

Choice News

Issue 4

Winter 2016

The Newsletter
for Choice Housing
Ireland Tenants

Customer Satisfaction
Survey 2016

the results
are in!



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choice 

choice-housing.org

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A Message from our Group Chief Executive



Leading change and doing things differently

Michael McDonnell
Group Chief Executive

Welcome to the Winter 2016 edition of Choice News. It is hard to believe that the summer is merely a distant memory, but I hope that you all had a relaxing and enjoyable one!

The single biggest challenge for us all is the ongoing roll-out of welfare change. This programme of reform has started to impact on households across a number of elements including ESA, PIP, benefit cap and restrictions on back-dating of housing benefit claims. The latter will soon be followed by the introduction of social sector size criteria (commonly referred to as the 'bedroom tax') in February 2017 and transition to universal credit from September 2017. Whilst the NI Executive have agreed a series of mitigations, I would encourage all tenants potentially affected by welfare change to read the information on page 14 on how will welfare changes affect you? Choice will also be producing special bulletins on welfare changes to ensure our customers are kept up to date of the changes introduced. Please also keep an eye on our website for further information www.choice-housing.org or visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfarechanges.

Since the last edition of Choice News, the draft NI Programme for Government has been updated and is back out for public consultation until Friday 23rd December. It is good to see more references to housing issues and opportunities in the latest document. However, I still believe more could and should be done within this framework to specify quality, affordable and 'fit for purpose' homes as a desired 'outcome' for everyone. I would encourage you to visit www.northernireland.gov.uk to view the revised draft and to feedback your views directly to the Programme for Government team.

Our commitment to meeting current and prospective tenant needs is as strong as ever. As the largest developer of homes across Northern Ireland in recent

years, we have made a significant contribution to addressing housing stress. In the current year, our level of new build starts already 'in the ground' is well ahead of last year's excellent performance. Our ongoing significant investment in remodelling older accommodation will create more safe, secure and energy efficient homes across the country. We are delighted that our ground-breaking loan agreement with the European Investment Bank secures £150 million of private finance on terms that will enable us to build even more homes for those in need.

We are extremely grateful for the very high response levels to our recent independent customer satisfaction survey. Whilst there are many areas where our service is clearly meeting or exceeding your expectations, there is scope for improvement in others. We will be working with focus groups and the Tenants' Forum to agree prioritised action plans. You can find out how you can be involved in these focus groups on page 7. We have recently completed business improvement reviews of a number of day-to-day service areas which will improve customer satisfaction and ensure better use of our resources. We are also continuing to invest in both our greatest asset – our staff – and the technology to both empower them and you.

Finally, I'm delighted that in recent months we have added to the range of awards which we picked up in 2015/16. More specifically, we have achieved the Service Excellence Standard for our Sheltered Accommodation, our Energy team has been recognised at the Sustainable Ireland Awards and we have been commended by both the Construction Employers Federation and Social Enterprise NI for our work. St Elizabeth's was also awarded the 'Best Kept Sheltered Housing Area' at the Open and Direct Best Kept Awards, you can read more about this on page 9.

I hope that you have a great Christmas and New Year and thanks for choosing Choice as your landlord.

Working together for positive change

Our New Chair of Choice

Ms Hazel Bell, who replaces Timothy Quin, will lead the Board and Senior Management Team as we expand our operations across Northern Ireland and deliver on plans to build 2,700 new homes in the next five years.

A graduate of Newcastle University and Ulster University, Ms Bell is a corporate member of the Royal Town Planning Institute



and has more than 30 years' experience in planning and development. She has been a Board Member at Choice since 2015.

Michael McDonnell said: "Hazel brings a wealth of commercial experience and expertise, and I look forward to working with her closely as we bring forward an ambitious programme of development and housing support services. We are making significant strides in many policy areas and Hazel's experience and expertise will be a huge asset to everyone during a period of great change in the housing sector.

"I would also like to thank Timothy Quin for all his dedication, leadership and commitment in recent years. He hands over to Hazel a confident business making clear progress and with the appetite to push harder still for our tenants."

Hazel Bell said: "It is a great privilege to have been appointed Chair of Choice, and I look forward to leading this successful and talented team into its next chapter. The association has secured many great achievements in its first few years, but there is still more to be done to deliver more homes and improving the high standards of services for our customers."

THE RESULTS ARE IN!

Choice Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016

Our vision is to be a leading provider in customer service and we recognise that to succeed in this we must seek the views of our customers. Over the summer we carried out our Customer Satisfaction Survey to help us identify things that we are doing well as well as, areas that need some improvement.

We commissioned an independent market research company, Millward Brown Ulster to carry out the research and worked with our Tenants' Forum to develop the questionnaire to ensure it included topics that are important to tenants.

We are pleased to report that Millward Brown Ulster received 1,206 completed questionnaires, a response rate of 16%. Thank you again to everyone who took the time to complete the survey, your feedback is really important to us. We've shared full details of the results with the Tenants' Forum and our management team will be working with the central and regional forums to develop and agree prioritised action plans based on the feedback and results.

IN SUMMARY

The results show:

HIGH LEVELS of satisfaction amongst tenants with

- their home
- the area they live in
- maintenance work carried out
- being kept informed about things that affect them
- Choice as a landlord
- overall service provided by Choice

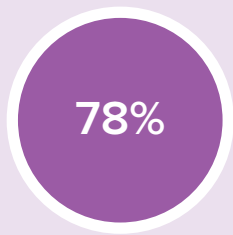
HIGH LEVELS of agreement regarding Choice staff in terms of being

- polite
- patient
- understanding
- knowledgeable
- able to deal with queries

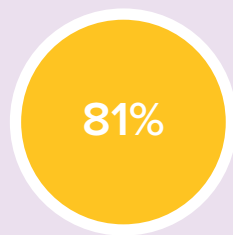
AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Our complaints procedure, particularly in relation to support provided to tenants who make a complaint and our process for keeping tenants informed about the progress of their complaint.
- Our handling of anti-social behaviour, particularly in relation to the support provided by staff and keeping tenants informed about what is happening with their case.
- The external and communal areas where general needs tenants reside.
- Contractors not showing their identity badges when carrying out repair or maintenance work.

OVERALL LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH CHOICE



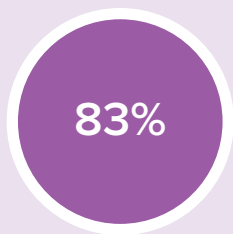
Over 3/4 of tenants were satisfied with the overall service provided by Choice



Over 4 in 5 tenants expressed satisfaction with Choice as their landlord



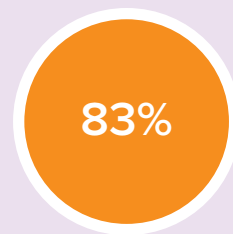
HOME



of tenants were satisfied with their home



AREA



of tenants were satisfied with their area as a place to live

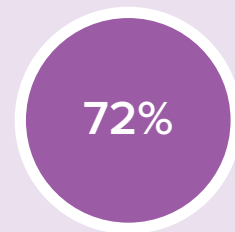
SHETLERED SERVICES



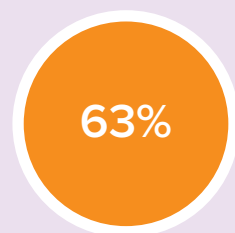
Sheltered tenants expressed high levels of satisfaction across most of the services provided



RENT



of tenants were satisfied with the value for money they received on their rent

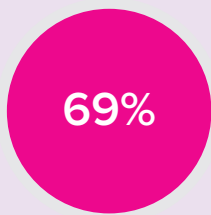
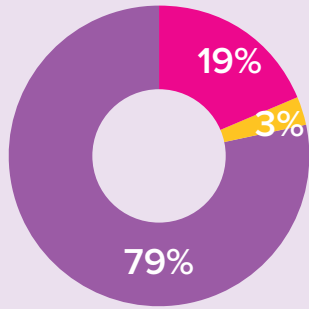


of tenants were satisfied with the value for money they received from their service charges

REPAIRS

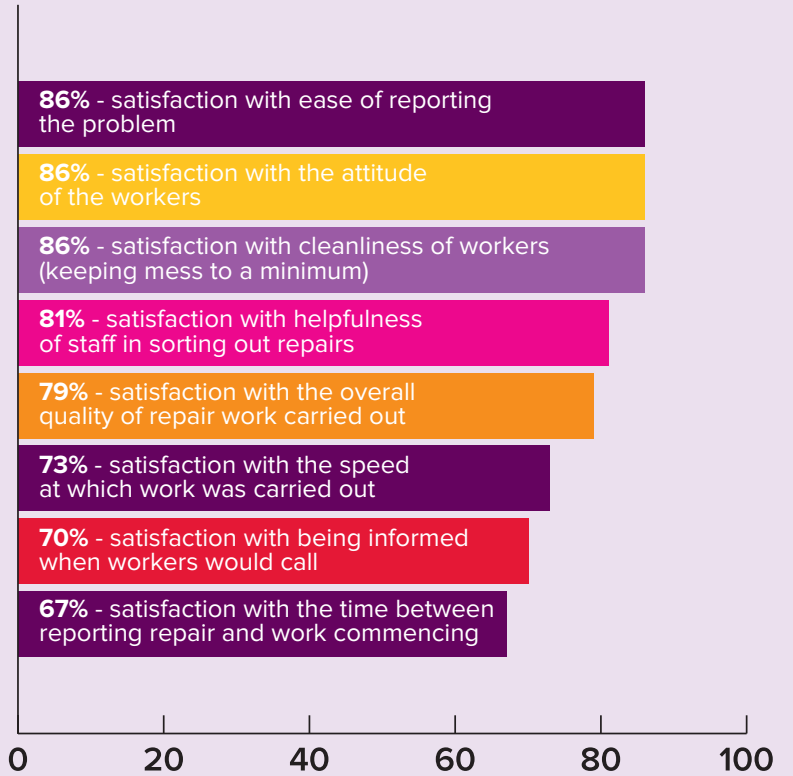


Over 4 in 5 tenant homes have had repairs carried out (79%).



Almost 7 in 10 tenants expressed some level of satisfaction with Choice's repair service

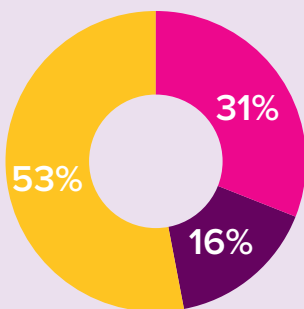
Thinking of the last repair carried out tenants expressed high levels of satisfaction related to repairs & maintenance



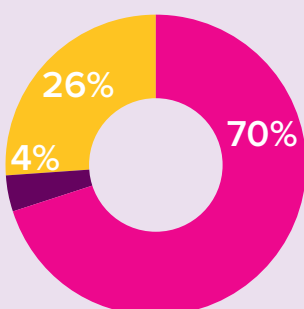
COMPLAINTS



Just over half of tenants (53%) were aware of Choice's complaints policy and procedures

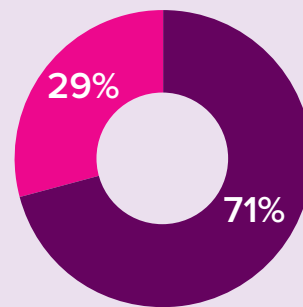


Just over a quarter of tenants (26%) had made a complaint



ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

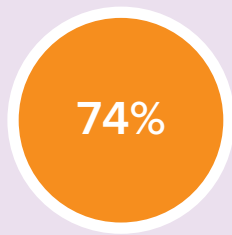
almost 3 in 10 tenants (29%) had been affected by anti-social behaviour



Almost 3 in 5 anti-social behaviour issues that were reported were resolved (58%)



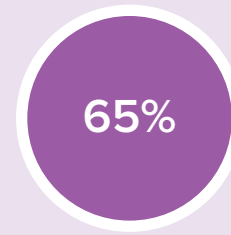
INFORMATION AND INVOLVEMENT



The vast majority believed that Choice were good at keeping tenants informed

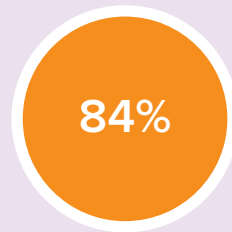


Over 2 in 3 tenants found Choice News useful

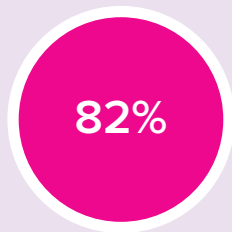


Almost 2/3 of tenants were satisfied that Choice gave them the opportunity to make their views known

CONTACT WITH CHOICE



84% of tenants were satisfied with the range of methods available for contacting Choice



Some 82% described Choice staff members as helpful



2/3 of tenants were satisfied with the outcome of their last contact with Choice

There were high levels of agreement amongst tenants that Choice staff are:

Polite and friendly **92%**

Patient **88%**

Understanding **85%**

Knowledgable **82%**

Able to deal with your query **80%**

NEXT STEPS

Whilst there are many areas where our service is clearly meeting or exceeding your expectations, there is scope for improvement in others. We will be working with focus groups and the Tenants' Forum to agree prioritised action plans and will update tenants with progress. We will be holding focus groups in the New Year and would encourage tenants to contact us if you would like to become involved in a focus group for helping us to improve services.

If you would like to become involved you can contact us on 0300 111 2211 or enquiries@choice-housing.org

Customer Satisfaction Survey Winners 2016



Bill Jeffrey, Choice Tenants' Forum Chair, Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive and Carol Ervine, Group Director of Tenant & Client Services present Ms Josephine Ritchie with her prizes at Old Manor House in Lisburn.

The winner, Mrs Florence McCarroll, can be seen receiving her prize on the front cover of this edition.

We would like to thank all our tenants for taking time to complete the Choice Satisfaction Survey 2016. All the customers who took part in the survey were entered into a prize draw to win three fantastic prizes.

The winners were randomly selected by Millward Brown Ulster and we were delighted to present the following tenants with their prizes:

First Prize

Mrs Florence McCarroll
42 inch HD Television

Second Prize

Ms Josephine Ritchie
£150 Tesco Vouchers

Third Prize

Mr Michael Turner
£75 Tesco Vouchers

St Elizabeth's Court

Open & Direct Best Kept Award Winner

Our beautiful sheltered housing scheme in Dundonald, a 200 year old Georgian rectory steeped in Belfast history, has been unveiled as the Best Kept Sheltered Housing development in Northern Ireland.

St Elizabeth's Court is an impressive building dating back to 1819 and was later renovated in 1985. It was transformed into a sheltered living scheme and provides 30 self-contained flats and six bungalows.

Commenting on the awards win, Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said: "It's very rewarding for this scheme to be recognised by experts who understand the importance of quality independent living. The scheme's co-ordinator, Jennifer Watson and all the tenants are passionate about creating an attractive environment to live in. This is particularly evident through their gardening skills, which always stand out for visitors.

"St Elizabeth's is a unique project and a highly popular scheme due to its rich history and facilities it provides for our tenants. Housing is a powerful catalyst for positive community transformation and it is important for Choice that our schemes continue to create real long-term social impact."

The annual Best Kept Awards reward communities and their commitment to creating beautiful surroundings and St Elizabeth's encapsulates all for a winning housing area.

Doreen Muskett MBE, President, Northern Ireland Amenity Council adds: "Every year it is a pleasure to reward those who have taken great pride in maintaining or creating beautiful settings. Entries for 2016 were of a high standard and judges had great difficulty in selecting the eventual winners. I would like to congratulate not only everyone who took home a 'Best Kept' accolade at this year's ceremony, but also everyone who entered. These awards promote a healthy, creative living environment and it is fantastic to see so many local areas putting the effort into bettering their own."



Contractor appointed for £3m Rock Mills refurbishment

Choice has appointed a Derry-Londonderry based contractor to complete a major overhaul of its Rock Mills scheme on the Strand Road.

The newly formed AMSON Consortium – a joint venture between local construction firm AMS Ltd and Omagh-based O’Neill Electrics Ltd – commenced the first phase of the 14-month refurbishment programme in October. Existing tenants will temporarily decant to empty units during the first phase of the refurbishment and return to their renovated homes once the work is completed.

The series of works will reconfigure the Rock Mills site to provide 96 modern self-contained units with the three largest each accommodating families of four. The refurbishment will include an overhaul of all electrics and plumbing within the building and the fitting of new kitchens and bathrooms throughout, as well as a number of other upgrades to the building.

Michael McDonnell, Goup Chief Executive of Choice said: “Rock Mills is in great need of renovation and refurbishment to enable it to help address the urgent local housing need. We engaged in a rigorous search to find the best contractors and it is pleasing to appoint organisations that have the skills, experience and resources for a job of this size. We believe in investing in the local communities where we operate and it is an added bonus to support local businesses with projects like this.

“This is an exciting new chapter for Rock Mills. The reconfiguration of the building increases the number of homes we can

provide and incorporates the very best standards and the latest in energy saving technology. It will enable tenants to make the most of quality, affordable and secure homes rights in the heart of the city.”

Gerry Donaghy from AMSON said: “We believe people deserve well-built and comfortable homes, whatever their circumstances. That’s why our social housing projects benefit from the same expertise, attention to detail, build and finish quality that we apply to commercial developments.

“This is an exciting and timely project for us to be involved in. The first phase of works has already started and we look forward to seeing the first new tenants take up occupancy next year. I believe our appointment reflects our successful record of delivering ambitious housing refurbishment and regeneration programmes in the region.”

Rock Mills was first opened by SHAC Housing Association in the late 1980s to serve the city’s student population and a number of single people. Approval for the upgrade was granted at a meeting of Derry City and Strabane District Council Planning Committee at the start of October.



£3.3m Greenisland housing development reaches major milestone

Housing and healthcare professionals today marked a major milestone in the delivery of a new £3.3 million facility in Greenisland.

Developed by Choice in partnership with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Greenisland House will provide 32 new state-of-the-art homes and care services for older people when it is completed in Spring 2017.

Community representatives joined both organisations for a hardhat tour of the Shore Road site and viewed the final roof beam being set in place just 18 months after work started on the development.

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said: "Work on this site has progressed at a rapid pace and we've wasted no time in getting

construction to such an advanced stage. We are committed to ensuring that our most vulnerable citizens are given exactly the same opportunities as everyone else to live independent lives. This new scheme is about doing that and more. Today is an important milestone for us and for the people who will ultimately benefit from the new homes in this area.

"In meeting the needs of older people, we deliver our best outcomes by working in partnerships that augment and maximise our abilities. Support from Northern Health and Social Care Trust, Department for Communities and NIHE Supporting People teams is invaluable. We look forward to opening this new scheme next year."

Bob McCann, Chair, Northern Health and Social Care Trust said: "We have now passed the half-way point in the construction phase which is on course to be completed early next year. That's a great credit to Choice, the architect and the contractor. Though this scheme shares its name with the old facility it is replacing, it will bring a new approach and will play an important role in allowing people in the Greenisland and Newtownabbey area to retain their independence and remain part of their community."

The scheme, designed by RPP Architect with M.J. McBride Construction Ltd appointed as project contractor, is funded through a mix of private financing secured by Choice and grants from the Department for Communities.



Minister cuts first sod at new £8.5m social housing scheme in Ballymena

Communities Minister Paul Givan has cut the first sod at a new social housing scheme which will provide 74 new homes for Ballymena.

The £8.5 million Larne Road development is being funded by an investment of £4.4 million from the Department for Communities, with a further £4.1 million being provided by Choice through private finance.

The 74 homes will accommodate 238 people when the development is completed in April 2018. The first phase of homes is expected to be handed over in September next year.

Communities Minister Paul Givan MLA said: “One of my key objectives as Housing Minister is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access good quality, affordable accommodation. When completed, this new development will do just that by providing 74 modern homes to people on the social housing waiting list, in an area where there continues to be a high housing need.

“The Executive is proud of its record of delivering more social and affordable housing for the people of Northern Ireland, with delivery far exceeding the targets over the past five years. I will continue in this drive to deliver homes for those in need. This development in Ballymena is an example of that and the use of the former school site, demonstrates how my Department, the NIHE and housing associations are working hard to utilise land in areas of need to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland.”

Group Chief Executive of Choice, Michael McDonnell said: “This important project will bring 74 high quality new homes for families of varying sizes in Ballymena. It is good news, particularly for those who are on the waiting list, and will help bring a new vibrancy to the Larne Road area. This is a site that we have worked hard to secure and we are grateful for the support received from the Department for Communities and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

“This is one of a number of new Choice developments that are at various stages of planning and construction across Northern Ireland. We’ve set ourselves ambitious targets over the next five years and are working in close partnership with local communities to bring about sustainable transformations that can support them to grow and flourish.”





£13m scheme to deliver 106 modern homes for Bangor

Choice have started construction work on one of the largest social housing schemes to commence in Northern Ireland this year.

Due for completion in 2018, the £13 million development on Bangor's Old Belfast Road will provide 106 much needed new homes that will accommodate more than 300 people and incorporate the very latest in energy saving, design and security features.

The scheme, designed by architects RMI with EHA Group appointed as project contractor, is funded through a mix of private financing secured by Choice and grants from the Department for Communities.

Communities Minister Paul Givan MLA attended the construction site and said: "It is a great pleasure to be in North Down to see the work underway to deliver vital social housing in this area. With Bangor being a popular residential area, the development of 106 family homes will go some way to addressing waiting lists. In a number of months this site at Old Belfast Road will be home to many families, a community, who will contribute to the wider economic and social development of Bangor."

In June, the European Investment Bank confirmed details of a £150 million loan in support of Choice Housing's plans to deliver 2,700 new homes over the next five years.

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said: "This is an important development for us and for the people of Bangor, particularly those on the housing waiting list. We have worked closely with the local communities in the design and build of this scheme to ensure it meets high standards of efficiency and quality but also to ensure that it can reflect the type of future we all want to see.

"Housing can be a powerful catalyst for positive transformation and this scheme is about supporting thriving and sustainable communities. We have every confidence that this unique development will demonstrate the standards we are setting ourselves and others, and the high quality modern homes that customers should expect."

Choice manages up to 10,000 homes in Northern Ireland and we were the most active developer of new properties in the region last year with work starting on more than 520 new homes.



How Will Welfare Changes Affect You?

Welfare Changes will result in changes to the benefits system. All benefit claimants, including those claiming Housing Benefit. Many current benefits will cease to exist and new benefits and payment systems will be introduced. Some of the changes have already taken place and others will follow in forthcoming months. Our handy guide outlines the main changes, what they mean and when they will come into effect.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

People aged 16-24 years will no longer receive contribution-based ESA regardless of National Insurance Contributions

Date of Change: **February 2016**

Benefit Capping

The Government will add up how much money you get from a range of benefits, including: Bereavement Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance and Housing Benefit. If the total comes to more than the maximum amount allowed, your Housing Benefit payments will be reduced.

In May this year, the overall amount of benefit you can receive was capped to weekly amounts of:

- £500 for lone parents or couples (with or without children).
- £350 per week for adults who do not have children or whose children do not live with them.

Date of Change: **May 2016**

The Benefit Cap will be further reduced on 7 November 2016 to the following rates:

- £384.62 per week for lone parents or couples (with or without children).
- £257.69 per week for single claimants.

Date of Change: **November 2016**

Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

New claims for Disability Living Allowance were replaced with a new benefit called Personal Independence Payment for people aged 16 to 64 years.

Date of Change: **June 2016**

From December 2016 the Government will begin transferring existing DLA claims to Personal Independence Payment.

Date of Change: **December 2016**

Housing Benefit

The maximum period in which Housing Benefit can be backdated has been reduced to one month for working age claimants.

Family premiums for households with a child or qualifying young person is no longer paid to new claimants.

Date of Change: **September 2016**

Bedroom Tax (Social Sector Size Criteria)

The amount of Housing Benefit paid to people of working age will be changed to reflect the size of their family. Tenants of all social landlords will have their Housing Benefit payments reduced if they have more bedrooms in their home than their family needs.

The new rules will allow one bedroom for:

- Each adult couple.
- Any other adult aged 16 or over.
- Any two children of the same sex aged under 16.
- Any two children aged under 10 regardless of gender.
- Any other child (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere).
- A carer (or team of carers) who do not live with the claimant but provide overnight care.

If you are considered to have more bedrooms than you need, your Housing Benefit will be reduced by:

- 14% for under-occupying by one bedroom.
- 25% for under-occupying by two or more bedrooms. This will affect all claimants of working age (up to 64 years). People over pension age will not be affected by the bedroom tax.

Date of Change: **February 2017**

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new single benefit payment for people aged 18 to 64 years old. It is due to replace Tax Credits and income-related benefits such as: Income Support, income-based Jobseekers' Allowance, income-related Employment and support Allowance and Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit will be paid once per calendar month but claimants can choose to receive payments fortnightly. If you currently receive Housing Benefit, the housing element of Universal Credit will be paid directly to the Association.

Date of Change: **September 2017**

Digital By Default

Universal Credit will be 'digital by default' meaning that the benefit application, and all future correspondence relating to the claim, will be carried out online. Further details of how this will apply in practice are to be made available at a later date.

Help and Advice

If you are concerned about how the changes to the benefit system will affect you, information and advice can be obtained by contacting:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Choice | 0300 1122 111 |
| Advice NI | 028 9064 5919 |
| Housing Rights Service | 028 9024 5640 |
| Citizen's Advice Bureau | 0300 1233 233 (Belfast) |

Make The Call

To check if you're getting all the money you're entitled to Make the Call free to the Benefits Advice Line on 0800 232 1271 or alternatively, text CHECK to 66101 and an advisor will call you back. All calls are confidential and a friend or relative can even make enquiries on your behalf.

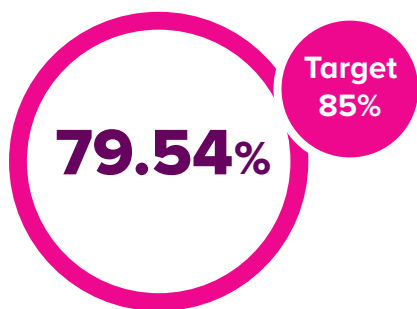
How we're performing

Choice is at the forefront in the provision of social housing and is committed to delivering quality housing and excellent customer services that enhance the lives of customers and communities.

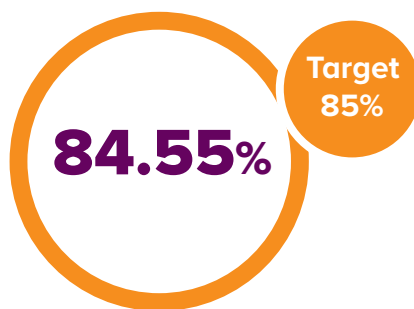
It is important that your voice, in relation to our services, is heard as the feedback that we receive is vital for Choice to identify and correct any problems within our service delivery and to ensure that we meet the needs of all our customers.

It is important that your voice, in relation to our services, is heard.

Customer Enquiries



of enquiries resolved at first point of contact

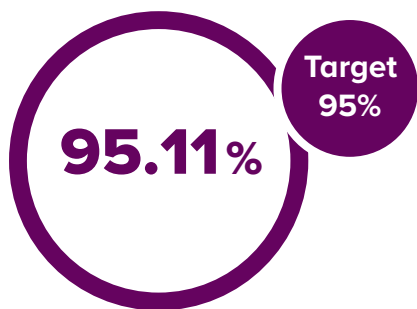


satisfaction rating of Choice Services Centre



average working days to respond to stage 1 complaints

Customer Services



Call Advisor call quality

Gas Safety



of gas boilers were serviced within a year

Human Resources



overall sickness absence in the year

Repairs



customers satisfied with repairs carried out



emergency repairs completed within 24 Hours



urgent repairs completed within 4 working days



routine repairs completed within 20 working days

Protecting your home from c



Protecting your home from extreme cold weather is vital during the winter months.

This information will help you prepare and assist you if you experience any problems during the cold weather.

It is important to recognise that when there is extreme weather and subsequent high call volume we will prioritise repairs such as complete heating failure where there are young children, elderly or people with medical or mobility problems. Due to call volume, access difficulties or where other agencies are responsible, repairs may not be completed within the designated time frames. Once you have reported your repair, try to avoid repeat calls to our Services Centre. Our contractors will deal with repairs issued in order of priority.

We appreciate that this may be a difficult time for tenants and your co-operation is very much appreciated.

Prevent your pipes from freezing

The following tips will help stop the pipes in your home from freezing:

- Turn your heating on for short periods throughout the day and night.
- Leave the heating on at a low level when you are away from home. This can be done by lowering the main heating control thermostat and turning thermostatic radiator valves down but not off. Consider leaving a key with a family member, friend or neighbour who can check your home regularly.
- Don't leave taps dripping or running as the water in waste pipes can freeze.
- Allow hot air from the main house into the loft, this may mean opening a trap door during extreme cold periods.
- Open the cupboard under the sink to ensure warm air can circulate round the piping.
- Ensure that all doors throughout the house are slightly open for warm air to flow around the house.

How to deal with frozen pipes

Most frozen pipes are found in the roof space and below sink units.

- Turn the water supply off at the stopcock. The stopcock is a valve for turning off and on the cold water system in your home. Stopcocks are usually found in your kitchen below the sink unit. However, in some houses the stopcock is found in a front or back hall. Please ensure that you know where the stopcock is located. You can shut off the supply by turning the stopcock in a clockwise direction. To turn the supply back on, turn the stopcock in an anti-clockwise direction.
- To thaw frozen pipes put hot water bottles or a thick cloth soaked in hot water over the frozen pipe. A hairdryer at its lowest setting can also be used. Please be careful not to warm the pipes too quickly as this may lead to the pipe bursting. It is important that you thaw along the pipe starting from the end nearest the tap.

What to do if a pipe bursts

- Turn off the stopcock by turning it clockwise.
- Try to block the escaping water with thick cloths such as towels to stop the leak spreading.
- Turn off your central heating, immersion heater and any other water heating systems. If the central heating uses solid fuel, let this die out.
- Once you have shut down your water heating, turn on all your taps to drain the system. Flushing your toilet several times may help.
- If water leaks near anything electrical switch off the mains electricity immediately. If the mains switch is wet, don't touch it as you risk electrocution.



To report burst pipes please contact the Choice Services Centre on 0300 111 2211.

old weather

Common faults with gas heating

Frozen condensate pipes

Modern boilers produce significant volumes of condensate (water) which normally discharges into a gully. In very cold weather this condensate may freeze particularly where it discharges to an external gully. To prevent this you can place a hot water bottle on the pipe close to where it discharges (this advice also applies to some oil boilers). In exceptional circumstances we may need to disconnect the condensate pipe internally and allow it to drain into a basin. The basin will need to be emptied regularly and the pipe reconnected when the weather improves.

Frozen gas regulators

There may be a small amount of water vapour in the gas regulator which if it freezes will cause the gas supply to your boiler to fail. You should cover your meter with a towel or old clothing to provide some insulation. Place a hot water bottle on the regulator (grey metal fitting on the top left hand side of the meter) and remove once it has thawed any ice. Dry the regulator immediately.

Home Contents Insurance

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to insure your home contents. Choice insures the buildings only. Any damage to your property, regardless of the cause, is not insured by Choice.

Help your neighbour

During extreme weather conditions please check on your neighbours if they are elderly, have a disability or are housebound as it can be a difficult time for them to get out and about. A friendly visit from a neighbour will be appreciated.

To report an issues please contact the Choice Services Centre on 0300 111 2211.

Further advice is available from your gas supplier and water service which may include helpful hints and video tutorials.

Saving Energy

We can all make small changes to how we live to reduce energy costs and our impact on the environment.

Reduce your heating costs

- 1 Don't leave windows open for long periods of time. Windows need to be opened in most homes to provide adequate ventilation, but leaving windows open all day can cool your home, increasing your heating costs.
- 2 Close your curtains at dusk to help keep heat in your home.
- 3 Check the wall thermostat in your home, if you have one. The recommended temperature should be around 18-21°C, so try keeping it at the lowest level that you feel comfortable at.
- 4 Make sure your radiators are not obstructed by curtains or furniture.
- 5 If drying clothes inside, use a clothes rail instead of hanging them over a radiator which would block heat from your room.

Reduce your electricity costs

- 1 Always turn off your lights when you leave a room.
- 2 Only boil as much water as you need – but remember to cover the element if you're using an electric kettle.
- 3 Switch off your appliances – don't leave them on standby or charging unnecessarily.
- 4 Use the 'half load' or 'economy' function on your washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher when possible.
- 5 Don't leave the fridge door open and try to avoid putting hot or warm food straight into your fridge.



Drumkeen Court 10th Anniversary



Choice sheltered living scheme, Drumkeen Court in Ederney marked its 10th anniversary with a special celebration for its tenants, staff and Cllr Raymond Farrell.

Drumkeen was opened in 2006 and is currently home to 12 residents who enjoy independent living within a safe and supported environment.

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice spoke at the celebratory event and presented long-standing tenants; Maria Lilly and Rosaleen Gillen with flowers. "We are delighted that so many people could come and join

the celebrations for this special milestone with us. It was fantastic to see tenants, friends and family coming together to celebrate ten years of being part Drumkeen Court at the heart of the local community."



Sperrin Court celebrates 30-year milestone

The Chair of Mid-Ulster Council, Cllr Trevor Wilson, recently joined residents and staff from Choice to mark three decades since a vital housing scheme opened in Cookstown.

Established in 1986, Sperrin Court on Limekiln Lane provides 42 self-contained apartments that help older people live safely and independently in their own home and with easy access to family, friends and local amenities.

The Council Chairman cut a cake to formally commence celebrations that included the presentation of flowers to three longstanding tenants Nancy Coners, Margaret Magee and Maeve Thompson; and a coffee morning in aid of MacMillan Cancer Support.

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said: "This scheme has been an important part of the community for such a long time and it is right that we mark 30 fantastic years that have benefited so many people. Over the years, Caroline Monroe our scheme co-ordinator at Sperrin Court

and our staff have built a unique bond between the

residents here and their families and friends. We are delighted that so many people could come and celebrate the success of Sperrin Court.

"Schemes like this provide residents with a safe and secure environment right in the heart of the community. They are designed to make day-to-day living easier and take on responsibility for life's complications like managing property repairs. Our aim is to ensure tenants feel safe, enjoy their privacy and keep their independence."

Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, Councillor Trevor Wilson commented: "I'm delighted to be here today to celebrate the provision of this fantastic service for 30 years to our local community. Sperrin Court provides safe homes for older people who wish to live independently, a vital service for those who need it."

The popular development is one of our longest-established sheltered living schemes and overall we have more than 35 years' experience of providing housing and support services for older people.



Nancy Coners with Head of Housing Chris Symington.





**LIVE
HERE
LOVE
HERE**

Small Grants Scheme

The Live Here Love Here campaign which is backed by Choice, several local councils and Tourism Northern Ireland, supports communities to transform their neighbourhoods and provides resources to help volunteers, groups and schools to create more green space and clean up littering, dog fouling and graffiti. The Small Grants Scheme has approved a number of grants designed to help groups improve the quality of their local environment.

Bi Blathac

Bi Gaelach

Aim of the project is to increase the amount of pollinator-friendly flowers in the west Belfast community. It will be a huge benefit to the wildlife, aesthetically pleasing for residents and visitors alike. The team will work with local residents and businesses and do some gardening tasks for them in return for allowing the group to plant pollinator friendly plants on their premises.

Growing the Garden of Eatin

Donegall Pass Community Forum

Donegall Pass Community Forum will deliver a healthy eating programme and a 'grow your own' project encouraging residents and users of the community garden to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. The grant will enable the group to purchase tools, compost and plants as well as provide a planting workshop for the whole community.

Patch to Paradise

Morten Team Ignite in partnership with Morton Community Centre and Helm Housing

This project will enable a junior youth group who meet at the Morton Community Centre to construct and maintain a garden along Lower Windsor Avenue with three raised beds and a seat for visitors. The goal of the project will be to engage young members of the community in projects which seek to enhance their environment and build community relations.

Footprints Women's Food Garden

Footprints Women's Centre

Footprints Women's Centre have already established a Community Food Initiative which provides families with surplus/donated food destined for landfill. The group wishes to build on this success and grow a range of fruit trees and shrubs around the centre which will supply fresh fruit, homemade jams and chutneys for the local community. The funding will allow the group to clear the site, purchase trees, plants and shrubs and construct a number of raised beds.

Mid waterside Transforming Alleyways

Mid Waterside Residents Association

The funding will enable to group to reclaim the unused, littered/derelict alleyways and transform them from a dead space to become a public space that is part of the community. The funding would allow the group to power wash and paint the dilapidated space as well as installing planters made from reclaimed pallets and a new dog fouling bin to clean up the area.

Grahamsbridge Working Garden

Grahamsbridge Volunteers

The tenants and the community have worked together to create a 'working garden'. The garden was constructed using all recycled materials such as laminated floor boards, and door frames. This project has helped to combating isolation and monotony of sheltered living. Garden borders on to school and the residents would like to include in future gardening tasks. The funding will allow the group to purchase equipment such as wheelbarrow, shovel and also a shed.

Pond Park Primary School

Pond Park Primary School

The funding will allow the school and community group to purchase a Polytunnel that will be based at school but open to community. The project will help to nurture the relationship between the school and locals by hosting introductory 'get to know you sessions', it will teach pupils and residents new skills. The funding will purchase a polytunnel and watering scheme.

Mucky Paws

Outer West Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership

Project will link school, community and council together through a project in the newly redeveloped Brooke Park. The group will purchase a polytunnel and gardening equipment. The project aims to give the young people and community a sense of ownership and pride for their local park and to include them in the upkeep.

Ligoniel Park Fix Project

Ligoniel Improvement Association

This project will develop an opportunity for local volunteers to enhance the natural environment throughout the Ligoniel area. Tasks will include tree maintenance, clearing of pathways and litter recycling. The project will focus on specific areas in the estate but also allow volunteers to suggest 'hot spots' where the group should target, this will allow the volunteers to become custodians of their local environment. The funding will allow the group to purchase equipment.

Work, Sit, Speak & Play

Whitehill Community Association

The community will transform the open grass area in the centre of the estate which is troubled by litter and dog fouling to become a colourful and welcoming picnic area. The group will construct a picnic area and plant flowers to instil pride in the area and provide a place for adults and children to relax and enjoy.

Choice have provided £12,000 of funding to these community projects.

For more information on the Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme please visit www.liveherelovehere.org or contact Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful on 028 9073 6920.

stay safe online

Over the last few years there has been a surge of online services and the demands for online connectivity has increased. We are connected to more devices and internet services than ever before, so much so that it is now hard to identify when we are not connected rather than the other way around!

Risks with being connected

One of the biggest problems with this constant connectivity is that we drop our guard, we become more familiar with the constant exchange of information and less critical of what we exchange – this then exposes us to unnecessary risks when online. Over the next few issues we will be exploring some of these risks of online services and look at methods of reducing these risks.

Regardless of what technology you are using or where you are using it, we recommend the following five key steps. This is not a definitive list but is designed to show you some easy steps which you can take to increase your defences against online threats.

1 You and Your Actions

If an attacker wants your credit card details, they may fool you into giving it to them, this could be via an email, a website or even a telephone call or brief encounter.

Ultimately, the greatest defence against attackers is yourself. Be suspicious. By using common sense, you can spot and stop attacks.

2 Update Software

Update your software on all devices. Attackers use flaws in software to infiltrate systems to gain access to data and other resources. When manufacturers identify these vulnerabilities they write updates to repair these flaws by updating the code. This applies to all devices be it your computer, laptop, mobile device and even in some cases baby monitors!

3 Passwords

Use a strong, unique password for each of your devices to include online accounts and applications.

A strong password is one that cannot be easily guessed by attackers or by automated programs. Use a long passphrase of multiple words with symbols and numbers. Use a different password for each device and account. This way, if one password is compromised, all of your other accounts and devices are still safe.

Especially for accounts with a higher risk (banking, etc) if they support two-step verification, it is highly recommended that you always enable it, as this is one of the strongest ways to protect your account.

4 Encryption

Encryption jumbles up information so that it cannot be read by unauthorised people thereby protecting it. Data can be encrypted in two places: at rest and in motion.

Encrypting data at rest means protecting it when it is stored as files on places like your hard drive or a USB stick. Most operating systems allow you to automatically encrypt all of your data using features such as Full Disk Encryption.

Encrypting data in motion means encrypting data as it's transmitted from your computer or device to others, such as when you are banking online. A simple way to verify if encryption is enabled is to make sure that the address of the website you're visiting starts with "https:" and has the image of a closed padlock next to it, this restricts who and what gains access to your data while it passes between you and the hosting website.

5 Backups

Devices fail and get lost, new forms of malware (ransomware) are designed to simply lock you out so that you cannot gain access to your data. Make sure you are doing regular backups of any important information and verify that you can restore from them. Most operating systems and mobile devices support automatic backups.

Anti-social Behaviour support for customers

Choice has appointed Insec Security to provide assistance to tenants whenever problems are encountered in relation to Anti-social Behaviour (ASB). This may include problems with excessive noise or threatening behaviour.

Please note the following:

- This service is only available to Choice tenants outside office hours.
- Tenants should continue to report all cases of ASB to the Services Centre on **0300 111 2211**, during normal office hours.
- Any tenant who has concerns for their own safety, or believes that a crime has been committed, should contact the PSNI.
- Tenants living in sheltered housing schemes should continue to report all cases of ASB directly to their Scheme Co-ordinators or to the Services Centre on **0300 111 2211**, during normal office hours.
- Insec Security will only visit the person who is causing the ASB. Insec will not visit the tenant making the complaint. This process is to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Please contact the Association if you require further information regarding this service.

Insec Security
028 9020 0080

Choice Services Centre Christmas & New Year Opening Hours

Choice Services Centre opening hours over the festive period are as follows:



| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Friday 23rd December | 9:00am – 5:00pm |
| Monday 26th December | Closed |
| Tuesday 27th December | Closed |
| Wednesday 28th December | 9:00am – 5:00pm |
| Thursday 29th December | 9:00am – 5:00pm |
| Friday 30th December | Closed |
| Monday 2nd January | Closed |

Normal working hours will resume from Tuesday 3rd December from 9:00am – 5:00pm. Our out of hour's services will continue to be available throughout this period. If you require emergency assistance, please call 0300 111 2211. We would like to request that you do not send emergency or urgent repair requests by email during the days when the office is closed (26th, 27th, 30th December and 2nd January) but contact us on 0300 111 2211.





Men's Health Conference

Choice Tenants' Forum work in partnership with Cancer Focus and members attended their annual Men's Health Conference in The Dunsilly Hotel on 15th September 2016.

The theme for the conference was 'Resilience' and looked at ways that build strategies for men to bounce back. The event was attended by 80 delegates from health professionals to both men and women who have an interest in health and cancer issues.

The conference shared ideas, best practice and how to improve health in local communities. The keynote speaker was psychologist Shane Martin, who spoke about the need to promote health, happiness and resilience through their difficult times. His presentation was powerful and resonated with so many in the room.



Choice and Apex celebrate Older Persons Day

Choice in partnership with Apex Housing supported an information event in Derry/Londonderry on Monday 3rd October 2016 to celebrate International day of Older Persons.

The event focused on Safety, Health and wellbeing of Older Persons in the North West area.

Derry and Strabane Policing Community Safety Partnership provided some valuable information, so too did other agencies all focusing on health related subjects. Tenants enjoyed a nice lunch, a bit of afternoon music and really enjoyed the social side to the event all positively contributing

to their overall health.

Choice want to thank Apex Housing for working together with us to make that positive change to our tenants.



The Choice Minibus

Choice tenants are widely dispersed throughout Northern Ireland and the Choice Minibus has proved to be a valuable commodity bringing tenants together, making it easier for people to engage and have fun together. The Tenants' Forum were very instrumental in reviewing and finalising the policy necessary for the use of the Choice Minibus. This Policy has now been 'Tenant Approved' and both tenants and staff look forward to making good use of bus for the benefit of all.



Tenants' Forum

Editorial Team working hard

Choice Editorial Team is made up of tenants who form part of the Choice Tenants' Forum group. The group is supported by Jenny Mawhinney (Marketing and Communications Officer) and Claire Darby (Tenant Involvement Champion) and all contribute to the content of your newsletter now four times per year and to your annual calendar which all tenants receive. The team enjoy this relaxed approach to this focus group and look forward to the fruits of their efforts when they see the finished publications. One member said: "Producing a newsletter with staff and tenants benefits us all, a benefit for tenants, staff and for our landlord Choice."



Choice Fund Local Community Events



Community events are an opportunity to bring communities together and foster a sense of community pride in their area, teach people about the area and strengthen relationships with neighbours. The benefits of such collaborations will last beyond any event as people are brought together, community connections are made and healthy communities are formed.

Finch Community Group, based in Pond Park, Lisburn, held a week long Community festival for the residents of this large estate.

Events were held each evening to bring tenants and children together including:

- Cultural night with African drumming.
- Irish Dance and Indian Henna tattooing.
- Roller Disco.
- Football Competitions.
- Assault Course.
- Community Feast with food provided for all.

If you have a Community project you would like Choice to discuss with you to determine if we can fund and support it please contact your Housing Officer on 0300 111 2211.

Mystery Shopping

Become a Mystery Shopper. Choice Tenants' Forum are about to commence training on Mystery Shopping and we will commence exercises within our offices and schemes. Mystery Shopping involves trained tenant members testing our services, by phoning Choice, visiting our offices and then telling us about the service they received. The purpose of the Mystery Shopping exercise is to identify good practice and areas for improvement.

Claire Darby, Tenant Involvement Champion supports this particular Focus group and said: "The tenants involved in Mystery Shopping are really enthusiastic and are looking forward to learning, putting their theory into practice and reporting back to Choice their findings."

A report outlining the findings will be prepared next year and reported to all tenants next Spring.



Menu of Tenant Involvement

Calling All Tenants

Why get involved?

Being involved with Choice will give you the chance to:

- Be active in shaping Choice services
- Make your area a better place to live in
- Give Choice your views on the services you receive
- Be part of a group to review and improve services
- Help Choice better understand the needs of tenants
- Gain useful skills
- Receive relevant training
- Meet new people

How do I get involved?

You can choose how to get involved and when by selecting the type and level of involvement that suits your lifestyle.

Choice would be delighted to hear from you

Please complete the Menu of Involvement in this newsletter and return to Choice or hand it to a member of Choice staff.

Telephone 0300 111 2211 and ask for the Tenant Involvement Team.

Choice Housing Ireland believes that it is essential to consider the views of our tenants with regard to the services and housing schemes we provide. We are committed to putting our customers at the heart of service delivery and we believe that by listening to and taking on board your views, we can ensure that policies and services are more responsive to changing needs and rising aspirations.

We recognise that it is important to offer a range of involvement methods which are fit for purpose and appropriate to the needs of our tenants, providing the opportunity for you to get involved with us on whatever level best suits your lifestyle.

If you are interested in working with Choice Housing Ireland staff to improve our services, please indicate in the table overleaf which option would be most appropriate for you and return the completed form to the Association.

Your
choice
Your
Voice



Menu of Tenant Involvement

YES NO



| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Resident Groups Represent your community on a wide range of issues by being part of a Resident Group in your area. Meets as and when required – 2.5 hours per meeting</p> | | |
| <p>Tenant Champion Where no formal Tenant Association exists become a Tenant Champion to represent your local community, working beside Choice housing staff to address any issues in your area. 1 hour per week</p> | | |
| <p>Tenants' Forum Group We currently have one Central Forum and three Regional Forums to cover the province, (Belfast region, North West region and Southern & Western region), discussing housing related issues and sharing best practice ideas. Meets every 8 weeks – 2.5 hours per meeting</p> | | |
| <p>Tenant Inspectors Carry out an inspection of our services alongside housing staff to identify areas for improvement. Training is provided and expenses paid. Meets quarterly – Additional project work every 6 months</p> | | |
| <p>Editorial Team Write and review articles for our Tenant Newsletter and website and report on the work of the Tenants' Forum. Meets quarterly – 2 hours per meeting</p> | | |
| <p>Estate Walkabouts Walk around your estate with your Housing and Property Services Officer to identify areas of concern and agree priorities for the local community. Meets annually – 2 hours per meeting</p> | | |
| <p>Financial Stakeholders Group Review the financial areas of housing, eg Tenants' Forum budgets, service charges and related financial matters. Meets quarterly – 2.5 hours per meeting</p> | | |
| <p>Policy Consultation Group Assist with the development and review of policies and procedures as and when required. We anticipate approximately 4 meetings per year – 2 hours per meeting</p> | | |
| <p>Mystery Shoppers Test services and provide feedback as a mystery shopper by carrying out a series of pre-agreed tasks, such as telephone calls or reception visits, and report on findings. Training will be provided. Meets quarterly over set days</p> | | |
| <p>Information Technology Assist with the ongoing development of Choice website and innovative self-service technology. As and when required</p> | | |
| <p>Tenant Satisfaction Survey Assist with the development of a Tenant Satisfaction Survey to help us identify our strengths and weaknesses. Meets twice per year, as agreed with staff</p> | | |
| <p>Register of Tenants Respond to surveys or comment on specific service areas which you are interested in. We can contact you by text, post, email or telephone call. As and when required – time commitment can be as little as 20 minutes</p> | | |
| <p>Tenant Translator Team Offer your services to other tenants in explaining documents or correspondence to help ensure they are understood. As and when required</p> | | |

Your Details

Name

Address

Telephone

Return to: **Choice Housing Ireland Ltd, FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 4BR**

Delivering New Homes

Our Development Team are working on new housing schemes to deliver much needed homes across Northern Ireland.

New Family Homes for Lower Shankill



Choice have successfully delivered 12 new homes to families in the Lower Shankill area of Belfast in September 2016. Phase two of this development consisted of a mixture of two, three and four bedroom houses. The 12 new family homes cost £ 1.14 million and took approximately 16 months to build. We hope our customers enjoy their new homes!

Building work started in Ballynahinch

On 9th June 2016 Choice signed the Building Contract to commence construction at Antrim Road, Ballynahinch. This scheme will consist of 24 family houses with a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and 2 and 3 bedroom houses. The family housing will cost approximately £1.93 million and will be on site for 18 months.





Sheltered Living in Sunnylands Grove, Carrickfergus

Choice handed over 12 new build apartments to tenants at Sunnylands Grove, Carrickfergus in September 2016. The two bedroom apartments are Category 1 sheltered apartments for applicants over 55 years of age. Sheltered living enables older people to live independently and privately in their own dwelling within a safe, friendly and supportive environment. We wish the new tenants many happy years in their new homes!

If you would like any further information on the new developments please contact Choice Services Centre on **0300 111 2211**.

Out and About



A visit from Paul Clarke

Tenants and staff of Pound Green Court in Larne were delighted to be part of the new Choice sheltered living video and meet Paul Clarke. Paul Clarke visited the scheme back in September to interview Marlene Smyth Scheme Co-ordinator and Martha Turner tenant at Pound Green Court for the video and was very impressed with the gardens at the scheme.



Fundraising at Sperrin Court

Congratulations to tenants at Sperrin Court in Cooktown who have raised a fantastic £1,040 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Clachan Court Macmillan Coffee Morning

Catherine McManus, Scheme Co-ordinator at Clachan Court, Derrylin has been organising coffee mornings in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support for the past 15 years with the help of her friends at the sheltered living scheme. This year Clachan Court raised the fantastic total of £1,926.62. Catherine would like to thank the tenants and the local community for their support for a very worthy cause.



The Rosses support World Suicide Prevention Day

The staff and tenants of the Rosses supported the "empty chair" initiative for world suicide prevention day 2016 on 10th September 2016. People often have a favourite chair at home where they usually sit, when you lose a loved one the "empty chair" is often a poignant reminder of the loss. Staff and tenants received donations of old chairs which they painted, then placed at various locations throughout Derry/Londonderry to raise awareness of world suicide prevention day. Beacon Support and Time 2 Choose Mindcrafts placed a large "empty chair" in the Guildhall Square to show support to those who have lost friends and loved ones through suicide.

In Northern Ireland in 2014 there were 268 lives lost to suicide and it is estimated that during 2012 for each adult who died of suicide there were over 20 who attempted suicide. There is stigma attached to mental health and talking about mental health should be encouraged to break down the stigma surrounding it. It is important for people to know that there is support available and that by talking to someone is a good starting point to aid recovery. If you need someone to talk to please contact Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.



An Aquarium Adventure

The Beeches, Dromore joined Millmount House, Banbridge on a day trip to the Aquarium in Portaferry. Tenants took the Strangford ferry to the aquarium and then enjoyed dinner in the Portaferry Hotel afterwards. Tenants Agnes Thompson and Margaret Weir even got to meet a pirate on their aquarium adventure!



Martin's 50th Birthday Celebrations

Martin Magee, Choice Housing Manager celebrated his 50th Birthday recently. Despite having to work on his birthday, Martin enjoyed a lunch with his fellow colleagues to celebrate the milestone birthday.





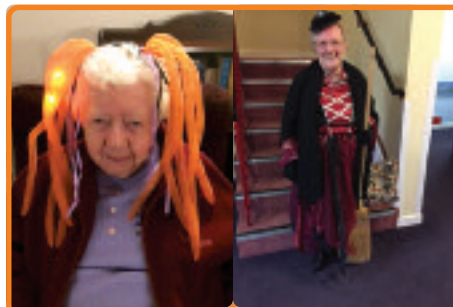
Francesca's Beauty at Old Manor House

On Friday 30th September, Old Manor House in Lisburn transformed their hairdressers, The Purple Rinse into Francesca's Beauty, for a pamper day. Tenants were able to book beauty appointments and everyone had a smashing day. The pamper day was such a success that Old Manor House have already organised another one for the tenants!



Choice Good Neighbour Award 2016

Jim Anderson from Sperrin Court, Cookstown has won the Good Neighbour Award 2016. Nominated by his fellow tenants, Jim was recognised for helping his neighbours and making a real difference to the lives of others at the sheltered living scheme. Jim who is 91 was delighted to win the award and enjoyed the celebrations with his fellow tenants including a very special cake, which was organised by Caroline Monroe, Scheme Co-ordinator at Sperrin Court.



Frightful Fun

Our sheltered living tenants have enjoyed some frightful fun around our schemes on halloween weekend. Thanks to Elmgrove Manor, Ashley Lodge, Sperrin Court and Lowtherstown Court for sending in their photographs!



60 Wonderful Years of Marriage

Margaret and Jackie McAllister from Pound Green Court in Larne recently celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary. Margaret and Jackie were married on 13th August 1956 and are as happy as they day they married! Congratulations to you both!



Out and About



Brian Rankin voted Best Energy Manager

Congratulations to Brian Rankin, winner of "Best Energy Manager 2016" at the annual Sustainable Ireland Awards.

Brian received the award, sponsored by Energia, at a glittering black tie event at the Ramada Hotel in Belfast.

Well done Brian!



Gardening Competition

The hotly anticipated gardening competition has been won by Pound Green Court in Larne. The annual competition run by Choice recognises the accomplishments of our green fingered tenants. The impressive back garden at the sheltered living scheme is wonderfully presented by the tenants, with lots of colourful plants and flowers. Carol Ervine, Director of Housing travelled to Pound Green Court and presented tenants with their prize of £100 shopping voucher for a local garden centre.



Choice Teams battle it out on the water for Friends of the Cancer Centre

Choice had two teams of staff (Choice Star and Voyage of Choice) competing in the Friends of the Cancer Centre Dragon Boat Race at Cutters Wharf. Despite the poor weather, one team; Voyage of Choice, made it through to the final but were pipped to the post into second place. The two Choice teams entered for fun and to raise money for a worthy local charity and were elated to finish as high in the competition as they did! Congratulations to all the teams who entered helping to raise vital funds for local cancer patients and their families.



Hill Court day out

Tenants at Hill Court, Lurgan enjoyed a summer day trip to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. A great time was had by all!



Rothersay Court aerobics with Sport NI!

Our tenants at Rothersay Court in Coleraine enjoyed some armchair aerobics with Sport NI!



Brave the Shave

Featured below is the before and after photographs taken of Cathy Fitzpatrick who completed the "Brave The Shave" Fundraising Event on Friday 2nd September



2016 in Ballydown Court, Belfast. Cathy decided to complete this event mainly in loving memory to her dear mum, Mrs Eileen Fitzpatrick, who lived at Ballydown Court and sadly passed away in December

2015, and also to raise awareness for Macmillan Cancer Support.

The event took place in Ballydown Court at Cathy's request, as she felt her mum had experienced the happiest times of her life while living at the scheme. Cathy wanted everyone to know how loving and supporting the people of Ballydown Court are and how great a place it is to live.

Cathy raised £1,400 for Macmillan Cancer Support. £380 of the final amount was raised by the tenants in Ballydown Court, who were a source of great support and helped to make the day a huge success.



Moya Rooney turns 80

Moya Rooney, long serving Tenants' Forum member turned 80 recently and celebrated with her fellow representatives and Claire Darby, Tenant Involvement Champion. Hazel Bell, Chair presented Moya with a lovely bunch of flowers to celebrate the big 80!

Your Housing Officer Working For You

Choice have a dedicated team of Housing Officers who work to deliver housing services to all of our customers. They are there to help, from the very first day you move in to your property. Following on from our last edition, we are continuing to profile our Estates Management Team so you can learn a little bit more about each of the Housing Officers.

Claire Foley

Housing Area: Fermanagh, Armagh and South Belfast

I have worked as a Housing Officer for around 12 years, having previously worked with Ulidia Housing Association before Choice. Prior to this I worked in the hospitality industry and completed a BA (Hons) degree in Hospitality Management in 1996. However, having completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Housing in 2006, I have really enjoyed the career change to housing and in particular working with my new colleagues and tenants in Choice!



Catriona McCann

Housing Area: Ards and North Down, Belfast, Newry and Mourne

I have worked as a Housing Officer for just over two years. I graduated from University of Ulster in July 2014 with a Bsc Hons Housing Management with a Diploma in Industrial Studies. I began my career in Housing with Ulidia Housing Association as a Housing Officer dealing with all aspects of housing and tenancy management. Since becoming an employee of Choice I have taken on a more specialised role in Estate Management.



If you would like to get in touch with your Housing Officer please contact Choice on 0300 111 2211.

Colouring Competition

Hey kids this is your chance to show-off your colouring skills



Win a £40 Voucher to We Are Vertigo

It's really easy to enter, just pull out this page and colour it in anyway you like! Then all you have to do is send it off in the post along with your name, age, address (the parent must be a customer of Choice) and telephone number to the address below. The entry that we like the most will receive this great prize!



| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Name | Age |
| Address | |
| | |
| Daytime Telephone | Evening Telephone |

Now send this page to:

The Editor, Choice News, FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 4BR (entries must be recieved by 09/01/17)

Different ways to pay your rent and other charges

You can now pay online

In order to make paying your Rent and Service Charges both safe and easy, we offer a wide range of options that will mean you can choose how you pay.

Ways to pay your rent



Going Online – You can now pay your rent online at www.choice-housing.org by clicking on 'Pay Rent' on the homepage.



The allpay App – You can pay your rent via the allpay App which is available to download from the Apple App or Windows Phone store and Google Play enabling you to pay your rent from your Apple, Windows or Android smartphone.



Direct Debit – You can set up a Direct Debit agreement. Please contact the Income Recovery Team on 0300 111 2211.

Debit Card
Credit Card

Phone us using your debit or credit card – You will need to give us your rent reference number (on your rent payment card), your debit or credit card details, and the amount you want to pay.



At any Post Office or shop or garage displaying the Paypoint sign – You can pay cash and show your rent payment card. Make sure you get a receipt and keep it safe.



Post – Send a cheque or postal order to our head office. Never send cash. You need to allow three days for your payment to reach us on time.

Housing Executive

Housing Benefit direct payment – If you claim Housing Benefit, it can be paid directly into your rent account. However, if your Housing Benefit does not cover the full amount you still need to pay us the difference.

choice

Choice Offices – You can pay with cash, cheque, or debit card. We accept MasterCard, Visa, Visa Electron, Solo and Switch.



Colouring Competition Winner



Congratulations to Anna Chen of the winner of the Choice News Autumn colouring competition.

Anna aged 9 is pictured with Chris Symington (Head of Housing) and won the fantastic prize of a family pass to Belfast Zoo. We hope you have a lovely time at the zoo and visit the new gorilla arrival!

Look out for our colouring competition in the next edition of Choice News for a chance to win a great prize!



Customers already enjoy the benefits of living in Choice accommodation and you may know someone, a friend or relative for example, in need of accommodation.

If so we'd be delighted to hear from them.

We currently have vacancies in sheltered schemes and general family housing in a number of locations across Northern Ireland.

Further Information is available through the Services Centre on 0300 111 2211. Viewing the accommodation can also be arranged.

Property Corner

Properties to Let

Sheltered Housing

- Belle Bashford Court, Belfast
- Elm Court, Belfast
- Cabinhill Court, Belfast
- The Milewater, Belfast
- Edgar Boyd Court, Carryduff
- James Court, Belfast
- Ashley Lodge, Dunmurry
- Old Manor House, Lisburn
- Carn Court, Roslea
- Clachan Court, Derrylin
- Lowtherstown Court, Irvinestown
- Westbridge House, Enniskillen
- St. Bronagh's, Rostrevor
- Shiels Court, Ballymoney
- Rothesay Court, Coleraine
- Rathkyle, Antrim

General Needs Housing

- Belle Bashford Court, Belfast
- Corrigan Court, Armagh
- Millbrook Gardens, Castlederg
- Mill House, Larne (over 35s)

We Welcome Your Input

Here is your chance to become involved in future editions

If you would like to submit a feature for consideration – such as a poem, a personal achievement, an interesting story, or indeed anything you feel would be of interest to other Choice tenants – then please send your article(s) to:

The Editor, Choice News, FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 6BR

Similarly, if you would like to join the Tenants' Forum Editorial Team to contribute and review articles for the Newsletter please contact the Services Centre on 0300 111 2211.

All contributions gratefully received! And of course, we always appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have for Choice News in general. After all, it is a newsletter for YOU!

**Working together
for positive change**

choice
choice-housing.org

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Belfast, BT1 4DN
Email: enquiries@choice-housing.org

For all your housing
repairs and enquiries
Services Centre

0300 111 2211