenton: Tuesday and Friday

Victoria Centre: Monday, Thursday and Friday (9.30am to 12.30pm and 1.45pm to 4.30pm)

If you normally pay your rent at your local housing office, why not look at more convenient and simpler ways to pay, such as:

Direct Debit

Online

Using our automated freephone hotline on 0800 052 0173

Calling our Rents call centre on 0115 915 4920 (minicom 0115 915 4113)

At PayPoint outlets (Visit www.paypoint.co.uk/locator.aspx to find your nearest location or see the centre pages of this newsletter)

At your local post office

Contact us on **0845 330 31 31** for further information or to comment on the housing office review.

New Board Members

At the AGM last month two new Board members were introduced and three existing members were re-elected or appointed.

- Janet Storar was re-elected to the Board as a Tenant Board Member
- Dave Bennett-Bull was elected for the first time to the Board as a Tenant Board Member
- Paul Rowe was re-appointed to the Board as an Independent Member
- Ade Aderogba MBE was re-appointed to the Board as an Independent Member
- Councillor Hassan Ahmed was nominated by Nottingham City Council to become a Councillor Board Member

Other existing Board members include:

- Margaret Pugsley (Tenant Board Member)
- Tim Bell (Independent Board Member)
- Peter Linford (Independent Board Member)
- Councillor Malcolm Wood (Council Board Member)
- Valerie Schneider (Tenant Board Member)

There remains a vacancy following Graham Ward's resignation earlier this year, due to changes in his circumstances. Nominations from the

TLC have been invited to fill this vacancy as a Casual Board Member.

Following the AGM, the Board held its first meeting and two further appointments were ratified:

- Councillor Merlita Bryan – nominated by Nottingham City Council
- Suhail Hashmi – appointed as Co-opted Board Member

In the next edition of News from Nottingham City Homes, we will be taking a closer look at our new Board members and learning a bit more about them.

We are always on the look out for tenants and leaseholders who have a real interest and drive in making key decisions to develop our services. **We will once again be looking for new tenant Board Members in 2010** and are always happy to discuss with you what it means to be a Board Member and the process to go through to become one. If you're already involved with your local tenant and resident association, have experience in housing or other service industries then you might be just what we're looking for – call us on **0115 915 7212** to find out more.

Sticking to our standards

When a tenant leaves one of our properties, it becomes 'void'. Before we can let this to anyone else we have to make sure it is of a 'lettable standard'.

This means that before you move in we will always:

- Inspect the property to check it is safe, secure, weatherproof and doesn't have damp and woodworm
- Check the gas and electricity supplies to your home are safe and carry out any repairs if necessary
- Service heating systems/appliances and leave them in good working order
- Make sure the inside of your home is cleaned to a good standard, including the fittings in your kitchen and bathroom
- Re-glaze the windows where necessary
- Test and inspect smoke alarms. If you don't have one, we will fit one
- Test and inspect burglar alarms if one is fitted to your home

- Replace or repair damaged floorboards, floor tiles and doors, if they are in a dangerous condition
- Provide sufficient food storage and preparation areas
- Provide a safe handrail to all staircases
- Replace damaged bathroom fittings, including any missing plugs and chains
- Repair damaged plaster on walls and ceilings
- Check the condition of internal decorations. If they need improving we will usually give you vouchers to assist towards the cost of decorating. If necessary, we will decorate some or all of the rooms before you move in.

Our dedicated voids team works hard to bring each property up to this standard.



Over the past two years the team has significantly reduced the amount of void properties across the city. This means more homes are available for let, fewer have to be boarded up.

But we are committed to improving further and are currently reviewing the service to see if we can work more efficiently.

We also work with our volunteer Tenant Services Inspectors to make sure properties are good enough to let. They randomly select properties to inspect to make sure the team is maintaining the lettable standard.

If you move into a new property and don't feel we have kept to the above standard, please contact our lettings team on **0845 330 31 31**.

Homing in on independent living

Did you know we have sheltered homes available for let right now?

Housing demand in Nottingham far outweighs supply – and with more than 13,000 people on the housing register, it can sometimes take years to find the home you want.

There are also older people living alone in a family-sized home – people who might benefit from a move to sheltered housing.

Older people often have concerns about losing their independence. But in our schemes, residents maintain an independent lifestyle – with the peace of mind that help is on hand should they need it.

And if you're struggling to maintain a larger home, then a move to sheltered housing may benefit you.

In September more than 100 people attended our special event for the over 60s at the Council House.

Representatives from Age Concern, Nottingham City Council, The Pensions Service, Framework, Telecare, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and many other city partners were all on hand at the event to give information about the support that they can offer older council tenants.

Properties are supported by a scheme manager, who is on hand if you need help or support. You can also be covered by the Nottingham On Call service. This is a Telecare alarm system that allows you to alert us if there is a problem, you have a fall or need medical assistance. A dedicated 24-hour call centre answers the alarm calls and sorts out an appropriate response.

If you think you or a member of your family could benefit from living at one of our schemes, please call the team on **0115 915 1616**.



New homes for Clifton

We now have the cash to build eight new homes in Clifton following a successful funding bid earlier this year.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) recently announced plans to give funding to councils across the country to build new council homes. We have the funding for eight and plan to build them on a disused garage site in Clifton.

This will not only provide eight brand new family homes for people on the housing register, it will also rid the local area of problems with anti-social behaviour as the garage site had in the past attracted problems.

We will soon appoint a building contractor to undertake the work and submit our proposals for planning permission. We will keep you updated on our progress in future editions.

Banding – what does this mean?

Homelink is a 'choice-based' lettings system. Every week we advertise our available properties and invite people to bid for them.

When you first apply to go on the housing register, we'll assess your level of need and then put you into the right band.

We normally get a number of bids each week on a single property. We'll offer the property to the person in the highest band who has been on the housing register for the longest amount of time.

Band one is for people who are legally homeless and the council has a duty to re-house.



Band number	Examples
1 Band 1 – for people who are legally homeless that the council has a legal duty to re-house	The Housing Aid Team at Nottingham City Council assesses these people
2 Band 2– urgent needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> serious racial harassment some assessed disabilities/illnesses people who can't return home after a hospital discharge some cases of family breakdown people whose property will be, or has been, demolished people within the 'Rough Sleepers Initiative'
3 Band 3 – moderate needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people with a hostel support plan who need to move private tenants with a Notice Seeking Possession or Notice to Quit which is not their fault people with two children of both sexes under the age of ten sharing a bedroom tenants in flats with children but no garden tenants leaving a high-demand property to move to a lower-demand one
4 Band 4 – general needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> private tenants with security of tenure lodgers who are single or in a couple without dependent children
5 Band 5 – low needs	People given this banding are only considered if there is no demand for properties from people in categories 1-4 above
6 Band 6 – people who are waiting for us to consider them for housing, or who live outside Nottinghamshire	People given this banding are only considered if there is no demand for properties from people in categories 1-4 above

Leave as you find

When you leave one of our properties it is important that you leave it in a reasonable condition.

At the end of your tenancy, one of our 'void inspectors' will check the property and if necessary will create a list of rechargeable repairs.

These could include:

- Damage created by yourself or others at your home
- Items that are damaged not from natural wear and tear
- Any non-standard items you have installed without our permission
- Other costs that we have as a result of the condition that the property is left in, for example removing furniture and belongings you have left behind.

We will then send you an invoice for the full cost of repairing the damage/alteration or removing and disposing your belongings.

How do I avoid this charge?

Report all repairs to us. We offer a repairs service to all tenants. If you report a problem to us, we will visit to repair it. You must report all repairs that need resolving during your tenancy to make sure the property is kept to a reasonable standard.

Don't 'Do it Yourself'

Do not try to repair things yourself unless they are your responsibility (for more information on what is your responsibility, please see the repairs handbook on our website or in your local housing office.) If you are still unsure, contact our repairs contact centre on **0115 915 22 22** (minicom **0115 915 1826**) to confirm.

You should not carry out any work or adaptations to your home without our written permission.

Why do we charge?

It is important we attempt to get the money back for this damage as we have to invest more rent payers' money into repairing it. This is not fair for your fellow tenants.

You do have the right to query the amount you have been charged, or appeal anything you think is unfair. You must do this within 14 days of receiving your invoice. We will then respond to you within five working days.

For more information on rechargeable repairs, please contact us on **0115 915 74 04**

Be careful with strippers! (Wallpaper strippers that is!)

When re-decorating please take extra care if you're using a steam wallpaper stripper. We've recently had cases of these damaging plaster works – damage that you could face a recharge for.

Wallpaper strippers work using steam to remove the paper from the walls. Working in a similar way to a kettle, water is boiled and steam comes out of a pan that is held against the wall. Although this is an effective way of stripping wall paper, keeping the stripper in the same place for a long time can result in bringing the plaster off the walls as well as the paper!

Using warm water instead of a steam stripper is an effective

alternative. Just follow these simple steps:

1. Protect your floor and furniture if they are to stay in the room. Use dust sheets (polythene if possible)
2. Fill a bucket of warm to hot water and add some washing up liquid. Apply the water to the paper with a sponge and leave to soak in for about half an hour. Repeat and leave for a further half an hour
3. With a wallpaper scraper, carefully scrape off the paper being careful not to damage the plaster – adding more water to the wall if required.



Get Involved Week 2009

Monday 27th July to Saturday 1st August

Did you 'Get Involved' with Get Involved Week? Lots of you did and made it a success for another year!

Despite the rain, many events were still able to go ahead and many of our tenants and leaseholders had the chance to learn more about 'getting involved' with Nottingham City Homes.

The week of events kicked off at the Forest Recreation Ground with a number of Nottingham City Homes departments and representatives from our partners taking part.

There was a bouncy castle for children, face painting and the Forest Factor team were there to launch the new mobile football coaching scheme.

Forest defender and Nottingham lad, Wes Morgan (pictured) even turned up to show his support for the day.

Other events held over the week included a 1940s themed event at

Brookfield Court, attendance at ParkLife in Mapperley, Nottingham Pride and the Riverside Festival and lots more.

Thanks to everyone who came along, took part and expressed an interest in getting involved!

To find out more about getting involved, contact our Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team:

Tel: 0115 915 7380

Minicom: 0115 915 7447

SMS: text INVOLVE to 60066, followed by your name and address

E-mail: gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Web: www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk



'Getting and running your first home' – drop in session

If you're aged 16 – 25 and thinking about getting your own place and are not sure how to go about it, why not drop-in and see us on Tuesday 20th October at the Housing Service Centre, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham (between Subway and Snug nightclub) anytime between 2pm and 7pm?

We'll be on hand to give you advice about getting a place through HomeLink, financial support packages available to you, information about home contents insurance and loads more.

Interested? Phone Claire Reeves on **Tel:** 0115 915 7315, **E-mail:** claire.reeves@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk or **text** INVOLVE to 60066 followed by your name and address.

16–25? Speak up! We want to hear from you!

What do you think about where you live? What's good? What's bad? What could be improved?

We want to help you make a difference in your community so we need you to tell us about it first.

There are loads of opportunities to get involved and to get your voice heard. You could attend an event and speak to us directly about the issues that are affecting you.

Why not become a 'mystery shopper' and judge how we're performing either in person or on the phone?

You could take part in estate and block inspections and point out what needs to be improved – or check out empty properties we have made ready for new tenants and tell us if they're up to scratch!

Or why not join our youth forum and meet with people similar to you from across the city – share experiences, make new friends, make a difference!

Young people from William Sharp School have been making a real difference. They helped us develop lessons for other youngsters to find out more about improving estates, dealing with anti-social behaviour, living independently and developing skills and career options.

Teenagers have already carried out an estate assessment, in a similar way to our Tenant Service Inspectors. They looked out for things such as fly tipping, graffiti, overgrown hedges or fencing needing repair and made recommendations about how services could be improved.

Are you just about to get a new place or want help to find out how?

We offer extra support to people under 25 moving into their first home, because we know this can be a stressful time.

We can give you lots of practical hints to help you live in your first home, including:

- how to bid for a property through the HomeLink scheme
- understanding the Nottingham Evening Post advertisement
- tips on how to avoid debt or deal with debt
- tips about welfare benefits
- tips about welfare benefits, and how to claim them
- budgeting skills
- furnishing your first home
- information on Credit Unions and how to save
- getting contents insurance for your prized possessions.

InLiving

We've also got our mobile phone game, 'InLiving', to help you understand more about starting out in a home – which can be daunting for anyone!

Similar to the popular 'SIMs' games, you choose a character who then makes a series of choices – including deciding on a career path, paying bills, cleaning the home, washing the pots or going out to party.

To get 'InLiving' on your phone text 'FUN' to 60505

Download is free on Vodafone, O2, 3 and Orange networks
For more information contact **Claire Reeves**, Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team, NCH, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham, NG1 7BA
Tel: 0115 915 7315,
E-mail: gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk or **text** INVOLVE to 60066 and we will call you back.



Carbon monoxide – know the facts, it could save your life!



You can't see it, taste it or smell it, but if you breathe it in you will quickly become tired and dizzy, possibly with a headache and chest pain.

Being aware of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning could save your life.

Nottingham City Homes will check for carbon monoxide as part of the annual gas safety check but this is for the heating system only.

It is your responsibility to have any other appliances – for example your cooker – tested for carbon monoxide yourself.

Many of the symptoms of carbon monoxide are similar to those of flu, food poisoning, viral infections, or simple tiredness. It is common to mistake the symptoms for something else.

Remember the six main symptoms to look out for:

1. headaches
2. dizziness
3. nausea
4. breathlessness
5. collapse
6. loss of consciousness

Other signs that you may have carbon monoxide poisoning:

- If your symptoms only occur when you are at home
- Your symptoms disappear or get better when you leave home but come back when you return
- If anyone else in your household is experiencing any of the symptoms (including your pets) and whether they appear at a similar time.

If you have any of these symptoms:

- Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances and leave the house
- See your doctor immediately or go to hospital – let them know that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning. They can do a blood or breath test to check.

Your home may show symptoms of carbon monoxide, too:

- The flame on your cooker should be crisp and blue. Lazy yellow or orange flames mean you need to get your cooker checked
- Soot or yellow/brown staining around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that frequently blow out
- Increased condensation inside windows.

If you have a carbon monoxide alarm, test it regularly. Do not paint it or cover it up.

If the alarm sounds or you have any worry about carbon monoxide escaping, immediately call the National Gas Emergency Freephone Service on **0800 111 999**.

Switch off all your gas appliances and open all doors and windows.

Nottingham City Homes do not provide carbon monoxide alarms. They can be purchased for under £20 at local DIY stores, supermarkets or from your energy supplier.

You can be particularly at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning when you are asleep as you may not be aware of early carbon monoxide symptoms until it is too late. Do not use the 'black spot' detectors that change colour when carbon monoxide is present. These will not make a sound to wake you up if the poisonous gas is present while you are sleeping.

Remember – the alarm will alert you to carbon monoxide being present in your home – but are no substitute for getting your appliances checked regularly.

Repairs clinics round two!

Over the summer we've held repairs clinics across the city, giving you the chance to come and meet the repairs team and ask your questions about the repairs service. These have been really well received by tenants and leaseholders – so much so that we will shortly be announcing dates for the next round of clinics.

These are likely to be held in December and early 2010.

The next edition of the newsletter will give more details of locations, dates and times but also keep an eye out on our website and in our housing offices for posters advertising the events.

And that's not all! By attending a clinic and completing a short questionnaire, you will be put in to a draw to win £25 worth of gift vouchers – just like Linda Tucker (pictured) who won the June prize draw.



Gas Service – it pays to give us first time access!



Pictured is Carrie Ann Kerr from Nottingham City Homes' Gas Section presenting Tanya Staples of Bulwell with **£100 of Victoria Centre vouchers** for making and and keeping her annual gas service appointment.

All you have to do to be entered into the prize draw is allow us to carry out a gas service at your home on our first request.

Every tenant who allows us first time will then be entered into a prize draw every three months. A winner will be chosen at random to win £100 of Victoria Centre vouchers.

Why are we doing this?

Refusing to give us access to your home or missing your appointment for an essential gas service, can put both yourself and your neighbours at risk from gas leaks, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Nottingham City Homes must, by law, carry out a gas safety check once a year in every one of our properties that has a gas supply (whether or not it is being used). This service is free and only takes around 45 minutes to do.

It's better to be safe than sorry!

According to figures from the Health and Safety Executive, around 20 people die from Carbon Monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues that have not been properly installed, maintained or that are poorly ventilated.

Carbon Monoxide is colourless, odourless and deadly. Often people don't even realise an appliance is faulty until it's too late.

Why do we give away vouchers?

Every time we make an appointment and then can't gain access to a property it costs money. Sometimes we have to try several times and occasionally have to apply for a court order to get into your home to carry out the necessary checks. This can cost up to £1000 (recharged back to the tenant).

This scheme aims to encourage you all to let us carry out the gas service first time – saving money that can be used on improving our services.

Automatic entry!

Simply keep to the appointment and allow the gas service to take place or make another appointment in plenty of time to suit you. Each tenant that allows access on the first request will automatically be entered into the quarterly prize draw.

'Get Involved' and have your say

At Nottingham City Homes we are committed to empowering our tenants and leaseholders to get involved and influence the way we shape and deliver our services. Area Panels have been set up throughout the city to find out what matters to local people and what we can do to make a real difference.



To find out more about getting involved, contact our Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team:

Tel: 0115 915 7380
Minicom: 0115 915 7447
Text: text INVOLVE to 60066, followed by your name and address
E-mail: gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk
Web: www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Check the table below to find your next Area Panel meeting.

Date	Area Panel 3	Venue	Time
24.11.09	Aspley and Bilborough	Sheila Russell Centre	10am to 12pm

Date	Area Panel 4	Venue	Time
04.11.09	Radford and Hyson Green	Radford and Hyson Green Housing Office, The Mary Potter Centre	6pm to 8pm

Date	Area Panel 7	Venue	Time
15.12.09	Wollaton and Lenton Abbey	Tenants Hall	11am to 1pm

New café opens at Mary Potter Centre, Hyson Green

A new community café has opened in Hyson Green, making it the latest addition to the Mary Potter Centre, which opened in June last year.

The Talking Point Café – set up by Shona Munro and Robert Dawson – will be run as a social enterprise, recruiting both paid staff and volunteers, with more than 50% of its profits going back to NHS Nottingham City and various other community organisations.

The menu has been developed to meet NHS requirements, focusing

on freshly prepared hot and cold snacks and nutritional lunch and breakfast options.

City councillor Dave Trimble said: "The Mary Potter Centre has become a main focal point in Hyson Green and the new Talking Point cafe will add another facility for the local community."

The new café is open daily from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Find out more at www.talkingpointcafe.co.uk



Transforming learning in Nottingham

In issue 25 we told you about the huge £300 million investment being made by the city council to transform education across the city and the real differences you will see at your local schools. From time to time, we'll be updating you on progress being made in your area:

Hadden Park High School in Bilborough is being remodelled as part of Nottingham's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and the second phase of work was completed this summer. Teachers and pupils are now making use of re-modelled science, English and modern foreign languages areas. Work is now progressing on the final phase which will re-model the humanities, business, ICT and main entrance areas.

Construction work is progressing on the building of the £13 million 'exemplar' Southwark Primary school in Basford. The new school is starting to take shape now that the steel structure has been completed and the roof is starting to go on.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

A 10-15 year major government initiative aimed at re-building and renewing school facilities and transforming education. In

Nottingham, BSF will mean an investment of approximately £180 million to create better secondary and special schools to teach and learn in.

Primary Capital Programme

A national 14 year programme which aims to renew at least half of all primary school buildings by 2022-23 to ensure they are fully equipped for the 21st century. Nottingham City Council has received £11.5 million for the next two years, which will benefit six schools.

To find out more, visit www.nottinghambsf.co.uk.



Paying your rent is easy with PayPoint!

Churchfield News	11 Churchfield Lane,	NG7 5QA	Tel: 0115 978 3250
The Co-op	123 Middleton Boulevard,	NG8 1FW	Tel: 0115 928 2129
The Co-op	133 Ilkeston Road,	NG7 3HE	Tel: 0115 978 7244
Londis	34 Hartley Road,	NG7 3AJ	Tel: 0115 970 8469
Woodfield Off Licence	141-143 Woodfield Road,	NG8 6HY	Tel: 0115 927 1733
Ambergate Supplies	15 Ambergate Road,	NG8 3GD	Tel: 0115 929 3319
G T News	160 Bramcote Lane,	NG8 2QP	Tel: 0115 928 3576
Threshers	167 Derby Road,	NG7 1PQ	Tel: 0115 985 9490
Bilborough Convenience	18 Graylands Road,	NG8 4FJ	Tel: 0115 929 8881
Stop n Shop	197 Alfreton Road,	NG7 3NW	Tel: 0115 942 7198
One Stop Community Stores	20-30 Bells Lane,	NG8 6ET	Tel: 0115 927 1127
Daffu Superstore	210-214 Berridge Road,	NG7 6GY	Tel: 0115 978 2515
Star News	223 Radford Road,	NG7 5GT	Tel: 0115 978 3865
Taaks Mini Market	286 Alfreton Road,	NG7 5LU	Tel: 0115 978 0500
Costcutter	294 Broxtowe Lane,	NG8 5NB	Tel: 0115 929 3167
Price Cutter	322-324 Radford Road,	NG7 5GP	Tel: 0115 978 7789
Sainsbury's	35-37 Lenton Boulevard,	NG7 2ET	Tel: 0115 970 4568
Liberty News & Office	371-373 Alfreton Road,	NG7 5LT	Tel: 0115 942 4796
Sidhu Stores	377 Aspley Lane,	NG8 5RR	Tel: 0115 929 3949
Kim & Sharon's News	41 Laurie Avenue,	NG7 6PG	Tel: 0115 978 3696
News Shop	425 Beechdale Road,	NG8 3LF	Tel: 0115 929 1085
The News Place	475 Alfreton Road,	NG7 5NH	Tel: 0115 978 5237
G T News	48 Cockington Road,	NG8 4DL	Tel: 0115 928 1445
Bodhan Stores	59 Ilkeston Road,	NG7 3GR	Tel: 0115 979 1010
Northgate Stores	62 North Gate,	NG7 7FY	Tel: 0115 978 5339
Wines & Spirits	66 Gregory Boulevard,	NG7 5JD	Tel: 0115 978 5580
Spar	8-10 Strelley Road,	NG8 3AP	Tel: 0115 929 2352
Sainsbury's	Nuthall Road,	NG8 5AZ	Tel: 0115 978 1205
The Co-op	Strelley Road,	NG8 3AP	Tel: 0115 929 9391
The Co-op	Trowell Road,	NG8 2DH	Tel: 0115 928 2222
Express Food & Wines	176 Broxtowe Lane,	NG8 5NG	Tel: 0115 927 5101
Gills Convenience Store	304-306 Broxtowe Lane,	NG8 5NB	Tel: 0115 929 9494
Grassington News	124 Grassington Road,	NG8 3PE	Tel: 0115 849 6689
Londis	16-18 Beech Avenue,	NG7 7LL	Tel: 0115 962 1397
Strelly Supermarket	31 Flamsteed Road,	NG8 6LR	Tel: 0115 913 3429
The Co-op	115 Arleston Drive,	NG8 2GB	Tel: 0115 928 6015
K S Mahal	250 Trowell Road,	NG8 2DS	Tel: 0115 913 2976
Spar	Bramcote Lane,	NG8 2QP	Tel: 0115 928 9010
The Co-op	Bracebridge Drive,	NG8 4PH	Tel: 0115 929 2444
J B News	111 -113 Woodside Road,	NG9 2SB	Tel: 0115 925 4430
Cagla Off Licence	75 Mansfield Road,	NG1 3FN	Tel: 0115 988 1247
Best Choice	193-195 Mansfield Drive,	NG1 3FS	Tel: 0115 941 7935
M J News & Dolls Houses	347 Mansfield Road,	NG5 2DA	Tel: 0115 844 0222
News Shop	425 Beechdale Road,	NG8 3LF	Tel: 0115 929 1085
K S Mahal	250 Trowell Road,	NG8 2DS	Tel: 0115 913 2976
G T News	553-555 Asprey Road,	NG8 5RX	Tel: 0115 929 5840
Broxtowe Post Office	186 Broxtowe Lane	NG8 5NG	Tel: 0115 927 2397
Woodfield Post Office	145 Woodfield Road	NG8 6HY	Tel: 0845 722 3344
Aspley Post Office	357 Aspley Lane	NG8 5GA	Tel: 0115 929 1765
Ambergate Post Office	11 Ambergate Road	NG8 3GD	Tel: 0115 929 3377
Bilborough Post Office	Bracebridge Drive	NG8 4PL	Tel: 0115 929 1760
Wollaton Post Office	760 Wollaton Road	NG8 2AP	Tel: 0115 928 1328
Bramcote Post Office	191 Bramcote Lane	NG8 2QJ	Tel: 0115 928 3544
Ilkeston Post Office	157 Ilkeston Road	NG7 3HE	Tel: 0115 978 2928
Hyson Green Post Office	52-54 Gregory Blvd.	NG7 5JD	Tel: 0115 978 9565
Sherwood Post Office	566 Mansfield Road	NG7 2FS	Tel: 0115 960 5321
Middleton Post Office	89 Middleton Blvd.	NG8 1FW	Tel: 0115 928 2633
Farndon Green Post Office	2 Farndon Green	NG8 1DU	Tel: 0115 928 3911
Bilborough Housing Office	95 Bracebridge Drive	NG8 5PL	Tel: 0115 915 0491
Aspley Housing Office	14 Strelley Road	NG8 3AP	Tel: 0115 915 3121
Radford & Hyson Green Housing Office	The Mary Potter Centre, Gregory Blvd.	NG7 5HY	Tel: 0115 883 8220



PayPoint is a free bill payment service that you can use to pay your rent, all your household utility bills, TV licence, council tax, catalogue payments, holiday payments and mobile phone top-ups.

You can pay by PayPoint at your local newsagent, petrol station and other shops or at the Post Office using the barcode on your rent card.

To the left is a list of PayPoint locations in your area. There is no cost to you and it costs us less too – as well as being convenient!

A map of all paypoint locations is available for downloading on our website. Just visit www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk and click on 'Paying your rent'.



Energy efficiency at home

– helping to save the environment and you money!

Now that autumn's here and winter's just round the corner we're all going to be looking at how best to keep warm, but without burning too heavy a hole in our pockets!

As part of the Secure Warm Modern programme we're installing double glazing in homes that require it, replacing old boilers where needed with new high efficiency ones and topping up loft insulation if your home has less than 200mm. This will not only help reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere but will also save you on your bills.

There are other things you can do now to help you save money and keep warm:

- Close your curtains when it gets dark to reduce the amount of heat escaping through the windows
- Shut your windows when the heating is on
- Close internal doors to stop draughts
- Put foil behind your radiators to reflect heat back in the room

- Turn your thermostat down by 1 degree – this could save you around £55 per year
- Set your heating and hot water to come on only when needed
- Wear jumpers and layers of clothing.

And follow these tips, to save money on your bills:

- Use energy saving light bulbs – they use about 80% less energy and last ten times as long!
- Turn off lights you're not using
- When boiling the kettle, only boil the amount of water you need
- Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly – it will help them run more efficiently
- Wash a full load rather than half a load in your washing machine
- Turn your taps fully off
- Switch electrical appliances off rather than leaving them on standby.

Saving money on your gas and electricity bills

Switch your gas and electricity supplier

Switching energy suppliers is simple and can save you a lot of money. Price comparison websites show you most of the tariffs available in the area and how much you could save by switching to each one meaning you get all the information you need to find a better energy provider.

www.energyhelpline.com also provide a customer helpline on **0800 074 0745** if you have any questions or queries.

www.uswitch.com also provide a customer helpline on **0800 404 7961** for any questions and queries.

Do a meter reading every time

Every time you receive a bill, do a meter reading: don't rely on your energy provider's estimate. You could be paying too little so will owe them at the end of the year – or you may be paying too much and your energy provider will owe you.

Switch to monthly direct debit

Fixed monthly direct debit payments (where you pay a fixed estimate each month) save you up to 10%. Companies are sure you won't default, and they earn interest on any overpayments (which should be refunded at the end of the year).

Switch to your company's internet tariff

Switch to your company's internet billing. It will usually save you up to

10% over the standard tariff, providing you're prepared to be billed online.

Winter fuel payment for over 60s

A winter fuel payment is an annual payment to help people aged 60 and over with the costs of keeping warm this winter.

If you are aged 60 to 79 and you are entitled to receive a winter fuel payment, this year you will get either £125 or £250, depending on your circumstances in the qualifying week (21 to 27 September 2009).

If you are aged 80 or over and you are entitled to a winter fuel payment, this year you will get either £200, £275 or £400, depending on your circumstances in the qualifying week.

You do not pay tax on winter fuel payments.

If you need to make a claim for a payment for winter 2009/10, you should return your claim form on or before 30 March 2010.

The Winter Fuel Payment Helpline is 0845 915 1515 or 0845 601 5613 for minicom users. Lines are open from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. For more detailed information and frequently asked questions about winter fuel payments.

www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel/home.asp



Set to make the difference at National Training Awards

Nottingham City Homes has been nominated for a National Training Award thanks to our 'Let's Make the Difference' campaign.

Let's Make the Difference was a training programme delivered last year to all employees. We carried out this training in partnership with

theatre training company, CragRats. Let's Make the Difference was an interactive drama training programme that helped us focus on customer care.

CragRats delivered the training in a series of workshops over a 58-day period between December 2007 and

May 2008. In all, 970 of our employees were trained. CragRats held a separate workshop for Board members and tenant inspectors.

Following the training the number of compliments we received from tenants and leaseholders increased and last year's customer

satisfaction (STATUS) survey showed a huge rise in customer satisfaction to 69%.

Our Learning and Development team will attend the National Training Awards later this month to find out whether we have won. We will let you know in our next issue if we win.

Pay up before you leave

Our rents team is making fantastic progress reducing the amount of rent arrears across the city, cutting it by 25% just last year.

We are constantly reducing this figure by offering help and support to tenants who are having financial difficulties and struggling to pay their rent. We look at better ways to manage your money and investigate potential benefits you may be entitled to. But, if you refuse to pay and don't want our help, we will seek to evict you.

This approach is so far proving to be a success. But it is not just our current tenants that are in arrears.

Some tenants leave their property without clearing their rent account and many do not intend to pay it back. We are committed to making sure that these tenants pay back what they owe. This will give us more money to invest in the services that are important to you.

We will pursue non-payers and attempt to get money back, either in bulk or through agreed payment plans. If they refuse to cooperate it can seriously affect their credit rating and ability to borrow money in the future.

If you are planning to leave, make sure you clear your rent account first. If you are having financial difficulties, please contact us on **0115 915 4920** (minicom **0115 915 4113**) and we will do our best to help.

Beat the recession by claiming benefits

As we are not yet out of recession and thousands of people across Nottinghamshire are still out of work, it is important to understand what you are entitled to.

There are a number of benefits available to a range of different people. They are divided into four groups:

- benefits for people of working age
- benefits for people who have retired or who are planning to retire
- benefits for families and children
- benefits for disabled people and carers.

It is important to make sure that if you are entitled to benefits, you claim it.

Last year around £3 million worth of benefit went unclaimed across the country. To make sure you are not one of the people missing out, contact our rents team on **0115 915 4920** (minicom **0115 915 4113**). Or have a go on the benefits calculator, which can be found on our website www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk This will give you some idea about what you are entitled to.

Bulwell Housing Office wins 'Office of the Month' for the fifth time!

Congratulations to the team at Bulwell Housing Office who have won Housing Office of the Month for July 2009 – their fifth success!

Mystery shoppers score housing offices out of ten in a number of categories – office reception area, performance, sickness rates and telephone mystery shopping.

Bulwell scored highly for the friendliness and helpfulness of staff, presentation of internal and external signage, dealing with customer enquiries and telephone mystery shopping. The office also achieved 100% performance for new tenancy visits and introductory tenancy visits completed on time.

Comments from the mystery shoppers on why Bulwell Housing Office deserves to win the award included:

'a very busy office, where staff work hard to maintain standards'

'staff are always very helpful and friendly'

'a fantastic leaflet display, well done!'

Why not become a mystery shopper?

We're always on the look out for tenants and leaseholders to help us

mystery shop our housing offices. We want to make sure that we're providing you with the best possible service and to do that we need and value your feedback and input.

You don't need any qualifications or experience and you will get training. You will also get help with your expenses. If you are on any form of benefits, you must tell the Department of Works and Pensions. You are a volunteer so it should not affect your benefit status.

Interested? Then why not contact Gemma Atkinson on **0115 915 7361** or E-mail gemma.atkinson@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk



On-call service credited for high standards of care

Our Nottingham On Call service for elderly and vulnerable tenants has been commended for its high standards of customer care.

At the end of July Nottingham On Call was audited against the TSA (Telecare Services Association) code of practice. The team excelled, achieving all three parts of its code of practice for the third year running.

What is Nottingham On Call?

Nottingham On Call is the 24-hour emergency response service for elderly and vulnerable tenants of Nottingham City Homes and tenants of councils and housing associations.

It allows people to get help if they are in difficulty or need support at any time. If tenants have a fall and can't get up, or are feeling ill, they can alert the on-call team. Our call centre staff are local people. Many

call centres are national and the people answering the call would not have the local knowledge that we have.

You don't have to be a council tenant

The Nottingham On Call service is also available to private residents living in the city. If you, or a member of your family, is living independently but could do with the extra support, why not give the team a call on **0115 915 1640** to find out more.



Empty pockets or party rockets?

Don't let your rent go up in smoke

For FREE, confidential debt advice - call us on **0115 915 4920** NOW!
Or, text 'Rent' followed by your payment reference number and message to 80800 (for FREE) and we'll call you back.

Nottingham City Homes

Garden competition 2009 – Winners announced!

Congratulations to all of the winners of this year's Best Garden Competition 2009 and thanks to all those who entered. Once again, the judges were very impressed with the quality, effort and enthusiasm put in by all entrants.

This year's area entries were judged by our Tenant Services Inspectors who spent four long, but enjoyable, days with Nottingham City Homes staff judging all of the gardens. A huge thank you for the time and effort they all put in with the judging.

Celebrity garden expert John Stirland of BBC Radio Nottingham and East Midlands Today judged the gardens entered into our Special Cup category.

John was very impressed with the standard and quality of all the gardens he visited.

The results are as follows:

Mr Cairns of Bestwood Park won the coveted Special Cup. Our celebrity judge, John Stirland said:

"I just loved this garden. A sweeping lawn created on a slight slope. An open feel yet with beds and borders created within the lawn to give that element of surprise. Lots of summer colour yet with rooms for beans and a few other vegetables. A buddleia and two trees give height to the garden And the fences are covered in plants offering a really cosy feel".

Mr Bexon from Strelley came a close second. John said:

"A very practical front garden with slabs as the base and raised formal beds. This garden will have something the year round. The back garden was very cosy yet practical and I enjoyed the temple type layout overlooking the formal bed."

Third place went to Mr Spencer from Abbey Bridge. John said:

"The quality of the plants, lawn and hard landscaping was excellent. A lovely collection of containers and well planted mixed borders made this garden a worthy winner."

Winners of main garden competition

Area 1 – Abbey Bridge
Geoff Gardner

Area 2 – Aspley
Hazel Knight

Area 3 – Beechdale
Mr and Mrs Davis

Area 4 – Bells Lane
John Harrison

Area 5 – Hyson Green
Mrs F Bailey

Area 6a – Bestwood Park
George Woodings

Area 6b – Top Valley
Peter Harvey

Area 7 – Bilborough (Central)
Mr and Mrs King

Area 8 – Bilborough (East)
Mrs Elliott

Area 9 – Bilborough (West)
Mr Smith

Area 10 – Broxtowe Lane
Mr Christian

Area 11 – Bulwell Hall
Mr Chapman

Area 11a – Bulwell and Crabtree
Alfred James

Area 12 – Radford
Janet Chaplin

Area 14 – Clifton (South-west)
Jack Noon

Area 15 – Clifton (South-east)
June Jackson

Area 17 – Clifton (North-east)
Trish Dickson

Area 19 – Colwick Park
Raymond Forbes

Area 22 – Heathfield
Mary Franklin

Area 25 – Meadows
Ian Miller

Area 29 – Stockhill
Albert Barber

Area 30 – Strelley
Mrs Connors

Area 31 – St Ann's
William Hutchinson



Area 32 – Whitemoor
Mr and Mrs Roome

Area 33 – Wollaton
Olive Smith

Sheltered Housing Complex
Crossfield Court, Top Valley

Balcony / Window Box
Paul Holehouse, Canning Circus

Community Garden
R W Mee, Highbury Vale

Disabled Persons Garden Award
Ida Scothern, Whitemoor

Everybody needs good neighbours – like Anita Mann!

Everyday we see in the news stories about anti-social behaviour and incidents of crime and disorder on our streets and in our neighbourhoods. It is easy to be easy to forget the people who make a difference to our communities for the better.

That's why, every year, we hold our Good Neighbour Awards to recognise those people who go above and beyond the duty of a normal neighbour.

This year's worthy winner is Anita Mann (pictured left) from Broxtowe, who was



nominated by her neighbour Anna Shephard (pictured right) on behalf of her family and all of their neighbours on her street.

Anita was awarded this year's prize for the help she gave to Anna and her family when they moved in. Anna, who suffers with epilepsy and severe back pain, can rely on Anita night or day should she have an attack or need assistance. But it's not only Anna that she helps. With a constant smile on her face, Anita is the lady that everybody on the street looks to. Being trusted to collect parcels if people are out, going out to give ice-creams to the children playing outside or checking on elderly neighbours living in the area Anita is, as Anna says, 'the life and soul of her neighbourhood and an inspiration to us all for the kindness she shows.'

Anita will be presented with her award at this year's Best Garden Awards ceremony. Congratulations Anita on a well deserved award.

A clean sweep

This month our independent Tenant Services Inspectors will start judging our low-rise blocks across the city.

The team already inspects our estates and high-rise blocks, and has helped us to make huge improvements in the quality of those areas. With all of our high rise blocks now two star or above and more than 50% being three star, we have made significant improvements.

This would not have been made possible without the hard work and commitment of our estate caretaking team.

We have 16 mobile caretakers and 28 block caretakers. The mobile team works across the city carrying out a number of jobs to improve our estates. Some of their work includes:

- Cutting back overgrown hedges on alleyways, making them neater and safer
- Deal with graffiti
- Jet wash the stairs and exteriors on low-rise blocks
- Remove fly tipping and bulky waste left outside blocks of flats
- Dispose of hazardous waste that is fly tipped
- Respond to requests from housing staff for estate issues
- Act as stand-by caretakers to cover blocks in the event of sickness or holidays.

The block caretakers are based in high-rise flats and tirelessly work to keep them to the highest standards possible.

Each and every member of the team is trained to the level British Institute of Caretaking Standards (BICS) and form part of the community in our high rise blocks.

Here are just some of the compliments we have received recently about our caretaking team:

"Our caretaker is excellent! We are so lucky. He takes a real pride in his job and is friendly and approachable. Never a bit of litter anywhere. He is A1 ++!"

"The cleaning staff in the flats are excellent. They are extremely helpful when disposing of household rubbish. They are cheerful and nothing seems to be too much trouble. Many thanks to them!"

"The caretakers do a sterling job. Their commitment is not in doubt, they give 100%."

"The caretakers do an amazing job."

Many of you will benefit from the work the caretakers do, if you would like to let us know what you think about the service, please contact us on **0845 330 31 31** or complete the form on the website

www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk



Gardens – your responsibilities as a tenant

In this month's newsletter we're celebrating the hard work, time and dedication that many of our tenants and leaseholders have put in to their gardens and are being recognised in this year's Best Garden Competition.

We know that not everybody has the time to put in this level of work but we do expect as part of your tenancy agreement that you make sure gardens, yards and hedges are maintained, tidy and free of rubbish at all times. Your garden includes grass, plants, bushes, hedges and trees.

Not keeping your garden tidy is a breach of your tenancy agreement and we will take action against any tenant who fails to maintain their gardens to an acceptable standard.

Garden assistance scheme

Should you be unable to maintain your garden yourself help may be available through the Garden assistance scheme. To qualify you must:

- Be a Nottingham City Homes tenant
- Be of pensionable age or have a disability that makes you unable to maintain your garden
- Not have an able bodied relative living in your home.

Demand is very high – so although you may qualify, you may have to be placed on a waiting list. The scheme is free of charge and includes grass and hedge cutting.

If you think you may qualify or to find out more, please contact your area housing office, pick up a copy of the 'Garden assistance scheme' leaflet or visit our website at www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk and click on the 'Your tenancy' link.



Blooming brilliant

Tenants and residents of Edingley Square Gardens in Sherwood were commended at this year's East Midlands in Bloom Neighbourhood Awards.

They worked hard to create the Edingley Square Community Orchard. It was awarded an 'improvement' rating for the work they had done to enhance the look and feel of their neighbourhood. The team planted a number of trees at Edingley Square to create the small orchard. Judges said the group working on the project had made a good solid start and could get a 'merit' in future competitions.

East Midlands in Bloom Neighbourhood Awards are part of the regional Britain in Bloom campaign. The neighbourhood category is open to any group eager to make a difference to their local environment. It doesn't matter if your group consists of a few neighbours keen to tackle local litter, or a larger action group determined to turn around a problem 'grot spot' or eyesore. You don't even need to know anything about gardening.

Congratulations to all those who took part. You have made a real difference to the neighbourhood.

We have a winner!



We had more than 60 correct answers for our competition last month. Congratulations go to our lucky winner Lea Mavin from Bulwell (pictured) who won £50 of Victoria Centre vouchers.

We asked: 'What is the name of the new initiative Nottingham City Homes and Frank Haslam Milan have set up with Nottingham Forest Football Club?'

The correct answer was 'The Forest Factor.'

Competition time

This month we are giving away £50 of Boots vouchers. To be in a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Who was the winner of the 'Special Cup' in this year's Garden Competition Awards?

The Communications and Marketing Team
14 Hounds Gate
Nottingham
NG1 7BA*

To enter by text simply type: NCH, followed by your answer, name and address. Text to 60066 (all entries are charged at standard network rates)*.

Deadline for receipt of entries is .

Good luck!

Alternatively, send your entries (with your name and telephone number) to:

*Only one entry per person

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs.

Have you ever considered a career in housing? Fancy working for Nottingham City Homes?

For our current vacancies please visit our new jobs website at www.jobsatnch.org.uk, or check out the Nottingham Evening Post jobs pages every Wednesday.

We welcome applications from all sections of the community and are particularly keen to encourage people with disabilities, dual heritage and from black minority ethnic groups to apply as these groups are currently under-represented in our workforce.

Tenant and leaseholder involvement training programme 2009 – 2010

Nottingham City Homes offers a range of training courses for our tenants and leaseholders throughout the year.

Upcoming training opportunities include:

Get involved in your community
20th October 2009
10.30am to 1pm
Nottingham Voluntary Action Centre

Negotiating and Influencing Skills
22nd October 2009
10am to 4pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

Role of the Treasurer
4th November 2009
10am to 4pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

Self-confidence and how to get your point across
12th November 2009
10.30am to 1pm
Nottingham Voluntary Action Centre

Developing effective newsletters
16th November 2009

10am to 12.30pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

Understanding repairs
16th November 2009
1.30pm to 4pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

Welcome to the voluntary sector
24th November 2009
10am to 1pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

Stress Management – avoiding burn-out
2nd December 2009
10am to 4pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

Funding for community activities
7th December 2009
10am to 1pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

What do you want to do with your life?
Wednesday 9th December 2009

10.30am to 1pm
Nottingham Voluntary Action Centre

Financial Inclusion
Thursday 14th January 2010
10am to 12.30pm
Nottingham City Homes Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

**Rearranged courses
These courses have been rescheduled:**

'Tenant Involvement' has been re-scheduled for Tuesday 3rd November from 10am to 4pm.
Nottingham City Home Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

'Understanding the Decent Homes scheme' has been re-scheduled for Tuesday 10th November from 10am to 12.30pm.
Nottingham City Home Head Office, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

'Roles and responsibilities of Nottingham City Homes and Nottingham City Council' has been re-scheduled for Thursday 19th November from 10am to 1pm.
Nottingham City Home Head Office,

14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham

These courses are available **free** to any tenant or leaseholder of Nottingham City Homes.

We provide lunch for full day courses, cover the cost of your travel and child care expenses.

If you're interested or would like to find out more please contact our Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team:

Address: 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham. NG1 7BA

Tel: 0115 915 7380

Minicom: 0115 915 7447

SMS: text INVOLVE to 60066, followed by your name and address

E-mail: gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Web: www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Important reminder to Leaseholders on service charges

If you are one of our leaseholders, you will have received your service charge at the end of September. Due to a change in the internal system in which leasehold properties are managed and the invoices are calculated you will find that you have received two invoices in September instead of one. You will have received the following:

- 1) An actual adjustment invoice for the period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009. This amount had been adjusted to take into account the estimate for the same period in which you paid within your 2007/08 service charge invoice. If you have overpaid you will receive a credit note for the period in question.
- 2) An estimated invoice for the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010.

If you would like to query your service charge please contact the Leaseholder and Rechargeable Repairs Team on 0115 915 7385.

The change in the system has also meant that the service charge arrears collection has been passed over to Nottingham City Homes to manage. This means that new payment options have been made available such as Direct Debit.

The way in which you pay your service charge over the telephone has also changed. To arrange payment you need to contact the Rents Contact Centre on 0115 915 4920 (minicom 0115 915 4113). The opening hours are Monday to Friday 8:15am to 6pm except Wednesday which is open 9:30am to 6pm.

Please ensure that you arrange payment of the service charge invoice as soon as possible and within the payment terms stated on the invoice. If you do have worries over paying the service charge invoice, please read the 'Leasehold Money Advice' leaflet which was included in your service charge pack. This provides you with details of the free advice that Nottingham City Homes can offer leaseholders.

Grants on offer to fire up community projects

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is inviting community groups to apply for a share of its On Fire Fund.

To benefit projects must be linked to issues the fire and rescue service are already involved in – such as safety, accident prevention, education and young persons intervention.

Across Nottinghamshire 37 different schemes have been awarded grants by the fire service in the last two years – ranging between £500 and £12,000.

Several city projects have benefited, including:

Bestwood Angling Interest Team (BAIT) – This project targets young people at risk of offending. The young people get involved in volunteering at community events as well as crime prevention workshops and prison trips. During camping trips they will complete a number of recognised exam board qualifications and also do

coursework towards an Open College Network (OCN) award.

The Youth Zone Project (Aspley, Leen Valley, Bilborough) – Fire safety education and arts projects during the school holidays. Participants took part in interactive, information based workshops leading to an AQA unit in Fire Safety.

Dunkirk and Lenton Residents Association – An event for residents of high rise buildings aimed at enhancing community cohesion, awareness of fire safety and evacuation procedures, as well as providing an opportunity for residents to access services they may not feel confident in usually approaching.

For more information and an application form, contact Sally Savage at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service on 0115 984 3249 or E-mail onfirefund@notts-fire.gov.uk. The deadline is 12pm on Tuesday 20 October.

Twiggy & Emma
at breakfast

Treat your little princess to a night at the Trent FM Arena Nottingham!

Twiggy & Emma are offering you the chance to win a family pass for **Disney On Ice Presents Princess Wishes** at the **Trent FM Arena Nottingham**.

Date: 11th November 2009 **Time:** 7.00pm Simply **RSVP** by the 6th November 2009 to enter.

Send to: My Little Princess, Trent FM, The Top Floor, Chapel Quarter, Nottingham, NG1 6JR

For your chance to win simply rsvp

I would like to accept the invitation to be entered in the draw to win tickets to see **Disney On Ice Presents Princess Wishes** on the 11th November at the **Trent FM Arena Nottingham**.

Name: _____ Tel: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Please tick here if you would like to receive further details on offers and events from Trent FM Arena Nottingham and Trent FM

Terms and conditions apply. For more information visit trentfm.co.uk



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