

Housing news for
tenants & leaseholders



NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

voice

ISSUE 6: WINTER 2016



Also...

KEEPING WARM IN WINTER 04

TACKLING ASB 10

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER CONFERENCE 11

Welcome

Season's Greetings from NPH! Welcome to the sixth edition of NPH Voice.

It's been a busy autumn and we've got lots to update you on.

In this edition we'll be sharing with you some top saving tips for keeping warm over winter – written by our guest author, Kat! Our Planned Investment Team will be showing off the latest improvements we're making to homes in your area.

We'll also be meeting up with tenant Kristina to talk about NPH's free training programme (as well as listing our free courses coming up).

Our next tenant and leaseholder conference is just around the corner. On page 11 find out how to book your place and be involved!

Looking ahead to Spring 2017, we've got exciting news for all green fingered gardeners. Check out our back page for more information.

We'd like to say a massive thank you to the young people at our Market Street Youth Group for the festive cover photo. We hope you like it as much as we do.

Best wishes

Hannah
& Alex



At a glance...

Proud to be a Tenant

Meet this edition's Proud Tenant, Zubeda.

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NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

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Large print?

If you would like a version of this magazine in large print, or another language, please call

0300 330 7003



Reader Friendly

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NPH Voice Issue 6 Winter 2016

Zubeda



At NPH, we are proud of our tenants and we want everyone to know it. If you are proud to be a NPH tenant, we want to hear from you! For the Winter edition, we met up with Zubeda Dahir. We got chatting about family life and volunteering in the Somali community.

Zubeda came from South Africa to the UK with her then husband and it was far from an easy move for her. After getting off the plane in London, Zubeda's husband drove her to a family member's house in the "nearby town" of Northampton and unexpectedly left her there. Zubeda never saw her husband again.

11 years on, Zubeda lives in Abington with her two children. She is a volunteer for the Somali Community of Northampton and regularly helps people with filling out forms and accessing local services. "I take phone calls and I travel to help people who

may not be able to read forms, letters or go online". Zubeda is fluent in three languages - English, Swahili and Somali.

Zubeda is also a member of NPH's Tenants' Panel and recently got involved in the Complaints and Scrutiny Panels. "I get to raise local issues near me and gather feedback from my neighbours about NPH's housing service".

At home, she loves spending time with her children. Zubeda says "they're well behaved... well, at least until their friends come round anyway!"

She is also a passionate campaigner against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in ethnic communities.

"FGM is a very sensitive issue. It has no medical benefits and is illegal in the UK. I feel passionately about it as it is degrading and embarrassing for women".

Zubeda recently completed a qualification in hairdressing and dreams of one day opening her own salon. "My friends are always asking me to cut their hair when they come over".

Zubeda told us that she is proud to be a tenant because "NPH has done a lot to help me at home. They made my home more accessible and improved my bathroom to make life easier for me".

The big interview

How did you come to work at NPH?

I worked for Northampton Borough Council for 5 years before joining NPH. I was part of their Call Centre team, so I answered phone calls and helped customers with their enquiries. I saw this job advertised with NPH about 12 months ago. I was looking for something a bit different. I applied, got an interview and was offered the job.

What do you like about working for NPH?

I get to help people. That's really rewarding. I visit a variety of people in their homes - test their pendant and smoke alarms and stop for a chat to make sure they're okay. I do love my team too. They really support me and trust me to get on with my job.

What do you do when you're not at NPH?

I have three children and a Labrador named Ralph so I love spending time with them. I also like watching musicals. I was in America not so long ago and I went to Broadway to see Kinky Boots. It was funny being all the way over there, and watching a musical about Northampton!

What are you doing for Christmas this year?

I'm hosting Christmas for all my family this year. This will be the first time I've done it in ages. I'm a bit worried. I've cooked Christmas dinner once before, while I was watching the Wizard of Oz on TV. Unfortunately, I got a bit distracted and dinner got burnt...



Do you have a favourite holiday destination?

I do look forward to my holidays. I would definitely recommend Miami in the USA. The beaches are so clean and the sand is soft and white.

What about pet hates. Do you have one?

Rude car drivers. I don't like it when people honk their horns for no good reason.

If you didn't work for NPH, what would your dream job be?

I've always wanted to be a newsreader - breaking the biggest stories to the world. Someone like Sir Trevor McDonald. He's so passionate and delivers his news in such a professional way.

Keeping warm in winter

Thank you to our guest writer Kat Bennett for sharing this article – If you are worried about anyone in your area this winter, you can talk to us on 0300 330 7003.

Wintery walks in the snow can be so exciting. Watching the ducks at Abington Park slip-sliding along, seeing the white, starry flowers of blackthorn bushes on Bradlaugh Fields, and if you're lucky, catching a glimpse of the turquoise kingfisher as it swoops along Billing Brook.

But when we come home, reality bites. Dare we crank up the thermostat; what'll it cost? Well actually, the cost of keeping it turned low can be far worse.

According to the Department of Health there are around 25 thousand excess deaths during Winter. This is almost twice the rate when compared with Finland!

Hypothermia is rare, but our bodies really don't like the cold. We get ill more easily. Our sluggish circulation makes us more liable to trip indoors (let alone on ice outside). As our

blood cools, it thickens, and can cause heart problems. Our minds don't like it much either.

Mental health is severely affected by cold weather. It doesn't even have to be properly freezing - A 'mild' 8°C (46°F) is cold enough to affect us.

Who's most at risk from the cold?

- people over 65
- school children
- pregnant women
- people with disabilities
- people with poor mental health
- people on a low income
- people with cardiovascular or respiratory health problems

So, how do we stay warm enough to be healthy when heating is so pricey? Thankfully, there are some really simple tips that work and lots of help is available too.

How to stay warm

- Keep moving indoors
- Eat hot food and drink hot drinks
- Keep at least one room warm during the day and your bedroom warm at night
- Never use hot water bottles and an electric blanket together – they don't mix
- Wear lots of layers
- Don't block off radiators with curtains or furniture
- Draw your curtains to keep heat in

Did you know?

Electric, gas and water companies must keep a register of Priority customers. The companies know these people need urgent help if there's a blackout, gas cut, or water outage – but they can't know unless you tell them!

To ask to join their Priority Register, contact your utility company. They should have a number on their bill.

To find out more on keeping warm over winter, head to:
www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth



Safeguarding

We can all help



Have you ever worried about a neighbour's wellbeing and been unsure what to do? Maybe you decided to keep quiet because you didn't want to interfere?

Alison was worried about being a "busy-body" when she contacted us. She'd heard a lot of shouting, banging and crying next door and knew that young children were living there. Alison didn't know who to call and really didn't want to get anyone into trouble, but she also knew that she wouldn't forgive herself if anything happened to the children. Alison's call to her housing officer was the first step towards her neighbour getting the help she needed to break free from an abusive relationship and the family being moved to safety.

We have developed a safeguarding policy that sets out our commitment to safeguarding our tenants, and assisting vulnerable people to keep

their home. NPH employees have been trained on how to deal with safeguarding issues and are aware of who is responsible for safeguarding in the organisation.

This means that you don't need to worry about any of that. Our message to you is that if you have the slightest concern about someone in your area, just speak to us. You can talk to any member of the NPH team and we will take it from there.

If you would like to find out more about Safeguarding, you can visit our website www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/safeguarding or contact NPH on 0300 330 7003.

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding children includes:

- protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect;
- making sure they grow up in circumstances that allow safe and effective care.

Safeguarding adults includes:

- protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect;
- people and organisations working together to prevent the risk of abuse or neglect, and to stop them from happening;
- making sure people's wellbeing is promoted, taking their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into account.

Preparing for Universal Credit?

1 **Get a bank account**

1



2 **start saving a small amount regularly**

2



3 **Get online**

3

It's the third instalment of our **Universal Credit series** and having looked at banking and saving in previous editions, this time we're focusing on how important it is to get online.

You need to be online to apply for Universal Credit, which can be really difficult if you don't have a computer or internet access at home. There are a number of places in Northampton where you can get support to use the internet and make online applications.

You can visit the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall to use one of their computers

between 09:00 and 17:00 Monday – Friday. If you need extra support to access online services, there are a number of advisors available to help between 16:00 and 17:00.

Local libraries often have low cost internet services and Northamptonshire County Council offers adult learning courses, which can be free if you get certain benefits. The Adult Learning team at Northamptonshire County Council can be contacted on 0300 126 1000.

Services do change from time to time, so if you need advice on where

to go, please contact the NPH communications team on 01604 838136. We can also show you how to access NPH services on a computer or your smart phone.



Planned Investment update



Lower Bath Street
Spring Boroughs
Artist Impression

Spring Boroughs

In the last issue of NPH Voice, we shared with you 5 planning applications to develop new homes in Little Cross Street, Lower Bath Street and Althorp Street and for a ground floor extension to St Katherine's Court. We can now confirm that the planning applications have been approved by Northampton Borough Council.

Building contractor, Wilmot Dixon have been appointed to carry out the work. The redevelopment will include 14 three bedroom and 2 four bedroom houses as well as 9 two bedroom maisonettes with private terraced gardens and 9 one bedroom apartments.

At Cooper Street, Doddridge and St Peter's House there are major external improvements taking place, which will make these homes more

secure and improve how they look. We're also looking at the green space in the area. We hope to include a space to grow your own food, more washing lines and a play area.

Look out for us onsite very soon!

Dovercourt

NPH and our building contractor, Lovells recently met up with Dovercourt residents over fish and chips to welcome them to their newly refurbished homes.

The flats at Dovercourt have been fitted with new kitchens, new bathrooms and flooring throughout. On the outside, Dovercourt now benefits from new bin stores, a bicycle rack and a resurfaced car park. There are still some minor works to do, like adding a perimeter fence.

Kingsheath & Eastfield

We're working hard to improve homes in Eastfield and Kingsheath. We are painting the outside of blocks as well as lobby areas.

Balconies, entrance doors and some of the windows are being replaced and a major project is underway to improve the gardens too.

Eleonore House

We're giving Eleonore House a much needed face lift and adding 6 new apartments at the same time.

We'd like to thank residents for their patience during the works. We can't wait to see the finished results in the New Year!

Lakeview House

Did you see us recently at Eden Close Community Hub? We met with residents to reveal the design plans for a redevelopment on the former site of Lakeview House. The site is only a pile of rubble at the moment, but there are big plans to create 45 new homes for older people here.

Keep an eye out for further updates online at:

www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk



Artist impression of Lakeview House



Abbey Street blocks

What do you think of the finished works at Abbey and Devonshire House? Both blocks have received external wall insulation and new windows to make the homes more energy efficient.

The communal areas are also being redecorated. Next we will be looking to improve the communal gardens.

The great news is that work is now progressing at Melbourne House too. Work stopped during the summer when we discovered a protected breeding colony of roosting bats nesting in the roof. The bats have now flown away, which is a relief for all residents looking forward to the completed works.

Far Cotton & Delapre

We're adding external wall insulation and replacing some of the windows and doors in Far Cotton and Delapre. We're reviewing fencing too and repairs are being made where needed. We're really pleased with how the work is going so far.



Abbey Street finished block

The NPH Training Programme

It's free to all tenants and leaseholders!

We're delighted to introduce you to Kristina who has, with the help of our training programme, achieved her ambition of working in a role that helps others.

Kristina now volunteers as a receptionist at Relate and as a Disability Benefit Advisor at Community Law Service in Northampton. She likes helping people, which is something she got to do lots when she worked as a bus driver in London!

But it hasn't always been that easy. Before moving to her home in Northampton, Kristina was forced to seek refuge. The experience left her feeling low in confidence and afraid to go out in public.

Step by step, Kristina has been rebuilding her confidence by getting involved in NPH's training courses. This is her story.

"I was in refuge for 8 months. When I moved into my home with NPH, I heard about the training courses through their Customer Engagement Team. The courses were called things like 'building my confidence' and 'assertiveness'.

I guess that I didn't know what to expect from the training at

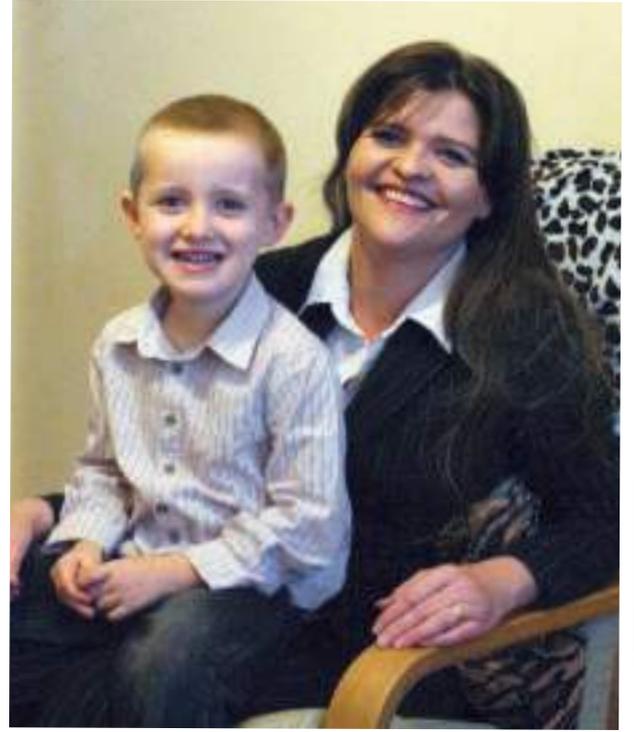
the time but I pushed myself to go. It was hard for me.

I found the training easy to understand. I tried the tips in my courses and it worked. I learnt how to control my emotions until it became natural for me to speak in public.

It made me realise that I have my own voice and can make my own decisions. That is why I feel confident to talk to you today!

I began to realise that I can help people. I decided to apply to volunteer somewhere. That is when I got a place with Relate and then Community Law Service. I now feel like I belong there.

I'm proud of how I am now, compared to before. I can see the changes in me and the feeling is amazing. I'm sharing my story to encourage others who need these skills to give NPH training a try. Without these courses I don't think I would have been able to move on with my life like this".



“

I'm proud of how I am now, compared to before. I can see the changes in me and the feeling is amazing. ”

Relate is a support and counselling service that helps people with relationships.

Community Law Service is a not for profit organisation providing specialist, independent and confidential advice to residents on welfare benefits, debt, housing, immigration and employment.

January to March 2017

Whether you are looking for practical skills to help you get into work or want to build your confidence, our training programme can help. There are also courses to help with your wellbeing and life skills, which are all completely free!

<p>Tuesday 10, 17, 24 and 31 January 2pm - 4pm at Abington Centre of Education</p>	<p>Maths Online Provided by Abington Centre of Education This is an online course to help learners increase their knowledge and skills in basic mathematics.</p>
<p>Friday 13, 20, 27 January and 3 February 5pm - 7pm at James Lewis Court Community Hub</p>	<p>ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for Beginners by Abington Centre of Education. This classroom-based course will teach basic English language rules, vocabulary and grammar.</p>
<p>Monday 16 January 10am - 1pm at Goldcrest Court Community Hub</p>	<p>Assertiveness by People Tree Training This workshop will show you how to make your point and get your needs met, while respecting others.</p>
<p>Wednesday 18 January 10am - 12pm at the Liburd Community Hub</p>	<p>British Sign Language Taster by Northamptonshire County Council This course will give you the opportunity to learn some basic phrases in British Sign Language.</p>
<p>Thursday 26 January 10am - 1pm at the Liburd Community Hub</p>	<p>Mental Health First Aid by Northamptonshire County Council This workshop will provide information on a range of mental health issues and give guidance on recognising if somebody develops poor mental health.</p>
<p>Friday 3, 10, 17 and 24 February 2pm - 4pm at Abington Centre of Education</p>	<p>English Online by Abington Centre of Education This pre-designed online course will teach the basics of the English language including word sounds, spelling, word meaning and grammar.</p>
<p>Wednesday 22 February 9.30am-4.30pm at Nene Drive Community Hub</p>	<p>Paediatric First Aid by Northamptonshire County Council The qualification will show that you are qualified to carry out Paediatric First Aid.</p>
<p>Thursday 23 February 10am - 1pm at Goldcrest Court Community Hub</p>	<p>Speaking with Confidence by Engage Associates This course is designed to help increase your confidence with public speaking by exploring ideas around body language, tone of voice, clarity of ideas, preparation and assertiveness.</p>
<p>Monday 6, 13, 20 and 27 March 5pm - 7pm at Abington Centre of Education</p>	<p>ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Online by Abington Centre of Education This online course will teach you basic English language rules, vocabulary and grammar.</p>
<p>Wednesday 15 March 9.30am to 4.30pm at Nene Drive Community Hub</p>	<p>Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering by Northamptonshire County Council This course is aimed at anyone who is interested in working with food. The course meets the legal requirements for working in the food catering industry.</p>

How do I enrol?

Call NPH's Customer Engagement Team on **01604 837836** or email **participation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk**.

Why not visit **www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/learn-something-new** and read all about our free training courses!

Tackling anti-social behaviour

We know how much this upsets you.

Anti-social behaviour upsets us too. We want to tackle it and make sure your home is a safe place to live. When you send a complaint to us about anti-social behaviour it lands on the desk of our Tenancy Compliance Team. They have over 20 years of experience tackling ASB and taking action to prevent it!



Meet Noella (front left) - Tenancy Compliance Officer for the South West area and Kingsthorpe. We spent a day with Noella to find out what her team do and the sorts of cases they deal with.

08:00 Noella's organising her home visits for the day, and checking emails to see if there are any updates from the witnesses to open cases. We're off to see three different tenants who have reported ASB near their homes.

10:00 We arrive at our first destination - Kingsthorpe! Noella is working closely with the tenant and their housing officer to resolve the issue. Noella explained, "ASB isn't always somebody's fault. Sometimes a neighbour making a report alerts us to the fact that one of our tenants needs extra support in some area of their lives."

10:45 Now we're off to Rye Hill to meet a private tenant who is experiencing problems with her neighbour, an NPH tenant. Noella really puts the resident at ease. They talk about the mediation service we offer and Noella explains that you can meet in a safe place and get help from someone with lots of experience of resolving conflict. After the visit Noella tells us, "It's really important not to take sides when you first get an ASB report. You need

to hear from everybody involved and have all the information before you decide what action to take."

11:00 Next stop, Duston. On the way, Noella tells us that we are going to see a victim of Hate Crime. We talk about what this means and how Noella and her colleagues in the Tenancy Compliance Team work with the Police to tackle it.

12:00 Noella catches up with the local Police Community Support Officers to talk about working together. They meet every 6 weeks and invite other agencies along, depending on the issues they are dealing with at the time. They agree it's better to meet in person to get things done. They can share news and make sure everyone is working together to prevent anti-social behaviour in the area. There's also the added bonus of sampling Noella's homemade shortbread!



14:00 Noella has lots of work to catch up on after being out of the office all day. She talks to us about one of the serious cases she is working on.

"Unfortunately, we can't always help people to change their behaviour and we have no choice but to take legal action. We deal with people who harm others, deal drugs, exploit sex workers and we need to keep residents safe by removing this kind of activity from our communities.

I'm working on a case at the moment where we helped the police get a closure order from the court. The court order means the property has to be closed down for three months. The police use this time to gather evidence and back at NPH, we go through the legal process to evict the tenant so that we can give someone in genuine housing need a home."

We decide to leave Noella to concentrate on getting her court papers ready and return phone calls she has missed while she was out. It's been a really interesting day and we can see that there is never a dull moment in the life of a Tenancy Compliance Officer!

A hate crime or incident is any offence perceived by the victim or any other person, whether a witness, friend or family member, as being motivated by prejudice or hate. A hate crime is an act of hostility or prejudice towards a person's:

- Race
- Colour
- Ethnic origin and nationality
- Religion, faith and belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability and learning difficulties
- Gender identity
- Physical appearance
- Any combination of the above

For more information visit www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/anti-social-behaviour

To report ASB:

Online at www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/anti-social-behaviour

Phone us on 0300 330 7003

Email us at: asb@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

You are invited to the

Tenant and Leaseholder

Conference 2017

Investing in Northampton's future



**Thursday 12 January 2017
at the Park Inn, Silver
Street, Northampton,
NN1 2TA.**

From 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

**Arrive at 10:30 am
for registration and
refreshments.**

Help us celebrate 2 years of NPH

Make your views count and find out more about what we do.

We will be looking back at last year's highlights and revealing new plans for 2017. There will also be a choice of workshops for you to get involved in and have a say on how we deliver your housing services.

You will meet members of the NPH team as well as some of our valued partners. We look forward to seeing you there.



Contact the Customer
Engagement Team to book
your place by 30 December.

Call us on 0300 330 7003
or 01604 837836

Email us at

participation@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

Limited free parking is available. The Park Inn is within walking distance of the North Gate Bus Station.
Lunch and refreshments are provided. Travel and care expenses can be reimbursed if you bring receipts to the event.

What would you like to read more of in NPH Voice?

I would like to see more information on:

- NPH's Planned Investment Programme
- Tenant and Leaseholder training
- Events taking place in the community
- Local residents' news
- How to get involved in NPH's Tenant Participation groups
- Information on NPH's Performance

- Useful contact information for NPH and their partners
- National news from the housing sector
- Community group or charity case study
- Crosswords, puzzles and competitions
- I would rather receive NPH Voice by email (please provide email address)

If there's something we've missed, tell us your idea here:

Name: Address:

You can tear this section away and post it to: **NPH Voice Editor, Westbridge Dept, St James Mill Road, NN5 5JW.**

You can also give the slip to any of the NPH team, drop it off at one of our community hubs www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/community-hubs or the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall.

The survey is also available online: www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/what-would-you-read-more-nph-voice.

Or you can email your answers to voiceditor@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk

We always love to hear your feedback on NPH Voice. We're also interested in the kind of articles you would like to read in the future.

All completed surveys received by 9 January will be entered into a draw to win £20 of love2shop vouchers.



Calling all green fingered gardeners! Get involved in the NPH Garden Competition 2017

We are running a garden competition next year to spot NPH's biggest gardening talents. The competition is open to all tenants and leaseholders. With judging in the Summer, now's the time to start planning your planting for next year and see if you could be one of our prize winners.

There are lots of different categories so everyone can have a chance to enter.

- **Best garden**
- **Best communal garden**
- **Best balcony or patio**
- **Best young gardener (under 16's)**
- **Best fruit and veg patch**
- **and most environmentally friendly garden.**

The competition will open next April. Look out for more information on how to enter on our website and in the next edition of NPH Voice.



We can't wait to see your beautiful blooms!