

Homes+People



Spring 2006



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

Arabic

هذه هي 'Homes & People' الرسالة الإخبارية للمستأجرين المقيمين في مساكن مجلس بلدية نيوكاسل. إذا أردت الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغتك فسوف نرتب للاستعانة بمتترجم لمساعدتك.

Bengali

"এটি 'Homes & People' (হোমস অ্যান্ড পিপল) নিউক্যাসেল কাউন্সিল ডাভাটের নিউলেটার। আপনি যদি এই বিষয়ে তথ্য নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তবে আমরা আপনাকে সাহায্য করার জন্য একজন সোভায়ার ব্যবস্থা করে দেব।"

Chinese

这是纽卡斯尔市政府房客通讯 'Homes & People' (住家与居民)。如果您希望得到本资料的中文翻译，我们将安排传译为您提供帮助。

Farsi

"این خبرنامه شورای کرایه نشین های نیوکاسل تحت عنوان 'Homes & People' (مردم و خانه ها) است. اگر شما می خواهید که اطلاعاتی در این مورد به زبان خودتان داشته باشید ما می توانیم از یک مترجم بخوایم که به شما کمک کند."

French

Voici "Homes & People" (« des foyers et des gens ») le bulletin pour les locataires des logements sociaux de Newcastle. Si vous souhaitez cette information dans votre propre langue nous pouvons vous fournir les services d'un interprète.

Hindi

"यह 'Homes & People' (होमस एंड पीपल) न्यूकैसल परिषद के किराएदारों की समाचार पत्रिका है। अगर आपको यह जानकारी अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो हम आपकी मदद के लिए एक अनुवादक का इंतज़ाम कर सकते हैं।"

Punjabi

"ਇਹ ਨਿਊਕੈਸਲ ਸੈਮਸਟੀ ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ ਵਾਲੇ 'Homes & People' (ਹੋਮਸ ਐਂਡ ਪੀਪਲ) ਸਮਾਚਾਰ-ਪੱਤਰ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਇੱਕ ਉਤਸ਼ਾਹਿਤ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ।"

Urdu

"Homes & People" (ہومز اینڈ پیپل) نیوکیسل کونسل کرایہ داروں کیلئے اطلاع نامہ ہے۔ اگر آپ یہ معلومات اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو ہم آپ کی مدد کیلئے ایک ترجمان کا انتظام کر دیں گے۔"

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.

2

Useful numbers

Community Housing Offices

Avison Street	0191 277 1300
Blakelaw / Cowgate	0191 277 1000
Byker	0191 278 1555
Cruddas Park	0191 277 1066
Daisy Hill	0191 278 1666
Elswick	0191 277 1111
Fawdon	0191 277 1422
Fenham	0191 277 1200
Gosforth	0191 277 1166
Heaton	0191 278 1811
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 and Pottery Bank)	0191 278 8455
West Denton	0191 277 7940

Property and Contract Services

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 019 1256

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

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

Repaircall
0191 277 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:
Newcastle Chronicle
and Journal Ltd



Letter from the chair

Dear reader
Welcome to the spring edition of Homes and People.

I write this letter just after joining with tenants, staff and construction partners to celebrate the official opening of our Talk To Us Bus. The converted double-decker will show you how your home is going to be improved as part of the Modern Homes programme. The bus is a real asset as it means that we can now take information and a full range of fixtures and fittings out to where you live. This will make it much easier for you to talk to us about the work and understand what choices you can make.

In the past year we have made real progress in the Modern Homes programme. Over 4000 council tenants have now had their homes improved, 1000 of which now meet the Government's Decent Homes standard. The next twelve months promise to be just as busy, with over £70 million being invested in improving up to 6000 homes.

You can find out more about the Modern Homes programme and visit the Talk To Us Bus at the Your Homes, Your Say event on 27 and 28 June. I'd encourage you to come along to this annual event that is held especially for tenants and leaseholders. It's not just an opportunity to find out more about our services, but also to meet myself, other board members and staff to have your say on housing issues.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the event.

Bill Midgley
Chairman
Your Homes Newcastle

Homes+People



Tell us what you think

We hope you like our new look Homes and People which was launched last summer. The change to the style came from feedback you gave us at last year's annual tenant and leaseholder event. But that's not the only way you are having your say about Homes and People. Last year we asked if you would like to become a member of a readers' editorial panel. We held an information session in January for people to find out more about what being a member would mean. From that we now have a number of volunteers who will be meeting every three months to discuss the content of Homes and People. We had our first meeting of the panel in February to discuss the content for this edition.

Mrs Sodhi, a tenant member of the panel, says "I joined so I can take issues back to the panel that might otherwise get left out. The panel is a good idea to get more public views in to the newsletter rather than management views."

There's always room for new members so if you'd like to join, then phone Fiona Punchard on 0191 278 8633, or write to Fiona Punchard, Communications and Involvement team, Your Homes Newcastle, Freepost, NAT22311, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7LX.

The next meeting is on Thursday 11 May at 2pm (venue to be confirmed at time of going to press). Phone Fiona to book your place.

Have you got a story that would interest tenants and leaseholders? You can always write or phone in your suggestions for future editions to Fiona on the details above.

East End Pool Competition Winners

Hannah and Thom use the tickets their mum Kim won in our East End Pool competition.

Other winners who each got 6 single use free passes were: Carol Bryant, Nicholle Raymond, Margaret Allan, M Driver, Alex Harris, Slawomir Wawrzyniewicz, J Stewart, Anmarie Quinn and Dorothy Milor.



All aboard for modern homes

Look out for Your Homes Newcastle's Talk To Us Bus.

The specially converted double-decker will be bringing news about improvement work right to where you are. The bus will be visiting your estate before Modern Homes work is due to begin. On board you can find out what work will be taking place in your home. Have a look at the range of fixtures and fittings on display - from kitchens and electrics to windows and heating systems. For some items there's a range of styles for you to choose from and you can compare samples before having to make up your mind about your choices at a home visit. You can also watch a video about what to expect when work begins. Or simply have a chat with staff who are on hand to listen to your views and answer any questions.

David Savage is the driver and project officer for the bus and is one of the friendly faces who will greet you aboard. He's proud of what the bus has to offer. "The Talk To Us Bus is an excellent way for you to get the full low down on what work is going to take place in your home. It's also a chance to talk to us and tell us what you think about YHN's Modern Homes programme. We're looking forward to welcoming you aboard."

We will write to let you know a few weeks before the bus is due to visit your estate. Alternatively visit www.yhn.org.uk for a full list of locations. You can also visit the Talk To Us bus at the Your Homes, Your Say event on 27 and 28 June 2006 at Newcastle United Football Club (see page 10).

A council tenant from Heaton Park Court helped us to officially open the Talk To Us Bus in March. 88-year-old Laura Osborne, who has lived in her top-floor flat for over 30 years, has had new double-glazed windows fitted, as part of YHN's Modern Homes programme. She declared the bus open after cutting a massive ribbon wrapped around the bus, helped by Newcastle's Lord Mayor, Councillor David Slesenger. A giant cake in the shape of '1000' was also enjoyed to mark the number of homes that have now been modernised to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard.



Heaton Park Court tenant Laura Osborne and Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Coun David Slesenger

Think before you buy

Up to £600 million will have been invested into improving the city's council homes through our Modern Homes programme by 2010.

But do you know where you stand on improvement work if you buy your council home?

- If your home is a house you will miss out on these improvements because this investment is for council-owned housing only. If you make an application to buy your home, we will explain that no work will be carried out while your application is being processed or once you become the owner.
- If your home is a flat or maisonette, you will become a 'leaseholder' and the council will still own the external building. This means we will continue to repair and maintain the external structure and fabric of your home and charge you for any work we do. If you make an application to buy your home, we will explain that any improvement work to the external structure will still go ahead, such as new windows and doors or the re-roofing of your block – and you will be legally required to pay your share of bill. No improvement work will be carried out inside your flat while your application is being processed or once you become the owner.

"We want to make sure tenants who are thinking of buying their home know where they stand," says Jane Samples, the Right to Buy Manager. "It is perhaps one of the biggest decisions you will ever make and there are plenty of cost implications to think about. This is particularly the case at the moment while major

4

improvement work is taking place, as part of the Modern Homes programme."

If you need advice about how to buy your council home, get in touch with YHN's Right to Buy team on 0800 09 11 310. You can get independent advice from your local Citizen's Advice Bureau or a solicitor – though there may be charges.

Don't forget that you can withdraw from your Right to Buy application at any time, up to the day of completion.

Beware of bogus callers

Beware of private companies calling at your door offering to help you buy your council home. Whatever they might claim they are not from Your Homes Newcastle or Newcastle City Council and you shouldn't let them in. You could find yourself signing up to a legal agreement which commits you to paying expensive charges or signing up to a costly home loan.

Don't forget. If anyone ever unexpectedly calls at your door:

- always ask for ID;
- don't let anyone you don't know into your home;
- never sign anything there and then; and
- never sign anything which you haven't read or don't understand.

For more information contact the Right to Buy team on 0800 09 11 310

Night Night, Sleep Tight!

Carbon Monoxide kills

As a Newcastle Council Tenant you get your gas appliances serviced for free.

If you have ignored appointment letters we will now begin action to gain entry by force for which you will be recharged.

Telephone 0191 278 3450

Area focus

Football crazy on Jubilee

Football fever is taking over the Jubilee estate, Elswick - and it's not just in anticipation of this summer's World Cup. Football mad youngsters are going to weekly coaching sessions thanks to local Neighbourhood Wardens.

"One day we were chatting to kids about what to do on the estate," explains Alan Toward, one of the wardens. "When they said they loved football, we turned to Newcastle City Council's Kickin' programme for help."

Now about twenty youngsters from the estate, aged 7 to 12, meet every Thursday for practice with Kickin' programme coach Kris Glenwright. They play in local competitions as the Jubilee All-stars and recently won the Fair Play Award for being the most sporting and friendly team at a local tournament.

Peter House, aged 11, loves the sessions: "I really like football and it's good to come along to learn new skills and get some exercise." Chris Hudson, aged 10, agrees: "The training is good fun - and the street wardens are great too!"

Now 15 and 16-year-olds from the estate are getting in on the act, meeting every Monday with Hat Trick's coach, Mark Oliver. The Hat-Trick project is backed by New Deal for Communities and the FA to encourage more 7-16 year olds to get involved in football.

Neighbourhood Wardens, who are funded by Newcastle New Deal for Communities, are even thinking about setting up teams elsewhere in the area.

Aged 7-16 and living in Arthur's Hill, Cruddas Park, Rye Hill or Elswick? Want to get involved? Call wardens Alan Toward or Murray Watson on 0191 277 3775.

Daisy Hill Memories



Photo of the Proctor Family from the Daisy Hill exhibition

Old photographs like this one stir a lot of memories and emotions, as Daisy Hill tenant Jim Simpson has discovered. He's not long returned from the south, but his family was one of the first to move onto the brand new estate in Daisy Hill back in 1935. One day he was comparing his family's old photos with those of a neighbour when he hit upon the idea of using them to trace the estate's history. He asked around and eventually had enough photos to hold an exhibition at the Ray Grey Community Centre last summer.

"I just found it fascinating how different everyone looked in the 1930s and 40s and yet how much the houses hadn't really changed," Jim says. "People came to the exhibition from all over the place, some coming back for the first time in 40 years. At times people became quite emotional, but what I remember most is the laughter; something that had obviously helped them through many hard times. In a way I couldn't believe what I had done by just getting old photos together."

"I find that I'm now much more aware of what goes on here. I've been attending meetings about the planned regeneration of the estate. After all, in a way the estate's history is still being made."

Do you have any photos of Daisy Hill between 1935 and 1960? Jim is still looking for more to add to the archive. You can phone him on 0191 262 0183 or email jimboberesford@yahoo.co.uk.



Photo courtesy of Newcastle New Deal for Communities

Residents go digital

Some of our sheltered accommodation residents have gone digital with their memories to create artwork for Byker Metro station. The residents of Margaret Collins House in Byker worked with artist Meera George to use photographs about their lives to create a massive montage.

Their work is on display until 18 April and is the third part of 'Next Stop Byker'; a project all about getting the local community involved in deciding how to enhance their local Metro station.

The residents initially got together to look through their albums, sharing their memories and selecting photographs that meant a lot to them. They then worked with the artist, as the photographs were transferred onto computer and arranged into a montage design.

95-year-old Jenny Braidford really enjoyed taking part in the sessions. A photograph of her late husband in his army uniform during the Second World War is featured in the display. "I loved chatting about the past and reminiscing with the other residents about life in Byker. I've always lived here and wouldn't dream of going anywhere else."



Photos courtesy of Nexus



New Cruddas Park

Local tenants are at the heart of exciting plans to transform Cruddas Park. Last October we hosted a series of consultation events to get local people's views on initial proposals to breathe new life into the estate.

We had such a great response that we've decided to open a Consultation Shop in Cruddas Park Shopping Centre. This means that local people will be able to pop in at any time to get information and give their views as our plans continue to take shape. Work on the Consultation Shop is due to start shortly - so look out next time you're visiting the shopping centre!

Your Homes Newcastle is working with Newcastle City Council, Bridging Newcastle Gateshead and Newcastle New Deal for Communities on Transforming Cruddas Park over the coming years. The first phase of work is due to start later this year, when the interior of Cruddas Park House will be refurbished as part of YHN's Modern Homes programme.

Winnie Hodgkinson, who is 92, brought along treasured family heirlooms from her brother Stan's time in the Second World War. This included a letter he had been given by his Field Marshall. The group decided to include an extract in their display.

Sue Bolam is YHN's Resident Warden at Margaret Collins House, and helps to organise a range of activities to keep residents active. "Everyone had been touched in some way by the war, so the group spent a lot of time talking about those difficult times; how it effected their lives in Byker and they had to become tough and resilient to get through it. The sessions brought back the old war-time comradery, something that they all really cherished."

Next Stop Byker is a project co-ordinated by Newcastle City Council's Arts Development team and supported by Metro operators Nexus and the Arts Council. From 19 April, young people from the YMCA will be displaying their artwork.

In the coming twelve months we want to continue to make improvements to the services we provide to you. You can help us stay on the right track by telling us what you think about the services you currently receive. You can do this in a number of ways, which include:

- complete and return a customer satisfaction survey when you're asked to do so;
- give your views by calling into your community housing office or contacting us by phone, letter or email;
- become a member of the tenants' panel, Your View, or the Leaseholders Panel;
- give your views via the Tenants' Federation or your local tenants' or residents' group; and
- come along and talk to staff at the Your Homes, Your Say event in June;
- come along to the annual Leaseholders Forum; and
- become a mystery shopper volunteer.

For more information about how you can get more involved, contact Heather Nixon on 0191 278 8723.

New loans for gardens in Outer West

Any gardener will know that spring is a time of rapid growth.

After the long dark winter months, nature literally springs back to life. And without care, suddenly your garden can start to



resemble a jungle. But help is at hand at just the right time, thanks to a new pilot scheme by our Newcastle Furniture Service.

If you are a council tenant living in the Outer West/North area you can now borrow garden equipment for free to help maintain your garden. This includes tenants living in Newburn, Newbiggin Hall, West Denton, Blakelaw, Cowgate, Fawdon, North Kenton, Gosforth.

Caroline O'Connor is the administrator of the scheme and delivers the equipment to people's homes: "Tenants can borrow a lawnmower, strimmer, fork, spade and shears for up to a week absolutely free," she explains. "We hope it will help people to keep their gardens tidy and looking nice."

"This is the first time we have loaned gardening equipment, so we are testing the service with tenants in the Outer West Area to see how it goes. And if it's a success we hope to extend the scheme to other tenants."

Every piece of equipment comes with a step-by-step guide about how to use it. Anyone who is new to gardening can even ask Caroline for a demonstration.

Living in the Outer West/North area and want to make a booking? Ask at your local community housing office or call us on 0191 2781888. Caroline is waiting to hear from you!

Independent living

Remember setting up your first home? Trying to cook your first meal? Learning how to stick to a budget? Imagine what it must feel like to be as young as 16 years old and have no other choice but to live on your own because of difficult circumstances.

The INLINE service has been helping young people since 1997 to stop them becoming homeless and to help take their first steps to independent living. And in January this year it became part of Your Homes Newcastle to compliment our existing support services and to help us improve the services we specifically offer to young people.

Young people receive practical support through regular home visits, as well as group sessions. Each is normally placed in an area that is familiar to them and INLINE makes sure they are settling in well. Through Youth Voice, they also learn about how to play an active part in their local community.

At the end of two years, if their tenancy has gone well they are given the option to continue to live in their home as an introductory tenant.

This is just some of the feedback from young people about INLINE Newcastle.

"They are sort of tough, but they don't give up on you."

"I got into training and met people... It's a chance to work and to be part of the area."

"When I got my flat they helped me to get in touch with my mam and family again..."

Michelle Mullen, aged 19, lives in Kenton Bar. INLINE has helped her since moving out of home. "My family's home was really cramped, so there wasn't enough room for me and my daughter, Courtney," she explains. She's a member of INLINE's Baby Group and is also working towards personal qualifications through the scheme. "INLINE has been a real help, especially when I first moved into my flat. They came round every week and made it much easier. The Baby Group is also a great way to get to know other young mums."

If you or someone you know needs to get in touch with INLINE you can speak to the service confidentially either by phoning 277 1190 or come to our office at Gosforth Community Housing office.

Michelle Mullen and inset, some young people INLINE have helped.



You said, we did

How are we doing?
Tell us and make
a difference



What you said

When the Your Choice Homes Property Shop first opened on New Bridge Street you told us that you would like us to extend our opening hours so that you can visit at more convenient times.

What we did

Over the last year we have piloted extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday to find out when it was best to open. During this time we asked customers what they thought of our opening times and monitored how many customers came into the Property Shop.

At the end of the pilot we could tell the best times to be open to make sure that customers could visit at the times that they wanted.

Our new opening times are:

Monday	8.30am – 4.30pm
Tuesday	8.30am – 6.00pm
Wednesday	8.30am – 6.00pm
Thursday	8.30am – 4.30pm
Friday	8.30am – 4.30pm

You can still use our services 24 hours a day through our website. You can also visit any of our Community Housing Offices, Newcastle City Council's Customer Service Centres or our partner landlords.

What you said

You told us that you were not receiving all the information you wanted about the Your Choice Homes Lettings Service when registering for the service.

What we did

We have developed a registration pack for all new customers. The pack provides the following:

- Our leaflet "Looking for a home in Newcastle"
- Registration form
- Summary of the our lettings policy
- New customer survey

What you said

Staff in the Asylum seekers unit have been asking their clients how they would prefer to get involved. One-to-one consultation in the clients' own home was the most popular choice.

What we did

We have developed a consultation plan using the information we gathered from our clients. We now consult with clients regularly in their own home. This is in addition to other ways to get involved, such as focus groups.

Support is here

More than two billion pounds of benefit is left unclaimed by people over 60 in the UK.

The number of benefits on offer, the rules and lengthy application process can make it difficult to know exactly what you are entitled to.

Help is at hand.

The Advice and Support Team offers free advice to council tenants of all ages on a range of subjects, including how to apply for benefits. At the moment they are making sure that those living in sheltered housing in particular are not missing out.

Back in February, the team visited a group of residents of Hadrian House, Newburn, along with an advisor from the Pensions Service. They talked about the range of benefits that are available to help people cover their living expenses. As a result, they have helped tenants to complete benefits applications.

The coffee morning event was such a success that the team will be visiting more tenants in sheltered housing this summer. If we are coming to your block, we will send you a personal invitation.

Would you like free advice on anything from setting up home and applying for benefits to finding training and education places? Ask at your local Community Housing Office to be put in touch with the Advice & Support team.

Improving your housing services

Update on consultation

Thank you for giving your views on how we can improve our housing services in the city.

Early this year we asked you to give your views on four different options. These included possible changes to the number and location of community housing offices, with the aim of improving the level of service we can offer to you. They also included additional improvements such as extended opening hours and the potential to develop a single contact centre for all telephone enquiries.

Over 600 tenants and leaseholders have completed questionnaires (see across for winners of the prize draw) after coming along to one of our road show events. Many more have given their views through the Tenants' Federation and tenants' and residents' groups.

- 90% of people who responded to the questionnaire agreed why we need to make changes. The most important reasons were:
 - to enable Housing Officers to spend more time on estates;
 - to have staff with good local knowledge; and
 - for YHN provide more support for vulnerable tenants
- 93% thought the information we'd provided helped them to understand what each of the options would mean for them.
- 52% of people indicated that their preferred option was for YHN to make significant or very significant changes to the housing management service. Under these proposals this could mean bringing larger teams of staff together to work more effectively across fewer community housing offices.

We are now looking carefully at the feedback of all tenants, leaseholders and other stakeholders to develop a final plan for Board members to consider.

Your Homes Newcastle's Board will discuss these final proposals and make a final decision at their meeting in May. We will tell you about what was decided – and what this means for you – in our summer edition.

Your chance to have Your say

Your Homes Newcastle is hosting the Your Homes, Your Say event to give council tenants or leaseholders a real say in decisions about how we provide services to you.

This year the free event will be held over two days on 27 and 28 June 2006 at Newcastle United Football Club, St James Park in Newcastle city centre. It will give you the opportunity to suggest ways of making the services we provide better and get information and advice.

You will be able meet some of the key decision makers and talk to tenants and leaseholders from across the city about the housing issues that are important to you.

Staff will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about the Your Homes Newcastle's Modern Homes Programme.

You can find out about work scheduled under the Modern Homes Programme and see examples of products such as kitchens, bathrooms, fires and doors that will be fitted in many homes over the next few years.

Your Homes Newcastle's Talk To Us Bus will be at the event. Come aboard and talk to us about the difference we could make to your home.

As well as plenty of advice and information, there will be an opportunity for you to find out more about all Your Homes Newcastle's services. You can find out more about how we organise repairs and how we let properties. You can also find out about the Community Care Alarm Service. Advice will be given about issues that concern you such as dealing with anti social behaviour and adapting your home to meet your needs.

Every council tenant or leaseholder will receive a personal invitation to the free event, so look out for this in the post!

Questionnaire prize draw

Well done to Mrs E Turnbull who was the first entry pulled out of our mail sack and won first prize of £150 of Eldon Square vouchers for completing a questionnaire on improving our housing services. Violet Clark, Christopher Errington, Betty Martin, Todd Stone and Ian Thompson were runners up and received £50 vouchers.

Anti-social behaviour

Everyone has the right to live in peaceful, safe and healthy neighbourhoods.

That's why we take antisocial and nuisance behaviour very seriously. Our Antisocial Behaviour Unit, working in partnership with community-based staff, is there to tackle problems on our estates – and needs your help in reporting incidents to take action. The unit is made up of experienced staff from Your Homes Newcastle, Northumbria Police and Victim Support. We asked Nick Dodgeon, YHN's Tenancy Services Manager, to explain what to do if you experience antisocial behaviour.

Question: What is antisocial behaviour?

Nick: It's behaviour that unreasonably interferes with another person's right to the use and enjoyment of their home and community - basically acting in a way that causes harassment, alarm or distress to those living next door or nearby. It can apply to a wide range of activities, from playing music loudly and untidy gardens to verbal abuse and physical violence.

Q: What should I do if I experience antisocial behaviour?

Nick: It's really important to report it, as it's only if we are told that there is a problem that we can try to sort it out. It's also better to get in touch as soon as a problem begins to occur, so we can take early action to prevent a small problem becoming a big one. There are plenty of ways to do this. You can visit your local Community Housing Office, ring our 24-hour phone line, email or write to us, even post a message on our website. Of course, if you are being threatened with violence or you need immediate help you should go straight to the police.

Q: What if I'm worried about coming forward?

Nick: We take your concerns very seriously and will treat what you tell us in the strictest confidence. If we need to meet, this can be wherever you feel comfortable. It doesn't need to be in your home or area. When we are investigating your complaint we will never reveal your identity unless we have your agreement. We also have a dedicated victim support officer that can help you.

Q: What happens to my complaint?

Nick: Someone will investigate it. Depending on the type of behaviour, it could be staff from the local community housing office or your local police officer. More serious cases of antisocial behaviour will be referred through to this unit. When you report a complaint to our unit or a community housing office, we will give you a receipt to confirm it's been recorded and also explain our services standards, including how quickly we will be able to investigate your case.

Q: What more will I have to do?

Nick: We may ask you to complete an incident diary so that we know in detail what's going on. This is your personal record of what you see and hear. It's also a chance for you to explain how this behaviour has made you and those around you feel. The diary provides very valuable evidence and help us to understand and try to resolve the problem.

Q: What steps do you take to stop the antisocial behaviour?

Nick: We find that in the vast majority of cases once a council tenant realises they are causing problems - and if they continue to do so could face losing their home – then they do change their behaviour. We have a range of ways to tackle repeated antisocial behaviour and will take tough action where necessary (see below). But we depend upon your help in reporting antisocial behaviour in the first place to start to take action. So, please do get in touch.



Nick Dodgeon with Denise Gray, Community Housing Manager, Benwell.

Taking tough action

The Antisocial Behaviour Unit takes early action to challenge nuisance behaviour before it becomes a serious problem.

It sends everyone whose behaviour has been reported to have caused distress to others an early intervention warning letter. Last year over 80% changed their behaviour as a result of this letter. Where behaviour doesn't change despite visits and formal warning letters, the unit can ask individuals to sign an acceptable behaviour agreements (ABAs). These are an informal agreement with the unit and police about what behaviour is acceptable. Finally, if necessary, we take tough action. This could be by through legal injunctions, antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) or evictions.

At time of going to press the unit had just served notices seeking possession (NOSPs) to four council tenants in the Benwell area because of the repeated serious antisocial behaviour of young members of their family. The notices are a legal warning that they could be evicted from their homes if they don't change their behaviour.

Report antisocial behaviour here:

- telephone 24-hour Its Your Call line on 0845 605 2222;
- email the unit on newcastleasbunit@yhn.org.uk;
- write to Newcastle Antisocial Behaviour Unit, YHN House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle, NE7 7LX;
- visit www.yhn.org.uk.

Calendar of Faith Days

10 April to 10 July 2006

Easter isn't the only religious festival being celebrated around now. In Newcastle there are people of many different faiths, who mark important days in their calendars with events and activities. Here are just some examples of the religious days that are will be observed over the next three months.

All dates shown use the Gregorian (Western) calendar

Event	Dates	Religion	Notes
Milad un Nabi	11/04/2006	Muslim	Birthday of the prophet Muhammad. At this time Muslims think about Muhammad (pbuh), and the events of his life.
Hanuman Jayanti	13/04/2006	Hindu	This festival marks the birth of Hanuman, the Monkey God.
Maundy Thursday	13/04/2006	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.
Gurpurb - birthday of Guru Nanak	14/04/2006	Sikh	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.
Vaisakhi (Baisakhi)	14/04/2006	Sikh	Vaisakhi is one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar. It is the Sikh New Year Hindus celebrate the day too.
Passover or Pesach	14/04/2006	Jewish	Is a spring festival that marks the escape from captivity in Egypt.
Good Friday	14/04/2006	Christian	The most important events in Christianity are the death and later resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Jewish prophet whose teachings are the foundation of the faith.
Vaisakhi (Baisakhi)	14/04/2006	Hindu	An April harvest or New Year's festival depending on area, Vaisakhi is also celebrated by Sikhs.
Easter	16/04/2006	Christian	Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the most important Christian festival, and the one celebrated with the greatest joy.
Gurpurbs - birthday of Guru Tegh Bahadur (Nanakshahi calendar)	18/04/2006	Sikh	Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) was the ninth of the Sikh Gurus.
Ridvan - first day	21/04/2006	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.
Beltane	30/04/2006	Pagan	Pagans celebrate Beltane with maypole dances, symbolizing the mystery of the Sacred Marriage of Goddess and God
Gurpurbs - birthday of Guru Arjan Dev (Nanakshahi calendar)	02/05/2006	Sikh	Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) was the fifth of the Sikh Gurus
Ridvan - twelfth day	02/05/2006	Bahá'í	Marks Baha'u'llah's departure from the Ridvan garden.
Wesak / Buddha Day	13/05/2006	Buddhist	The most important of the Buddhist festivals, celebrating Buddha's birth and for some Buddhists also his death.
Feast of the Ascension	17/05/2006	Christian	The fortieth day after Easter Sunday, commemorating the Ascension of Christ into heaven, according to Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, and Acts 1:2.
Gurpurbs - birthday of Guru Amar Das (Nanakshahi calendar)	23/05/2006	Sikh	Guru Amar Das (1479-1574) was the third of the Sikh Gurus.
Declaration of the Bab	23/05/2006	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	02/06/2006	Jewish	Marks the time that the Jews received God's laws at Mount Sinai.
Pentecost	04/06/2006	Christian	Pentecost is the festival when Christians celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is celebrated on the Sunday 50 days after Easter.
Summer Solstice - Litha	22/06/2006	Pagan	Longest day of the year.
Martyrdom of the Bab	09/07/2006	Bahá'í	Anniversary of the Bab's execution in 1850 in Tabriz, Iran.

Board meeting dates

YHN Board meets every month to make decisions about council housing services in Newcastle. There are also three Area Boards which focus on different parts of the city. Anyone can go along to listen.

Your Homes Newcastle Board
 5pm at YHN House,
 Benton Park Road
 25 April
 23 May
 27 June
 25 July

Inner West Area Board
 5pm venue to be confirmed
 9 May
 11 July

East Area Board
 5pm at the Brinkburn
 Community Centre
 11 May
 13 July

Outer West and North Area Board
 5.30pm venue to be confirmed
 8 May
 10 July