

Choice News

**Issue 9
Summer 2018**
The Newsletter
for Choice Housing
Ireland Tenants

*Ready, set, go
for Summer!*



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choice 
choice-housing.org

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A message from our Group Chief Executive

Michael McDonnell



Welcome to the Summer 2018 edition of Choice News.

I'd like to highlight three things in my introduction, namely the performance of Choice in the year ended 31st March 2018, the launch of Maple and May and the roll-out of Universal Credit.

I think it's fair to say that 2017/18 was a challenging but ultimately successful year for Choice. One of the highlights was undoubtedly our continuing strong investment in both new homes and planned maintenance work. I'm delighted that Choice completed 395 much needed new social homes in the last year and that we invested over £15 million in upgrading and remodelling our existing tenant homes. It was also great to see our overall repairs completion performance improve from 87% in 2016/17 to 90% in 2017/18, and more importantly our tenant satisfaction figures rise to 87% from 84%. In very large part the latter is due to the hard work of Choice staff and contractors,

including our in-house maintenance business, Choice Services which is nearing the end of its first year of operation.

Challenges in 2017/18 have included the increasing delays in getting planning approval for development projects and the ramifications of the Grenfell tragedy. We continue to engage constructively with our partners in local government to ensure that our new build planning applications gain the earliest possible support of all stakeholders, but there is more to do. There is little doubt that there are still lessons to be learned from the devastating events of June 2017 in West London, but you should be assured that Choice will always prioritise the health and safety of our tenants.

The end of February also saw the launch of our new subsidiary Maple and May. This organisation will specialise in the development of affordable homes for sale and rent. Whilst Choice will continue to prioritise the development of socially rented homes, there is clearly a demand for other tenures across Northern Ireland.

In addition, our Board believes that diverse communities from every dimension are more sustainable. Ultimately, the success of Maple and May will underpin the future success of Choice and thereby contribute to our sector-leading social housing development ambitions.

Let me finish with a few words about Universal Credit (UC). You will find lots of useful information on the roll-out of UC in this edition of Choice News. This will supplement a range of documentation available for tenants through our website. Please take the opportunity to raise any queries or concerns with Choice staff in your area. UC is the most significant change to welfare in Northern Ireland for many years and the onus is on the tenant to be proactive. But Choice is here to provide advice and support should you need it.

The recent warm weather bodes well for our summer, so let's hope there is a lot more sunshine to come!

395
new social homes

£15m
investment in upgrading our homes

90%
repairs completion performance

Let's Get Social

We're ready to connect with you!



'Like', 'share', 'post' and learn more about our activities, information updates and news. Want to ask us a question or send us your comments? You can also contact us through Facebook messenger (Monday – Friday from 9am to 5pm). Find us by searching 'Choice Housing'.

[Go »](#)



Stay up to date with Choice through twitter @choice_housing We always welcome a retweet!

[Go »](#)



Subscribe to our channel @Choice Housing and watch our latest videos covering everything from our community investment programme to sheltered living. Use our videos to find out more about Choice and the services that we provide!

[Go »](#)

Join the conversation with Choice on our different social media channels.

Choice starts construction on £1.7m Newtownabbey scheme

Choice cut the first sod of our £1.7million construction project that will deliver 12 much needed new homes to Newtownabbey.

Scheduled for completion in April 2019, the Whitewell Road scheme will provide 12 family homes accommodating up to 44 people in the local area.

The development is set on a circa 0.75 acre site of the former St Ninian's Parish Church, Whitewell Road in Newtownabbey. The church,

which closed its doors to the public in June 2015, was recently demolished. When complete, the new scheme will include eight two-bedroom houses and four three-bedroom houses.

The project is funded through a mix of private financing secured by Choice and grants from the Department for Communities. Designed by Rolston Architects, with key contractor Geda Construction, it is expected that the development will be ready in April 2019.

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said:

"This important scheme will bring much needed family homes to the Whitewell area of Newtownabbey, at a time when demand is high. It is good news particularly for those who are on the waiting list. This is a site that we have worked hard to secure and we are grateful for the support received from the Department for Communities in doing so".

We currently have 285 properties in the Antrim & Newtownabbey area. The high quality homes, care and support services help meet the diverse needs of a wide range of people in the area. I look forward to welcoming new tenants into their new homes next year".

 Northern Health and Social Care Trust

 Department for Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Housing Executive



Deborah Brown, Director of Housing at the Department for Communities said:

"I am delighted to join Choice in marking the start of construction of the new housing scheme here in Newtownabbey, an area where there is real need for quality social housing. The development represents a significant investment from the Department as well as Choice and will no doubt be welcomed by those on the social housing waiting list."

Maple and May Launch

Jon Anderson, Group Director of Growth, along with Siobhan McCrystal, Manager, successfully launched Maple and May in February. A newly established profit for purpose company aimed at delivering new homes for rent or purchase across Northern Ireland. Maple and May has already acquired 70 apartments and houses throughout the region and is seeking to buy or develop more than 500 new homes in the next five years to expand its private rental and sales portfolio throughout Northern Ireland.

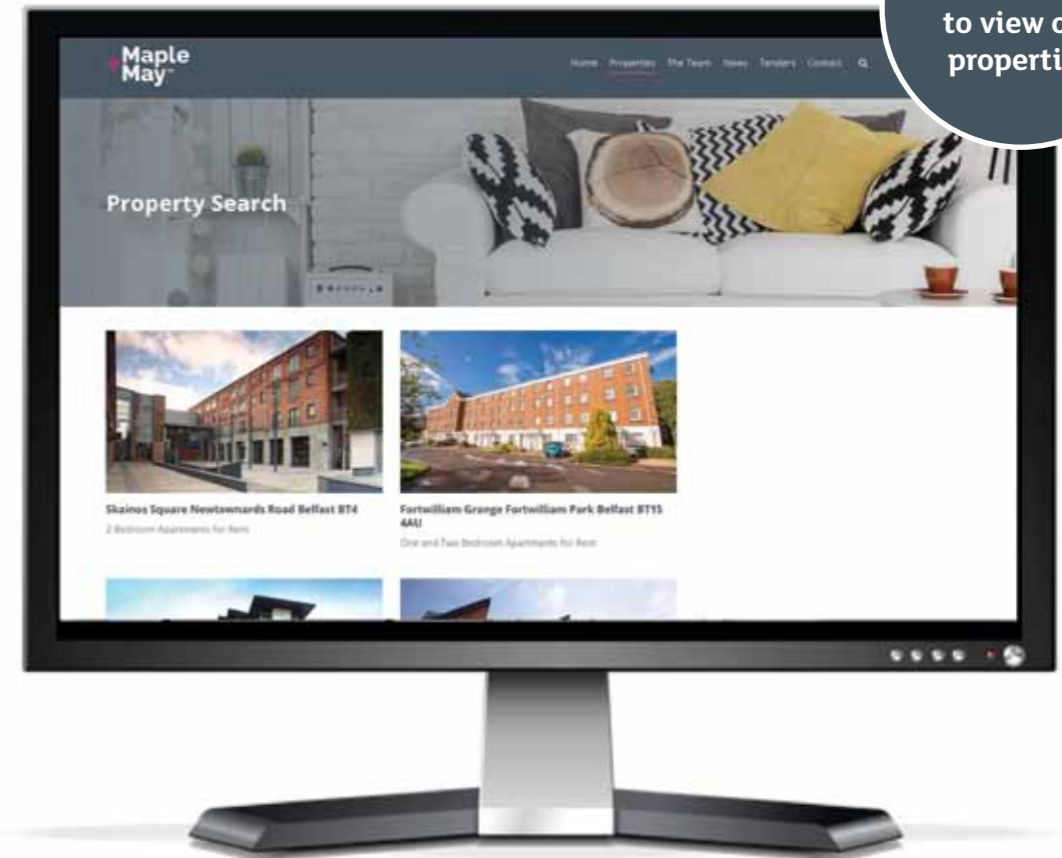
Jon Anderson spoke at the launch in Ormeau Baths, "We're working with developers and landowners to unlock as many of these sites as possible and transform vacant land into homes. Our focus is on giving more people the opportunity to access homes that are right for them, whether that is to rent or buy".

Siobhan McCrystal added: "The launch of Maple and May is good news for those either renting or looking to buy their home. Our approach is to give renters the assurance of quality accommodation, longer tenancies if desired, excellent services and the peace of mind that comes from having a professional Landlord".



You can now visit Maple and May's new website: www.mapleandmay.co.uk and follow their twitter @Maple_and_May for further information and property updates.

Visit our website to view our properties



£8.5m Choice Scheme opens its first phase in Ballymena

Local representatives joined Choice in Ballymena to mark the opening of phase one of a much anticipated social housing scheme in the area.

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

The scheme, designed by Knox & Clayton Architects, is built on the former site of St Mary's Primary School and will provide 74 much needed new homes that will accommodate 238 people and incorporate the very latest energy saving, design and security features.



The development is a mix of two and three bedroom homes and two bedroom apartments including one ground floor wheelchair accessible apartment. Phase 1 includes the first 12 units of the development, phase 2 and 3 will follow shortly providing a further 62 units.

Choice have a dedicated allocations team who work with the NI Housing Executive, targeting vacancies to those applicants registered on the waiting list. Phase 1 of the development has been allocated and new residents are already in their new homes.

It is anticipated that phase 2 and 3 will be allocated during Summer 2018.

A number of apartments at the popular scheme are available for people aged 55 or over.

To find out more visit choice-housing.org or call **0300 111 2211**.

Paul Frew MLA for North Antrim stated:

"This is an exciting time for Ballymena and Harryville in particular with much needed brand new, state of the art, modern housing. This development will bring much relief to many of my constituents who have been on the waiting list for a long time. I am glad that I have been able to support Choice throughout this project from planning and design stage right up to now, the official opening, and the delivery of the first phase of homes".

CLr Reuben Glover who represents the Ballymena Area added:

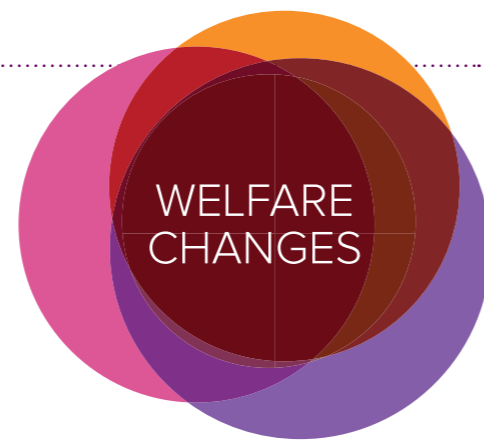
"This is brilliant news for the people of Ballymena who have been crying out for new homes for so long now. There has been a massive need in Harryville and it's great to see this development progress through the various stages. People have been talking about the derelict site before the construction and the vibrancy that this will bring to the community. I know many who will benefit from these new homes and the positive effect on the waiting list".



Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice 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. We are pleased to see the support for the development in the local area, one that is in need of housing that is flexible and accommodating to a wide range of families and their unique circumstances. We pride ourselves on becoming part of the community and we look forward to opening phase 2 and 3 in due course".

Welfare Changes - summary of changes to the benefits system



Choice tenants will be aware Universal Credit began its introduction into Northern Ireland on 27th September 2017. Further details of the new benefit are highlighted below for your information:

Universal Credit is a single means-tested benefit for working-age people aged 18 to 64 years and is paid to each household. It will replace the following means-tested benefits:

- **Income Support**
- **Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance**
- **Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance**
- **Child Tax Credits**
- **Working Tax Credits**
- **Housing Benefit.**

Universal Credit entitlement will be calculated monthly and, if entitled, you will be paid twice a month. At the start of a claim for Universal Credit the joint claimants must choose whether payment is made to one single account or split across two accounts (there is no default option).

Claims for Universal Credit must be made online, and all subsequent contact regarding weekly rental charges will also be conducted online at www.nidirect.gov.uk/UniversalCredit

It is important that you have the following information at hand before you start your claim:

- Your postcode
- NI Number
- Tenant Reference number
- An email account
- Details of the bank or building society you want Universal Credit paid into
- Details of your housing costs (rent)
- Your landlord's details
- Details of your savings or other capital
- Details of any income that's not from work, for example, from an insurance plan
- Details of any other benefits you're getting.

When you submit your claim you may be asked to provide more information. This information should be provided within one calendar month to ensure your claim is processed. If it is not provided within 1 calendar month your claim may be cancelled.



The introduction of Universal Credit is being carried out in two phases:

- Transition phase – new benefit claims commencing from September 2017
- Managed migration – existing benefit claims will transfer to Universal Credit between July 2019 and March 2022

The timetable for Universal Credit roll-out is detailed below:

27 September 2017 - Limavady	13 June 2018 - Falls, Shankill
15 November 2017 - Ballymoney	27 June 2018 - Andersonstown, Banbridge
13 December 2017 - Magherafelt and Coleraine	5 September 2018 - Holywood Road, Ballynahinch
17 January 2018 - Strabane and Lisnagelvin	19 September 2018 - Newtownabbey, Newtownards
7 February 2018 - Foyle and Armagh	3 October 2018 - Shaftesbury Sq, Carrickfergus
21 February 2018 - Omagh and Enniskillen	17 October 2018 - Knockbreda, Bangor
7 March 2018 - Dungannon and Portadown	31 October 2018 - Lisburn, Larne
16 May 2018 - Newry, Downpatrick	14 November 2018 - North Belfast, Cookstown
30 May 2018 - Lurgan, Newcastle, Kilkeel	5 December 2018 - Ballymena, Antrim

When will Universal Credit affect you?

Enter your postcode at (<https://ni.entitledto.co.uk/ucdate>) to confirm the date of transition phase into your area.

Universal Credit is claimed online at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/claim-universal-credit-online

A demonstration video which takes you through the steps of the online application process is available at (www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4ex67xX_Ao)

You will see references to local authority and councils. In Northern Ireland this means the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing Association or Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Housing Element of your Universal Credit will be paid directly to your Landlord (eg. the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, or your Housing Association). If the Housing Element you are awarded does not cover the full amount of your rent, you will need to pay the rest yourself.

You can download our information leaflets from our website now choice-housing.org



Help with rates

Rates support is currently paid with Housing Benefit. When Universal Credit is introduced, a new Rate Rebate system will replace the rates payment under Housing Benefit for new tenants.

Your Universal Credit payment will not include a payment towards the rates element of your weekly charge. Rates support for working age tenants receiving Universal Credit is moving to a new Department of Finance 'Rate Rebate' scheme administered by Land and Property Services (LPS).

Applications for a rate rebate will have to be made separately from Universal Credit. Payments of Rate Rebate will also be made separately from Universal Credit. The application for Rate Rebate will need to be made within three months of entitlement to Universal Credit being established and must be made online.

When making the application, claimants will be asked six or seven questions online. If a Universal Credit claim is cancelled, suspended or resumed, the Rate Rebate payments will be affected.

Social Sector Size Criteria (Bedroom Tax) and Benefit Cap

Social Sector Size Criteria continues to change how Housing Benefit is calculated for your household. If you are deemed to be living in a property with more bedrooms than you require, your Housing Benefit payments will be reduced and you will have to pay any shortfall in your rent directly to your landlord. You will not be affected by Social Sector Size Criteria if:

- You or your partner have reached state pension age;
- You live in supported accommodation;
- You live in a houseboat, caravan or mobile home;
- You live in a shared co-ownership scheme;
- You live in temporary accommodation.

There is also a limit on the total amount of benefit most people can get, known as the Benefit Cap. Those affected by the Benefit Cap will have their Housing Benefit payments reduced and will need to pay any shortfall to their landlord.

Welfare Supplementary Payments are available for those affected by Benefit Cap and Social Sector Size Criteria until 31 March 2020. If you qualify for this payment, you do not need to apply as this will be paid directly to your landlord by the Department for Communities.

You can find out how Welfare Changes might affect you in a number of ways:

1. Contact the Independent Welfare Changes Helpline on 0808 802 0020
2. Visit the Welfare Changes website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/UniversalCredit.
3. Contact the Universal Credit telephone service: 0300 123 3017 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Call charges £0.10/minute from a landline and £0.03 to £0.55/minute from a mobile.)
4. Contact Choice Services Centre: 0300 111 2211 or email: enquiries@choice-housing.org
5. Visit Choice's website: www.choice-housing.org
6. If you need help getting online your Jobs and Benefits Office or local library can provide support.

Choice Housing: TV License Price Increase – April 2018



As of 1st April 2018, the cost of a colour TV License increased from £147.50 to £150.50 and the cost of a black and white TV license increased from £49.50 to £50.50.

The usual concessions remain in place with those who are blind or severely sight impaired receiving a 50% reduction in price and those aged 75yrs old or older qualifying for a free license.

Residents of supported housing or sheltered living accommodation may be able to benefit from a concessionary TV License. This is known as an Accommodation for Residential Care

(ARC) license. It costs £7.50 per room, flat or bungalow. Residents should check with their Scheme Co-ordinator or Duty Support Manager to find out if they are covered by an ARC license.

You need to be covered by a TV License to;

- watch or record live TV programmes on any channel
- download or watch any BBC programmes on iPlayer – live, catch up or on demand.

This applies to any provider you use and any device, including a TV, desktop computer, laptop, mobile phone, tablet, games console, digital box or DVD/VHS recorder.



If you own a computer, smartphone, tablet or games console to watch or record live TV, you'll need a license.



YOU NEED TO BE COVERED buy a TV License to watch or record TV programmes on any channel.



If you live with someone who is 75years+ or severely sight impaired, you could benefit from a concessionary TV License.

tvlicensing.co.uk/over75info
tvlicensing.co.uk/blind



You need to be covered by a TV License to download or watch any BBC programmes on iPlayer-live, catch up or on demand.

91%

of us watched TV at least once a week last year.



Be aware of fraudsters, all of our officers carry ID cards. If you are unsure, you can call us to check they are genuine.

From 1 April 2018
a colour TV License costs **£150.50**

Fire Safety at Home



In previous editions of Choice News we included some advice on fire safety.

Since then, Choice staff have:

- provided further information regarding evacuation procedures to tenants living in blocks of flats.
- completed a review of fire risk assessments for all block accommodation to ensure any risks are identified and rectified.
- appointed a consultant to review fire safety across the entire organisation.

Furthermore, we are preparing a fire safety handbook, to be issued to all tenants, which will contain detailed advice on fire safety at home. It is important to reiterate that fire prevention and safety is a shared responsibility.

Choice will continue to provide safe homes equipped with appropriate fire detection and compartmentation such as fire doors. These systems provide early warning and subsequent containment of fire.

However, it is much better to prevent fires by following good practice such as:

- Take extra care in the kitchen – accidents while cooking account for over half of fires in homes. Never leave young children alone in the kitchen.
- Take extra care if cooking with hot oil and never throw water onto or try to move very hot or burning oil. Consider buying a deep-fat fryer which is controlled by a thermostat (if you don't already have one).
- Never leave lit candles in unoccupied rooms or in rooms where children are on their own.
- Make sure candles are in secure holders on a surface that doesn't burn and are away from any materials that could burn.
- Make sure cigarettes are stubbed out properly and are disposed of carefully, and never smoke in bed.
- Regularly clean the filters in tumble dryers and kitchen extractor hoods.
- Keep matches and lighters where children can't see or reach them.

- Take special care when you're tired or have taken alcohol.
- Don't overload electrical sockets. Remember, one plug for one socket.
- Don't leave the TV or other electrical appliances on standby. Always switch them off and unplug them when not in use.
- Don't charge phones etc overnight or near flammable materials.
- Do not run white goods such as tumble dryers, dishwasher and washing machines during the night or when you are not at home.

If a fire does occur, you can reduce the risk of harm by:

- Testing smoke alarms weekly and never disconnect, cover or remove batteries to ensure you have early warning of a fire.
- Always treat an alarm as a real fire.
- Make a fire action plan so that everyone in your home knows how to get out if there is a fire.
- Keep the exits from your home clear so that you can escape if there is a fire.
- Make sure that everyone in your home can easily find the keys for doors and windows.
- Get into the habit of closing doors at night. If you want to keep a child's bedroom door open, close the doors to the lounge and kitchen; it may help to save their life if there is a fire.
- If you or a member of your household has visual or hearing impairment or difficulty moving about your home, please contact us as additional help or support can be provided. If there is a fire, close doors and windows, if possible, before you leave your home as this will help to contain the fire.

If you live in a flat, the following advice also applies:

- Flats are built to be fire-resisting and should contain fires until the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) arrive provided doors are kept shut.

- Walls, ceilings and doors should hold back flames and smoke, so if there's a fire somewhere else in the building, you're usually safest staying in your flat unless you're affected by heat or smoke. However, our advice is to leave the building if it is safe to do so.
- If you live in a flat you should plan how to escape if there is a fire in your home or your block. It is likely that a flat will share common areas with other flats, such as corridors and stairways. The owner of the building will have the responsibility of making sure that the necessary fire safety measures needed in these areas are installed. For example, there may be a communal fire alarm, fire doors and other fire safety features of the common areas which will need to be regularly maintained. Never interfere with fire detection equipment or fire safety measures such as fire doors and never leave rubbish, unwanted furniture etc in the communal areas.

If you come across combustible materials that have been left, please contact us immediately as this may present a risk to you and your family.

- You should not use a lift if a fire happens.
- If you cannot escape because of smoke in the corridors, you will need to stay in your flat, near a window, where you can wait for assistance. Call 999 and tell the fire service operator which flat you are in. The operator

Fire Doors – Keep Shut!

Fire safety in our properties is of the utmost importance to Choice and fire doors are an important way of keeping you and your family safe should a fire occur.

Why is a Fire Door Important?

A fire door ensures that should a fire break out, it can be contained in a "compartment". This keeps the fire and smoke trapped for a defined period, allowing time for people to get out/to be rescued and make the fire easier to tackle.

**STAY
SAFE**



will tell the fire fighters to come and assist you or let you know that your flat is not in danger. This is particularly important if you have difficulty moving around or using the stairs. Tell your Housing Officer or let the Fire Service know that you would be unable to evacuate if there was a fire in your building.

The consequences of a fire can be devastating, even if it doesn't result in the loss of life or injury. While Choice will repair or replace damaged fixtures and fittings, we will not replace your personal items. You are therefore strongly advised to take out home contents insurance to cover your personal affects in the event of fire.

If you have any concerns you can visit Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service's website at www.nifrs.org or call 028 9266 4221.

Why should fire doors be kept shut?

Wedging or propping open a fire door can prove devastating as it allows fire to spread, putting lives and buildings at risk. Despite this, 64% of premises visited by the Fire Service have fire doors wedged open. Please ensure that fire doors are kept closed at all times.

If you would like clarification on which doors in your home are fire doors, contact the Services Centre on 0300 111 2211 or email enquiries@choice-housing and a member of the Property Services Team can visit your home.

Larne residents celebrate completion of £200,000 renovation

More than 34 Choice residents are celebrating the completion of a major £200,000 overhaul at Pound Green Court sheltered housing scheme in Larne.

The thirteen-week renovation project, designed to improve quality of living at the 20-year-old scheme, includes replacement kitchens in each apartment as well as upgrades that enhance energy efficiency and access to the scheme.

Prior to the works commencing, tenants met with the contractor – H&A Mechanical – to choose their new kitchens and agree the new interior decoration in communal areas, which also received flooring and lighting improvements.

Opened in 1998, Pound Green Court is home to 34 older people and comprises thirty-two gas heated and double-glazed homes with a mix of twenty-nine one-bedroom flats and two with two-bedrooms.

Special care was taken during the work to ensure full wheelchair access and to minimise noise and disruption at the popular scheme.

Situated in St. John's Place in Larne, the scheme is close to a wide range of local amenities including shops, cafes, restaurants, a health centre, pharmacy, post office, a number of churches as well as a library and leisure centre.



POUND GREEN COURT

Tenant Josephine Marrs, who moved into the scheme in 2008, said:
“I’m very happy with service provided and love the new kitchen in my apartment.”



Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive at Choice said:

“This is an exciting new chapter for Pound Green Court and comes as the scheme marks its 20th anniversary. The renovation brings the homes up to a high standard and will enable tenants to heat and manage their homes more effectively. There is a great sense of community here and we’re pleased that residents took an active role in the home improvements. A number of apartments are available to rent and interest from prospective tenants is welcome.

Sheltered housing schemes like Pound Green Court are an excellent option for older people who want to live independently in their own homes and remain closely connected to their community. We believe in providing good quality housing and actively involving tenants in our plans. The renovation works at Pound Green Court is a fine example of what we are trying to achieve.”

TO FIND
OUT
MORE

0300 111 2211
enquiries@choice-housing.org
choice-housing.org



Stewartstown Road Clean Up

Choice and Live Here Love Here volunteers visited Stewartstown Road in West Belfast for the first clean up of 2018!

These clean ups are part of the wider Live Here Love Here clean ups across Northern Ireland which are open to anyone wishing to rid their streets, beaches or parks of litter and discarded rubbish.

Litter can blight our towns, villages; beaches, roadsides and countryside, which make us feel a little less than proud of our beautiful surrounds.

By helping to clean up our housing developments, we are doing something positive and building a sense of community pride. Look out for more clean ups over the coming months. Together staff and volunteers can tackle litter and make a positive difference in our local areas!

If you would like to get involved in a Clean Up in your area please contact Choice on 0300 111 2211 or email enquiries@choice-housing.org



Choice awards £560,000 construction contracts to Newry contractor

Choice has appointed Newry-based firm Peter O'Hare Limited to complete two major south Belfast renovation schemes totalling more than £560,000.

The first of the projects will deliver three apartments at a Stranmillis Road property and includes the construction of a new three-storey extension, replacing an existing two-storey return, and significant upgrades to the main building. Meanwhile three addresses on Claremont Street will also undergo an 18-week renovation and remodelling programme that will provide five new homes.

Refurbishment works at both social housing projects also include the fitting of new kitchens and bathrooms alongside an overhaul of all electrics, plumbing and heating systems.

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said:

“Across Northern Ireland Choice is stepping up to the challenge of acute housing need by investing to expand our housing stock and get construction underway on much needed new homes. These projects will deliver eight high quality homes and reflect our commitment to improve and increase the number of units we have.”

“The works incorporate the very best standards and the latest in energy saving technology and will enable tenants to make the most of quality, affordable and secure homes rights in the heart of the city. It is pleasing to appoint a contractor that not only has the skills, experience and resources needed for these jobs, but also shares our vision for high quality housing.”



Declan Magee at Peter O'Hare Limited, said:

“We are pleased to have been appointed by Choice as the preferred contractor to carry out refurbishment and extension works on these challenging but rewarding contracts. Peter O'Hare Ltd has extensive experience within the Social housing sector.”

Celebrate Our Success

Choice is always keen to acknowledge the hard work of our staff and the success of the initiatives we deliver. Industry awards provide the perfect opportunity to tell our story and celebrate our efforts. Throughout 2017-18 we were delighted not only to be shortlisted but also to go on and win a number of prestigious awards.



Paula Conway, Senior Development Officer accepting the Norman Capper Award at the NI Housing Council Awards



Killynure Green, Carryduff winner of CIBSE Building Performance Award.



All the winners from the CIHNI Awards, including Niall Sheridan, Group Director of Development & Assets who won the Exceptional Contribution Award.

Staff Quarterly Awards

The staff recognition awards for last quarter were presented by Michael McDonnell to winning staff members; Mark Hamilton (trustworthy), Susan Fee (dynamic) and Christopher Canning (customer centred).

Mark Hamilton - Trustworthy

Mark Hamilton, Property Services Officer was nominated and awarded the Trustworthy Staff Award as he has shown real dependability on two significant projects for Oaklee Housing in the last 12 months. Mark has confidently identified latent defects in two apartment blocks and built a team of professionals around him. He also dealt with key agencies such as the Fire Service and Gas Network in working to find the best solution, mindful at all times of the risk posed to our tenants.

Susan Fee - Dynamic

Susan Fee, Senior Property Assets Co-Ordinator, has been a key team member in the continued success of the Assets department. Susan has diversified into Project Management and has recently passed the Prince 2 Practitioner course.

Susan is a dynamic team member and is continually using her skills to contribute to the growth of Assets and Choice.

Congratulations again to Mark, Christopher and Susan on their hard work and dedication to Choice and Oaklee Housing!

Christopher Canning - Customer Centred

Christopher Canning, Income Recovery Officer, demonstrates empathy and consideration for tenants in his calm and assured telephone manner, advising them of the status of their rent accounts and offering payments options.

Despite the potentially difficult nature of some of these conversations, he maintains a professional attitude at all times.

Chris is also a key member of the Area 4 team, providing Housing Officers with regular updates on increasing arrears and issuing tasks on required actions. He constantly updates records on all the team's rent accounts to ensure the real expected balances are available to colleagues, adding detailed and relevant comments at each stage of the income recovery processes.



L-R Mark Hamilton, Property Services Officer, Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive, Susan Fee, Senior Property Assets Coordinator and Christopher Canning, Income Recovery Officer.

Natural Gas Contract



POWERING Positive Change

New Natural Gas Contracts

Choice have secured two new two year natural gas contracts with Flogas and Go Power at an estimated combined value of around £1.2m. This relates to all of our communal and landlord natural gas costs.

By carrying out a competitive tender process the new contract is estimated to achieve a saving of around £46,000 over two years against current average natural gas prices.

Heating costs, including natural gas, are passed on to our customers and so our new contracts will deliver further savings and reduce the impact of any future price increases in the market.

Choice are the only housing association with an energy team and one of our responsibilities is to ensure our energy costs are managed effectively, by managing our energy consumption, procuring our energy contracts and verifying bills which we receive.

Natural Gas for Your Home

If your home is heated with natural gas then you may be able to choose between different suppliers, depending on where you live. If you live within the Greater Belfast area (which includes areas such as Belfast, Lisburn, Lame, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Bangor, Holywood, Newtownards and Comber) then you can choose between one of the two suppliers below.

You may also be able to choose between using a keypad meter and receiving bills.

Within other parts of Northern Ireland there may only be one supplier, although this is likely to change in the future. Natural gas networks are currently extending to parts of Co. Down, Co. Tyrone and Co. Fermanagh.



Supplier	📞	✉️
SSE Airtricity Gas	0345 900 5253	info@airtricitygasni.com
Firmus Energy	0800 032 4567	furtherinfo@firmusenergy.co.uk

How we're performing

The performance figures are for the period April 2018

Choice are at the forefront in the provision of social housing and are 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.

Gas Safety*



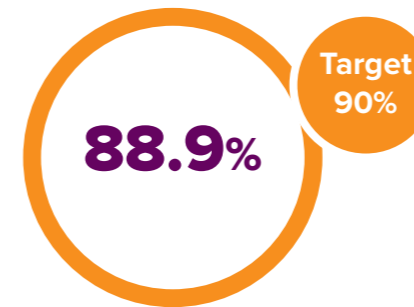
99.98%
Units with valid gas certificate

Repairs



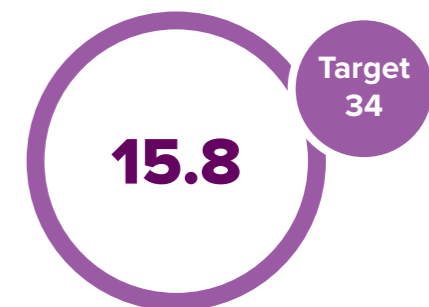
90.61%
Average repairs completion

Customer Satisfaction



'Real time' customer satisfaction

Complaints



Average number of days to resolve stage 1 and 2 complaints

Human Resources



5.28%
Absenteeism (average days)

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

*Choice is responsible for servicing and maintaining gas appliances in your home except those which you have fitted and own such as gas hobs and cookers. Choice service 'Choice owned appliances' annually. It is essential that you co-operate with us when we arrange your annual service.

Delivering New Homes

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

New homes for Ballynahinch

Choice was delighted to hand over 24 houses and apartments in March. The general needs housing scheme is made up of a mixture of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and 2 and 3 bedroom houses. The new build scheme took 18 months to complete by Geda Construction and cost £1.9 million to build. We wish our new tenants well in their new homes.



24
houses and
apartments

Final Phase at Old Belfast Road

Old Belfast Road, Bangor is now fully completed, and we are proud of the 106 homes this scheme has brought to the community. Completed over 18 months with contractors EHA Group, Old Belfast Road represents a £13.2 million investment to provide much needed social housing. The final phase, consisting of 14 homes, was handed over mid March. We look forward to the official opening later this year once everyone has settled in!



106
homes
now complete

Development underway in Newtownabbey

Work has begun on Longlands Avenue in Newtownabbey. This development will include 10, three and two bedroom houses, and 6, two bedroom apartments. The work which will be carried out by Kelly Brothers will cost an estimated £1.7 million and is due for completion in November 2019.



NEW
homes for
Newtownabbey

The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award 2018



Everyone needs good neighbours and we'd like you to tell us about yours.

- Have they helped you out at a time of crisis or are they a good neighbour all the time?
- Do they help you with your garden or do the shopping for you when you can't?
- Perhaps they have looked after your children so you can have a break or even go to work?
- Maybe they've just been there when you needed someone to talk to?

To assist you in your nominations here are a few guidelines of what the judges will be looking for:

- The person nominated and the nominator must both be customers of Choice.
- More than one person can be listed as nominator, however, anonymous nominations will not be accepted.
- Listing the special qualities that are the reasons for nomination of the person concerned will assist in the judging.

In memory of the late Muriel Smyth, former secretary of the Tenants' Forum, Choice will be awarding their Good Neighbour Award of £100 shopping voucher in her honour.

The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award will be judged by a panel made up of Board Members, Staff and Tenants' Forum Representatives.

You can nominate your neighbour by completing and returning the attached entry form. If you are unable to complete the form or require assistance, please contact the Services Centre on 0300 111 2211, who will be pleased to help.



The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award



Your details

Name:

Address:

.....

Tel:

Nominee Detail

Name:

Address:

.....

Tel:

All nominations should be forwarded to:
Marketing Officer,
Choice
FREEPOST BEL2371,
Belfast BT1 6BR
by 12 noon on
Friday 31st August 2018

Reasons for nomination:

GDPR

The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force on 25th May 2018, superseding the previous EU Data Protection Directive adopted in 1995.

The primary goal of this legislation is to promote best practice in information governance and provide more control to data subjects over their personal data.

As a registered housing association, we are responsible for collecting, processing,

storing and safe-keeping personal and other information as part of our business activities and manage personal information in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection legislation currently applicable to the United Kingdom.

We take the confidentiality and security of your information very seriously and have a Privacy Notice in place outlined below explains how we meet our obligations under the GDPR.

			
What is personal data?	Data Protection Principles	Lawful Basis for Processing	How we collect information about you
			
Who we collect information on	How we use your information	Sharing your information	International transfers
			
Protecting personal information	Retention of personal data	Your Rights as a Data Subject	Changes to our privacy notice

How to contact us. You can find a copy of our Privacy Notice on our website www.choice-housing.org or on request from your Housing Officer.

Food Shopping Tips - Choice Housing

Did you know the average UK home throws out £470 of food per year?

Before you go shopping

- Do a stock take of your cupboard and fridge to see what you have.
- Plan the meals you are going to have for the week – think about using up leftovers.
- Make a shopping list – and stick to it!
- Set yourself a target budget.
- Do not go shopping on an empty stomach.
- Remember to take your bags for life.

Other ways to save

- **Downshift your brands.** If you buy premium, try shifting to 'regular', own-brand or economy ranges.
- **Buy loose items.** Pre-packaged and prepared items can often cost most.
- **A not-so-special offer.** Do not assume offers are good deals. Look at the price per unit. Remember it is only a good deal if you need it!
- **Use it or lose it.** More than half the food we throw away can be eaten. Eating anything past the 'use-by' date can be risky, but 'best before' date is just for guidance. Use taste, sight and smell to decide but if in doubt, throw it out.
- **Reuse and recycle.** Consider buying refills to cut down on price and waste.
- **End of aisle promotions.** Beware of end of aisle displays and promotions in shops. Check if they really represent good value and ask yourself if you really need them.



To help you manage your budget, The Consumer Council has produced free household budget planners, spending diaries, and a leaflet 'Making your money last longer and go further - A guide to cutting the cost of your weekly food shop'. For free copies, visit www.consumerCouncil.org.uk, email info@consumerCouncil.org.uk or call 0800 121 6022.

Spring Colouring Competition Winner

Congratulations to Ethan Dalzell from Belfast for winning the Spring colouring competition! Ethan's colourful and creative entry shone through to impress the judges.

We hope that Ethan and his family enjoy their family pass to Belfast Zoo. Prize presented by Area Housing Manager, Cathy Doyle.



Choice Services - Celebrating one year in Business!

Choice Services journey started back in May 2017 and, since then, has been growing from strength to strength carrying out response repairs and maintenance requirements for over 4,000 Choice properties in the Greater Belfast and County Antrim area.

Bringing building, plumbing, electrical and other maintenance services under the Choice brand, Choice Services has more than 50 employees. It has been timely to honour the achievements of the hard working staff and assistance that we have received.

Wilton Farrelly, Managing Director of Choice Services said, "Its one year since we began operations and Choice Services has grown into a great team of over 50 talented people. Throughout the last year we have provided from a standing start, an improved and more responsive and consistent customer experience for Choice tenants and Choice staff. Our goal

now is focused on improving this further with an investment in IT systems and innovation in the sector. Behind our achievements is a great deal of hard work, dedication and enthusiasm and I would like to thank all our employees for demonstrating such a high standard of service delivery'.

If you would like to find out further information on Choice Services please visit their website at www.choice-servicesltd.org



CHILDREN'S COLOURING COMPETITION



Win a family pass to W5!

It's really easy to enter, just pull out this page and colour it in anyway you like! Then pop it in the post along with your name, age, address and telephone number in the reply slip below to The Editor, Choice News, FREEPOST BEL2371 Belfast BT1 6BR.

One lucky winner will receive this great prize! Entries must be received by **Friday 31st August**. (Please note that the parent must be a tenant of Choice Housing Ireland).

POST TO:
The Editor,
Choice News,
FREEPOST BEL2371
Belfast BT1 6BR

Name Age

Address

Daytime Telephone Evening Telephone

Become a community champion in your area Get Involved

Community Champions will make a difference.

- Are you a Choice General Needs tenant?
- Do you want to be more involved?
- Would you like to be a Community Champion in your area and improve with us the area in which you and your neighbours live.

We want to engage with our tenants and help improve our service to you. With training and support from Choice staff, the Community Champion will bring to this voluntary role their own life experiences and skills, and help improve neighbourhoods.

If you are interested, we will contact your neighbours and they will elect you to represent the area. You will then work alongside the Housing Officer who will support you.

- Training will be provided
- You will meet the Housing Officer every two months to address any issues of concern in the neighbourhood.
- The Community Champion will attend the annual Estate Walkabout
- You will attend quarterly interagency meetings, if applicable
- You will monitor the communal areas, if applicable, to ensure a good responsive service is provided i.e. stair cleaning, window cleaning, landscaping.

The Community Champion role will be required to develop a relationship with Choice staff in working towards a common goal to improve neighbourhoods. Choice want to develop this Community Champion role and, together with staff, we will ensure information, consultation and communication improves and we achieve our aim of helping communities and neighbourhoods to flourish.

If you are interested in becoming a Community Champion contact your Housing Officer / Tenant Involvement Team on 0300 111 2211 or email us at enquiries@choice-housing.org

Estate Walkabouts

Estate Walkabouts allow residents in our General Needs housing properties the chance to work alongside their Housing Officer and Property Services Officer to highlight issues in the local area.

Each Walkabout lasts 1-2 hours and staff and tenants walk around the development together. We look at the condition of the outside of Choice properties and note down any repairs. Staff will also record any unkempt gardens and issue letters accordingly.

Estate Walkabouts are a useful way of communicating with you, our customers, and identifying any problems, especially maintenance issues, that otherwise may not have been picked up. The Estate Walkabout gives Choice an insight into what a tenant thinks about the quality of the estate management and, hopefully together we will learn more about what our tenants expect and what Choice can actually do to resolve matters.

Choice want to encourage and invite residents to attend their Estate Walkabout this year. Some Estate Walkabouts have already started but the programme will run until November 2018.

You will receive notification from your Housing Officer about two weeks in advance of the actual day of the Walkabout so look out for that invite through the post and get involved.

Have a say in how your local issues are dealt with and get involved.



Service Improvement Team

Choice is developing a Service Improvement Team made up of tenants in response to the challenges of service and performance improvement.

The team has just completed their training and is made up of 20 voluntary tenants who will play a critical role in making sure our services are delivered to the highest standard and in the way YOU want.

The tenants involved in the project work will act as a critical friend and work closely with staff to review how the customer receive and perceive our services. They will select two service areas per year that they want to explore and improve and, together with staff, they will monitor how Choice deliver that service, ensuring it is high quality and delivering value for money. The reasons for undertaking this project work are:

- to meet our requirements within our Tenant Involvement Strategy
- to ensure we are accountable to our tenants
- to guide and model a service with a view to delivering improvements.

The Service Improvement Team will report its findings and recommendations to the Tenants' Forum and to Choice Management. We will tell you about the areas the panel investigates and ensure their findings are produced in the Choice newsletter.

Choice is committed to supporting and developing the Service Improvement Team and we look forward to seeing the outcomes of the first project in the winter edition of this newsletter.



Tenants' Forum Annual Conference

Choice Tenants' Forum held their annual conference in February with representatives travelling from across the county to attend. The full itinerary included presentations from Choice and Empowering Communities.

The conference celebrated the achievements of the Forum over the past year including the launch of our Tenant Involvement Strategy for 2017-2020, which outlines how we intend to engage and consult with tenants and foster a stronger partnership over the next three years.

Empowering Communities gave presentations on their recent work with the Forum including the Digital Inclusion Programme in which 56 Tenants' Forum members completed an eight-week course, learning and developing new digital skills.

Choice is committed to placing our customers at the heart of service delivery and we believe that by listening to, and taking on board tenants' views, we can ensure that policies and services are more responsive to changing needs and rising aspirations. Genuine engagement with tenants is vital for the successful delivery of our services.

Regional Tenants' Forum



Rita Murray
Rita is Chair of the Belfast Regional Tenants' Forum. She is heavily involved in community work and also chairs the G6 – Greater Belfast Senior's Forum – Engage with Age and has received awards for her voluntary community work. Rita is also a member of the Pensioners' Parliament and a strong advocate for senior citizens issues. She is happy to lobby on behalf of tenants and works with staff to resolve complaints within Choice and is well known for her impartiality and fair judgment.

Bill Jeffrey
Bill Jeffrey is Chair of the Central Tenants' Forum, he is also Vice Chair of Belfast Regional Tenants' Forum. Bill was a member of the Committee structure and previously on the Board. He also represents Choice and the Tenants' Forum with external organisations such as Cancer Focus, Live Here Love Here and at official functions.

Personal interests include star gazing, photography, social networking, current and political affairs, and is a regular freelance contributor for BBC and print media. Bill also holds a post graduate diploma in marketing.



William Wilson
William has recently been elected Chair of the North West Regional Tenants' Forum and looks forward to representing the Region at Central Forum. William says "I am a relatively new member of the Forum and I believe it is very important as it helps create and promote a good relationship between Choice and their tenants." William, who lives in Derry~Londonderry, has a very strong interest in social housing and championing tenants in the region. William looks forward to welcoming new members to the Tenants' Forum in the North West Region.



Sam McWhinney
On Thursday, 17th May 2018, Sam was elected Vice Chair of the South East Regional Tenants' Forum. He was a member the Belfast Regional Forum but moved to the South East Region during the restructure in 2017. Sam, who is married to Anne, is from Bangor and has a keen interest in social housing. Other interests include social media and travel. Sam is a member of Comber Branch Probus Association.



Asking your opinion makes sure we are making the right decisions for you
In Choice we want to make sure our services are the best they can be. We want to involve as many tenants as possible and we want all tenants to feel empowered to contribute their voice.

In May and June, the Tenant Involvement Team from Choice and Tenants' Forum members promoted tenant engagement and carried out roadshows in Tyrone, Fermanagh and the Dungannon areas. The team were delighted to meet with so many tenants and we have been successful in signing up new members for this South West Region.

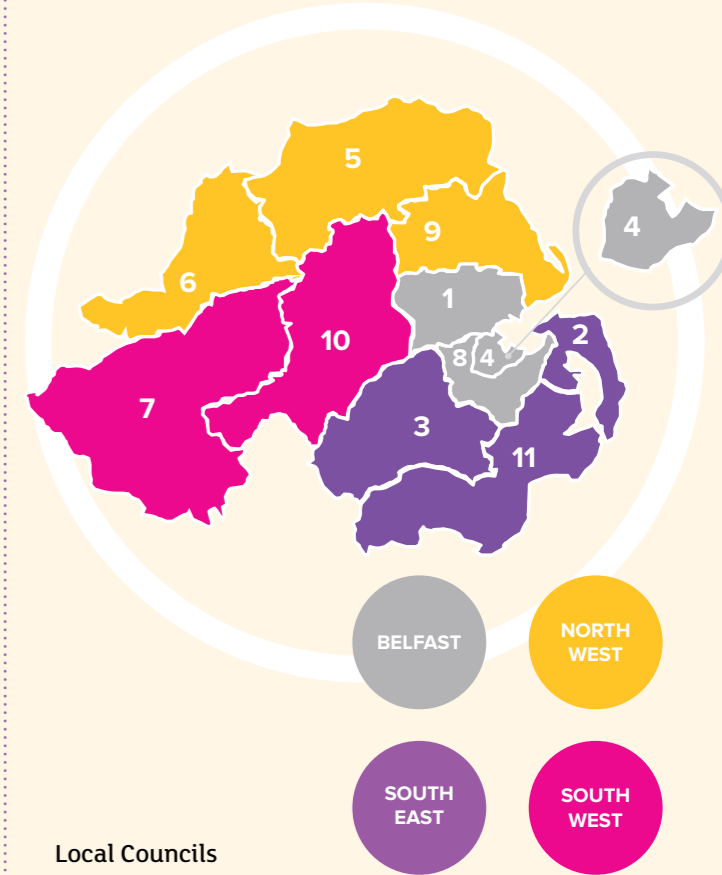
Did you know we hold our Regional meetings in the Fermanagh area every two months?

We want to encourage tenants from this regional area to get involved so if you would like to participate please call your Housing Officer / Tenant Involvement Team on **0300 111 2211** or email us at **enquiries@choice-housing.org**

YOUR OPINION IN THE SOUTH WEST MATTERS

YOUR OPINION MATTERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE HAVE YOUR SAY WORK TOGETHER WITH STAFF

OUR 4 REGIONAL AREAS



Local Councils

- 1 Antrim and Newtownabbey
- 2 Ards and North Down
- 3 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon
- 4 Belfast City Council
- 5 Causeway Coast and Glens
- 6 Derry and Strabane
- 7 Fermanagh and Omagh
- 8 Lisburn and Castlereagh
- 9 Mid and East Antrim
- 10 Mid Ulster
- 11 Newry, Mourne and Down

Out & About

Choice is made up of around 10,000 tenants, 300 plus staff and numerous partners and stakeholders; so it's no surprise that there is always plenty of activity going on in all the communities we support.

Read through our Out & About section and don't forget to let us know about your events!

Contact us at:
editor@choice-housing.org



100th BIRTHDAY AT ST. BRONAGH'S

Residents, staff and family joined the celebrations for the 100th birthday of Mrs Annie Owens.

Annie has been a tenant at St Bronagh's since 2006 and has made many friends amongst fellow tenants. She is adored by her nephews and nieces, who visit regularly and admire her independence and determination which she has shown over the years.

When asked the secret of long life, Annie said: "Hard work! As a housekeeper to many families over the years, I wasn't scared of hard work which has kept me active and full of life!"

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said: "It is a great privilege to be at St Bronagh's today to celebrate Annie's birthday. She is such a great character and it is clear for all to see she is one very special and well thought of lady. On behalf of everyone at Choice we wish Annie a very happy 100th birthday".



SPRING TENANT REPAIR FEEDBACK WINNER

At Choice we are always looking for ways to improve our services. With this in mind, we ask our tenants to give us their feedback through our quick and easy tenant repair feedback surveys. Every time a tenant returns a questionnaire to Choice following a repair, it is entered into a quarterly prize draw. Congratulations to Anne Morrow from Bangor who has won £200.

£200
for lucky Bangor resident



BARBARA DOES STRICTLY!

Well done to Barbara Haggan (ICT Projects Manager) who danced her way out of her comfort zone to compete in the 'TinyLife does Strictly' event recently in La Mon Hotel in Belfast. Barbara and her dancing partner Danny put their best feet forward on a 10 week training programme to learn three dances for the finale show including a group dance, the Cha-Cha-Cha and the Quick Step!

Barbara and Danny might not have won the strictly competition but they raised a fantastic £1,614.88 for TinyLife which supports families with premature babies as well as conducting vital research.

Well done again Barbara and we hope you ... 'keep dancing'!!



MARATHON MONDAY

A huge congratulations to the Choice teams from Development & Assets who successfully completed the Belfast Marathon on Monday 7th May 2018! The teams have successfully raised over £3,000 for Public Initiative for Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm (PIPS), well done to everyone involved!



CRAIGNAGORE FIRST AIDERS

Tenants at Craignagore in Newcastle recently took part in British Red Cross first aid training. The course provides training for everyday life and allowed tenants to take part in practical exercises which builds confidence in dealing with emergency situations.

It's great to see our tenants continuing to learn new skills, especially something as useful as first aid. Well done to the tenants for completing this important training!



BELFAST JOB FAIR

The Department for Communities, in partnership with Belfast City Council, hosted the Belfast Jobs Fair on 7th February 2018 in the Europa Hotel, Belfast. Visitors were invited to come along to find out about available jobs, meet employers face-to-face, build on job search skills, get careers advice and guidance, chat to support organisations and much, much more.

Choice hosted a stand at the event promoting the current vacancies within Choice, Oaklee and Choice Services. There were more than 75 employers who took part. The event was very popular last year attracting over 1400 visitors and more were expected to attend the 2018 show.



LILLIE COURT REDECORATION

Residents from Lillie Court in Lisburn are delighted with the recent redecoration of the sheltered living scheme. The £65,000 upgrade, carried out by M&M Contracts, took 12 weeks to complete and included: a full interior redecoration and lighting upgrade, with new exterior fencing and the front entrance areas tidied up. Residents had their dancing shoes at the ready and put the new wooden flooring in the common room to good use!

£65k
upgrade
had residents
dancing for
joy!



BELL & BERTIE TOGETHER FOR 60 YEARS!

Congratulations to Mr & Mrs Barclay at Old Manor House, Lisburn who have reached their milestone 60th wedding anniversary on 29th March. Their two daughters, family and friends helped the happy couple celebrate.

There was even a royal stamp of approval as the couple received a card from the Queen. We hope that Bell and Bertie share their secret to a long and happy marriage!



CONTRACTOR APPOINTED FOR £10M CHOICE SCHEME IN WEST BELFAST

Choice has appointed leading UK contractor EH Allingham Construction Ltd to complete a major housing project in West Belfast. Work will begin on site this week with a scheduled completion date of early 2020, providing 92 much needed new homes that will accommodate more than 350 people and incorporate the very latest in energy saving, design and security features.

The scheme, designed by JNP Architects includes six apartments, 83 houses and three wheelchair accessible bungalows.

Michael McDonnell, Group Chief Executive of Choice said: "Glen Road Heights has been in the system for quite some time and we are pleased to be in a position to finally start construction on site. This scheme will play a major role in meeting the growing demands for local housing in the West Belfast area."

PLANNED MAINTENANCE SATISFACTION SURVEY WINNERS

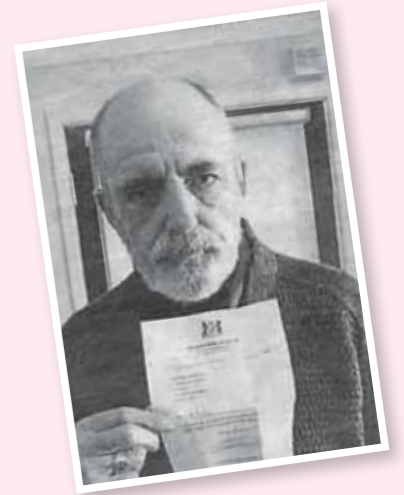
Choice carried out planned maintenance works to approximately 4000 properties during 2017/18 which included installing new kitchens, bathrooms, painting and decorating, and much more.

A programme of remodelling was also undertaken, with 75 properties completed and we are very proud to have invested over £20million in the homes that we provide through planned maintenance work alone.

In order to learn from our customers about the services we provide, we asked a sample of 1200 tenants to complete a follow up Planned Maintenance Satisfaction Survey. The aim of this survey was to gauge the level of satisfaction with our services, understand tenant priorities, and identify where improvements can be made.

Our KPI target within the Asset Management Strategy was to achieve 90% tenant satisfaction during 2017/18. Although we fell just shy of our target in our first year, we are confident that we can use customer feedback to continue to improve our services and strive to achieve our target next year.

We would like to thank tenants who participated in the survey and congratulations to the winners from the prize draw.



LETTER OF THANKS

Paul Wallace from Antrim received a thank you letter from Theresa May, Prime Minister outlining her appreciation for his continued interest in the ongoing affairs of 10 Downing Street.





BETTY AND KEN'S JOINT BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Betty Bradley and Ken Forsythe from Rothesay Court in Coleraine enjoyed joint birthday celebrations with their fellow tenants recently at a coffee morning held at the sheltered living scheme. Betty and Ken proved you are never too old to enjoy birthday cake! Happy birthday Betty and Ken!

You are never too old to eat cake!



ASHLEY LODGE - ALWAYS LEARNING!

Over the years tenants at Ashley Lodge have taken part in numerous digital training initiatives and this year sees their interest in new skills continuing. No less than 14 residents have signed up to digital training provided by Advice NI. The training is free and we are delighted to see so many taking advantage of it. Best of luck to all the participants!



ELLIS COURT KNITTERS

Well done to all the Ellis Court Knitters who collected and lovingly created cardigans, hats, boots and blankets. The knitting club is made up of a small group of tenants who have produced these wonderful creations for Sleeping Angels, a charity close to the sheltered living scheme for parents with premature births.



HARRY AND MARGARET'S 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to Harry and Margaret Williamson who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on 29th June 2018. Harry and Margaret's wedding day in 1958 was set against the back drop of the World Cup Final. Brazil, featuring Pele, were victorious, but the real winners that day were Harry and Margaret!



RUBY CHEERS ON COLERAINE!

Ruby McAfee tenant at Rothesay Court in Coleraine might possibly be Coleraine Football Club's biggest fan (alongside Jimmy Nesbitt). Ruby was delighted when Coleraine lifted the Irish Cup title this year!



SKAINOS WALKABOUT

Thanks to the tenants at Skainos in east Belfast for taking part in the recent estate walkabout. We find these events really useful to connect with our tenants and make improvements within schemes.



WESTBRIDGE MUSICAL EVENING

Tenants at Westbridge House enjoyed a wonderful evening of tea and music at the sheltered living scheme. The musical evening gave the tenants an opportunity to catch up with one another over a cup of tea, a great time was had by all!



SONG CIRCLE

An exciting initiative is being piloted across a number of Choice schemes, Song Circle brings people together to socialise and collaborate through music and song. Tenants from Bernagh Glen, Pembroke Lodge and Lille Court have been gathering once a week. Facilitated by musicians from Andersonstown School of Music they have been exploring their musical creativity.

Participants have sang together, chatted about their favourite songs from throughout their lives, and some have even given solo performances. The group have demonstrated their talent and clear passion for music. Song Circle has been a great success and everyone involved has benefited from the social side of coming together and sharing their skills.

The organisers hope that funding will be available to extend this initiative and bring it to more people who may be isolated or suffer from dementia or depression.



GARDEN TRANSFORMATION AT SPERRIN COURT

Sperrin Court in Cookstown have been getting their hands dirty by taking on a new gardening project. The scheme now boasts a vegetable patch and new flower beds.

Tenants, Raymond and Kirk have been creative and built a raised bed which makes gardening easy and accessible for all at the sheltered living scheme. It is fantastic to see the change they have made to the garden, which everyone is thoroughly enjoying especially in the recent sunshine!

Thank You for taking part



TENANTS' FORUM RETHINKING SOCIAL HOUSING

Jim Chapman (Area Housing Manager) joined members of the Tenants' Forum; Rita Murray (Chair of Belfast Regional), Sylvia Connachan and Bill Jeffrey, Chair of the Tenants' Forum, at a Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) workshop in the Skainos Centre in East Belfast on Wednesday, 17th April 2018.

The workshop was called 'Rethinking Social Housing' and part of a new research project CIH is working on.

Social
Housing
what's next?



URBAN ORCHARDS

Residents from Elm Court recently teamed up with the Donegall Pass Community Forum and the Eco Council from Botanic Primary to plant apple trees and fruits bushes at the sheltered living scheme in east Belfast. 'Urban Orchards' is a pioneering project bringing community orchards to cities and towns across the county.

Elm Court residents look forward to continuing to work with the Donegall Pass Community Forum in upcoming gardening workshops, learn new skills and share gardening tips which they can use in their community garden.

Apple
and fruit trees
planted
in East Belfast



A ROYAL INVITATION

Over the course of each year, The Queen welcomes over 30,000 guests to spend a relaxed summer afternoon in the beautiful gardens of Buckingham Palace or the Palace of Holyrood House.

At each Garden Party, around 27,000 cups of tea, 20,000 sandwiches and 20,000 slices of cake are consumed! Garden Parties are an important way for The Queen to speak to a broad range of people from all walks of life, all of whom have made a positive impact in their community.

Sylvia Conachan, Tenants' Forum member, was invited to a Royal Garden Party in the grounds of Buckingham Palace in recognition for her work with the Royal British Legion. Sylvia has dedicated a lot of time and effort to the Legion and her contribution is greatly valued. Sylvia thoroughly enjoyed the sunny day out in the most exceptional setting.

TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TOGETHER

Anti-social Behaviour Support for our customers

Choice 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.

**Insec Security
028 9020 0080**

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-ordinator 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.



Different ways to pay your rent and other charges

In order to make paying your rent, rates 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 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 Store, Windows Phone Store or Google Play .



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



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.



Universal Credit direct payment – if you claim Universal Credit, the housing cost element can be paid directly to your rent account. However, if this does not cover the full amount of your rent you still need to pay us the difference.



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

Best Kept Garden Competition 2018

Green-fingered tenants are being urged to 'grow for it' as part of the annual Choice gardening competition.

Calling all keen gardeners! To the green fingered among you or your friends and neighbours, it's time to remind you of the annual Choice Best Kept Garden Award. You can nominate your own or another customer's garden, or a scheme garden providing it is tended by the customer and not Choice contractors. If you wish to submit an entry please complete and return the information slip plus photo(s) of the nominated garden by

Friday 31st August 2018
to the Editor,
Choice News
FREEPOST BEL2371,
Belfast BT1 6BR.

Please be advised that this competition is open to Choice customers only.



Best Kept Garden Competition 2018

Your details

Name:

Address:

.....

Telephone No:

Email:

Nominee Detail (if different)

Name:

Address:

.....

Telephone No:

Email:

Find out more about our Sheltered Living Schemes

Finding the right home that suits your requirements and lifestyle can seem impossible, but it doesn't have to be. At Choice our priority is finding what's right for you. We know everyone has different needs and these can change over time. We have over 60 sheltered living schemes across Northern Ireland which enable older people to live independently in their own apartment or bungalow, within a safe, friendly, supportive community.

Sheltered living schemes offer a range of support provision to suit different needs. Many schemes offer a Scheme Coordinator service to provide support to each tenant in a way that respects their dignity and privacy whilst also promoting independence. As tenants grow older and may require more help to manage, sheltered accommodation

is ideal for the provision of higher level support through Social Services and can prevent the need to move again to alternative accommodation. We also have schemes without the on-site support service, for more active older people.

Sheltered living makes day-to-day life easier for our tenants and takes away the worry of problems like arranging property repairs or keeping a garden. Tenants enjoy the privacy of their own home, but feel part of a community, with communal areas for socialising, maintained landscaped gardens, a guest suite for visitors and a wide range of social events and activities.

Our aim is to ensure tenants feel safe and comfortable, enjoy their privacy and keep their independence.

We currently have apartments immediately available in the following sheltered schemes:

- Aughrim Court, Kilkeel
- Lowtherstown Court, Irvinestown
- Edgar Boyd Court, Carryduff
- Greenisland House, Greenisland (Designed and managed to allow frail and elderly residents to live independently)
- James Court, Belfast
- Elm Court, Belfast



Contact us today for further information

0300 111 2211

or email: enquiries@choice-housing.org

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:

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together for
positive change

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