

IN TOUCH

Update on our services: PAGE 3



Message from the InTouch Editorial Panel

The editorial panel is a group of involved residents working in partnership with the Resident Involvement Team to keep you informed on issues that affect tenants and leaseholders of North West Leicestershire District Council. If you would like to make any comments or contribute to the magazine, please contact the Resident Involvement Team on 01530 454795 or resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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Gardening tips:

Planting up containers and spreads of bulbs in autumn and early winter ensures there will soon be flowers to enjoy.

The cooler soil in autumn means it's the perfect time to plant bulbs. It can also help to link the winter and spring gardens, so there is not an awkward pause. Feed bulbs in containers to keep them going until the following year.

Leavers and starters

Our involved tenants have asked us to keep you up to date with any changes to our team members. This issue we're saying goodbye to:

- Jackie Robinson, a support officer who is retiring after 33 years working at the council
- Elizabeth Turner, a senior housing officer who will be leaving us at the end of October to take up a role at a nearby housing association
- Harley Simpkin, a housing assistant.

We're delighted to welcome:

- Megan Hodgett, team manager for building safety and tenant involvement
- Conor Dixon, interim responsive repairs and maintenance team manager
- Prof. Jon Fairburn, business project manager (housing transformation)
- Kirk King, capital works programme manager
- Lee Ibrahim, contract manager (Wates and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund)
- Alex Musial, housing choices case officer
- Pragna Patel, a housing officer who has joined us from an agency

If you'd like to work for us, you can find all of our current vacancies at nwleics.gov.uk/jobs

Hicks Lodge

Hicks Lodge is a great place to walk, cycle and so much more!

In the heart of the National Forest, Hicks Lodge is a former coal mining site that has been totally transformed by new planting and exciting trails for you to enjoy.

There's a range of trails for cyclists of all ages and abilities. You can also visit the lakeside bird hide to spot some rare wildlife, or explore the walking and horse riding paths - and afterwards visit the café and play area.

Visit www.forestryengland.uk/hicks-lodge to find out more.



Update on our service

I can barely believe it's time for another issue of InTouch magazine – what a busy few months we have had!

I'm pleased to start with some really positive news on the recruitment front. We're preparing to welcome several new people to our team over the coming weeks, including our new Building Safety and Tenant Involvement Team Manager.

We'll be carrying out a bit of a reshuffle of some housing staff to form a new tenant involvement team to really concentrate on listening to you. We'll also look to recruit more tenants to help us shape our service and our policies, and deliver more ideas to improve things together.

Housing Summit Conference

Last month I went to the first Housing Summit Conference in Liverpool. The event was hosted by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation. It was the first time both bodies have joined forces to bring as many housing professionals as possible together to learn from each other's experiences.

The conference was attended by people from across the UK, from local authorities as well as registered providers of social housing.

There were presentations from a variety of social housing professionals and experts on bringing about reform and enabling more affordable homes to be available. It gave some interesting food for thought and ideas for me to share and discuss with my team.

Delegates from the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman were also there. We have been working closely with our regulator over the summer to ensure we are on the right track to meet the requirements of the consumer standards

introduced this year, and I feel confident that we will achieve this.

I want to tell you how seriously we take the challenge of improving the comfort and affordability of every property we are responsible for. I felt profoundly moved at the conference, listening to brave tenants sharing their experiences of being without a secure home, experiencing problems that landlords took far too long to fix, and the impact of anti-social behaviour.

I realise these things happen up and down the country, and across our own district too. However, I am determined that together we can better support you in tackling housing issues that affect your health and wellbeing.

Partnering with Wates

One giant leap towards preventing tenant dissatisfaction on the repairs front is to deal with repair requests more quickly and make sure we fix things first time. To help us do this, we've partnered with a maintenance provider called Wates – in fact they've already started and will be booking appointments with tenants for repairs from this month.

Wates carries out maintenance and repairs in over 500,000 social housing homes each year and already work with other councils in the region.

The team from Wates is committed to tenant satisfaction, and will ask you for your feedback after each repair. I would really appreciate your time in giving your feedback and helping our repairs service to develop and improve.

There won't be any change to the way you report repair requests and, as always, our friendly team will be on hand to answer any queries you may have.

Jane Rochelle, Head of Housing

Tenant scrutiny panel - chair's message



Hello, my name is Janet and I am the Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

This is a panel made up of what are known as 'involved tenants', who look at information and feed back from tenants about the Housing Service.

The panel has recently done a review of the grounds maintenance service.

As part of the review, we interviewed officers and managers from the housing service and from parks.

We also sent a survey out to tenants and got their feedback on the service they receive.

We then looked at all the information, produced a report that contained a series of recommendations on how the service could be improved such as reviewing the garden tidy scheme and sharing more information with tenants about what to expect from the grounds maintenance service.

The report will now go to the Housing Improvement Board and then onto the formal Cabinet meeting of councillors for approval.

It's been great to work with officers who are helpful, support us as a panel and genuinely listen to what we have to say.

Thank you to everyone who has helped this process.

Winter fuel payments

You may have seen in the news that the Government has made changes to who will be getting the winter fuel allowance this year.

You will continue to get the winter fuel allowance if you are in receipt of Pension Credit.

If you've never applied or your circumstances have changed, take a few minutes to find more on the government website:

www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment

Citizens Advice are also available at our Customer Centre at Belvoir Road, Coalville on Friday mornings, 9.30am - 1.30pm or you can phone them on 0808 278 7854.

Please contact us if you have any concerns about making your rent payments by calling the Housing Management Team on 01530 454660.



Look out for more information, which will be included in our January edition of InTouch.

Estate Evaluators and Tenant Void Inspectors needed

Would you like to represent your neighbourhood and make a difference to the services within your community? If so, you could become and Estate Evaluator or Tenant Void Inspector!

Estate Evaluators are trained tenants who look at the area they live in to help us improve neighbourhoods and communities with communal living areas or open spaces.

This gives our tenants an opportunity to help improve the area in which they live. By grading areas, it helps us to focus on areas that we need to improve and shows we are proactive in what tenants are telling us.

If you'd like to help us monitor the standard of our empty homes you could choose to become and Tenant Void Inspector.

Void homes are properties that are empty between the old tenant moving out and new tenant moving in. You will receive full training and will be accompanied by a member of the Resident Involvement Team. The properties you will inspect will be in the area where you live. It would be beneficial if you have transport, and we will cover out of pocket expenses.

If you are interested in finding out more about either role, or would like to sign up for training, please contact Resident Involvement Team on resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk or telephone 01530 454795.

New choice based lettings portal

You told us that we needed to make it easier for people to apply for housing, so we've recently launched a new customer portal for all new housing applications called Housing Jigsaw.

Housing Jigsaw is better at keeping you informed about your housing application, and offers new ways to manage and view your information online.

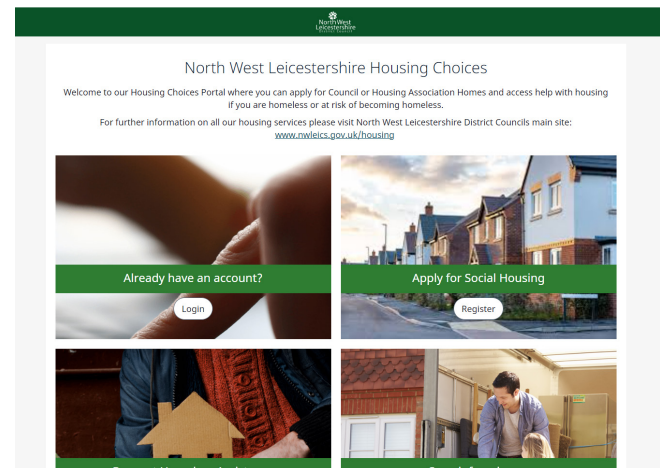
It also makes it easier for our housing association partners to advertise properties with us.

If you were already registered with us you will have been asked to complete a fresh application. This is to ensure that your information is up to date and to ensure that our new allocation policy rules are being applied fairly to all applicants.

As we have had to reassess all of our existing applications as well as all the new ones coming in, it is taking longer than normal – but we are working through them as quickly as we can.

If you want to apply for rehousing, please read the guidance available on Housing Jigsaw before submitting your application. Please also ensure you have all of the necessary supporting documents and information to hand.

You can find Housing Jigsaw at myhome.nwldc.housingjigsaw.co.uk



Nominate your community champion

Do you know a NWLDC tenant, leaseholder or household member who goes the extra mile to help someone in the local community? If so, why not nominate them as a community champion?

Community champions are those volunteers who are proud of where they live and are inspired to help their communities become better places to live. They also focus on helping others living within the community.

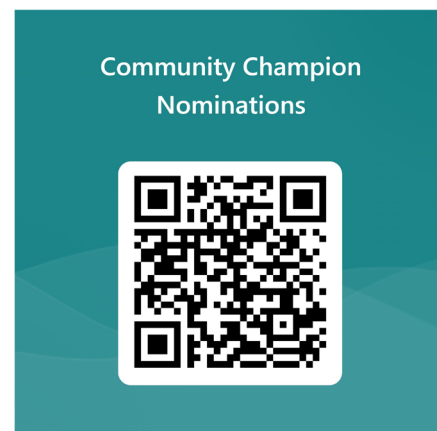
Here are some examples of what a community champion might do:

- Volunteering, in some cases this may be over a long period of time
- Acts or speaks on behalf of the community
- Goes out of their way to help others, for example getting shopping or helping with transport
- Helps improve neighbourhoods, such as looking after community gardens or projects
- Involved in local groups in a voluntary capacity

- Involved in organising community projects as a volunteer
- Fundraises for local community projects.

This isn't an exhaustive list, so if you feel that someone within your community goes the extra mile, please nominate them to be recognised. It can be anyone – they don't need to be registered with a voluntary organisation.

You can submit your nomination by scanning the QR code on your phone or by going to forms.office.com/e/ck9pwDLGc8



Meet our tenants associations

Hello, my name is John Lakin and I am from the Park View Tenants Association. We only started late last year, but we have already done an awful lot!

We have weekly coffee mornings on Mondays in the communal lounge and our bingo nights have been particularly popular on Wednesday evenings. We are currently in the process of planning one for Christmas, which is exciting. We also go out for breakfast on the first Friday of each month – so we keep ourselves busy!

We have also gone on two trips recently: one was a canal boat trip on 4 October and we also had a fish and chips supper night on 28 September. Both really enjoyable trips.

We are in the process of cleaning up our outside spaces so residents can enjoy the sunny weather (sometimes!). We have had new furniture, chairs and a new gazebo.

I am looking forward to organising many more trips, and we invite anyone at Park View to join in! My email is j.lakin214@btinternet.com for anyone who wants to find out more.



Hello, my name is Sue Richards and I am from the Whitwick and Thringstone Tenants Association. We keep a busy weekly schedule, starting off with a coffee morning 10am-12pm on Mondays at Howe Road community lounge. On Wednesday afternoons we have a seated exercise class, run by Jenny from the council who is fantastic in leading the sessions. She works on mobility and balance, and we have lots of fun doing it. On Thursdays we have a toddlers' group where residents can drop in and watch the children play. It's great for grandparents looking after little ones.

We have also received a grant of £1,000 from the council that's helped us organise four different activities. The first was a trip on the canal at Loughborough and the money helped fund the transport to and from Whitwick and Thringstone. We've also visited Ulverscroft Manor, as well as the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, which is where most of the grant went. We had a the brilliant train ride around the grounds and then

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attended a memorial service. Finally, we will be having a buffet lunch at Christmas, with by singing by the local school choir, which we are very much looking forward to.

Hello, my name is Barry Barlow and I have been the chairman of Castle Donington Tenant Association for five years. We have had a range of trips as a TA, including a boat ride up and down the River Trent in Nottingham. We've also had various pantomime trips, visits to gardening centres, cinema trips and a trip to Loughborough market with a pub meal at the end, so we have been busy.

We have also organised a few charity fundraisers, raising around £600 for the Air Ambulance, another £600 for MacMillan and another £600 for First Responders. A big thank you to everyone who supported the events, and we look forward to raising more money in the future.

We have been twinned with a town in Normandy for around 41 years and we organise trips to visit them and vice versa. This year, they hosted us so we visited them in mid-September, this is always lots of fun and we enjoy practicing and perfecting our French!

Hello, my name is Nigel Hill and I am from the Hugglescote Tenants Association. On Mondays we have our games day although it often turns into more of a general chat! Tuesday mornings is exercise bingo in the community hall, where every time a number is called there is a different exercise to do. We host monthly quiz nights, and we hosted a beetle drive (a game like dominoes) – it went so well we are definitely going to it again! One of our more bizarre activities is our race nights where we put on a DVD of different horse races (usually the Kentucky races) and people can watch as though it were live and bet on the horses, we are just hoping no one has extensive knowledge of past Kentucky races!

In terms of trips, we had a boat trip down to Mountsorrel with lunch out, which was lovely. We had a trip up to York in September and we're going to be having a trip to Stratford Christmas Market in December.

Hello, my name is Lisa Sherratt and I am from the Willesley Tenants Association. In August we hosted a lunch club where people came along to socialise and join in with crafts and other social activities. We also had a trip to Ingoldmells in Lincolnshire in August, which was a lovely trip out. A big thank you to the Rotary and Lions Club who gave a donation to help with that trip.

We also have general weekly activities to keep us busy. On Mondays afternoons we have our knit and natter sessions. On Tuesdays from 2pm-4pm we have a drop in for a coffee and socialising with other residents. We also host a tuck shop on Monday and Tuesday at the school, and the cabin on Ridgeway Road on Fridays. We're looking to do something for Halloween, so keep an eye on our noticeboard.

If you'd like to get involved, email me on 58lisasherratt@gmail.com

Zero tolerance of abuse

We've seen an increase in abuse directed at our staff recently – particularly those whose job it is to help and advise customers.

This abuse has come in many forms, including threatening emails and our staff being sworn at and shouted at both over the phone and face to face.

Please always remember that we are people too and we always want to do our best to help you.

Threatening and abusive behaviour has a direct impact on our staff and will not be tolerated in any form.



Your waste collection dates



Earlier this year local councillors approved a proposal to join most other district councils in no longer delivering waste collection calendars to all households.

This is expected to save £15,000 in printing and

distribution costs, as well as reducing carbon emissions.

Your current waste collection calendar runs out at the end of November. You'll be able to download and print your collection dates, including the Christmas and New Year period, at nwleics.gov.uk/collection_information

Housing Community pop up events

Resident Involvement Team organised seven Housing Community pop up events on our housing estates to take our services to you within your communities. Some events saw lots of attendance, although we had to cancel Ibstock's due to Storm Lillian.

These events gave tenants the opportunity to access a variety of housing services including repairs, resident involvement, housing officers, tenancy sustainment as well as other services including waste, community focus and health and wellbeing. We had games for the children and free fruit too.

Following these events, we will be gathering all the information together to influence change within our services and we have a number of places interested in developing a tenants association. We will be working hard with volunteers to get these up and running over the next few months; please keep an eye out for updates in future editions.

We will be looking at how we can improve these events for next year, so if you have any feedback please contact the Resident Involvement Team at resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk or telephone 01530 454795.

Find the right support with the Joy app

The Joy app is a tool which helps people find the support they need with just a few clicks.

Whether you're looking to improve your mental health, eat more healthily, join a local activity group or are looking for more specialist support, Joy might be able to point you in the right direction.

Simply put in your postcode and use the filters to see the directory of services available in your area.

Many of the services can be accessed for free, but some may require a professional referral first or have a waiting list.

Find out more at services.thejoyapp.com



Halloween word search

P	Y	K	D	E	U	G	Y	X	G	C	Z	H	B	O	V	K	X	Q	D
M	A	N	L	Y	N	R	A	M	M	B	T	X	B	Z	E	H	Q	E	B
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WITCH
GHOST
BATS
GAMES
SPIDERS
SUPERNATURAL
COBWEBS
PUMPKIN
COSTUME
CANDY
HAUNTED
WARLOCK
SPIRITS
GOBLINS
APPLES
WINTER
BROOMSTICK
MAGIC
TOADS
OWLS
HAUNTED

