

Homes+People



Spring 2007



The view across our city

To find out the story behind these amazing pictures turn to page 3!



Your Homes
Newcastle

Useful info

This is 'Homes & People' the newsletter for Newcastle council tenants and leaseholders. If you want this information in your own language we will arrange for an interpreter to help you. This information is also available in large print, Braille and audio tape. We can also arrange for you to see a British Sign Language interpreter.

0191 278 8633

Bengali

এই তথ্য হল ইউর হোমস নিউকাসল সম্বন্ধে। এবং আমরা কিভাবে মনিয়ে পালন করছি সে সম্বন্ধে। ইউর হোমস নিউকাসল, নিউকাসল সিটি কাউন্সিলের পক্ষে কাউন্সিলের ঘর বাড়ি ব্যবস্থাপনার পরিদপ্তর। এই তথ্য যদি <বাংলায়> অথবা অন্য কোন ভাষায় প্রয়োজন হয় তাহলে এই নম্বরে ফোন করুন- ০১৯১ ২৭৮ ৮৬৩৩

Chinese

这是有关代表纽卡斯尔市政府 (Newcastle City Council) 负责管理市政房屋的 Your Homes Newcastle (您的纽卡斯尔住房) 组织的消息, 内容解释了我们是如何运作, 如果您需要此信息的普通话版本或其它语言版本, 请致电 0191 278 8633 索取。

Farsi

این اطلاعات درباره سازمان «خانه‌های شما در نیوکاسل» و عملکرد آن است. این سازمان از سوی شهرداری نیوکاسل، مسئولیت اداره خانه‌های دولتی را به عهده دارد. در صورت نیاز به این اطلاعات به زبان فارسی یا زبان‌های دیگر با شماره تلفن ۰۱۹۱۲۷۸۸۶۳۳ تماس بگیرید.

French

Ces informations concernent Your Homes Newcastle : qui est chargé de gérer les logements sociaux au nom de la municipalité de Newcastle et comment nous procédons. Si vous avez besoin de ces informations en français ou dans une autre langue, téléphonez au : 0191 278 8633.

Kurdish

ئێم زانیاریانه سهباروت به Your Homes Newcastle و چۆنیهی کارکردنه که به له لایهن شۆرای شاری نیوکاسلکهوه ئێرکی لهوهی پێداوه که خانووهکانی شۆرای شار بهرتۆههرا بهتانی بکات. ئهگهرحهزتان له وهرگرتنی ئێم زانیاریانه به زمانێ کوردی یا ههر زمانیکهی دیکه ههیه به ژماره تیلیفونی 0191 278 8633 پێوهندی بگرن.

Portuguese

Esta informação refere-se à Your Homes Newcastle, a organização responsável pela gestão da habitação social em nome do Município de Newcastle, e a nossa situação actual. Se precisar desta informação em <português> ou noutra língua, queira ligar para o 0191 278 8633.

Russian

Информация о наших услугах сдачи жилья в наем. Если Вы нуждаетесь в этой информации <на русском> или другом языке звоните по тел. 0191 278 8633.

Информация о Your Homes Newcastle, которая отвечает за управление делами муниципального жилья от имени Муниципалитета г. Ньюкасла и об общем состоянии дел.

Spanish

Ésta es información sobre Your Homes de Newcastle, que es la responsable de gestionar las viviendas municipales en nombre del Ayuntamiento de Newcastle, y sobre nuestra manera de hacerlo. Si necesita esta información en español o en otro idioma, llame al 0191 278 8633.

Your Homes Newcastle Limited. Registered in England and Wales. Registration number 5076256. Registered office: Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8PR. A company controlled by Newcastle City Council.

Useful numbers

Community Housing Offices

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Avison Street | 0191 277 1300 |
| Blakelaw / Cowgate | 0191 277 1000 |
| Byker | 0191 278 1555 |
| Cruddas Park | 0191 277 1066 |
| Elswick | 0191 277 1111 |
| Fenham | 0191 277 1200 |
| Gosforth | 0191 277 1166 |
| Newbiggin Hall | 0191 277 1400 |
| Newburn | 0191 277 1133 |
| North Benwell | 0191 277 1484 |
| North Kenton | 0191 277 4360 |
| Scotswood | 0191 277 1355 |
| Shieldfield | 0191 278 1566 |
| St Anthony's North | 0191 278 1626 |
| St Anthony's South | 0191 278 1600 |
| Walker (includes Churchwalk, Pottery Bank and Daisy Hill) | 0191 278 8455 |
| West Denton | 0191 277 7940 |

Modern Homes helplines

0800 091 1255

East

covering Walker, St Anthony's North & South, Daisy Hill, Pottery Bank, Shieldfield, Byker, Heaton

0800 091 1257

North and Outer West

covering Newburn, Newbiggin Hall, West Denton, Blakelaw, Cowgate, Fawdon, North Kenton, Gosforth

0800 091 1256

West

covering Cruddas Park, Avison Street, Benwell, Scotswood, Fenham, Elswick

0800 091 1273

Information and admin

0800 091 0082

Leasehold

Other numbers

Community Care Alarm Service
0191 278 8699

Envirocall
0191 274 4000

Gas servicing and repairs
0191 278 3450

Newcastle Furniture Service
0191 278 1888

Repairs Centre
0845 113 8888

Your Choice Homes
0191 277 2020

The Communications and Involvement team, Your Homes Newcastle, produces this newsletter. If you have any comments about the newsletter please contact: Communications and Involvement Team, Your Homes Newcastle, YHN House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7LX
Phone: 0191 278 8633
email: yhn@yhn.org.uk

Designed by:
Beacon Creative
www.beaconcreative.com

Printed by:
Harmsworth Printing Ltd

Letter from Satwant Sodhi

Hello and welcome to the Spring edition of Homes + People!

My name is Satwant Sodhi and I've been a council tenant in Heaton for almost twenty years, and I'm also part of the Homes + People editors panel – in fact, I was the person who suggested the calendar of faiths on the back page!

One of the things I care about most is bringing people from different communities together and respecting each other's differences, so I'm pleased to hear about the launch of YHN's new Diversity Guide, which you can read all about in this issue of Homes + People.

We all know we live in the most beautiful city in the World and I think we can all agree that the pictures taken from the roofs of some of our homes as part of the "View from the Top" project really show that off.

Speaking of our homes, one of the things I'm most interested in is YHN's Modern Homes programme.

It's fantastic that all these improvements are being made, but if you're like me you probably have a few worries about your life being disrupted during the work to your home, and questions about when the work to your home is actually going to be done.

If you have any questions about the Modern Homes programme you can call YHN's free helpline on 0800 091 1255.

You can also go along to the 'Talk to Us' bus, where you can see first hand the sort of work which will be done on your home.

The Homes + People readers panel always wants to hear your stories or even just your ideas about what you'd like to see in the newsletter, so if you have an idea for something it should cover, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Bye for now!

Satwant Sodhi

View from the top brings back memories

Tower block residents in all four corners of the city have been involved in an exciting new arts project.

The "View from the Top" project, organised by Newcastle City Council's arts development team, saw photographer Chris Madge climbing tower blocks in Denton, Elswick, Kenton and Walkergate and taking stunning pictures of the view – as you'll see from our cover!

These pictures were then used by artist Elaine Parker to inspire the memories of the older residents in the blocks, in Denton, Elswick, Kenton and Walkergate, which were filmed for a special DVD.

The aim of the project was to highlight the sense of community found in tower blocks, and well as giving some of the city's senior citizens the chance to reflect on how our city has changed and developed over the years and to have their say on the issues which matter to them the most.

"It was really great going up to the top of the towers to take the pictures - I quite fancy going back up actually," says photographer Chris Madge.

"What struck me was how each block had a personality of its own and how what mattered to the people the most changed depending on what part of the city they lived in."

One of the residents who took part in the scheme was Joyce Robinson of Cruddas Park, Elswick.

"I've lived in this area all my life, as have at least six generations of my family – probably more," she said.

"We're all so proud of our community, so it was wonderful we could all get together and share our memories."

"We're already very close in this block, but it brought us all together," says Edith Weaver of Hilltop House in Denton, who also took part in the project.

"It was really interesting. I didn't grow up here so I learnt a lot of things I didn't know before."

The pictures will go on display at the tower blocks and local community centres later this year.

Changes to our community housing offices

A number of our Community Housing Offices have recently merged, or are merging soon.

This is part of our on-going programme of changes, which ensure our service meets your needs in the most efficient way.

We're bringing our staff together in larger, better equipped offices which mean we can offer you more, and our staff can spend more time on your estates – something you've told us is very important to you.

The changes also mean we're able to offer you longer opening hours at our busiest offices.

The next change takes place this summer when our St Anthony's North and St. Anthony's South offices in Walker merge with each other. This will see the North office close, and services transfer to the newly-expanded South office.

Our Heaton office closed in January. If you live in Heaton your new housing office is either our Shieldfield office (if you live in Heaton) or Gosforth (if you live in High Heaton).

Our Fawdon office closed in February, and also merged with our Gosforth office. A regular surgery service for

tenants and leaseholders will remain at the Fawdon office on Mondays and Fridays from 10am to 12 midday.

If you have trouble getting along to your new office we can arrange for a home visit for you. To arrange this, or for more information, call your local office - you'll find the number on page 2.

New DVD for new tenants

When you start your tenancy with us, there's an awful lot of information you need to know.

That's why we've put together a DVD for new tenants, explaining the terms of your tenancy agreement, and telling you about the services we offer you.

We thought this would be a quicker and more memorable way to let you know about your responsibilities as a tenant and our responsibilities as landlords. The DVD also tells you about all the Your Homes Newcastle services available to you – like our Furniture Service and Advice and Support team.

When you take up a tenancy you will be asked to watch the DVD when you sign for the tenancy at your housing office and you can also take it home with you and watch it again at your leisure.

Estate walkabouts giving you the power to make a difference

Our estate walkabouts give you the chance to improve your community for the better.

They bring local residents together with local housing and council staff for trouble-shooting tours of estates, identifying where improvements can be made.

They're a way of using your know-how to make our estates safer, happier places to live, as well as making sure we're tackling the issues you care about most.

One walkabout is taking place on April 26 in Walker and is being organised by our St Anthony's North housing office team.

The walk will take in the area south of Welbeck Road and bounded by Scrogg Road, Allendale Road and Dunstanburgh Road. For more information call 0191 278 1626.

If you're interested in knowing when an estate walkabout will be taking place near you, contact your local housing office.



Giving you the power to make a difference - an estate walkabout

We're backing Newcastle Warm Zone

The entire Your Homes Newcastle board recently signed a pledge supporting the aims of Newcastle Warm Zone.

The pledge states our commitment to;

- warmer homes across Newcastle
- saving energy and cutting environmentally damaging carbon emissions, and,
- helping people to reduce their heating bills and boost their income through new benefits entitlements.

Newcastle Warm Zone can make your home warmer and more energy efficient by insulating your loft and walls, and because you're council tenants this costs you absolutely nothing.

25,000 homes across our city have already been insulated and having the work done could cut £200 from your heating bill every year!

There are other companies in Newcastle who provide a similar service to Warmzone, but only Warmzone is an official partner of Your Homes Newcastle, and these other companies will charge you for the work they do.



YHN Chief Executive John Lee, Chairman Bill Midgley and tenants representative board member Margaret O'Callaghan sign a pledge supporting Newcastle Warm Zone

Don't miss out on getting your home insulated for FREE. It takes only five minutes to talk to a Warm Zone assessor, and the work is carried out quickly and with minimum disruption. For more information, call Newcastle Warm Zone on 0191 277 7373.

Changes to the way you pay your water rates

As you may already have heard, we've taken the decision to no longer collect your water rates on behalf of Northumbrian Water.

This decision will come into effect on April 1, and we will not be responsible for collecting your rates after this date.

We've done this to free up our staff to spend more of their time doing the things you've told us are the most important to you.

Although nearly all of you will be affected by the change, all that will change is you will now be paying your bill to Northumbrian Water instead of us – that really is it!

You can still pay your bill exactly the same way you are now, just to different people.

You can pay your bill at any PayPoint agency, at your bank, over the phone by calling 0845 733 5566, by direct debit and even over the internet at www.nwl.co.uk.

If you pay by direct debit, where the money is automatically debited from your account each month without you having to lift a finger, you'll also get £5.50 automatically cut from your bill.

The only people who won't be affected are those of you who whose water comes from a single metre supplying more than one property, such as in some of our sheltered or temporary accommodation.

If you want to contact Northumbrian Water you can call them on 0845 717 1100, or email customercentre@nwl.co.uk. A minicom number is also available on 0845 723 1254.

Two years on – our Modern Homes programme

It's now two years since the start of our Modern Homes programme – the biggest ever housing improvement programme in the history of Newcastle.

This means thousands of you are now enjoying the external and internal improvements to your homes - things like refitted kitchens and bathrooms, double glazing and even new front doors or power sockets!

We're really picking up pace now – last year alone we finished work on over 5500 of your homes (meaning over

12,000 homes have now had work done) and we're well on track to have all the work completed by the target of 2011.

Sometimes we've had to change our plans to make the work more cost effective, or for circumstances beyond our control which has meant we've had to change the timetable for work on your home from what we originally told you. If that has been the case we're very sorry.

Here are the decent home schemes which are happening near you in the next few months.

Don't forget our 'Talk to Us' bus will visit your area before the work is carried out so you can see just what work is going to be done on your house for yourself!

| East Area | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Estate | Type of work | Number of properties | Constructor | Start of work | Date bus on site | Bus location |
| Tarset Street | External | 29 | FHM | June 2007 | Tuesday April 10 10am-12 noon | Tarset Street |
| Diamond Row | External | 163 | FHM | March 2007 | Thursday April 5 10am-12 noon | Fairhaven Avenue car park |
| West Area | | | | | | |
| Estate | Type of work | Number of properties | Constructor | Start of work | Date bus on site | Bus location |
| Ryehill (Beech Grove Road) | Internal | 27 | Wates | April 2007 | Thursday April 12 10am-12 noon | Kenilworth Court shopping centre |
| Ryehill West Infills | External | 69 | Straightline | April 2007 | As above | As above |
| Ryehill East Leazes Court mid rise flats | External Internal | 146 76 | City Build Mears | June 2007 April 2007 | As above Thursday 26 April 10am-12 noon | As above Barrack Road, next to Queens Court |
| Outer West | | | | | | |
| Estate | Type of work | Number of properties | Constructor | Start of work | Date bus on site | Bus location |
| Lemington houses and flats | Internal | 306 | Mears | April 2007 | Tuesday April 24 10am-12 noon | Denton Avenue |
| Kenton houses and lowrise | External | 493 | Straightline | April 2007 | Wednesday April 25 2pm-4pm | Hillsview Avenue |
| Grange houses and flats | External | 20 | Mansell | April 2007 | Monday April 16 10am-12 noon | Horwick Avenue |
| Ewart and Shafto multis | Combined | 63 | Wates | April 2007 | As above | As above |

A day in someone else's shoes...

A group of Newcastle youngsters teamed up with the police this spring to learn what life is like in the other's shoes.

Youth Voice, part of our Inline team, our groundbreaking project helping vulnerable young people live independently and fighting youth homelessness organised a special 'role reversal' day.

The event saw police and 12 youngsters from Walker Technology college swap places to experience each other's perspective on what it's like to be a young person or police officer, a victim or crime or even the perpetrator in a number of situations young people have a risk of being involved in – things like underage drinking in a park, and an incident of so-called 'happy-slapping' on the metro.

The event took place at the Fire Brigade's state of the art Safety Works centre in the West End, where the emergency services practice for real life events in a realistic film-set-like setting.

"The aim of the day was to allow both sides to see each other's point of view," says Inline's Karen Adamson, who organised the event.

"It also helped the police build up positive and effective relationships with young people on their beat.

"We took part in a consultation called 'What matters to us', where thousands of young people from across Newcastle told us what issues were important to them, and many of them told us they didn't feel respected enough by people in authority, the police in particular.

"Not only did the event show them that they are respected, it also taught them that respect has to be earned."

Seeing things from the other person's side – city youngsters and police reversed roles at a special event this spring



"This was a great opportunity for our pupils to gain the knowledge and understanding which will inform the decisions they're going to be making as adults," says Claire Goodwill, Head of Personal Development at Walker Technology College.

"I think this will really boost their confidence and self-esteem – we also run a project called 'Student Voice' which is all about showing the children we listen to them, and this is another way of showing them that we take their views seriously."

Youth Voice works with young people to empower them to use their experiences to make positive changes in their own lives and to have a voice in their communities.

They're part of our Inline team who help youngsters who are unable to live with their families live successful and independent lives.

Often they move into council homes at short notice and in difficult circumstances, having never had to look after themselves before.

Inline gives them all the support they need, from teaching them how to cook and budget to helping them apply for college courses and benefits.

For more information, contact Inline on 0191 277 1192 or email inline@yhn.org.uk.

Report your repairs online

It's now easier than ever to report work you need doing on your home.

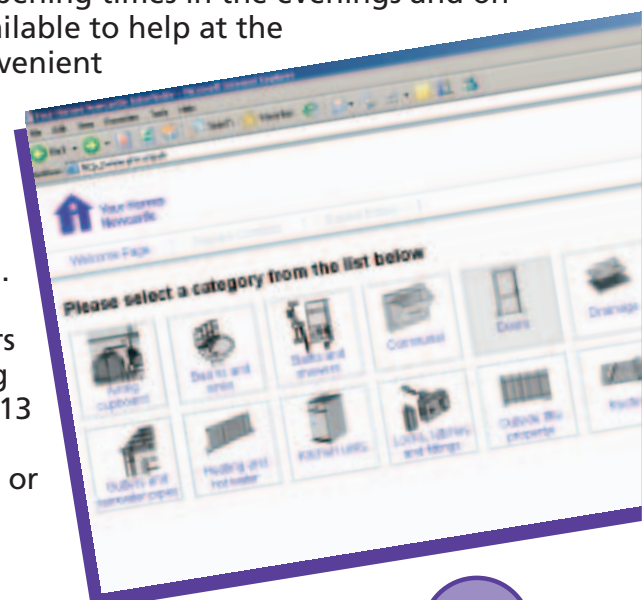
You can now report problems over the internet, just by logging onto www.yhn.org.uk or www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/repaircall

We've designed the system to be very easy to use. All you have to do is point and click on a picture to indicate the sort of fault you want to report.

You can also indicate when you'll be at home and available for the repair to be done, although the repairs service centre will confirm an appointment separately.

As we told you in the last Homes + People, our repairs team has also extended their opening times in the evenings and on Saturdays, so they are available to help at the times which are most convenient to you, and we've also introduced rapid response teams to your communities, who can react immediately if you have work needing doing.

You can also report repairs over the phone by ringing our repairs line on 0845 113 8888, by emailing repairs@newcastle.gov.uk or by popping into your local housing office.



Shared ownership

A few of you have got in touch to ask us why we don't run a shared ownership scheme.

Shared ownership allows you to buy a share of your council home, usually around 50%, while continuing to pay rent on the share you don't own.

If and when you can afford to, you can buy more shares until you own 100% of your home.

At the moment we aren't able to offer shared ownership as it generally needs some public funding to allow housing

associations, councils, or arms length management organisations like us to build homes for shared ownership, and at the moment neither YHN nor the council has direct access to this funding.

We're working with the council to pilot a new house building scheme which may allow the council to help in the development of new homes, including shared ownership homes. The results of the pilot will be known later this year.

When we know more, we'll let you know in a future edition of Homes + People.

Smoking in communal areas

You might have read a few things in the papers recently saying you aren't allowed to smoke in your homes any more.

This couldn't be further from the truth but, as we told you about in the last Homes + People, we have made some changes to our smoking policy in the last few months.

First of all, as we said last time, we're now politely asking you not to smoke in the same room as our staff or contractors when they visit your home.

This doesn't mean you can't smoke in the same room as

them, or that you'll be told off if you do, and it certainly doesn't mean you can't smoke in your home normally - we're just asking you to show some consideration when people visit you on our behalf.

We have to take these steps to comply with the new laws protecting people from the effects secondary smoke at work (which kills 35 people in the North East every year) and in public which come into force on July 1.

For the same reasons, smoking will also not be allowed in communal areas of private dwellings like tower blocks and sheltered accommodation – places like indoor stairwells, community rooms, foyers, lifts and bin stores - from July 1.

We hope this clears everything up.

Correction

We said in the last edition of Homes and People that the people supported by our Asylum Seekers Unit were tenants. This is not the case as people seeking asylum do not have the right to become tenants until they receive the right to stay in this country.

People seeking asylum are only given permission to occupy their accommodation until a decision on their asylum claim is made.

Our apologies for the mistake.

New diversity guide launched for staff

From April all our staff will be given a pocket guide to diversity. The guide will provide an introduction into the different lifestyles, cultures, customs and religious backgrounds of the communities we work with.

It will give advice on what to think about when visiting your homes and organising events.

The guide also gives information on

- Race and Religion
- Older and Younger People
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender

A lot of our work involves our staff visiting you in your home and working in your community. The guide will help us be as sensitive to your needs as possible and make sure we provide the highest standard of customer service.

Our new strategic objectives

We might be a few months into the New Year now, but April sees the start of the new business year, and we thought it would be the perfect time to launch our new strategic objectives.

This is our new mission, and our new objectives.

Your Homes Newcastle intends to be the best housing provider in the North East

We will achieve this by investing in

- Support and care for communities
- Three star excellent services
- A quality workforce
- Refurbishing and building homes

In case you're wondering, "Three star services" doesn't mean the same as a three star hotel!

It's the highest rating given to organisations like us by government inspectors.

These objectives are really important to us – they aren't just lofty words – all our plans are built around achieving them, they drive our day-to-day work and they signpost where we're heading in the future, and as you might have noticed, the first letter of each of the objectives spells out the word "STAR" making them that bit easier for our staff to remember.

First £250 winners drawn! What would you do with £250?

In the last Homes + People we told you all about how you can win yourself £250 just for keeping your rent account up to date.

The first winner of our three-monthly prize draw was chosen at random just as we went to print and we'll tell you all about it in the next issue of Homes + People.

If you weren't the lucky winner this time, the next draw takes place on July 1, and if your rent account is clear on that day, you could be the one celebrating.

We're running the scheme to say 'thank you' to all of you who pay your rent on time, because without you we

wouldn't be able to provide all the services we do.

We have just drawn the first winner of our first monthly £50 prize draw for tenants who have signed up to pay their rent by direct debit.

Paying your rent by direct debit couldn't be simpler, all you do is arrange for your rent to be paid automatically each month and your bank will do the rest.

To set up a direct debit, ring our income team, pop into your local community housing office or download a form from www.yhn.org.uk.

Your Homes, Your Stars!



Your Homes. Your Stars
For people making
a difference in Newcastle

As we told you in the last Homes + People our yearly Your Homes, Your Say event at St James' Park is going to be a little different this year.

We're going to be holding our first ever Good Neighbour awards at the event – an Oscar-like ceremony celebrating the people who improve the lives of their neighbours and turn estates into real communities.

People are nominated for these awards by you – this is your chance to say thank you to someone you think deserves recognition for their efforts making your community, and even the World, a better place.

So if one of your neighbours helps you with the shopping, gives you lifts into town, takes a stand against anti-social

behaviour or goes out of their way to do something for the benefit of the community, why don't you put their name forward?

Winners will receive a medal and a £200 Eldon Square shopping voucher, and one winner will receive a special trophy and a £500 Eldon Square voucher.

We've already heard some wonderful stories of how some of you go out of your way to help others, and there's still plenty of time for you to make your nomination.

You can pick up nomination forms by popping into your local community housing office or by calling Nicola Salmon on 0191 278 8628.

The Your Homes Your Say event is your chance to tell us your views on the way we do our jobs and our chance to tell you about the wide range of services we can offer you. This year's event is set to take place on Wednesday July 18.

Helping your garden grow, and budding careers flower

As part of your tenancy agreement we expect you to keep your garden tidy - but we know many of you with busy lives or young families simply don't have the time, while some of us just can't get down to do the weeding like we used to.

That's where our new Garden Care team come in. For just £5 a week they'll take care of your gardens for you – cutting grass, picking up litter, planting, weeding and pruning.

The scheme is currently running in North Kenton, Blakelaw, West Denton and Newburn, but we're planning to roll it out city-wide in the future.

The service doesn't just help your garden grow though, it's helping young careers flower too.

The team is largely made up of 16 to 24 year-olds who either recently left school or were out of work before joining the scheme. They'll be studying for a NVQ in horticulture as they work.

Their work will be overseen by our Employment Initiatives team who have so far helped 400 people find work across our city, and set-up apprenticeships for over 60 youngsters.

"Our motto is 'great gardens, great communities'," says David Lavery who manages the scheme.

"We know how much people love their gardens and we want to take the worry of having to look after them from people who need a little help, so people can really appreciate their gardens."

"Well-maintained gardens can brighten up entire estates and improve the quality of life of everyone in the area."

For more information call David Lavery on 0191 278 1899



10

One of the young trainees staffing our Garden Care team gets to work

You said, we did

How are we doing?
Tell us and make a difference

You can tell us how we're doing through surveys, complaints, meetings and focus groups.

We take your views seriously. In each issue of Homes + People we'll tell you what you've said, and what we're doing in response

What you said

Residents from one of our Modern Homes schemes, Byker Old Town, told us that removing the box sash windows from their properties causes a lot of damage to the plaster around the window frame, and that the work in general is causing a great deal of mess in their homes.

What we did

We recognise the removal of the box sash windows has caused more mess than we expected. The additional mess has happened because a lot of the existing plaster in these properties is old and in poor condition. In view of the level of damage, we have agreed a disturbance allowance will be paid to tenants where extensive damage has been caused by the removal of the box sash windows in their homes.

Our construction partner in Byker Old Town, Straightline, already put protective covers over all areas of the home when completing the improvement work. In response to what customers have said they also agreed to clean tenants' carpets in exceptional circumstances.

YHN and Straightline have arranged for a respite house to be made available to all tenants during the improvement works. Residents in Byker Old Town were asked to inform Straightline's Resident Liaison Officer if they want the use of this house during their improvement work.

What you said

Young people from our support service Inline said they wanted to have informal discussions with us on a regular basis.

What we did

We have organised a series of informal chats with young people who are customers of our Inline service when we will talk about ways we can improve our services.

What you said

Young people from Inline also said the posters in our Community Housing Offices all look the same and aren't attractive to young people.

What we did

We have developed posters targeted specifically for young people and have developed some cartoon characters that we will use on the information we send out, on our posters, at events and on our website.

What you said

Tenant mystery shoppers testing sheltered housing services found that not all staff were able to provide them with enough information about the cost of renting sheltered housing.

What we did

In response to this a training programme has been arranged to make sure that all staff provide the right information across the city.

There are loads of ways for you to tell us how you think we're doing – like surveys, our online polls, complaints and compliments, meetings and focus groups.

You can sign up to become a Tenant Mystery Shopper and You can even join our Homes + People readers panel and have a say in what you read in this magazine!

For more details of how you can get involved please contact our tenant involvement team on 0191 278 8723 or by texting 'INVOLVE' plus your name and address to 0779 088 257.

For young people, by young people – the cartoon characters requested by young people to make the information aimed at them more eye-catching



Board meeting dates

The YHN board meets every month to make decisions about housing in Newcastle. The board is made up of 18 people, six of whom are tenants elected by you.

There are also three boards which focus on your part of the city – and anyone can go along and take part.

The next YHN board meetings take place at YHN House, Benton, at 5pm on:

April 24, May 22, June 26

Area boards meet every other month at 5pm. Their next meetings take place on:

East Area Board

May 10 (Brinkburn Community Centre)

North and Outer-West area board:

May 14 (Venue TBC)

West Area Board:

May 8 (Venue TBC)

All other dates and times where correct when Homes + People went to print.

For more information, contact Maureen Dickson on 0191 278 8624. If you'd like to know what went on at previous meetings details can be found on our website at www.yhn.org.uk.

Dates of interest

1st April to 29th June 2007

All dates shown use the Gregorian (Western) calendar

| Event | Dates | Religion | Notes |
|--|------------|-----------|---|
| Palm Sunday | 01/04/2007 | Christian | The most solemn week of the Christian year, Holy week is the week leading up to Easter, and is the week during which Christians particularly remember the last week of Jesus's life. Holy week begins on Palm Sunday. |
| Hanuman Jayanti | 02/04/2007 | Hindu | This festival marks the birth of Hanuman, the Monkey God. |
| Therevada New Year | 02/04/2007 | Buddhist | New Year festival for Theravada Buddhists. It is celebrated for three days from the first full moon day in April. |
| Passover or Pesach | 03/04/2007 | Jewish | Is a spring festival that marks the escape from captivity in Egypt. |
| Maundy Thursday | 05/04/2007 | Christian | Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter. Christians remember it as the day of the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and established the ceremony known as the Eucharist. |
| Good Friday | 06/04/2007 | Christian | The most important events in Christianity are the death and later resurrection of Jesus Christ, who Christians believe was the Son of God, whose teachings are the foundation of the faith. |
| Easter Sunday | 08/04/2007 | Christian | Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the most important Christian festival, and the one celebrated with the greatest joy. |
| Vaisakhi (Baisakhi) | 13/04/2007 | Sikh | Vaisakhi is one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar. It is the Sikh New Year festival and also commemorates 1699, the year Sikhism was born as a collective faith. Unlike other festivals, Vaisakhi doesn't move around the Western calendar and has always been celebrated on 13 or 14 April. Hindus celebrate the day too. |
| Gurpurb - birthday of Guru Nanak | 14/04/2007 | Sikh | Gurpurbs are festivals that are associated with the lives of the Gurus. They are happy occasions which are celebrated most enthusiastically by Sikhs. Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism, and his most famous teachings were that there is only one God, and that all human beings can have direct access to God with no need of rituals or priests. |
| Gurpurb - birthday of Guru (Nanakshahi calendar) | 18/04/2007 | Sikh | Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) was the ninth of the Sikh Gurus. |
| Gurpurb - birthday of Guru Angad Dev (Nanakshahi calendar) | 18/04/2007 | Sikh | Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552) was the second of the Sikh Gurus. |
| Ridvan - first day | 21/04/2007 | Bahá'í | The most important Baha'i festival. Start of a 12 day festival to celebrate the day when Baha'u'llah said that he was the prophet predicted by the Bab. |
| St George's Day | 23/04/2007 | Christian | Saint George is the patron saint of England. |
| Beltane | 01/05/2007 | Pagan | Pagans celebrate Beltane with maypole dances, symbolizing the mystery of the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God |
| Ridvan - twelfth day | 02/05/2007 | Bahá'í | Marks Baha'u'llah's departure from the Ridvan garden. |
| Wesak / Buddha Day | 02/05/2007 | Buddhist | The most important of the Buddhist festivals, celebrating Buddha's birth and for some Buddhists also his death. |
| Gurpurb - birthday of Guru Arjan Dev (Nanakshahi calendar) | 02/05/2007 | Sikh | 'Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) was the fifth of the Sikh Gurus. |
| Ascension Day | 17/05/2007 | Christian | 'Ascension Day marks the last earthly appearance of Christ after his resurrection. Christians believe Christ ascended into heaven. It is celebrated 40 days after Easter. |
| Declaration of the Bab | 23/05/2007 | Bahá'í | The Bab was the Forerunner of Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i faith. His mission was to prepare the world for the coming of Baha'u'llah and he declared it in the evening of May 22 1844. |
| Shavuot | 23/05/2007 | Jewish | Shavuot marks the time when the first harvest was taken to the Temple. Also known as the Festival of Weeks. |
| Gurpurb - birthday of Guru Amar Das (Nanakshahi calendar) | 23/05/2007 | Sikh | Guru Amar Das (1479-1574) was the third of the Sikh Gurus. |
| Pentecost | 27/05/2007 | Christian | Pentecost is the festival when Christians celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the Christian Church. It is celebrated on the Sunday 50 days after Easter. |
| Ascension of Baha'u'llah | 29/05/2007 | Bahá'í | Anniversary of Baha'u'llah's death in 1892 near Akka, Israel. |
| Trinity Sunday | 03/06/2007 | Christian | The first Sunday after Pentecost. Christians meditate on the nature of God as "Three in one". |
| Corpus Christi | 07/06/2007 | Christian | Roman Catholic festival celebrating the "real presence of Christ in the Eucharist". The festival falls on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. |
| Gurpurb - martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev | 16/06/2007 | Sikh | Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Sikh Guru and the first Sikh martyr. He also compiled all of the past Gurus' writings into one book, which is now the Sikh holy scripture: the Guru Granth Sahib. |
| Summer Solstice - Litha | 21/06/2007 | Pagan | The longest day of the year. |
| St Peter's Day | 29/06/2007 | Christian | Observed by Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches. One of the oldest saints' days. |