

**Housing  
Executive**

**WINTER 2020**

# streets ahead

🌐 [nihe.gov.uk](http://nihe.gov.uk)

📘 [facebook.com/nihecommunity](https://www.facebook.com/nihecommunity)

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

📷 [nihecommunity](https://www.instagram.com/nihecommunity)

The magazine for  
Housing Executive  
tenants



News > Features > Advice > Community

# Welcome

**Dear tenant, Welcome to the 2020 edition of Streets Ahead.**

It's safe to say life has been anything but normal this year. Over the last few months the coronavirus outbreak has caused us to change how we socialise, work, and look after one another. It has also presented the Housing Executive with major challenges as we've had to adapt the way we deliver our services so we can keep our tenants and staff safe.

I realise that many of you rely on the services we provide perhaps more than ever, and I want to assure you that our staff are still here to help. This is why we have packed this edition of Streets Ahead full of information on the range of services

you can access online, over the phone, or by using our new tenant portal, My Housing Executive.

As you flip through the magazine, you will also see that we are celebrating the community groups who have been helping people throughout the coronavirus outbreak. Across Northern Ireland there is fantastic work being done, usually on a voluntarily basis, to assist vulnerable people and I'm delighted that we've been able to support these projects in some way.

Finally, I'd like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate our way through and out of the pandemic.

*Clark Bailie*

Clark Bailie  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

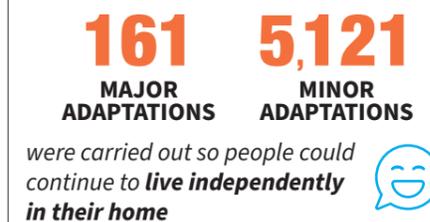
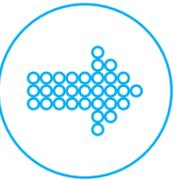


## Contents

- 3 How we're doing
- 4 Celebrating our community champions
- 6 We're here to help
- 7 Caring through COVID
- 8 What you said
- 10 Putting down roots in Ballycastle
- 12 Giving young people the key to their future
- 14 Looking on the Bannside of life
- 15 Our repairs service now has a hands free mode
- 16 Keeping up with the Keshians
- 18 Not all heroes wear capes
- 20 Creating a sanctuary on the Shankill
- 22 Register with My Housing Executive in 7 simple steps
- 24 3 ways to care for your dog during the coronavirus outbreak
- 26 Get online with ONSIDE
- 28 Milestones from our year
- 30 Staying young at heart with Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership
- 32 Creating dementia friendly homes
- 34 Would you like a financial MOT?
- 36 What to expect when we need to visit your home
- 37 Applying for a transfer
- 38 Staying safe in your home
- 39 Reporting an emergency repair
- 40 Get a move on with HomeSwapper
- 42 Making our communities safer
- 43 Spotting a scam!
- 43 Tower block update
- 44 Getting your home adapted
- 45 Our door is always open
- 46 Taking it to the next level
- 47 Embracing all our neighbours
- 47 Interpretation services for deaf or hard of hearing customers
- 48 What can my Patch Manager help me with?
- 48 Get in touch

# How we're doing

Figures taken from the **Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey 2019** and the **Housing Executive Annual Report 2019/20**.



# Celebrating our Community Champions

Since March, key workers have risen to the enormous challenge of keeping our essential services going. We met up with some of our tenants who have been helping people stay safe and healthy during this unprecedented time.



**“I’m often the only person my client will see all day so I take time to have a chat with them and see how they’re coping. If I can make them smile and take their mind off what is going on in the world right now, I know I’ve done a good job.”**

Grainne, Antrim

As a carer for Extra Care, Grainne provides support and care to vulnerable people in their homes. Every day she helps her clients with personal tasks like meal preparation, bathing, and administering medicines.

Grainne has had a very busy year juggling work, home-schooling her three kids, and studying for a Masters in Criminal Law.

**“Nobody really thinks about who keeps their street clean, but it’s really important, especially since we’re spending more time outdoors, and we’ve been working hard to keep Belfast tidy throughout the coronavirus outbreak.”**

Ciaran, North Belfast

Ciaran has worked as a Driver and Labourer for Belfast City Council since 2007 and has lived in his home for over 40 years.

Although his holiday plans for this year were cancelled, Ciaran is looking forward to going golfing with his mates to Portugal next April and getting a hole in one.



**“My job involves booking people into the COVID-19 Centre who are displaying any coronavirus-related symptoms to be assessed by one of our GPs. It can be daunting for our patients but my colleagues and I reassure them that it’s a normal appointment they’re attending and it’s just because of the circumstances that they can’t come into their own practice.”**

Jacqueline, Ballymena

Jacqueline moved to Ballymena in October with her son and two daughters. She works in Dalriada Urgent Care, which is acting as the Primary Care COVID-19 Centre in Ballymena, and is responsible for booking people in to see a GP.

Jacqueline didn’t let the chaos of going on holiday this year stop her from travelling to Italy to visit Venice and Rome. She is now making plans to spend a few days in New York in 2021.

# We're here to help

We are continuing to provide key services and support to you in your home.

## KEEPING YOU SAFE

We are delivering the majority of our services online or by phone. You can get in touch by phone, online, or through our new tenant portal, **My Housing Executive**. You can find out more about the portal and how to register on [page 22](#).

We have reopened some of our local offices. To keep you and our staff safe, access to our offices is **by appointment only**. Call your Patch Manager on **03448 920 900** to make an appointment. Check out the back page to find out more about the ways to contact us.

You can also keep up to date with our latest updates on our website and social media channels.

## HELPING YOU PAY YOUR BILLS

If your income has reduced due to coronavirus, and you are worried about paying your rent, our staff can help you.

It is important to contact us as soon as possible. We can refer you to one of our Financial Inclusion Managers who can talk you through your situation and the options available to you. They can also carry out a benefits check to make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to, and give you impartial advice. Flick over to page 34 to find out more.

If you are worried about paying your rent, please be reassured that we will not be taking legal action to evict tenants where financial hardship is suffered due to coronavirus.

## MAINTAINING YOUR HOME

We are responding to tenants who have been waiting the longest, and have the most urgent repairs first. This means that there may be delays from our usual response times. We thank you for your patience while we work to maintain a full service.

We are taking all necessary steps to ensure that you stay safe when our staff and contractors visit your home to complete a repair or carry out a gas safety check.

You can find out more about how we are keeping you safe when someone visits your home by turning to page 36.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR PATCH MANAGER

During this uncertain time, it's important that you have one point of contact. Your Patch Manager is there to support you, and help resolve your housing issues.

You can get in touch with them by ringing our General Enquiries Line on **03448 920 900** or by sending a message through the **My Housing Executive** portal.



## KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH YOU

It is important to make sure that we have your most up to date contact details and household information.

This means we can contact you about any changes to our services, and can provide you with relevant advice and support you might need.

To update your details, please call us on **03448 920 900** or update them at a time that suits you on **My Housing Executive**.

**Housing Executive**

# Caring through COVID

We have taken steps to help you stay safe, support people in your community, and keep you up to date on the changes to our services during the coronavirus outbreak.

**Helping you stay safe**

# 210,000

We have purchased over **210,000 face coverings** for our staff to wear and nearly **10,000 hand sanitisers**.



# 65,157

**EMERGENCY REPAIRS**

# 32,000

**RESPONSE MAINTENANCE JOBS**

# 3,400

**HEALTH AND SAFETY ELECTRICAL INSPECTIONS**

Our contractors have completed **65,157 emergency repairs**.

Our Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) completed **32,000 response maintenance jobs** and **3,400 health and safety electrical inspections**.



## Supporting people in your community

# £290k

**EMERGENCY COVID FUND**  
SET UP SUPPORTING

# 204

**COMMUNITY GROUPS**

We set up a **£290k emergency COVID-19 Fund** helping **204 community groups** across Northern Ireland to provide services including food delivery and prescription pick-ups to those who were shielding.

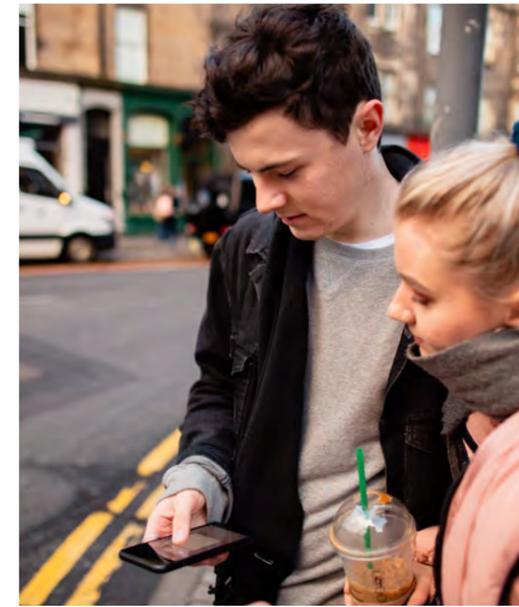


## Keeping you up to date

# 290,998

**TEXTS**

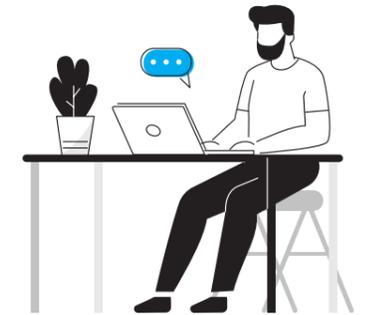
To keep you up to date on our services, we sent **290,998** text messages.



# 40,028

**COVID-19 FAQ VISITS**

We created a dedicated 'COVID-19 FAQ' section on our website which has been visited **40,028** times.



# 85

**85 Housing Community Network meetings**, facilitated by Supporting Communities, were held online ensuring tenants continued to be involved in decision-making during this important time.

Our **Central Housing Forum** were given hand held devices so they could hold their **meetings virtually**.

# 1,920

**TENANT CHECK-IN TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS**

From the 27th April to the 20th May, our Patch Managers completed **1,920 tenant check-in telephone interviews** to find out what support they needed during this difficult time.

We also give funding, through our Community Safety programme, to a range of organisations who

provide a 'Good Morning' service. Throughout the coronavirus outbreak they have made **149,730 calls**.

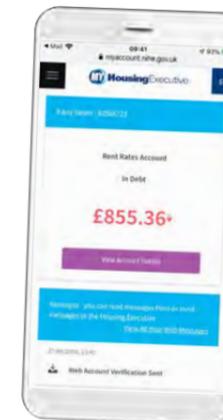
# NO

**ROUGH SLEEPER CASES RECORDED DURING LOCKDOWN**

From March to June 2020, there were **NO recorded cases of anyone sleeping rough on our streets**. We worked alongside partner organisations in the homeless sector to ensure anyone who was rough sleeping was given accommodation.

**MY HousingExecutive**

We launched our customer portal, **My Housing Executive**, in May, so we could deliver more of our services online. Turn to page 22 to find out how to register.



We posted a series of **service status update videos** on our **social media accounts**.



# 224,008

Our **Customer Service Teams** took **224,008 calls** and gave advice to tenants living across Northern Ireland.

## What you said



“Thank you to the lovely lady at the Housing Executive who called my 84 year old grandmother this morning to check if she had someone to go to the shop for her and told her just to give them a call if she needs anything. It is so kind at this stressful time for vulnerable people.”

“Just had a phone call from the Housing Executive; what a lovely and kind gesture to check on your tenants. Thank you all for still working throughout this all. It was greatly appreciated.”

“Thank you so much for fixing my heating. I’m high risk and self-isolating but your workers took all the proper precautions. I only had to wait a few hours, thanks so much.”

“The Housing Executive has always been there to support Belvoir Area Residents Group, from attending our community safety meetings to funding our community Christmas event. They also do a pretty good job of keeping our green spaces in the estate well maintained!”

“Housing Executive can I say a big thank you to Victoria and Michelle who are my Patch Managers. They have rang me every week to make sure I’m ok and to see if I need anything.”

“Thank you Housing Executive for the quick response getting my lock fixed on my front door.”

# Putting down roots in Ballycastle

**In October, we visited the seaside town to see how the new community garden in Mayo Drive, which hopes to bring residents of all ages together, was progressing.**

Since its creation in 2012 – following a request from a member of the ‘Things we’d like to see in Ballycastle’ Facebook group – Ballycastle Community Development Group has played a vital role in the local community. They’ve spearheaded many projects, including the creation of a ‘Winter Wonderland’ in a vacant shop in Castle Street, with their latest being a community garden in Mayo Drive.

There are grand plans for the garden including creating an area that promotes natural play, planting a wildflower meadow, and establishing an urban woodland on the estate. The group will be working closely with our Grounds Maintenance Team and Ballycastle Gardening Club to do the soft landscaping and planting on the currently vacant piece of land.

Paul Kerrigan, Chairman of Ballycastle Community Development Group, told us why the garden is so important to residents,

“Being out in nature is so vital for your health and wellbeing, so this will be a great place for people to come to socialise. I was born and bred in Mayo Drive and I think this will be a fantastic addition to the estate.”

## Sample the local delicacies

For the first time in nearly four centuries, the Ould Lammas Fair was cancelled this year due to the coronavirus outbreak. If you missed out on getting the town’s famous Yellow Man and Dulse this summer don’t worry, you can still buy them in the local shops.



Paul Kerrigan, Chairman of Ballycastle Community Development Group, showed us round the coastal town.



**‘The jewel in the Causeway’s crown**  
Did you know Ballycastle frequently tops **The Sunday Times ‘Best Places to Live in Northern Ireland List’?** With the beautiful scenery, bustling high street, and great community spirit it’s not hard to see why.



The new community garden in Mayo Drive will bring residents of all ages together.

# Giving young people the key to their future

**W**e travelled to Magherafelt to learn more about how Helen and Charlotte from Belfast Central Mission are providing housing support to young people to help them to live independently and plan their future.

Through our Supporting People programme, we provide funding to Belfast Central Mission to run their Housing Support for Young People project. It has been immensely successful with dozens of young people receiving help from support workers like Helen and Charlotte.

“If you’re part of the project you will get your own dedicated support worker who will help you develop a personal action plan,” Charlotte informed us, “This means you can work on things that will make a difference in your day to day life.”

This includes things like:

- Helping you turn your house into a home, and teaching you skills like cooking or cleaning so you can live there independently
- Getting you into training, education, or work
- Empowering you to feel confident making financial decisions
- Giving you support to improve your physical and mental health

Support is provided to young people in their own home, the service is not means tested, and you do not need to have a social worker, or be known to the care system. You can be part of the project for up to 2 years with the level of support depending on what you agree with your support worker.

We asked Helen what she wanted young people to know most about the housing support project and she said:

“Living on your own can be an overwhelming experience, but don’t worry, you don’t have to go through it alone. Speak to us and find out how we can help.”

Our online service directory can be used to find all support services funded through the Supporting People programme in Northern Ireland by visiting [www.nihe.gov.uk/find-support](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/find-support)



**“I have fond memories of going to maternity appointments with a young woman and helping build her confidence as a mum. Being a support worker is a real privilege as you get to see someone grow and thrive.”**

Helen  
Support Worker, Belfast Central Mission



**Start building your future now**

You can access the housing support service if you’re aged 16-25 and live in the Armagh, Dungannon, Magherafelt, North Down or Ards areas.  
Your Patch Manager can complete a referral form for you if you like.  
You can also be referred to Belfast Central Mission by a social worker or by visiting [www.belfastcentralmission.org](http://www.belfastcentralmission.org) and completing their online form.



Charlotte and Helen catch up on their way into work at Tafelta Rise, Belfast Central Mission’s supported living accommodation for young people, in Magherafelt.

# Looking on the Bannside of life



Every Tuesday and Thursday young people from across Portadown come to Bannside Community Centre to socialise and learn key life skills.

**Just a few days into the new school year, we dropped by to see Phyllis Millington from Bannside Community Group, and the young people taking part in her Youth Engagement Programme.**

The 48-week programme, made possible by our Community Safety funding, brings teenagers from across Portadown together, to learn new skills that will help them in their adult life. Before lockdown in March, the young people had been coming into the community centre to cook healthy meals, get tips on looking after their mental health, and plan their future.

Phyllis and her team members, married couple Campbell and Gail Best, have also been empowering the young people to take an active role in their community. They have set them the challenge of creating their own area at the back of the centre and, although the work is not due to begin until 2021, they have already made plans to bring in a graffiti artist so they can transform the former playground into somewhere they can bring their friends to have BBQs.

Young people have been hugely impacted by the coronavirus restrictions this year so we were delighted to see lots of happy faces looking forward to the future.

**“We’ve never done a youth project before but I am so glad we have, as it has been the most rewarding thing we have ever done.”**

**Phyllis Millington**  
Community Development Officer  
Bannside Community Group

## Get to know your Good Relations Officer

They can offer your community group support so you can get your projects off the ground. Call our General Enquiries Line on 03448 920 900 to get in touch with yours.

# Our repairs service now has a hands free mode

**W**e’re rolling out new technology that will help you resolve any repair issues you’re having remotely.

With Totalmobile Remote Assist, our Maintenance Officers and Customer Service Unit Advisors can be virtually present in your home by connecting with you over video on your smartphone or tablet.

This means you can show them any repair issues you’re having, so they can pinpoint the best way to help you, while maintaining the current public health guidance on social distancing.

### How it works

1. You will be sent a text that contains a web link.
2. When you click on this link you will be asked to give us permission to access the camera on your smartphone or tablet for a short time.
3. This allows you to share a live video feed with either a Maintenance Officer or Customer Service Unit Advisor.

**All you need is internet access!**



**Did you know that you can report a repair and find out when it is due to be completed online?**

Turn to [page 22](#) to find out how to register for our new tenant portal My Housing Executive.

# Keeping up with the Keshians

**A**ffectionately known as the hub of Fermanagh by locals, Kesh is a bustling village steeped in history and surrounded by beautiful countryside. We went down to see their new community facility earlier this year.

The old courthouse in Kesh was completely revamped, thanks in part to funding from our Rural Development Programme match-funding initiative, after over a decade of planning and hard work from people across the community. As soon as we stepped into the centre we received a very warm welcome and it was clear that this was one of the many reasons why it has quickly become the heart of the village.

While taking us on a tour of the facility, The Courthouse Kesh Ltd members; Frances, Alan, and Gerald told us that it was set up so people can go there in their hour of need without worrying about being judged. The new building allows them to provide invaluable services like a food bank, a 'tunic room' filled with clothes for families in need, a community café, counselling, and befriending schemes.

We were blown away by the work of the team and asked them how they had been able to make a huge difference to this rural community within such a short space of time. "We try to do everything we can

here to support people and it all starts with having a chat over a cup of tea", Gerald explained, "Through this we are able to find what we can help them with and start putting together a plan so they can get back on their feet."

Alan, who manages the café, added, "We also found that some people in our community felt isolated so the café is a great place for them to come to socialise and make new friends."



Alan, Frances, and Gerald took us down to the historic river Kesh once we finished our tour of the new community hub.



You can enjoy great coffee and the best view of the village's Main Street in the café.



Frances showed us some of the clothing, kindly donated by local people, available in the 'tunic room'.



**"Kesh has a great community spirit. People here really pull together and are always offering a helping hand."**

Frances Spence  
The Courthouse Kesh Ltd

**Would you like help making your rural area a better place to live?**

Visit the rural section of our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) to find out how we can support you.



On top of managing the café, Alan also helps out at the centre's food bank which has become a lifeline for vulnerable people during the coronavirus outbreak.

# Not all heroes wear capes...

Throughout the coronavirus outbreak, our staff have been supporting our tenants across Northern Ireland. Check out this snapshot of some of the people who have been helping you stay safe in your home, and providing a vital connection to your community.



Dean Weir



Kimberley Bellew



Catherine Lynch



Sylwia McAvoy

“A key part of my job is working within the local community to find out what the issues are, and how we can help make where they live better. Community groups have been doing fantastic work throughout the outbreak and I am delighted that I’ve been able to help them support vulnerable people living in our estates.”

Dean Weir  
Neighbourhood Officer, South Area

“As a Housing Executive tenant myself, I understand how worrying it is when someone has to go into your home to carry out a repair. I’m here to answer any queries you have and to talk you through the steps we are taking to make sure you’re protected.”

Kimberley Bellew  
Customer Service Advisor,  
Mid & East Antrim Area

“The most rewarding part of my job is whenever I get to hand over the house keys to a family so they can make it their home. This year especially, we’ve been working incredibly hard to do this as quickly and as safely as possible, as we know how important having somewhere to call home is right now.”

Catherine Lynch  
Maintenance Officer, West Belfast Area

“As a Polish national raising a family in Northern Ireland, I understand how important it is to bring people together to celebrate different cultures and breakdown harmful stereotypes. This year, the community groups I support have been doing this digitally, but I’m really looking forward to a time when we can all meet again.”

Sylwia McAvoy  
Race Relations Officer, NI wide

## We’re here to help

We understand that many of you need us now more than ever. If you would like to discuss your housing situation, or have any queries about your tenancy, get in touch by:

- Sending us a message on our My Housing Executive tenant portal
- Ringing our General Enquiries Line on 03448 920 900



# Creating a sanctuary on the Shankill

**B**etty Carlisle MBE, the Manager of the Shankill Women's Centre, tells us how her team have created a safe space where women can come to get support, learn new skills, and improve their wellbeing.

Since 1987, Betty has worked as part of the Shankill Women's Centre - which was initially based in a Housing Executive property before moving to its current location - and has been instrumental in transforming the lives of hundreds of local women. Her team has faced many challenges over the past four decades, including working throughout 'The Troubles', and has continued to be a source of support for women during the coronavirus pandemic.

"We've had to make major changes to the way we deliver our services so we can keep the women who use our centre safe," she explained while giving us a tour of the facility, "the services we

provide act as a lifeline, and our staff have really pulled together so we can continue to be here for them."

After the tour, Betty introduced us to her all-female team who gave us an insight into the ways they have been supporting women and their families for over 30 years. They have been working tirelessly to: keep their shared education and young women's projects running; develop women through the North Belfast Women's Network; and provide them with opportunities to take part in cross-community activities throughout the coronavirus outbreak. They also deliver a wellbeing project, which is currently helping 250 women improve their physical and mental health, and provide quality childcare

at the centre so they can enable these women to take part in all these fantastic initiatives.

Betty and her team also have big plans for the future, including the building of a brand new shared space for women at an interface area on Lanark Way. We were delighted that they were able to use our funding to complete an economic appraisal to make this long-time dream of theirs a reality and look forward to visiting the new centre in 2023.



**"When I'm here surrounded by people that care, I feel I can do anything."**

Shankill Women's Centre service user

**Got an idea for a project in your community?**

Call us on 03448 920 900 to speak to the Good Relations Officer for your area to find out how we can help make it happen.

We were delighted that Betty Carlisle MBE, was able to take time out of her busy schedule to give us a tour of the facility.



# Register with My Housing Executive in 7 simple steps

**W**e all lead really busy lives. That's why it is important that you can contact us when you're on the go, or from the comfort of your home, using the 'My Housing Executive' portal. With My Housing Executive, you can report a repair, make payments, and get in touch with us, anytime, anywhere... all you need is internet access!

Meet Laura. Laura wants to access information on her tenancy in one easy place.

She wants to contact the Housing Executive at a time that suits her. With just a few clicks, she can register for My Housing Executive, and get access to everything she needs.

**TURN OVER TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN DO ON OUR NEW TENANT PORTAL.**



## Get in touch

If you're having trouble registering with My Housing Executive, please call our dedicated Tenant Portal Help Line on 03448 920 910 to chat to a member of our staff.



Follow her journey to find out what you need to do to register.

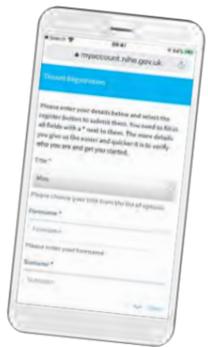
**TOP TIP!** Before you start, have a copy of your rent statement handy. It will have your Tenancy Number on it and will help with the registration process. Your Tenancy Number begins with the number 8.

**1**



Laura visits the Housing Executive website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) and selects the 'Register' option from the menu on the top right hand side of the screen. This brings her to the My Housing Executive registration home page.

**2**



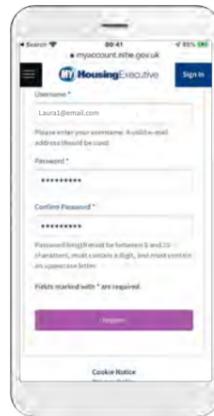
Laura selects 'Register' from the menu on the left. This opens the 'Tenant Registration' form and adds some personal information. She creates a **username** with an **email address** and a **password**.

Passwords must be between 5 and 20 characters in length and contain:  
 • A number  
 • A lower case letter  
 • An upper case letter

**TOP TIP!** Your username should be an email address that you use.

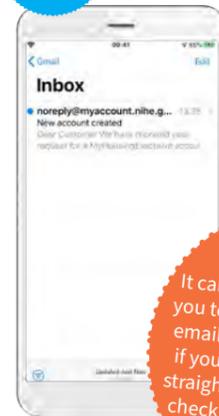
It is important to make sure all fields with an \* are filled in.

**3**



Laura clicks on the 'Register' button. She gets an automatic email from us, confirming that we have received her registration form.

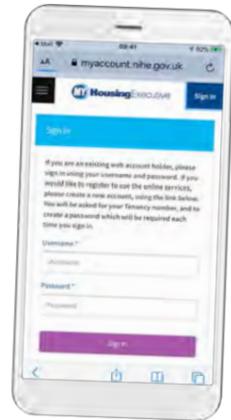
**4**



Laura is sent a second email from us asking her to **verify** her My Housing Executive account.

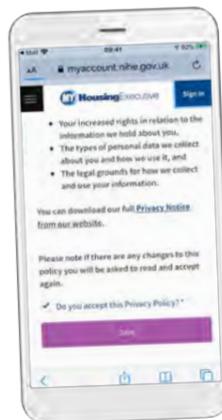
**TOP TIP!** It can take up to 24 hours for you to receive the verification email from us, so don't panic if you haven't been sent one straight away. You should also check your 'Junk Mail' folder to see if it is in there.

**5**



Laura opens the email from us and **copies the verification code** (she needs this for step 6). She clicks the log-in link and enters her **username** and **password**.

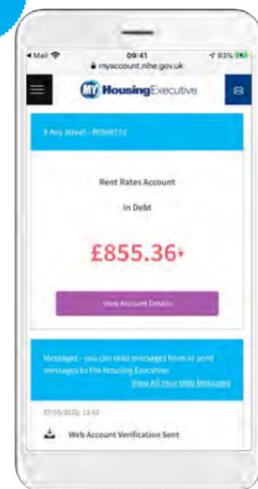
**6**



Once she is logged in to the portal, she is asked to **read and accept** the Privacy Policy and the Cookie Notice.

She then pastes the **verification code** into the next screen.

**7**



**Laura's My Housing Executive account is now up and running!**

## Keep your world moving, register for



**M**y Housing Executive allows you to access information about your tenancy and to contact us securely 24 hours a day.

When you register and sign up to the new tenant portal you will be able to:

- Check your rent balance and account statements
- Make a payment
- Order a new payment card
- Request services like a transfer, an adaptation to your property, or a self-help repair
- Update your contact and personal details
- Request and track a repair
- Contact our staff through direct web messages

You can do all of this on any of your devices that connect to the internet when you're on the go or from the comfort of your home.

### Register now

Visit our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) and click on the 'Register' icon on the top right hand corner of the home page to get started.

We're always adding new services so keep checking back to see what else you can do.



# 3 ways to care for your dog during the coronavirus outbreak

Gus and his beagle Oonagh take a moment to enjoy the stunning views of Belfast Lough during their walk along the North Down Coastal Path.



**O**ur North Down & Ards Good Relations Officer, Gus Moore, shares three ways that you can help the furry member of your family cope with any changes you've made to your lifestyle and daily routine following the coronavirus outbreak.

#### 1. Go walkies

Exercise is a great way to relieve stress, provide mental stimulation, and improve your canine companion's physical health. If you're worried about social distancing, try to go at a quiet time during the day and keep your dog on a lead so it doesn't run into people. Many of us are working from home so why not fit in some playtime in the garden or inside during your lunch break? It's a brilliant way for you to bond with your dog and prevent bad behaviour.

#### 2. Watch their weight

Being at home more means you're more likely to give them treats and leftovers. Try to not give in to those puppy dog eyes too often, as this can cause your pet to become overweight.

#### 3. Give them space

You may find that your dog loves that you're with them more but it's also important that they are able to be on their own as well. To help them do this, create a safe space in your home for them to go to that is quiet and cosy.

During this uncertain time, it's nice to have a constant loveable companion, so try to relax and enjoy the company of your furry family member.

#### Do you live in a flat or a maisonette?

Dogs make great pets but they can become a source of tension with your neighbours due to the potential noise and mess. This is why if you're living in a flat or maisonette, you should get written permission from your Area Manager to keep a pet.

## If you're thinking of getting a dog

Make sure you chat to your Patch Manager first by ringing 03448 920 900.

# Get online

# with

# ONSIDE

**W**e called to Mark Gamble's home - one of our tenants in the New Buildings area of Derry-Londonderry. Mark has been taking part in the ONSIDE project to improve his digital skills, and help him stay connected with his multiple sclerosis (MS) support group.

Like all ONSIDE participants, Mark got to keep his tablet after the training programme was finished. He has continued to receive support so he can stay connected with family and friends. Mark, who lives with his fiancé Orla and pet dog Bailey, has really enjoyed being part of the project and encourages anyone with a disability to give it a go.



As a participant in the ONSIDE project, Mark was given an android tablet, preloaded with the software he needed, and a guide on how to get set up. He attended weekly digital training sessions over eight weeks. The training sessions showed him how to use video call apps, such as WhatsApp, to connect with his MS support group, family, and friends. The training sessions teach participants how to use the Internet and stay safe online.

The digital training has really helped Mark. Like a lot of people, he had to shield due to the risk of coronavirus. This meant he had to stay indoors, changing the way he socialised.

"I'm part of a MS support group and we would have regularly met up to have a chat," Mark told us, "So we decided to move our meetings online so we could still be there and give each other a lift during this crazy time."

**ONSIDE is led by Disability Action NI in partnership with the Housing Executive, the Independent Living Movement in Ireland and Supporting Communities. It is funded by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.**



Mark gave us a socially distanced demonstration of what he had learned through the ONSIDE project.

## Would you like to take part in ONSIDE?

If so ring 028 9029 7880 / 00353 1873 0455 or email [info@onsideproject.org](mailto:info@onsideproject.org)

You can also be referred to the project by your Patch Manager.

**What is ONSIDE?**  
ONSIDE stands for **Outreach, Navigation, Social Inclusion and Digital Engagement.**

ONSIDE is a cross border, pan-disability project which aims to reduce the social isolation often experienced by disabled people living in Northern Ireland and the border regions.



A project supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

# MILE STONES FROM OUR YEAR



2020 has been a year like no other but despite the challenges; we still had a lot to celebrate.



Our Grounds Maintenance Team worked with pupils from St Peter's Primary School in West Belfast to spruce up a piece of communal land on the Falls Road in **February**.



Following the coronavirus outbreak, we opened a COVID-19 Fund in **April**, to support community groups who were helping vulnerable people living in their neighbourhood. Go to [page 10](#) to see how Ballycastle Community Development Group used our funding to reduce social isolation during the pandemic.

**TOP TIPS FOR WINTER**  
Housing Executive

**AVOIDING FROZEN PIPES**

- Keep your home as warm as possible, even when you are out, by setting the heating to come on for short periods
- If you can, lift the trap door to the roof space slightly to allow warm air to circulate
- Open the doors to the sink unit to allow air to circulate around the pipes
- Allow warm air to circulate around the house by opening doors to all rooms
- If you are away from home, ensure the heating comes on for regular intervals and ask someone to check regularly for frozen pipes

**IF A PIPE FREEZES**

- Turn the water off at the stopcock
- Protect everything around the pipe that appears to be frozen to avoid damage if it bursts
- Open the tap nearest to the part of the pipe you think is frozen so the water can flow through when it has thawed
- Thaw the ice in the pipe with a hot water bottle or hairdryer (taking care to keep it well away from any water) beginning from the tap end and working back towards the cold water tank
- Never use a heat gun or blow torch
- If you have a solid fuel room heater, or an open fire with a back boiler, you should let your fire go out
- If you have oil, gas or wood pellet boilers you should reduce your water usage, but you can continue to run your heating at a low setting

**IF A PIPE BURSTS**

- Turn off the water
- Turn on all the water in the bath flushing the toilet
- Block the escape
- If the water has with electric it be turned off at to do so
- If water has on the Mains Box, touch it and do equipment in
- Turn off your systems
- If you have a an open fire, it

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE NO WATER?**

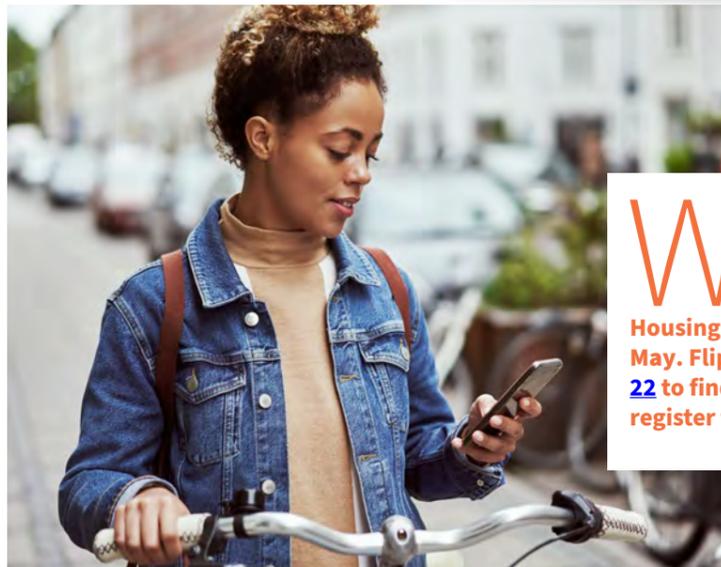
If your water supply fails, there may be a burst pipe in your home, or a leak in the main system outside your home. If there is water at the kitchen cold tap then the main supply is working. If you think it is an issue, please call us on 02827 449 084 or email [water@housingexecutive.com](mailto:water@housingexecutive.com)

**CHECK ON IF YOU CAN**

Remember, every being the effects. People may be an try to stay in contact and help out if you can.

In **January**, we shared our 'Top Tips for Winter' on our social media channels. Turn to [page 39](#) to find out the steps you can take to avoid a pipe freezing in your home.

On International Women's Day in **March**, we celebrated women like Deirdre Crawford, our Community Cohesion Manager, who works with us to help communities across Northern Ireland. Flick back to [page 20](#) to find out more about the fantastic work being done by Shankill Women's Centre.



We unveiled our new tenant portal, My Housing Executive, in **May**. Flip back to [page 22](#) to find out how to register today.

In **July**, we launched our Social Enterprise Plus Programme. To find out what support we can offer your social enterprise email [socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk)



We celebrated Puppy Pride at Muddy Paws, a dog grooming social enterprise run by MACs, during the **summer**. Turn back to [page 24](#) to find out three ways you can care for your dog during the coronavirus outbreak.

From the 3rd to 14th **August** we showcased the importance of social and affordable housing in rural areas through our #RuralHomesNI social media campaign. Flip back to [page 16](#) to find out how we are helping villages like Kesh thrive.



Over the past year our staff have raised over **£110,000** for charities across Northern Ireland.



We launched our new Community Safety Strategy in **October**. Turn over to [page 30](#) to find out how Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership have been using our funding to help older people feel safe, and live independently in their home.

In **autumn**, we launched our **NI Energy Advice Line**. You can speak to our staff to find out how to reduce your carbon footprint, and to save money on your energy bills by calling us on 0800 111 4455.

**NEED ENERGY ADVICE?**  
We're here to help  
**FREEPHONE 0800 111 4455**  
Independent and impartial free advice

Find out about:

- Reducing fuel bills • Grant programmes
- Switching energy providers • Insulation • Damp & condensation
- Warmer homes • Heating systems
- Reducing energy consumption • Renewable energy

**NI ENERGY ADVICE LINE**

The service is provided by the Housing Executive and funded by the DfC (Department for Communities)



The 9th to 13th **November** was Talk Money Week. If you would like to talk to someone about making your money go further or would like a benefit check flick over to [page 34](#) to find out how our Financial Inclusion Managers can support you.

# Staying young at heart

## with Mid &

## East Antrim

## Agewell

## Partnership

**In September, we caught up with Jenny Dougan, from Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAAP), and service user, Reverend Ian Magowan, at the People's Park in Ballymena to find out how MEAAP have been supporting older people over the past year.**

MEAAP is a charity that provides advice and assistance to older people living in the Mid & East Antrim Borough Council area. On our socially distanced walk round the People's Park, Jenny told us that older people needed the charity more than ever this year, as many of them had to self-isolate, and were worried about doing everyday things we all take for granted.

During lockdown, they extended their opening hours so they could respond to the huge volume of calls, with staff busy arranging prescription pick-ups, dog walking, and even just checking in with older people to find out how they were coping. This phenomenal work was on top of their Community Navigator service funded by Northern Health & Social Care Trust and delivered in partnership with Age NI, where they signpost older people to organisations that provide services such as Community Transport, Befriending

Schemes, and Home Safety Checks.

As the coronavirus outbreak continues to evolve, Jenny encourages anyone living in the Mid & East Antrim Borough Council area to contact MEAAP:

"The Community Navigator service is basically like the Yellow Pages for older people. We can help you stay connected to your community, improve your wellbeing, and make new friends. Give us a call on 028 2565 8604 and find out how we can support you!"

**"MEAAP made everything so easy and were a great help. I would encourage any older person to give them a call."**

Rev. Ian Magowan

Jenny Dougan from MEAAP and Reverend Ian Magowan have been encouraging older people who live in the Mid & East Antrim Borough Council area to use the charity's Community Navigator service.



**As part of our Community Safety programme, we give funding to groups that support older people across Northern Ireland.**

Make the call and find out how they can help you.

**Good Morning West Belfast**  
028 9024 5943

**Good Morning North Belfast**  
028 9071 9200

**Good Morning South & East Belfast**  
028 9087 2277

**Good Morning Down**  
028 4461 3434

**Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership**  
028 2565 8604

**Mid Ulster Agewell Partnership**  
028 7963 2170

# Creating Dementia Friendly Homes

**W**e sat down with **Andrea Curran, our Dementia Champion in Downpatrick, to chat about how we're helping tenants living with dementia to stay safe in their home, and remain independent.**

In 2018, Andrea and her colleague Paula Keenan, developed a 'Dementia Friendly Homes' pilot in our South Down area. Since then, we have trained over 40 members of staff across Northern Ireland as Dementia Champions, providing bespoke support to our tenants, and their families, who are living with dementia.

"People who have been diagnosed with dementia often worry about managing their home and we want to let them know that we are here to help," Andrea explains, "By making simple changes, based on

the needs of each individual, they can stay independent, active, and safe."

We are able to support tenants in a number of ways, such as adapting their home, providing a 'Dementia Friendly Pack' full of items that can make doing everyday tasks easier, and can refer them to partner agencies that provide specialist support. We can also add an alert to our customer records, with the tenant's permission, so that when we get in touch, we do so in a way that meets their needs, and suits them and their family.



Our staff can offer you advice and provide you with a free 'Dementia Friendly Pack'.



Andrea Curran is one of many of our specially trained Dementia Champions.

## Would you like help?

To contact one of our Dementia Champions send us a message on our tenant portal, My Housing Executive, or ring our General Enquiries Line 03448 920 900.



## Making your life easier

We can make adaptations to your home, without a referral from an Occupational Therapist, to help you continue to live independently. We can also give you a 'Dementia Friendly Pack' which includes items such as:

- A specially designed landline telephone with large number keys and picture buttons
- A 2-in-1 calendar clock that displays the month, day, date and time prominently
- A dry-wipe reminder board and pen
- Colour contrasting key fobs with labels
- Alzheimer's Society documents and guides
- An easy to read bookmark that has all our contact details on it

If you would like a pack or to have your home adapted please speak to one of our Dementia Champions.

# Would you like a **Financial MOT?**



Niamh looks after our South region, encompassing counties Armagh, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

**O**ur Financial Inclusion Managers are here to check you're getting all the benefits you're entitled to, and to help make your money go further.

Every year millions of us take our cars to get an MOT check to make sure that it's safe to drive, and to find out if anything needs fixed. It's also important to do a Financial MOT so you can reduce the amount you're spending on your bills, to see if you can increase your income, or start a savings pot for a rainy day.

Our Financial Inclusion Managers, Sinead, Michael and Niamh, are there to:

- Perform benefit checks to make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to
- Help you create a budget
- Provide impartial advice so you can reduce your debt, resolve any benefits issues, and help you make the most out of your income

They will talk you through your situation, and guide you through the simple steps you can take so you feel more confident in managing your money. Why not take your foot off the pedal for a few minutes and book yourself in for a financial tune up?

If you would like to speak to Sinead, Michael, or Niamh contact your Patch Manager and ask to be referred to a Financial Inclusion Manager.



Michael takes care of our North region, covering counties Antrim and Derry-Londonderry and the Strabane area.



Sinead covers the greater Belfast region, including Lisburn and Castlereagh.

## Take your financial wellbeing up a gear

Our Financial Inclusion Managers can check to see if you're getting all the benefits you're entitled to. Here's a snapshot of how they've helped tenants become better off every month.

“ I was struggling financially but didn't think I could claim any benefits because I was a single tenant. I got great advice so I now know how to claim the right benefits and have found myself **£603 a month better off.** ”

“ I had to give up my job to care for my disabled child and didn't think I'd be entitled to any benefits as my husband works full time. After doing a benefit check I found out I'm able to claim **£800 a month in Universal Credit.** ”

# What to expect when we need to visit your home

**If you have a maintenance issue or a repair that needs fixed, our staff or contractors may need to visit your home.**

To keep you safe, they will take the following steps, in line with advice from the Health and Safety Executive, while the work is being done.

#### **Before we visit your home**

We will contact you to:

- Arrange a suitable time and date for the work to be carried out
- Check that no one in your home is self-isolating or has coronavirus symptoms

#### **When carrying out the work**

Our staff and contractors will:

- Sanitise their hands
- Wear suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Ensure they stay at least 2 metres apart from everyone in your home

Before they leave your home, they will sanitise the area they have been working at.

#### **Help us help you**

You should take the following steps to protect yourself whenever our staff or contractors visit your home:

- Open your front door and stand well back
- Ensure everyone in your home stays at least 2 metres away from the area being worked at
- Open the window, if possible, in the room the staff member or contractor will be in

By taking these steps, we can all stay safe during the coronavirus outbreak.

**What happens if a gas safety check is due in my home?**

We are required to carry out a service and safety check each year of all gas appliances we have installed in your home. This is a legal obligation that must be completed by all landlords in the UK. These checks help keep you safe, and ensure that the gas appliances are working efficiently.

Your safety is our top priority; this is why our contractor's Gas Safe Engineers will also take the steps mentioned earlier when carrying out the work.

If you are due to have a gas safety check in your home, our contractor will send you an appointment letter. If this does not suit, we ask that you contact the contractor using the telephone number on the letter to make alternative arrangements.

**If you are self-isolating, or would like more information on how we can help you stay safe when we visit your home, call our 24 hour Repair Line on 03448 920 901.**



# Applying for a transfer

**If your home no longer meets your needs, and you are thinking about moving, it is important to speak to your Patch Manager. They will discuss your housing options such as getting your home adapted, exchanging properties with another tenant using our HomeSwapper service, and applying for a transfer.**

If you decide to apply for a transfer, your Patch Manager will carry out an assessment to determine if you meet the criteria to access the transfer list. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, we have adapted our usual transfer process so we can keep you and our staff safe.

#### **Carrying out a Housing Needs Transfer Assessment**

If you meet the criteria for a transfer, your Patch Manager will assess your housing needs, and award you points based on the conditions set out in the Housing Selection Scheme. You will then be placed on the waiting list, and be entitled to three reasonable offers of accommodation.

Your Patch Manager will need to know if the property you are currently living in has been kept in good condition so there may be instances where we have to visit your home. To protect you and our staff, we want to ensure that visits to your home are kept to a minimum, so we will explore other options first.

#### **Viewing your potential new home**

If you receive an offer of accommodation, you will be asked to view the property so you can decide if you would like to live there. We will contact you to arrange a viewing, and explain the steps we will be taking to keep you safe while the viewing is taking place.

#### **Accepting an offer**

If you accept an offer of accommodation, we will be in touch with you to agree your tenancy start date and arrange a sign up. This will be done in line with Public Health Agency guidelines.



# Staying safe in your home



You can take some simple steps to help everyone in your home stay safe, and prevent your belongings from being damaged.

## FIRE



To prevent a fire occurring in your home, follow these tips:

1. **Check** your smoke detector regularly
2. **Don't leave** candles unattended
3. **Switch off and unplug** any appliances not in use
4. **Don't** dry clothes on electric heaters or leave them on when you're out
5. Make sure you **don't leave** cookers or chip pans unattended



Switching off and unplugging appliances that you're not using is a simple way you can prevent a fire occurring in your home.

## WATER



Legionnaires' disease, a severe form of pneumonia, can be caused by inhaling small droplets of water containing the Legionella bacteria.

To make sure your water is safe in your home you should **keep**:

**Hot water hot** – Hot water should be stored at 60°C. This is set for you by our contractors during your annual heating service so make sure you don't change the temperature.

**Cold water cold** – The bacteria doesn't grow in water below 20°C.

## Find your stopcock

If you have a leak in your home, you may need to cut off your water supply. This can be done easily by turning off your stopcock or stop valve.

Your stopcock is usually in the cupboard below your kitchen sink but it may also be in an airing cupboard or under the floor boards by your front door.

To cut off your water supply you need to turn it **clockwise**.



Cleaning your shower head regularly reduces limescale build up.

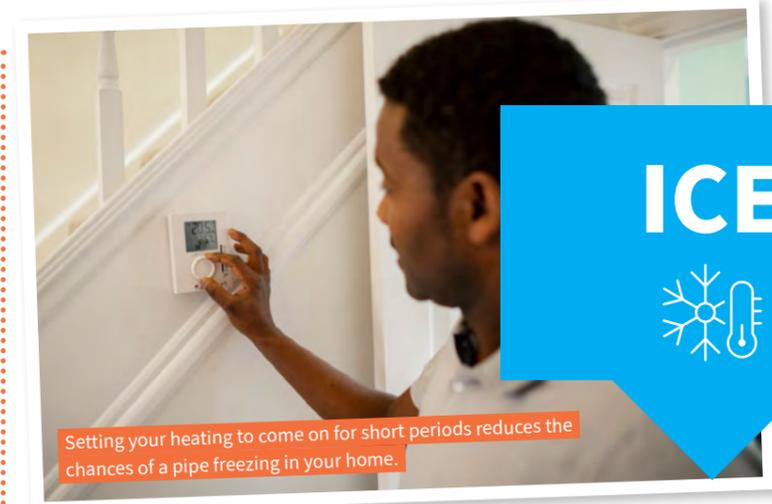
**Water circulating** – Turn on infrequently used taps and showers weekly and run the water for five minutes to prevent the build-up of bacteria.

**Outlets clean** – The bacteria feeds on limescale on taps and shower heads. Cleaning these regularly will prevent limescale build up.

If you believe any part of your water system has been damaged ring our 24 hour Repair Line.

You can get further advice on Legionnaire's disease by emailing [waterhygienemanagement@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:waterhygienemanagement@nihe.gov.uk)

## ICE



Setting your heating to come on for short periods reduces the chances of a pipe freezing in your home.

You can stop the pipes in your home from freezing by:

1. Setting your heating to come on for **short periods** during the day
2. **Allowing warm air** to circulate by opening doors in your home
3. **Setting your thermostat** to 12-15°C for when you're out of your home
4. Opening the doors to the sink unit to **let air circulate** around the pipes
5. **Lifting the trap door** to the roof space slightly to allow warm air to circulate

## Reporting an Emergency Repair

An **EMERGENCY REPAIR** is where there is an **IMMEDIATE RISK TO LIFE OR PROPERTY** such as:

- Unsafe gas supplies or installation
- Burst water pipes
- No electrical supply or unsafe electrics
- Faulty smoke alarms
- Your home not being secure

You can report an Emergency Repair by ringing our 24 hour Repair Line on 03448 920 901.

# Get a move

# on with

# HomeSwapper

**A**re you looking to downsize, move to a bigger property, or live in a different area? You should register for HomeSwapper, an online Mutual Exchange service for social housing tenants, and find a home that meets your needs.

With HomeSwapper you can swap with another Housing Executive tenant in Northern Ireland or a housing association tenant who lives in any part of the UK. After you register your account on the HomeSwapper website or app, a member of our housing team will confirm if you are entitled to swap. Your Patch Manager can also offer advice on things to consider when looking for a new home.

If you have a secure tenancy with us, you'll be able to post an advert on HomeSwapper. This should have photos

of your current home, as well as a few lines on what you're looking for in a new home and where you would like to live.

By doing this, potential swappers can see what your current property looks like and find out if their home meets your needs. You can also search for homes and send messages to other tenants to see if they would be interested in swapping.

Over 500,000 people are on HomeSwapper so join now and find your new home!



Despite the coronavirus outbreak, Philip and Diane have been busy enjoying city life since they moved into their flat in February.



Leanne has been busy turning her new house into a home but she took time out for a cuppa when we came to visit her.

## Moving just round the corner

### Leanne's story

"In January I decided that I wanted to move out of my flat in Killyleagh into a house as I wanted more space for myself and my cat Eddie.

HomeSwapper was great as you could view photos of other people's properties and get a feel for what it would be like to live there. I also wanted a house with oil central heating so I was able to ask the previous tenant if their home had this and how much it costs to heat it.

Being able to choose the area I wanted to live in was brilliant as I could pick an estate that was still just round the corner from my mum and dad."

## From the coast to the city

### Diane's & Philip's story

"We lived in Whitehead for 22 years but decided to downsize when our daughter moved out.

HomeSwapper was so easy and straightforward to use. We were able to swap to a ground floor flat with a

more manageable garden in east Belfast within 6 weeks.

We really love it here and are delighted our old house can now be used by someone else to bring up their family."

## Make a house hunting checklist

When doing a search on HomeSwapper have a think about:

- How many bedrooms you need
- The type of property you want to live in
- What outdoor space you would like to have
- The area you want to live in

*This will make it much easier for you to decide if you want to swap homes.*

## Get swapping now

To register for HomeSwapper download the app from the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store. You can also create an account on [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)

# Making our communities safer

**W**e are committed to ensuring all forms of anti-social behaviour are tackled appropriately.

While the majority of our areas are safe and popular places to live, we recognise that nuisance and anti-social behaviour are real issues which can have a significant impact on you and your family.

It is important that you know what to do if you're worried about anti-social behaviour.

## Reporting anti-social behaviour

The easiest way to report anti-social behaviour is to ring our General Enquiries Line on 03448 920 900 and ask to speak to your Patch Manager. You can also send them a message on our My Housing Executive tenant portal.

If you prefer, a relative, friend, or representative can make a complaint on your behalf.

You can also report anti-social behaviour anonymously on our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) however this may mean action that can be taken may be limited.

It is important when reporting anti-social behaviour that you provide as much detail as possible, such as the date and time of the incident, who was involved, where it happened, and who was affected by the anti-social behaviour.

It may also be necessary for you to report anti-social behaviour to the PSNI or your local council.

## We are here to support you

If you make a complaint, we will respond in a sensitive way, and take appropriate action to tackle the problem, taking your wishes into account.

We also organise support for victims and witnesses, by making referrals to specialist organisations such as Victim Support Northern Ireland.

**It is important that you know what to do if you're worried about anti-social behaviour**

# Spotting a scam!

**T**he internet is an easy way to shop, complete banking transactions, or to keep in touch with friends and family. Unfortunately, it can also create opportunities for fraudsters. It's important to know how to keep yourself safe when you're online.

Online scams are when someone uses the internet to try to trick someone into giving them money or personal information.

## 3 of the most common scams to look out for are:

- 1. Email scams** – scammers can send bogus emails to trick people into entering their personal details. This can be done in a number of ways... by pretending to be your bank, encouraging you to send money to someone you do not know, or telling you that you have won a competition that you didn't enter.
- 2. Social media** – scammers can post misleading information on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, so they can direct you to a website where you enter your personal information.
- 3. Online shopping** – scammers can create fake websites selling products at a much cheaper price than other retailers. This is so they can get people's credit or debit card information.

## Take the scam test

If you think something is a scam ask yourself these 4 questions:

1. Does it seem too good to be true?
2. Have they contacted me out of the blue?
3. Have they asked me for my personal details?
4. Have they asked me for money?

*If you've answered yes to any of these then it is more than likely a scam. It is important to make sure you do not give out any personal or financial information.*



# Tower Block Update

**F**ollowing a public consultation in 2018, our Tower Blocks Action Plan was approved by our Board in March 2019 and by the Department for Communities in August 2019.

Given the complexity and scale of this plan, we have put together a programme of business cases setting out detailed proposals for each block or groups of blocks. These have been categorised into 3 phases.

## Phase 1

Demolition or disposal of 14 tower blocks taking place over a 1 to 5 year time period.

This is where our focus is currently at, with approval now in place to demolish Monkscoole House, Rathcoole and Latharna House, Larne.

## Phase 2

Removal of 7 tower blocks over a 6 to 10 year period, with remedial works to be carried out in the interim.

## Phase 3

Demolition of 12 tower blocks to be carried out beyond a 10 year period with improvement works taking place in the meantime.

## What happens next?

Over the next 12 months we will send the remaining business cases to residents for consultation and, after considering feedback, onto the Department for Communities for approval.



# Getting your home adapted



Adaptations, like getting a stair lift installed, can help you to live independently in your home. Speak to your Patch Manager to find out how we can help.

**W**e want to help you to live independently. We can do this by carrying out improvement works to your home.

It is important to let your Patch Manager know about the difficulties you are having in your home. That way we can find out how to best meet your needs.

The process for each adaptation is different. The timescales can vary significantly so it's important that you have that initial conversation.

#### Minor adaptations

We are able to complete certain minor adaptations without the help of an Occupational Therapist.

These include:

- Fitting handrails
- Lowering electrical sockets to an accessible level
- Adding power points
- Defining steps for people with visual impairments

#### Major adaptations

If we need to carry out a major adaptation to your home, your Patch Manager will signpost you to your local Occupational Therapy Service.

A major adaptation can include building an extension or installing a *stair lift*.

An Occupational Therapist will carry out an assessment. This looks at your needs and how they can be met through a range of services, like adapting your home.

The Occupational Therapist will send a recommendation onto us if they think that adapting your home would help you.

We will get in touch with you to arrange to come out to your home. We will carry out an inspection to determine if we can make changes to your home.

After the inspection we will talk to you about the options for adapting your home. If major work is required, we will appoint a contractor who will agree the start date and timescales with you.

**Y**our home should be a safe space. We are here to offer you advice and support, if you are suffering from, or feel at risk of domestic abuse.

#### What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

When a current or former partner, or a family member is violent or abusive to you, you're experiencing domestic abuse. It can involve physical contact, verbal or emotional abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour, and threats to harm or kill.

You do not have to be physically harmed to be abused.

#### What happens if you report domestic abuse to us?

Do not suffer in silence - you can call us in confidence on 03448 920 900 and ask to speak to your Patch Manager.

We will support you to make decisions about your living arrangements to help keep you safe such as:

- Installing security enhancements in your home
- Organising support from organisations that specialise in helping victims of domestic abuse
- Arranging temporary emergency accommodation and transport to get there
- Discussing your permanent housing options with you

You only have to tell us about your experience once, and we will ensure confidentially in accordance with your wishes.

We also run an out-of-hours, emergency homeless service. If you find yourself in a crisis, after 5pm, at the weekend, or on a bank holiday, you can ring our team on 03448 920 908.

Regardless of the abuse you are experiencing:

- **it is not your fault**
- **you are not alone**
- **you have the right to live free from fear**
- **you can survive and move on from an abusive relationship**

Our door is always open



## Help is at the other end of the phone

**IF YOU FEEL IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CONTACT THE PSNI BY CALLING 999**

If you are unable to speak press **55** on your keypad, the call operator will flag with the SILENT SOLUTIONS team as an emergency.

We give funding to a range of specialist organisations that provide advice and support to victims of domestic abuse. You can get in touch with them by calling the following numbers:

24 hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline: **0808 802 1414**

Women's Aid: **028 9024 9041**

Men's Advisory Project: **028 9024 1929** or **028 7116 0001**

Men's Action Network: **028 7137 7777**

Support for the LGBT+ community  
The Rainbow Project:

**028 9031 9030** or **028 7128 3030**

If you are worried about a child please ring the NSPCC on **0808 808 5000**

# Taking it to the next level



Diane didn't let the weather dampen her spirits when we met her earlier this year in Larne.

One of our tenants, Diane Huston, from Larne Community Care Centre, has been busy studying for three OCN Level qualifications in Community Development over the past year. We checked-in to find out how staff in Supporting Communities have helped her take her learning and career to the next level.

As an OCN training centre, Supporting Communities provides training and offers a range of qualifications to community groups across Northern Ireland. In May, Diane spoke to one of their Community Development Officers about doing a course that would fit around her busy family and work life.

“Even though I didn't plan to, I completed two qualifications in the past 7 months, and am about to finish my third,” she told us, “It's all down to my trainer Karla who has been so encouraging and given me the confidence to continue progressing.”

Diane, who was recently promoted to a senior position within Larne Community Care Centre, thought the training was very practical and uses it in her everyday work. She found the sessions on establishing good governance practices, completing funding applications, and setting up an effective committee, really helpful.

Diane is planning to continue her studies when she finishes her OCN Level 3 in Community Development. In fact, she's hoping to go to Ulster University, to study the subject at degree level next year - continuing to take her learning to the next level.

“Without the support and guidance of Supporting Communities I would not have had the confidence and opportunity to consider Community Development as an area of further education.”



## Level up

We provide funding to Supporting Communities so they can offer **qualifications free of charge** for members of our Housing Community Network:

- OCN Levels 1, 2 and 3 - **Community Development**

These courses can allow you to gain direct access to Ulster University to complete further training within Community Development even if you do not have any previous GCSEs or A-Levels.

- OCN Level 2 - **Understanding Social Enterprise**
- OCN Level 3 - **Developing Social Enterprise**
- OCN Level 2 - **Tenant Participation and Community Development**
- OCN Level 2 - **Improving Housing Services**

These can all be done online so if you're interested in studying, please speak to your local Community Development Worker at Supporting Communities or one of our Good Relations Officers.

You can also find more information at [www.supportingcommunities.org](http://www.supportingcommunities.org)

# Embracing all our neighbours

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

## ARABIC

كفتغل يه فيزييلجنالال اغلللا نكت مل اذا يف قدعاسملا ىلع لوصحلل اجاتحتو مال عيظتستف ، فيطخل او فيفشلا قمجرتلا هذه ريفوت فيذيفنتلانا كسالال قمدخ كئمن ىجري ، بلطلا دنع فينجالال تامدخال نم ليصفتلابل مال اذه لوح راسفتسالال يلمحلل كفتكلم

## CANTONESE

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

## LITHUANIAN

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

## MANDARIN

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

## POLISH

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

## PORTUGUESE

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

## ROMANIAN

Dacă nu sunteți vorbitor nativ de limba engleză și aveți nevoie de sprijin în interpretare sau traducere, Autoritatea Irlandeză pentru Locuințe [Northern Ireland Housing Executive] vă poate oferi aceste servicii gratuite la cerere; vă rugăm solicitați detalii suplimentare la biroul local.

## SLOVAK

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

## SOMALI

Haddii af Ingiriisigu uusan ahayn luqaddaada hooyo oo aad u baahan tahay in lagaa caawiyo turjumaadda oraahda ah iyo midda qoran Agaasinka Gurayynta (Housing Executive) ayaa adeegyo bilaash ah bixin kara marka laga codsado, fadlan faahfaahin dheeraad ah weydii xafiiska xaafaddaada.

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



## Interpretation services for deaf or hard of hearing customers

If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can get in touch with us online, by text, or face to face.

## LET'S CONNECT

British (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) users can use the online interpretation service offered by SignLive to access advice and support on everything to do with your tenancy with us.

Video Relay Service (VRS) works by connecting you with a BSL or ISL interpreter who will relay the conversation between you and a member of our staff.

To find out how to use SignLive visit our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

## SEND US A TEXT

If you have a textphone or the Relay UK app installed on your smartphone, you can communicate with us via text using the below numbers:

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES:**  
18001 03448 920 900  
**REPAIRS: 18001 03448 920 901**  
**HOUSING BENEFIT:**  
18001 03448 920 902

## VISIT OUR OFFICE

If you've been asked to come into one of our offices by a member of our staff to discuss your housing situation, we can arrange for a BSL or ISL interpreter to provide you with communication support during your visit.

# What can my Patch Manager help me with?

Patch Managers are here to look after you and help resolve your housing issues. Here are some of the ways your Patch Manager can support you.



## I love my home but need some support so I can continue to live there independently.

With a referral from an Occupational Therapist, we can carry out minor and major adaptations to make it easier for you to do everyday tasks. You should chat to your Patch Manager about the difficulties you're having so they can determine what adaptations can be made to your home so it meets your needs. They can also refer you to specialist organisations that provide additional support services to help you manage your home.

## I'm finding it difficult to manage my money and I'm worried about falling behind on my rent.

Your Patch Manager can talk you through your situation and discuss the various options available to help you manage your rent payments. If you like, they can also refer you to one of our Financial Inclusion Officers who can check that you're getting all the benefits you're entitled to, and help you make your money go further.



## My home no longer meets my family's needs and I would like to move.

If you would like to live in a different area or another property, your Patch Manager can help you complete a transfer application and talk you through your housing options.

## I've been having difficulties with my neighbours and need some help resolving them.

If you're worried about anti-social behaviour, or are having a dispute with your neighbour, you should speak to your Patch Manager. They will handle your complaint in a sensitive way and work alongside our partners like the PSNI to resolve the problem.



## Get in touch

You can contact your Patch Manager and other members of our housing team in the following ways:



### BY OUR TENANT PORTAL

Send us a message on our tenant portal My Housing Executive at a time that suits you.

Register at [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)



### BY PHONE

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

**03448 920 900**

*(Lines are open 8.30am to 5pm Monday - Friday)*

REPORT A REPAIR

**03448 920 901**

*(Lines are open 8.30am to 5pm for normal repairs and 24 hours for emergencies)*

You can also report a repair by texting **66644** (starting your message with the word 'REPAIR' and remembering to include your address)



### BY EMAIL

For general enquiries email [information@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:information@nihe.gov.uk)



### BY SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to keep up to date with everything happening in your area and you can also report anything you need help with.

Like us on Facebook

[@HousingExecutive](https://www.facebook.com/HousingExecutive)

Follow us on Twitter

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

Instagram [nihecommunity](https://www.instagram.com/nihecommunity)



### BY VISITING OUR OFFICES

We understand that you may prefer to speak to someone in person.

However, in order to keep you and our staff safe, access to our offices is by appointment only.

If your issue can't be solved over the phone or online, your Patch Manager will make an appointment for you to come in to your local office to speak to a member of our housing team.

**Housing Executive**

 [nihe.gov.uk](http://nihe.gov.uk)

 [facebook.com/housingexecutive](https://facebook.com/housingexecutive)

 [@nihecommunity](https://twitter.com/nihecommunity)  [nihecommunity](https://www.instagram.com/nihecommunity)