



Join in our **FREE**
tenants' event at
Alnwick Castle

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Welcome to the latest issue of Your News

We must start with the positive news that the Council have now confirmed that they want to retain Homes for Northumberland as their managing agent for the remainder of our contract which runs to 2022. They recognise that many of the issues that caused them concern last year are now under control and that the organisation is strengthening the way it does business. In making the decision, the Council has challenged us to ensure that we have tenants in a real position of influence over the way that services are delivered and that there are improvements to service delivery.

I have observed that tenants get a wide range of opportunities and the magazine highlights some of those. I have a concern that tenants have not been given as much power and influence as they should have been and the tenants view is not always fully taken into account. I want to rectify that and we are very keen to see more tenants get involved and to offer them proper scrutiny of our services. We should be held accountable by you, our customer.

I also recognise that there are areas where our services could and should improve. Again we want to invite tenants to have raised expectations and to demand that we provide the best services. I am told by some that tenants are reluctant to complain if things don't go right for fear of being marked out. I would like to state on the record that I would positively encourage your complaint. By putting the issue on the record we can ensure service failures are addressed and learn from our mistakes. If we don't get complaints we assume all is well, but tenants are unhappy. My message is don't moan - complain.

The themes of tenant empowerment and service improvement are at the heart of our forthcoming tenants' conference. We are holding the event at the wonderful Alnwick Castle, one of the jewels in Northumberland's crown. We hope you will join us to herald in a new era and approach and help us make Homes for Northumberland number one in the region.

Best wishes

Kevin Lowry
Managing Director



www.hfn.uk.com

Message to tenants from Northumberland County Council



In the last issue of Your News I told you about the proposals the Council were considering in regard to Homes for Northumberland. I can now confirm that on the 3rd July the Council's executive confirmed that the agreement with Homes for Northumberland is to be retained and the previous plans for direct council management of the housing services have been dropped. This reflects the fact that the Council's concerns about how things were being managed are now being addressed.

The Council have placed a number of conditions on this decision.

Firstly we will make changes to the management agreement to ensure that

housing stock cannot be "sold off" against our wishes. It is the Council's view that the houses should continue to be owned as council housing. From the feedback tenants have given us, that is your view too. We are therefore going to take measures to protect the ownership of the housing.

Secondly we are challenging the management of Homes for Northumberland to ensure that there is a programme of continuous improvement of the housing management and maintenance service. We want our tenants to receive the highest quality of service in the County and the region.

Thirdly we have re-stated our view that Homes for Northumberland need to ensure that tenants are central to the delivery of services and are given every opportunity to be involved and have genuine influence over decisions related to the housing service. Homes for Northumberland have an existing network of tenant and resident involvement and we wish to see that developed further.

This is good news for tenants. Given the problems that have existed over the last year it means that everyone can now focus on the key objective of delivering top quality services.

Mrs Daljit Lally
Corporate Director of Adult Services
and Housing
Northumberland County Council

NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

www.hfn.uk.com

Calling all tenants of Homes for Northumberland

There is an exciting opportunity for a Homes for Northumberland tenant to join the Northumberland Tenants Voice Panel.

The panel comprises representatives from key social housing provider partners. The role of the panel includes responding to government and other consultation documents, supporting the Council in developing benchmarking strategies and discussing key themes which affect tenants, such as welfare reform.

The group meets four times a year and we will meet all travel and expenses.

Interested in knowing more?

Contact Milinda Vare at Northumberland County Council on 01670 623887 or email: Milinda.vare@northumberland.gov.uk for an information and recruitment pack.



You said leaseholders should get information on gas servicing

We wrote to every leaseholder to highlight gas safety

You said you wanted to have complaints stories in Your News

We have introduced a complaints section in this edition of the magazine

You said we need to reduce the number of complaints about missing appointments for outdoor work due to weather conditions

We have added a line in our appointment letter stating the work is 'weather / conditions permitting' to manage expectations.

You said all calls to the Customer Services Centre should be ended by saying "is there anything else I can help you with?"

The Customer Services Centre have introduced this

You said tenants want more "meet the tenants" question and answer sessions with members of the Executive and Senior Managers.

Tenants have now met with all members of Executive team.

You said you wanted information on void costs

We have printed details about void costs in this edition of Your News

You said we should inform tenants about not completing some external works on time due to the floods

We posted details on our Facebook page and website.

Your Home, Your Views

Feedback from tenants helps us to:

- Tailor our service to meet your needs
- Learn and make improvements to the service
- Recognise the good work of teams

Here is a recent complaint:

- A tenant complained about the mess left after a job. We try our best to minimise mess by using dust sheets and shoe protectors, but there may be some small mess left after we finish the repairs. We are investigating this case fully - if there has been any damage caused by our actions, we will consider appropriate compensation.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression that you are not happy with a service provided by Homes for Northumberland.

A complaint can be:

- Where we have missed an appointment
- If we have sent incorrect information
- Our staff have acted inappropriately
- Failure to deliver the agreed service
- Poor response from staff or customers

A complaint is not:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (i.e. a neighbour dispute)
- A request for a service
- A request for a repair to be carried out

The complaint can be made by you or someone you ask to act on your behalf. The complaint must be brought to the Company's attention within six months of the incident.

What is a compliment?

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction with a service made by a customer about the organisation.

A compliment may be made about an individual officer, team or a service as a whole.

Here is a recent compliment:

- I am extremely pleased with your service in general and want to praise a Gas Engineer for being prompt, efficient and very pleasant.

How can I give a complaint or compliment?

Any customer wishing to pass on a complaint or compliment can do so -

- in writing
- by telephone on 01670 542424
- in person
- via our email address info@hfn.uk.com

Our Performance

To keep you up to date on Homes for Northumberland's performance, here we take a look at what was achieved in certain areas for Q1 (April to June) of the financial year April 2012 to March 2013.

If you have any comments or questions about our performance, please contact us on **01670 542424**

Property Services

Percentage of gas servicing completed

Target 100%



Higher is better.

Performance was slightly lower in April as some tenants would not allow us access to their property to carry out a gas service. This has now been rectified and we were back on track by May

Customer Services

Percentage of calls abandoned

Target 4%



Lower is better. An abandoned call is one which is not answered.

We have recently installed a new telephone system and were inundated with calls during the floods. We are working on improving our performance in this area.

Property Services

No of emergency jobs done on time

Target 99%



Higher is better. **Emergency repairs (priority 1) are defined as:** Any defect that puts the health and safety or security of the tenant, or a third party, at immediate risk; or that affects the structure of the building adversely.

Neighbourhood Services

Average number of days to re-let a property

Target 21 days



Lower is better. This is the number of days we take to get a property ready for the next tenant and get the new people moved in.

A number of properties were left in a particularly poor condition – we have included information in this edition of Your News to help improve how tenants leave their home. We are looking at other ways of improving this.

Property Services

No of urgent jobs done on time

Target 97%



Higher is better. **Urgent repairs (priority 2) are defined as:** Any defect where comfort or convenience of the tenant or third party is seriously affected

Neighbourhood Services

Percentage of estate inspections completed against number planned

Target 100%



Higher is better.

Property Services

No of routine jobs done on time

Target 97%



Higher is better. **Routine repairs (priority 2) are defined as:** Any defect that can be deferred without serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to a tenant or a third party, and can await the next convenient maintenance visit.

Extreme weather conditions delayed some roofing and external works this summer. We are now attempting to catch up with this work.

Neighbourhood Services

Current tenant rent arrears outstanding



Lower is better. Rent arrears occur when tenants don't pay all or some of their rent.

We are running a Winter Rent campaign this November to help tackle rent arrears

Free advice on Right to Buy

There has been an increase in door to door and telephone calls from independent agencies offering tenants advice on Right to Buy.

Please be aware that these firms will charge a fee for any information or work that they do for you. They are not connected to either Homes for Northumberland or Northumberland County Council.

If you are interested in any aspect of the Right to Buy process, you should contact Homes for Northumberland direct on 01670 542424. We will offer you free advice on Right to Buy. There is no reason to pay a separate agency a fee for this service.

Get into the Christmas Spirit

Tenants and leaseholders are invited to a special Christmas event at Bede Academy in Blyth on 3 December from 6pm.

You can join the Big Debate, which is your opportunity to put your questions to our Directors. Homes for Northumberland is keen to encourage more tenants to speak up and ask us the questions that matter to them – no matter how big or small. Come along and tell us what you think!

You can also enjoy hot chocolate and mince pies while celebrating the achievements of the Spirit of the Community Award winners. See all of those people who have gone the extra mile for their community as they get their awards at this special presentation event.

To book your place and arrange transport please contact our Resident Involvement Team on 01670 542424.

*Please note – we said in the last edition of Your News that the Big Debate would take place on 8 November 2012. The date of the Big Debate has now changed to 3 December.



Enter the Spirit of the Community Awards

There is still time to get your nomination form in for the Spirit of the Community Awards.

Our tenants' awards scheme aims to recognise the achievements of those who are going the extra mile.

The Spirit of the Community Awards will look to find the people who have helped their fellow residents enjoy life more or made a difference to others. Winners will be presented with an award at an event in December 2012.

The awards are split into the following five categories:

- Good neighbour award
- Young person of the year award
- Getting involved award
- Best community group
- Garden of the year award

To make a nomination, simply call 01670 542424 and ask for a Spirit of the Community application form. The deadline for nominations is 29 October 2011.

All applicants must be a Northumberland County Council tenant or living in a Northumberland County Council property.



Ryan Dixon, Young Person of the Year 2011



Kathy Wark (Gateway Leader), Sherry Hardy (Secretary) and Marion Bryan (Treasurer) from Blyth and District Gateway Club are presented their Overall Spirit of the Community Award 2011 by tenants Paul and Jane Mackay for their work in the community



Taking customer care to the streets

Homes for Northumberland met two hundred tenants on their doorstep at its first series of Residents' Roadshows.

The roadshows aimed to go directly to tenants in their local area and housing staff visited a range of places across the county, including Blyth, Cramlington, Rothbury, Longframlington, Shilbottle, Amble and Allendale.

This offered tenants the chance to meet with the Resident Involvement team, Safer Neighbourhoods Unit and local housing officer to express any concerns they may have to help the housing company to provide an improved service.

Tenants were also given the opportunity to win a garden makeover from Groundwork North East and learn basketball skills with the Eagles Community Foundation Community Coaches.

Those who attended the mobile event also had the chance to win vouchers by completing survey forms. The feedback

following the events has been extremely positive and tenants are keen for more events like this to take place.

Angela Brake, a tenant from Dandsfield Square, Amble said:

"I felt I could openly talk to the team as they listened and took note of what we were saying. I really appreciated their efforts and think it is fantastic to see the housing company go direct to tenants in their local community."

Tim Harris, interim director of neighbourhood services at Homes for Northumberland, said: "Resident feedback is extremely important to us and we want to make it as easy as possible for residents to tell us what they think – which is why we decided to hold the Residents' Roadshow so we could bring the opportunity out to them on their doorsteps.

"Our residents are at the very heart of what we do and by getting their feedback, it enables us to evolve and constantly improve our services. We have been able to gather some great feedback about our services which will be useful moving forward."

Your News Test the Service

In the last edition of Your News we told you that the Resident Involvement team will be conducting regular Test the Service exercises on the magazine.

This will help us to collect your views and shape future editions of Your News to meet your needs.

Following your feedback in Test the Service we are:

- Exploring opt out options
- Continuing to promote the different formats of the magazine (ie Braille and audio)

- Working with the Editorial Panel to ensure there is a mix of stories
- Including information on the services provided by Northumberland County Council
- Adding regular articles on sheltered housing

If you have any feedback on the magazine, please contact Communications on 01670 542424.

Tenants kerb their rubbish at community clean up day

A mountainous 30 tonnes of rubbish were shifted at a community clean up event at the Eastfield Lea and Grange estates in Cramlington.

The day was organised by Homes for Northumberland alongside Northumberland County Council and saw Cramlington residents getting rid of mounds of unwanted household and garden waste to clean up their estate.

On the day tenants were invited to put out rubbish at designated times to be cleared by a wagon – this included white goods and electrical items.

Tenants were also given the chance to speak with the Safer Neighbourhoods Unit and their Housing Officer for advice and support on any issues.

The clean up event removed tonnes of unwanted items from homes and gardens and has made a real difference to the look of this estate.





Be King* of your Castle at our **FREE** tenants' event at Alnwick Castle

Homes for Northumberland would like to invite you to our **FREE** tenants' event at Alnwick Castle on Saturday 27 October from 10.30am till 5pm.

The theme is 'Be King of Your Castle' and the day will feature a presentation on how you can get more involved in making a difference at your housing company. There will be a choice of workshop sessions.

There is also the opportunity to attend our Annual General Meeting at the end of the event. Later, you can end the day with some free time in Alnwick Gardens.

Transport will be provided for those attending, along with a crèche for children aged 5 years and under. You will be given lunch and

refreshments throughout the event. Everyone who attends the event will also get a free family day pass for Alnwick Gardens next summer. As we are expecting a high demand for attendance, we will be allocating places on a first come, first served basis. Please note that you **MUST** reserve a place to come along to the event.

We look forward to seeing you there.

*or Queen

How do I book my place?

There are a number of ways in which you can book your place.

Telephone us on 01670 542424 (as listed on the RSVP)

Post the RSVP form back to us at Tenants Event, Blyth Civic Centre, Renwick Road, Blyth NE24 2BX

Email us at info@hfn.uk.com, providing all the information on the RSVP

Whichever way you choose to respond, please do so by 12 October.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Everyone who attends the conference will get a special ticket for a day at Alnwick Gardens next summer

It's free!

All food, drink and transport will be provided!

Enjoy Halloween at Hogwarts!

RSVP form (Please return by 12 October)

Name and ages of attendees:

_____	Age _____
_____	Age _____
_____	Age _____
_____	Age _____

Address:

Contact telephone number:

I would be delighted to attend the tenants' event on 27 October 2012 at Alnwick Castle.

Workshop sessions

I would like to attend the following sessions* (please number boxes in order of preference, with 1 as first choice and 4 as last choice)

<input type="checkbox"/> Rate our service	<input type="checkbox"/> How you access our services
<input type="checkbox"/> Improving grass cutting on your estate	<input type="checkbox"/> You've got the power. How are you going to use it?

*We will do everything we can to allocate places based on preference, but cannot guarantee your choice.

Transport and dietary requirements

I would like to book a place for the following (please tick box where appropriate):

<input type="checkbox"/> Transport	
<input type="checkbox"/> Crèche	Number of places required _____

Special access requirement (please give details)

Special dietary requirements (please give details)

Please highlight any mobility or health issues we may need to be aware of.

We will call you to confirm whether you have a place at the event. We will also give you the details of your transport arrangements when we confirm your place.

For more information, please call us on 01670 542424. We hope to see you there!



Clean up before you clear off

When you move out of your Council home, you are responsible for leaving the property clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.

Your Tenancy Agreement says that tenants must take care of their home and report any faults or damage to us within a reasonable period of time. Homes for Northumberland will carry out an inspection of the property after we receive your termination notice to make sure it is in good condition.

When you leave your property, you are responsible for:

- Reporting any repairs that are needed and repairing broken items that belong to us. If you do not, we may carry out the work and charge you.
- Making good any damage to your home before you move. If you do not, you may need to pay for any costs incurred in repairing the damage.
- Removing all possessions, animals, rubbish and private papers when you leave. If you do leave any belongings we will dispose of them and charge you for this.
- Keeping your garden neat, tidy and free from rubbish and debris. Trees, shrubs and hedges must be trimmed so they don't overhang pavements or neighbouring properties – we may charge you for the cost of clearing your garden.

We will write and tell you about anything you will be charged for.

What happens if the property does not meet our standards?

In your first inspection we will outline any work or repairs you must complete. We will



then return after five days to re-inspect the property to ensure it meets the standards set out in your tenancy agreement.

If the work outlined in your first inspection has not been completed, we will arrange for this to be done and charge you for the work involved.

Please don't forget the following, or there may be charges incurred:

- Clear your loft, outhouses and cupboards completely of belongings
- Remove all fixtures and fittings and put right any damage caused by this, including shelves or light fittings.
- Remove carpets and gripper rods
- Cut your grass and tidy your garden
- Ensure there is a plug on your bath and sinks
- Clean your toilet
- Fill any holes in walls



Improvements

If you are planning to make changes in your home, you will need written permission from Homes for Northumberland if you want to build any of the following:

- Garden shed or outbuilding
- Greenhouse
- Car port
- Driveway or Patio
- Fences or walls

There is no charge for seeking permission – call us on 01670 542424 to find out more. We will look for any improvements during the inspection process.

You must remove all sheds and greenhouses when you move out of the property.

Did you know...

from April to June this year we spent over £285,000 bringing voids back to the lettable standard agreed with tenants. This works out as a cost of £35 per tenant. Please help us to avoid these unnecessary costs by looking after your property.

If you cause damage to, or neglect your home you are breaching your Tenancy Agreement. This may lead to us charging you for repairs or you could lose your home.

For more information on our empty property standards please review our leaflet online at www.hfn.uk.com or call us on 01670 542424 to request further information.

Handyman Services

Homes for Northumberland is responsible for doing a number of repairs on your home – for example on the structure of the property, on gas, electricity, plumbing or heating installations. These repairs are free.

There are other smaller jobs that you must do yourself. Please visit our website at www.hfn.uk.com or call 01670 542424 for a list of the repairs that tenants are responsible for.

If you need help doing these jobs, there are handyman services which can help:

- **Care and Repair Northumberland.** This service is for those over 60 or with a disability. They do small tasks like putting up shelves or fixing toilet seats. Call 01670 851952 for more information
- **Northumberland Age UK.** Services range from interior and exterior painting to path laying. For more information call 08451 400088

Gas Safety Week: Take care, be Gas Safe

Homes for Northumberland was proud to support Gas Safety Week from 10th -16th September 2012.

Gas Safety Week is co-ordinated by Gas Safe Register and aims to raise awareness of gas safety and the importance of taking care of your gas appliances.



Badly fitted and poorly serviced gas appliances can cause gas leaks, fires, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning. Every year thousands of people across the UK are diagnosed with carbon monoxide poisoning. It is a highly poisonous gas. You can't see it, taste it or smell it, but it can kill quickly with no warning.

Your landlord must keep gas appliances supplied for you to use in good condition. That is why Homes for Northumberland arrange a gas safety check every 12 months and give you a record of the check.

By taking care of your gas appliances properly you are taking care of your home and your loved ones.

Follow these top tips to help keep you and your family gas safe:

- make sure gas appliances have a regular service and a gas safety check every 12 months
- look out for warning signs that your gas appliances aren't working correctly e.g. lazy orange flames instead of crisp blue ones, black marks on or around the appliance and too much condensation in the room
- know the signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning – headaches, dizziness, breathlessness, nausea, collapse and loss of consciousness
- install an audible carbon monoxide alarm

For gas safety advice please contact us on 01670 542424

Tenant Cashback Scheme – what are your views?

A Tenant Cashback Scheme was announced by the Government last year.

The proposal would allow you to carry out your own DIY, or pay a local tradesman to do the work, then you would be paid a share of any savings made by the housing company.

Community groups would also be able to take on the repairs on a particular street or neighbourhood, helping out those who cannot take on the responsibility themselves. Tenants will be able to pool their resources, creating a 'Community Cashback' account which could be used to fund improvements to the local area for the benefit of all residents.

This proposal would see a huge change in how Homes for Northumberland delivers

repairs. We consulted with tenants to find out what you think about Tenant Cashback and the response was that tenants were not in favour of the proposals.

If you would like to tell us what you think – get in touch on 01670 542424.



Hodgsons Road New-build Work Set to Begin:

The much anticipated demolition and construction work at Hodgsons Road Estate in Blyth is set to begin in October 2012 following the recent appointment of Homes for Northumberland as project managers for the build by Northumberland County Council.

The work is part of the overall regeneration of the estate and follows the numerous successful and on-going Capital improvement projects which have taken place there over the last year or so involving the houses not ear-marked for demolition.

The new-build project involves the demolition of 56 properties at various parts of the estate by the contractor GB Solutions, followed by the construction of 56 new properties by the construction company Galiford Try in early 2013.

The 56 demolition properties have been selected for demolition due to the high costs that would be required to extend

and upgrade this particular property type to modern standards. The new properties will help to meet the demand for the type and size of Council housing accommodation currently required for the area.

An open day will be organised by Homes for Northumberland for all residents on the estate very soon, and we will update you on progress during the build in future editions.



Switch to the safe, smart and easy way to pay your rent



Direct Debit is an easy way to pay your rent - no more queuing, no need for cash, debit cards or rent swipe cards.

What is Direct Debit?

A Direct Debit gives Homes for Northumberland permission to take money directly from your bank account for your rent payments. These payments would be in agreed amounts and at agreed times.

You would be told how much the payment would be for and if any changes are made. You can cancel a Direct Debit with your bank at any time.

How to request to pay your rent by Direct Debit

You can request to pay your rent by Direct Debit by calling the Homes for Northumberland Customer Services Centre on 01670 542424

Setting up your Direct Debit

When we receive your set-up request, we'll take your bank details and set up your Direct Debit. We'll send you a confirmation letter that includes a copy of the Direct Debit guarantee.

Why switch to Direct Debit?

Direct Debit is:

Easy - simply speak to Homes for Northumberland over the phone and we will set up a Direct Debit with your bank.

Convenient - choose to pay on either 1st or 15th of each month.

You also have the option to pay weekly (every Friday)

Safe - the Direct Debit guarantee protects all of your payments.

You should continue to make payments as shown on your rent statement until you receive the confirmation letter telling you that the Direct Debit is set up. If you have been paying by Standing Order you should contact your bank to cancel it as soon as you receive the confirmation letter.

For more information, please give us a call on 01670 542424

Your benefits may be changing

A guide to Welfare Reform

The Government is making changes to benefits through the Welfare Reform Act which could affect you.

In this edition of Your News, you will find a special leaflet outlining some of the benefit changes and the support available to help you.

Please remember, these are all proposed changes and the rules may change so please keep checking with us.

Let us know if your circumstances change so we can give you the right advice and support.

If you are in financial difficulty and need support and advice on how to pay your rent, then Homes for Northumberland is here to help you. **Please contact us on 01670 542424 for free, confidential advice or speak with your Housing Officer.**

Throughout October we will be calling at all tenants who may be affected by the new under occupancy rules.



Be Moneywise is Homes for Northumberland's Welfare Reform campaign to keep you up to date with changes as they happen. Whenever you see this logo we will be giving you important information about proposed changes to your benefits. Please look out for this logo in the coming months.

We are holding special Welfare Reform advice sessions if you would like advice on your personal circumstances:

Blyth Civic Centre

Mon 5 November 9.30am – 12pm
Tues 6 November 9.30am – 12 pm
Wed 7 November 9.30 am -12 pm
Thurs 8 November 9.30am -12 pm
Fri 9 November 9.30am -12 pm

The Old Post Office,

1 Clayport Street, Alnwick
Tues 6 November 1.30pm – 4.30pm
Wed 7 November 1.30pm – 4.30pm

Call us on 01670 542424 to book your place now!

Worried about paying your rent this winter?

With the rising cost of fuel bills and petrol, plus the expense of Christmas, it can sometimes be hard to balance the books over the Winter months.

Homes for Northumberland is here to help.

From 5th to 9th November 2012 we will be running a special week of activities to offer you help and support so you can prioritise your rent.

During this week we will be visiting every tenant in rent arrears where there is no

arrangement to clear the debt, to offer individual advice and support.

You can also get confidential, free debt advice from our Independent Money Advisor.

Why pay your rent?

Rent arrears occur when you don't pay all or some of the rent you owe your landlord. If you are in financial difficulty and need support and advice on how to pay your rent, then Homes for Northumberland is here to help you.

If you don't pay your rent, you may face:

- Eviction
- Court action
- Homelessness
- Losing your credit rating
- Difficulty finding another home

Not paying your rent is a breach of your tenancy agreement. While Homes for Northumberland will try and be as helpful and sympathetic as possible with our tenants in

this situation, you must consider your rent as a priority payment due to the potential consequences of not paying.

Contact us if you need financial advice

It is important that you address the problem that is causing your rent arrears as soon as possible by seeking advice on your options.

Most of the time it is possible to sort out the problem and pay off any existing arrears, but you must act quickly. The longer your financial problems continue, the higher the rent arrears will build up making it harder for you to pay off. **Please contact us on 01670 542424 if you need any advice on paying your rent.**

Stay warm this winter

Here are some simple tips to help you keep warm and safe this winter:

- 1.** Eat regular hot meals and hot drinks for warmth and energy.
 - 2.** Keep moving as activities, like vacuuming, gets circulation going and makes you feel warmer.
 - 3.** Dress appropriately and wrap up warmly, indoors and out, ideally with several layers of thin clothing.
 - 4.** Keep your home between 21 and 24 degrees centigrade (70 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit). You can get a thermometer to help you assess this.
 - 5.** Keep warm at night - wearing the right clothing to bed is as important as wrapping up outdoors.
 - 6.** If you're sitting down, a shawl or blanket will provide extra warmth. You should also try to keep your feet up, because air is cooler at ground level.
 - 7.** Sleep with your windows closed and keep those cold drafts outdoors.
- 
- 8.** Claim your rightful benefits and grants – to find out if you are entitled to benefits contact our Money Advisor on 01670 542424.
 - 9.** Use your heating timer to set the heating to come on and off at certain times.
 - 10.** Draw your curtains, as soon as it gets dark to stop the heat escaping and the draughts coming in.

Get £130 towards the cost of your electricity bill this winter

The Warm Home Discount Scheme is run by the Government and is available to people who are receiving Guaranteed Pension Credit on the 21st July 2012.

To apply, you must be aged under 80 and receiving Guaranteed Credit (no Savings Credit) OR aged 80 or over and receive Guaranteed Credit (even if you receive Savings Credit as well).

You must also be with a supplier who participates in the scheme. The electricity suppliers involved in this scheme are: Atlantic, British Gas, EDF Energy, E.ON, Equipower, Equigas, Manweb, M&S Energy, npower, Sainsbury's Energy, Scottish Gas, Scottish Hydro, ScottishPower, Southern Electric, SSE, Swalec and Utility Warehouse.

The Government will write to you to let you know if you qualify. Your energy supplier will automatically credit the payment to your account.

Each participating supplier also offers the discount to a broader group of vulnerable people. Check with your supplier to see if you qualify. Applications for this winter are now being taken. To find out more call your energy supplier directly.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme does not affect your entitlement to a Winter Fuel Payment or Cold weather Payment.

Please call 01670 542424 and ask to speak with our Financial Inclusion and Employability Advisor if you would like further advice.



Energy Saving Workshops

Homes for Northumberland has joined forces with Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau to run a series of energy saving workshops.

Council tenants can come along to one of the following sessions to get free, confidential and independent advice about saving money on their energy bills:

Keel Row Information Centre, Blyth

Monday 22 October 10.00am – 2.00pm

Avenue Road Information Centre, Seaton Delaval

Tuesday 23 October 10.00am – 2.00pm

Forum Way Information Centre, Cramlington

Wednesday 24 October 1.00pm – 4.00pm

Alnwick Greenwell Lane

Friday 26 October 10.00am – 2.00pm

You are invited to bring along your recent energy bills and one of our experts will help you look at ways of saving money.

For more information, contact us on 01670 542424.

Your guide to sheltered housing



Homes for Northumberland manages nine sheltered housing schemes, providing approximately 250 homes for older people.

They are:

- Hartley Court, New Hartley
- Concorde House, Holywell
- Patterson House, Nye Bevan House and Bob Elliott House, Blyth
- Augur Place, Alnwick
- Dolphin Court and Kennedy Road, Amble
- Rodsley Court, Rothbury

These sheltered housing schemes are made up of flats or bungalows specially designed for people over the age of 60 who are able to live independently, but who would benefit from additional security and support.

Tenants in sheltered housing can live in a safe and secure environment with the peace of mind that scheme officers/wardens and Community Alarm staff are available if you require assistance at any time of the day or night.

We will also develop an individual support plan for every tenant to help us identify any assistance you may need to help you stay independent and in good health.

Most sheltered housing schemes have a social fund which is managed by the residents themselves to pay for and fund social activities.

In order to apply for sheltered housing applicants must:

- Be single or a couple over 60 years of age
- Be able to live independently with a low to medium level of assistance
- Have a housing need
- Have care and support needs that cannot currently be met in your home
- Comply with Northumberland Homefinder Allocations Policy

To learn more about the scheme facilities, rent and services offered at each scheme, please contact us on 01670 542424.

Estate walkabouts

Alnwick	Meeting Place	Time	Dates
Sycamore Avenue, Beech Grove, Cedar Grove, Upper Barresdale, Lower Barresdale, Alwynside	Entrance to Alwynside	10am	28th Nov 2012
Windsor Gardens, Clayport Gardens, Howling Lane, Clayport Street, Westgate House	Junction of Howling Lane/ Windsor Gardens	10am	7th Nov 2012
Dovecote Lane, Hotspur Place, Hotspur Street, Narrowgate Court, Dukes Memorial Cottage, Bowburn Cottages, Pottergate, Monkhouse Terrace, King Street, Lisburn Street, Lisburn Court, Howick Street, St Pauls Garth	Pottergate Tower	10am	24th Oct 2012
Augur Place, Victoria Crescent, St Georges Crescent, York Road, York Crescent, Cornhill Estate, Sea View Terrace, St James Estate	Co-op, Victoria Terrace	10am	19th Dec 2012
Cawledge View, Tanners Garth, Glovers Green, The Cordwainers, Farriers Court	Entrance to Cawledge View	10am	12th Dec 2012
Ivy Street, Leslie Drive, St Lawrence Avenue, St Cuthberts Avenue, Melrose Gardens, Holywell Crescent, Kennedy Road, Churchill Avenue, Davis Drive, Burton Road, Links Avenue, Links Road, Philip Drive	Junction of Ivy Street/ Leslie Drive	10am	7th Nov 2012
Andrew Drive, Anne Crescent, Charles Road, Coquetdale, Glendale, Alndale, Redesdale, Cheviotdale, Dandsfield Square, Straffen Court	Car Park at Andrew Drive	1.30pm	19th Dec 2012
Jubilee Crescent, Beechcroft, The Pinfold	Entrance to Beechcroft	1.30pm	5th Dec 2012
Cheviot Road, Farne Road, St James Road, Selby Road, Middle Road, The Haven, Grange Road, Lee Avenue, Kiln Lonnen, Widdrington Cottages, The Crescent, Fallodon Avenue, Beech Estate, Fairfield View	Selby Road Garages	1.30pm	24th Oct 2012

Blyth	Meeting Place	Time	Dates
Benridge / Cottingwood	Entrance to Benridge	10am	10th Oct 2012

Cramlington	Meeting Place	Time	Dates
Mayfield Glade	Carpark Clifton Road	10am	10th Oct 2012
Eastfield Lea	Outside Axminster Close	10am	14th Nov 2012 27th Mar 2013
Nelson Village/Sunnyside	Arcot Avenue Shops	10am	7th Feb 2013
Mayfield Dale	Entrance to Thirston Drive	10am	25th Oct 2012 7th Feb 2013
Mayfield Grange	Entrance to Ave, op Village Road	10am	1st Nov 2012
Eastfield Grange	Entrance to Cairnglass	10am	6th Dec 2012 20th Jun 2013

Seaton Valley	Meeting Place	Time	Dates
The Crescent	1 Stanley Gardens	10am	13th Feb 2013
Deneside	1 Burnlea Gardens	10am	10th Oct 2012

Smaller villages and settlements will be inspected on a periodic basis and tenants in these locations will be notified separately of the date/s of inspections in their area. Please contact the Estates and Tenancy Services Team on 01670 542424 for further information.

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If you have a Facebook account, you can stay up to date with news from us. Simply search for Homes for Northumberland and click to like our page.



If you have any comments or suggestions for Your News, please contact **Melanie Armstrong, Communications, Homes for Northumberland, Civic Centre, Renwick Road, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 2BX** or call **01670 542424**.

Key Contacts

Customer Services Centre
01670 542424

For information on Dog Wardens call
0845 6006400

Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau
0844 4111309

For queries about repairs, rents and neighbourhood services call
Homes for Northumberland on
01670 542424

If you have an enquiry about Homefinder, Council Tax, Housing Benefit Applications, Refuse Collection, Pest Control or other Council services contact

Northumberland County Council on
0845 6006400



Please contact our Customer Services Centre if you would like to receive this information in another language or format, for example Braille or audio.

URDU

اگر آپ یہ معلومات کسی دوسری زبان یا فارمیٹ، مثال کے طور پر بریل یا آڈیو، میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہمارے کسٹمر سروسز سینٹر سے رابطہ کریں۔

BENGALI

আপনি যদি ei তথ্যাবলী a ন্য ভাষাতে বা a ন্য রূপে যেমন bi লে বা a ডিওতে পেতে চান, a নুগহ করে, আমাদের কাছে ামার সার্ভিসেস সেn রে যোগাযোগ করুন।

CANTONESE

如果您想要本資訊的另一種語言版本或其他格式（如：盲文或音訊），請與我們的客戶服務中心聯絡。

MANDARIN

如果您需要本信息的其它語言版本或其它格式（例如：盲文或音頻文件），請联系我們的客服中心。

POLISH

Prosimy o kontakt z naszym Centrum Obsługi Klienta (Customer Services Centre), jeśli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać niniejszy dokument w innej wersji językowej lub w innym formacie, na przykład w alfabecie Braille'a lub w formie nagrania dźwiękowego.

PUNJABI

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਜਾਂ ਆਡੀਓ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਗਾਹਕ ਸੇਵਾ ਕੇਂਦਰ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।