

Choice News

choice 
Together we enrich lives

Issue 17, Summer 2023



***Rio Ferdinand
Foundation
inspiring our
young people***

**Good
Neighbour
Award 2023**

p.44 Good
Neighbour
Competition

p.45 Garden
Competition

A message from Michael, our Group Chief Executive



Welcome to the Summer 2023 edition of Choice News.

I'm delighted that Choice is the first Northern Ireland Housing Association to partner with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation (RFF). As many of you will know, Rio is a former professional footballer and current commentator and his Foundation has a tremendous track record in helping marginalised young people through a range of international projects. Our pilot programme will focus on South and East Belfast and seeks to build individual self-esteem and provide qualification opportunities whilst addressing community and racial prejudices. The initiative is a great example of our ongoing commitment to community support and development.

I'm optimistic that we will have another strong year in relation to new build starts and completions. Choice is a leading contributor to the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) and we are targeting over 400 new homes being commenced in 2022/23. I'd like to reiterate my sincere appreciation for the cross-party support to SHDP and to the level of Housing Association Grant. This support has never been more important than in a year of rampant inflation and spiralling construction costs. I would encourage the continued prioritisation of funding for new public housing in the year ahead as the level of housing demand remains stubbornly far too high.

We are grateful to all of the former tenants of VHE who transferred to Choice nearly 3 years ago. You have been hugely supportive of our refurbishment programme and hopefully you can attest to the benefits derived from our significant investment in your homes.

Choice continues to commit substantial funds to the maintenance and upgrading of our entire property portfolio. This edition includes examples of a range of

successful planned and cyclical maintenance projects across the country. It is really important for our organisation to invest in our existing tenants' homes to improve energy efficiency, to maintain affordability and to create sustainable communities.

Finally, I just want to highlight the articles relating to the work of our Financial Inclusion and Energy Teams. The high cost of living remains a day and daily challenge for so many across our communities and Choice is ready and willing to play our part in supporting you and your family manage through such pressures. These are difficult times but my colleagues can provide advice and guidance on how you can balance the household budget, so please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thanks for being a tenant of Choice and I hope everyone has a really great summer.

Michael McDonnell

Connect with Choice



@ChoiceHousing



@choice_housing



enquiries@choice-housing.org



Choice Housing Ireland Limited



Choice Housing

Follow us on social media - from Facebook, Twitter to YouTube and LinkedIn - we've got something new for you every day! It's a great way to stay connected, engaged, informed and entertained! Feel free to like, follow, share, and ask questions on any of our social media platforms.

We're looking forward to connecting with you!

Join us on Social Media!

Fire Safety Advice for Smokers and Carers

Smoking is one of the leading causes of accidental fires in the home and more people die of smoking related fires than any other cause. There has been a number of fires in Choice properties, sadly including fatalities, which have been attributed to smoking.

Smokers who are older and those with impaired mobility, including people confined to a bed/chair, are at greater risk from fire. Their clothing, bedding or the chair in which they are sitting can catch fire or they are more likely to be overcome by smoke, if care isn't taken.

Fires caused by smoking materials are preventable. By following this guidance, smokers, family members, carers and friends of vulnerable smokers could save their own, or someone else's life:

- Most smoking related deaths occur in the home - if you must smoke, smoke outside.
- Do not smoke in the communal areas of apartment blocks – it is illegal.
- Smoking is not permitted in shared housing – if you live in shared housing you should only smoke in designated smoking areas.
- Use a deep, sturdy ashtray which should be emptied regularly and keep lit cigarettes away from any materials that could catch fire.
- Never leave a burning cigarette unattended.
- Before disposing of cigarette butts, make sure they are completely extinguished; wet them thoroughly before placing in an outside bin.
- Be extra careful if you are feeling drowsy, on medication or have consumed alcohol as you are more likely to fall asleep without realising your cigarette is still lit.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Keep lighters, matches and smoking materials out of reach of children.

Follow this guidance to help reduce the risk to older people, those with impaired mobility, including being confined to a bed/chair, or who have other health issues:

- Assess the risk to each person by looking for danger signs such as burns or scorch marks and, if identified, implement control measures.
- If practical, keep smokers supervised or visible at all times.
- Whenever possible, it is always safer for someone else to light their cigarette.
- Encourage smokers to cover their lap with a smoking apron or fire retardant cover.
- Some clothing materials such as loose fitting nylon, will ignite much more easily than others, such as cotton or wool; eliminate flammable clothing where possible.
- Avoid smoking in bed; if not practical, consider flame retardant night wear and bedding.
- Smoking on an airflow mattress should be avoided; use fire-resistant bedding if this is not possible.
- Never smoke near to, or whilst using oxygen therapy equipment.

If individuals are being treated with paraffin-based skin emollients that are covered by a dressing or clothing, there is a danger that smoking or using a naked flame could cause dressings or clothing to ignite. Emollients soak into fabric and can become a fire hazard. Advise individuals not to smoke or be near any naked flame and ensure that clothing and bedding is changed regularly, preferably daily.

SMOKE SAFELY

Most smoking related deaths occur in the home - if you must smoke, smoke outside.

CLOTHING

If clothing catches fire - take immediate action. The principles of STOP, DROP and ROLL are simple:

- STOP, do not run;
- DROP to the floor and cover your face with your hands to protect it; and
- ROLL over and over to smother the fire; don't stop until the flames are extinguished.

If you are near someone whose clothing catches fire, you can also use a blanket or a rug to smother the flames. Cool any burns with running water and seek medical attention immediately. Help us to keep you and your loved ones safe and enjoy your life choices without putting your life and the lives of others at risk.

Choice launch £6m housing project in Coleraine

Choice are delivering an investment of £6m in social housing provision in the Somerset Road area of Coleraine, offering quality affordable homes for up to 138 individuals and families. The new development, which cut sod in March 2022 is expected to be completed by Spring 2024, is further good news for those on the social housing waiting list in the area.

With grant funding provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the scheme is located just two miles away from Coleraine Town Centre and adjacent to the main Riverside Retail Park. The mixed development will offer its new residents secure quality living close to a range of amenities with excellent public transport links.

With a total of 39 units, the scheme will provide a range of apartments, houses, and bungalows to suit a range of tenants.

As one of Northern Ireland’s largest housing associations, Choice has invested in building social homes in areas that offer a quality of living, access to local amenities, schools and other services that facilitate sustainable and cohesive communities for people to live in.

Working in collaboration with DTL Construction Ltd, this new development will offer the highest spec in energy efficiency which will help residents with cost saving measures.

Choice Group Chief Executive, Michael McDonnell said, *“The Somerset Road Development is part of the 1,000 Choice units currently on site and we hope to deliver this project by Spring 2024. The local area has high demand for quality affordable housing, and this is one of many projects we are working on in the Coleraine and surrounding areas.*

Over the last five years, Choice has invested £9.1 million across 3 developments in the Causeway Coast and Glens area including The Hill, a £1.5m development in Portstewart specifically tailored for over 55s and a £1.6m development on Beresford Avenue, Coleraine providing 14 new homes in the area.”



39 NEW
FAMILY
HOMES
Coming Soon

The very
best in
sustainable
design

Delivering
quality and
affordable
housing to
Coleraine



The very
best in
sustainable
design



Help with your money



Housing sector helping tenants tackle the cost of living

'Your Guide to Staying Warm on a Budget' is a collaboration between 13 housing associations in the HACT NI Community Investment Network, Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The guide provides tips on how to keep energy usage and costs down, manage household bills, and reduce the damaging impact of damp & condensation.

The new booklet ensures that tenants have access to information on simple actions that can help them make essential savings during these difficult times. Housing Officers and other support workers gathered key information, tips and tricks, and myth busters from organisations such as Age NI, the Consumer Council, Energy Saving Trust, Phoenix Natural Gas, Power NI and National Energy Action.

The 16-page guide is already being used by tenants, with more than 10,000 distributed so far, and housing associations will continue to provide more copies for tenants over the coming months.

Speaking about the guide, Ruth Buchanan, Co-Chair of the HACT NI Community Investment Network, said "All housing providers know how difficult it is for tenants right now. The cost of living crisis has seen sharp rises in energy costs, food bills and other everyday expenses, and we see how many people are struggling to make their income stretch. Housing associations have been working hard to provide a range of support to tenants, including important financial steps such as benefit entitlement checks, as well as signposting to other support organisations, such as food banks."

Tracey Ellis, Co-Chair said "There are a number of small things that we all can do to help make some savings, and these all add up over time. By producing this guide, we wanted to bring as much advice and information on how to do that together for tenants.

It covers simple but effective tips such as keeping your home at a regular temperature, which is more efficient than intermittently putting the heating on, or turning lights off when not in use, which combined can help make some savings on your electricity bill. We all have something to learn from these."

"I got a copy of this booklet from Grove Community Housing Association and found it very useful and informative and it is helping me make savings on a day-to-day basis."

Housing tenant, Esther



You can download a copy of the Cost of Living Guide on our website: choice-housing.org or alternatively contact our Financial Inclusion Team on 0300 111 2211 or email: enquiries@choice-housing.org



Choice completes £2m refurbishment of North Belfast Sheltered Living Scheme

Choice has completed a large-scale upgrade of its sheltered living scheme, James Court which is situated off Kansas Avenue in North Belfast. The investment of £2m forms part of the Housing Association's £20 million capital investment programme offering tenants a wide range of measures aimed at helping improve their homes.

The scheme, originally built in 1980, underwent multi-element renovations across its 54 properties and their communal areas, including the fitting of contemporary kitchens and bathrooms, mechanical and electrical upgrades, as well as, the installation of a new energy efficient heating system.

The development comprises of 41 single bedroom apartments and 13 double bedroom apartments, with lift access to the upper floor, catering to a range of needs.

Group Chief Executive, Michael McDonnell said,

"Over the last two years, Choice has invested over £20m in Capital Spend on planned maintenance on existing housing stock. This investment ensures that existing developments continue to meet the growing needs of tenants and the quality standards of any new build that we commission."

"As a major housing association in Northern Ireland, Choice is committed to working with partners and statutory providers to collectively address the social housing waiting list. Demand across Belfast for quality affordable homes is growing significantly year on year and North Belfast continues to see high demand."



L-R Michael McDonnell (Choice Group Chief Executive), Lorna Brown (Choice Asset Project Liaison Officer), Ann and Jim Kelly (Choice tenants) and Paddy Cassidy (GEDA Site Manager).

Group Chief Executive, Michael McDonnell said,

"Energy efficient technology is constantly evolving and it is vital that as a Housing Association, Choice not only keep up with these new measures but ensure that existing developments can acquire the same standards as all of our new builds."

"Working in collaboration with local firms GEDA Construction and Moore MacDonald & Partners building consultancy services, we have been able to deliver a quality refurbishment whilst ensuring tenants were not unduly inconvenienced. I would like to thank our tenants for their patience and co-operation during all stages of the project."



Bright, modern kitchen design.



The development comprises **41** single bedroom apartments and **13** double bedroom apartments, with lift access to the upper floor, catering to a range of needs.

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

**Our team
is here to
help you.
So please
treat them
with respect.**

Choice operates a zero tolerance policy in respect of abusive/threatening behaviour towards our staff and contractors.



ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

**Our team
will not
stand for
any form
of abuse.**

Choice operates a zero tolerance policy in respect of abusive/threatening behaviour towards our staff and contractors.

We are here to keep our customers safe and to provide the best service we can, but we're also responsible for protecting our staff from abuse, hostility and violence.

These are the kind of behaviours we consider to be unacceptable:

- Verbal abuse, aggression, violence including derogatory remarks, rudeness, inflammatory allegations, and threats of violence
- Unreasonable demands
- Unreasonable persistence
- Excessive letters, calls, emails or contact via social media.

What action can Choice take?
We can:

- End a call, visit or appointment
- Provide a single point of contact
- Limit contact to a single form, letter, or email
- In certain cases we may involve the police or other legal action
- Unacceptable behaviour towards our staff can put your tenancy at risk.

Community Sports Award inspires young people to talk about their mental health

Choice has become the first housing association in Northern Ireland to partner with the well-established Rio Ferdinand Foundation to support young people through a range of personal and professional development programmes. The initial six-month pilot, will involve a combination of sports, music, media, and arts projects and will initially be delivered to young people with ambitions to introduce it across Northern Ireland in the future.

The Rio Ferdinand Foundation, set up by former Manchester United and England defender Rio Ferdinand has worked in Northern Ireland since 2016 and provides mentoring and employment pathways to help young people in economically deprived communities. As part of this pilot young people from South and East Belfast came together to train for a Sports Leaders Award, and to hear from former Chelsea FC player and matchday Ambassador Paul Canoville and local sports stars on their journeys through sport and the importance of prioritising your mental health and wellbeing.

The Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA Level 1) Accreditation is a key part of the new initiative between Choice Housing and the Rio Ferdinand Foundation which aims to use sport, media, and arts to build positive relationships, leadership, skills, and opportunities for young people whilst tackling issues such as racism and inequality at a community level.

Youth groups took part in a weeklong programme of workshops and other activities aimed at improving skills and opportunities for young people. The initiative is supported by partners including Warner Music UK / Ireland, UEFA Foundation, Community Foundation NI and Catalyst Belfast who offer mentoring, training and opportunities for young people to learn about careers.

Former Irish League players Harry McCue, Paul Millar and Paul Leeman joined Paul Canoville, the first black player for Chelsea FC and anti-racism campaigner in an open discussion about their own journeys and the challenges that young people today face.



L-R Reuben (Rio Ferdinand Participant), Paul Canoville (Former Chelsea Football Player), Karla McDermott (Rio Ferdinand Foundation Project Co-Ordinator) and Michael McDonnell (Choice Group Chief Executive)



Choice Group Chief Executive, Michael McDonnell attended the event and said,

“The partnership with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation focuses on bettering the lives of young people in our communities, seeing so many of them here today engaging and sharing their experiences shows how vital these programmes are.”

Belfast Project Co-Ordinator – Rio Ferdinand Foundation, Karla McDermott said,

“ This week has been a fantastic experience for the young people involved, and for us as a staff team as we have watched them grow and take a lead in the project. The participants have achieved accredited qualifications in Sports Leadership and Equality and Diversity and have led on putting together a community tournament.”

Rio Ferdinand said,

“It’s important that we support young people to build the confidence, skills and networks that will help them to find their career path and achieve their potential in life. This training course is a great first step for these young people in Belfast and I congratulate them on achieving their qualification and look forward to hearing how their journeys progress.”



Choice unveils £1.5m renovation of former Victoria Housing Estates (VHE) Scheme

Choice has officially handed over six newly refurbished former VHE properties in West Belfast, which were acquired as part of a stock transfer in 2020.

The £1.5m investment in previously void properties in Riverdale, West Belfast included extensive internal and external upgrades to six properties, which will initially provide temporary homes for families in other occupied former VHE housing to facilitate upgrades to their properties.

The stock transfer of over 300 previously managed VHE properties, included a significant programme of renovation and refurbishment to bring the properties in line with the Decent Homes Standard.

Phase 1 of this project involved upgrading void properties across all areas (Glengormley, Bangor, East and West Belfast) which would be used as decant housing to facilitate upgrades to the occupied properties in these areas, also part of the transfer.

Following completion of the wider refurbishment project the formerly void properties will then be offered to new individuals and families in need of quality affordable housing. The £1.5m investment in Riverdale forms part of the £10m which will be invested in properties across West Belfast on full completion of the project, with expected completion by Summer 2024.

Extensive upgrades, aimed at bringing the properties up to meet the Decent Homes Standard included new roofs, kitchen and bathroom installations, all new electrical and heating installations, new UPVC double glazed windows and composite Secure By Design external doors, upgrade of fiberglass insulation and external site works.



L-R Jason Donaldson (Choice Project Manager), Michael McDonnell (Choice Group Chief Executive), Lorna Brown (Choice Asset Project Liaison Officer) and Raymond McCartan (Piperhill Construction, Site Manager)

Tenant Surgery

OPEN TODAY



Choice Group Chief Executive, Michael McDonnell said,

“Our VHE refurbishment project has made significant progress and remains on target for completion by summer 2024. With a mix of houses and apartments, the programme was divided into ten phases with the initial focus being on completing the void properties to facilitate temporary housing for families whose homes needed extensive repair.

With the demand for quality social housing increasing, it is vital that we deliver on this project in a timely manner with the formerly void properties eventually becoming available homes for people across all of the areas included in the programme.

“Working with Moore MacDonald Building Surveyors and Piperhill Construction, the upgrades to Riverdale commenced in January 2022 and we are pleased to have completed this phase in just over six months.”

Protecting your home from condensation & mould

Where does the moisture come from?

All air contains some moisture. Modern appliances such as dishwashers, washing machines and tumble dryers all produce large amounts of moisture. As many as 20 pints of moisture is added to the air in the home by an average family per day.

How do the problems start?

Generally, the problems start in winter when there is too much moisture in the air which condenses on cold surfaces. In older properties which were poorly insulated and drafty, any excess moisture could easily escape.

Today our homes are much better sealed and insulated. Unfortunately excess moisture, once sealed into our homes now makes them prone to problems such as windows streaming with condensation. Excess moisture, if left unchecked, will lead to damp in the building fabric. Double glazing, insulation and draught proofing all help to retain heat, but can make condensation problems much worse by reducing natural ventilation. Since it is neither practical nor desirable to make our homes less-well sealed, the answer is to reduce the amount of moisture we produce and physically remove the excess moisture.

If excess moisture is allowed to build-up in the home, moist air will inevitably come into contact with a cold surface such as a window or external wall when the outside temperature falls. At these low temperatures beads of condensation form, initially on windows and then spread elsewhere. Soon the condensation turns into damp and may result in mould spots growing.

How does the moisture spread?

Moist air is never concentrated in one place for long, it will drift around the home. Moisture produced in one room, for example a kitchen or bathroom will circulate around the house, until it finds a cold place where it will condense and create areas of localised damp. This may be a cool bedroom or inside a wardrobe for example. Condensation and damp can, therefore occur in any room of the home. Usually these are the rooms that are least well heated, not necessarily the ones where the moisture was produced.

How do you reduce condensation?

Condensation can be effectively managed by controlling moisture generation, adequate heating and ventilating your home.

In cold weather, opening windows for 5-10 minutes several times a day will remove moist air without allowing the fabric of the building to cool significantly. This method will conserve heat and reduce energy loss as most heat in a property is held within the building fabric (walls, floors etc.) and not the air itself.

If you suspect rising damp, penetrating damp such as defective render or leaking pipework please contact us to arrange an inspection.

CALL US ON:
0300 111 2211



It is important that tenants are aware of the need to control and manage indoor air quality which contributes to condensation and mould growth that may damage your health, home and belongings.

All homes produce some amounts of excess moisture and we are all familiar with condensation on windows and pools of water on window sills. In severe cases, if not managed, this can lead to damp patches on walls and mould growth. In homes, unsightly mould can form around window panes, corners of rooms and behind furniture.

Condensation is the first sign that your home is producing excessive moisture or that moisture cannot escape through ventilation. Moisture and mould build up is not only unsightly but can cause damage to clothing, furnishings, decorations and can aggravate certain health conditions.

TOP TIPS!

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| Do not dry your clothes indoors - each load of washing will contain 5-10 pints of water | Wipe condensation from windows in the morning and wring the cloth or sponge into the sink | Treat mould with a mild acid, such as undiluted white vinegar |
| Keep lids on pots when cooking, open a window and use the extractor fan if provided | Keep bathroom doors closed during and after bathing or showering. Open the window or use the fan if provided | Let fans run or leave windows open for at least 15 mins after showering, bathing or cooking |
| When filling a bath or sink run the cold water first before adding hot - this reduces steam and will prevent scalding |  Ensure all rooms are adequately heated even if rarely used | Don't use stand-alone gas heaters as these appliances produce water |
| Consider using mould resistant paints in rooms exposed to high humidity such as bathrooms and kitchens | Keep a space behind furniture to allow air movement and avoid placing furniture against external walls | Ventilate properly to remove stale, moist air. The most effective way is to open several windows to allow a through draft |
|  Don't block or close wall, ceiling or window vents | Don't isolate fans or ventilation systems if fitted - they are efficient and cost very little to run |  Don't cover radiators with curtains or furniture |

Choice Partners with the Turing Trust

Choice have partnered with UK charity, the Turing Trust to support the educational needs of 7,300 disadvantaged students across the UK and beyond.

The Turing Trust uses technology to empower disadvantaged communities. Alan Turing is widely regarded as the father of modern computing, he saw IT as a tool for solving immense challenges and had a passion for helping others.

The Turing Trust refurbish IT equipment, install a range of educational software and provide it to those who need it most. In the last 13 years they have enabled access to computers for over 169,000 students across Africa, Asia and the UK.

In 2022 Choice undertook a significant equipment recycling project. Following an organisation wide upgrade and the mobilisation of users, the ICT department had collected a large amount of surplus kit.

Staff in the department investigated possible channels through which to make use of this kit while adhering to the organisation's asset disposal policy. The ICT department were delighted to identify and work with Turing Trust.

Choice look forward to continuing to work with Turing Trust in the future.



Turing Trust Founder, James Turing: "I'm delighted to say that our shipment of PCs has been packed and departed our workshop! Thanks to the fantastic work of our team of volunteers and your all-important donations there are now 800 PCs on their way to our partners in Kenya that will shortly be installed in classrooms across the country."



www.turingtrust.co.uk

CHOICE COMMUNITY NETWORK

Together We Enrich Lives

Our Community Development Team recently held an event to celebrate the achievements of a number of our tenants who have completed accredited training.

At Choice we know that investing in our communities enriches lives, and we are proud to have partnered with a number of organisations to provide training and education for our tenants.

In February our tenants, partner organisations and staff gathered at the Clayton Hotel, Belfast, to celebrate the achievements of our tenants who completed their courses.

Our Community Development Team presented certificates for the following categories:

- OCN level 1 in Volunteering - delivered by TIDES
- OCN level 3 in Train the Trainer – delivered by Housing Rights
- Certificate of participation in training of Choice Tenant Engagement Governance structures

We will continue to provide training and support opportunities for our tenants, so if you are interested please contact our Community Development Team, and who knows- you could be receiving your certificate at next year's event!



Downpatrick outing

Ahead of St Patrick's Day a group of our residents from Ballymena visited Downpatrick to a trip to Down County Museum and was followed by a visit to the Cathedral!

Grand Choice

The successful groups were-



Organisation	Amount Awarded
Lisburn YMCA	£1000.00
The Hygiene Bank	£1000.00
The Sub (School Uniform Bank)	£1000.00
St Patrick's Academy	£1000.00
St Coleman's Primary School	£1000.00
Lisburn Distillery Warriors	£1000.00
Lisburn Downtown Centre	£1000.00
Derryvolgie Kids	£1000.00
St Columba's Derryvolgie	£1000.00
Hilden Community Association	£1000.00
St Patrick's Lisburn GAC	£1000.00
Derriaghy Village Community Association	£1000.00
Knockmore Primary School	£1000.00

Our Community Development Team were out at Harmony Hill, Lisburn recently supporting the Grand Choice community decision initiative through our Shared Housing Programme in partnership with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

The Grand Choice participatory budgeting initiative for Lisburn North welcomed over 1000 people visiting and voting for projects to receive funding up to £15,000.



Gardenmore Way Enhanced Estate Walkabout

Our Community Development Team offer a variety of ways for our tenants to get involved and influence the work we do. Our Estate Walkabouts are a very popular method of involvement, tenants and staff tour an estate to identify areas of concern and agree priorities for the local community.

Gardenmore Way, Twinbrook hosted an enhanced Estate Walkabout late last year. A wide range of Choice staff attended from housing management staff, Community Development Team and our Financial Inclusion Team. The local PSNI also attended and got stuck into the pumpkin carving! There was a fabulous turn out for this community event, ideas were shared over refreshments and our staff left with new insight and plans to take forward.

Our Estate Walkabouts occur annually and last approx. 2 hours, with all tenants at the estate welcome to join. If you are interested in contributing to your next Estate Walkabout, get in touch with our Community Development Team on 0300 111 2211, we would love to hear from you!



Community Health Fayre, Ballynahinch

Through our shared housing programme we delivered a Community Health Fayre in Ballynahinch.

We were delighted to be joined by County Down Rural Community Network and The South Eastern Regional College.



WE WANT OUR
TENANTS TO
GET INVOLVED

COMMUNITY NETWORK

Do you want to learn new skills?
Meet new people?

Would you like to help shape our services?

Would you like to gain experience
in community work/make a
difference in your community?

Come join our Community Network

We are actively seeking a diverse range of new members from across NI. There are many ways you can be involved and opportunities are designed to match your interests depending on how much time you have.

Our volunteers have a wide range of responsibilities, including engaging with tenants and residents, working with staff to assess how well we're delivering our services, and taking part in resident events throughout the year.

You can learn new skills and some of the training we are offering includes:

- Community Development OCN level 1
- Tenant Participation & Community Development OCN level 2
- Improving Housing Services OCN level 2
- Understanding Social Enterprise OCN level 2

Volunteering means you can help make your community a better place to live while having fun and gaining valuable experience.

ChoiceCommunityNetwork

Contact us on
Get.Involved@choice-housing.org
We'd love to hear from you!

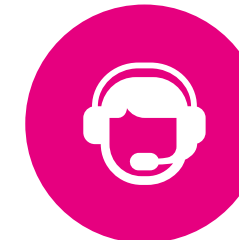
Menu of Tenant Involvement



Community
Network



Community
Champion



Service
Improvement Team



Editorial
Team



Financial
Stakeholders Group

Choice Community Network

The Network provides more opportunities to impact services in your area and have a stronger voice.

Community Champion

Become a Community Champion to represent tenants in your local community, working alongside staff to improve your neighbourhood.

Service Improvement Team

Working alongside Choice to help improve service delivery in your area.

Editorial Team

The Team review articles to showcase the activities for Choice News.

Financial Stakeholders Group

Receive information on annual rent increases and service charges as well as an explanation on how these have been calculated.

Contact our team and let us know how you would like to get involved ...



Email us:
get.involved@choice-housing.org



Call us:
0300 111 2211



Visit us:
choice-housing.org



Connect
with us!



Connect with us:
Facebook | Twitter | LinkedIn

Invest in our Planet

In 2022 as part of World Earth Day Choice shared our intention to deliver innovative projects that demonstrate our commitment to protecting the planet. Our intention aligns with the mission of World Earth Day which we will mark each year by celebrating our recent environmental achievements.

In October 2022 Choice launched our three year Sustainability and Energy Strategy. This strategy builds on our successes in energy efficiency and explains how Choice will invest in our planet. The intended outcomes of our strategy:

- position Choice to achieve net-zero by 2050,
- reduce fuel poverty risk,
- enhance biodiversity and eco-system services,
- increase awareness of sustainable behaviours and
- visibility of our environmental impacts.

We consider these core objectives to be mission critical in the next three years. However, as we progress these objectives and draw upon the expertise within and outside our organisation, we anticipate the requirements of this programme to evolve accordingly.

As Sustainability and Energy Manager I am thrilled with the sincerity that my colleagues have for our mission and personally proud to play my part in the delivery of what is shaping up to be a leap forward on our journey to be a sustainable housing association.

Since publication of our strategy we have taken important steps by developing working groups to deliver our commitments. These groups incorporate all directorates of our organisation and provide Choice employees with the opportunity to contribute in their way. Not all

success is marked by figures and grand projects. It is often the smallest of gesture that makes the biggest difference and culturally Choice are in a healthy place to deliver on our commitments in earnest.

The previous 12 months have not been without their difficulties. The cost of living crisis and the energy crisis have impacted our tenants enormously. These crises have increased fuel poverty risk and the associated health concerns. It is evident that that the risk of fuel poverty and the climate crisis are closely linked as both are deep rooted in a reliance in fossil fuels.

As we have seen energy insecurity and tenant affordability reach crisis levels, it has never been more important to balance priorities that serve to resolve economic, social and environmental issues simultaneously.

As we conclude 2022-23 we have many projects ongoing that we look forward to progressing over the next year. We are building on this year's success in retrofit and new-build energy efficiency and we are taking significant strides forward in how we enhance the ecological value our properties can offer.

Sincerely,
Daniel Egerton
Choice Housing -
Sustainability &
Energy Manager



NET-ZERO
2050
choice 

choice-housing.org

Energy Saving Tips



Change all lights to energy saving LED bulbs.



Turn your thermostat down by 1°C to save 10%. Time your heating for when you need it and don't block radiators.



Ensure you have a full load when using the washing machine or dish washer.



If you have a hot water tank, set the cylinder to 60°C.



Turn all lights off when not in use.



Wash your clothes at 30°C where practical.



Turn taps off properly. In a single week, a dripping hot tap can waste enough hot water to fill half a bath.



Don't leave your mobile phone charging all night – most only need a couple of hours.



Keep curtains open in the day to let sun energy into your home and close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping.



Dry clothes outside when possible.



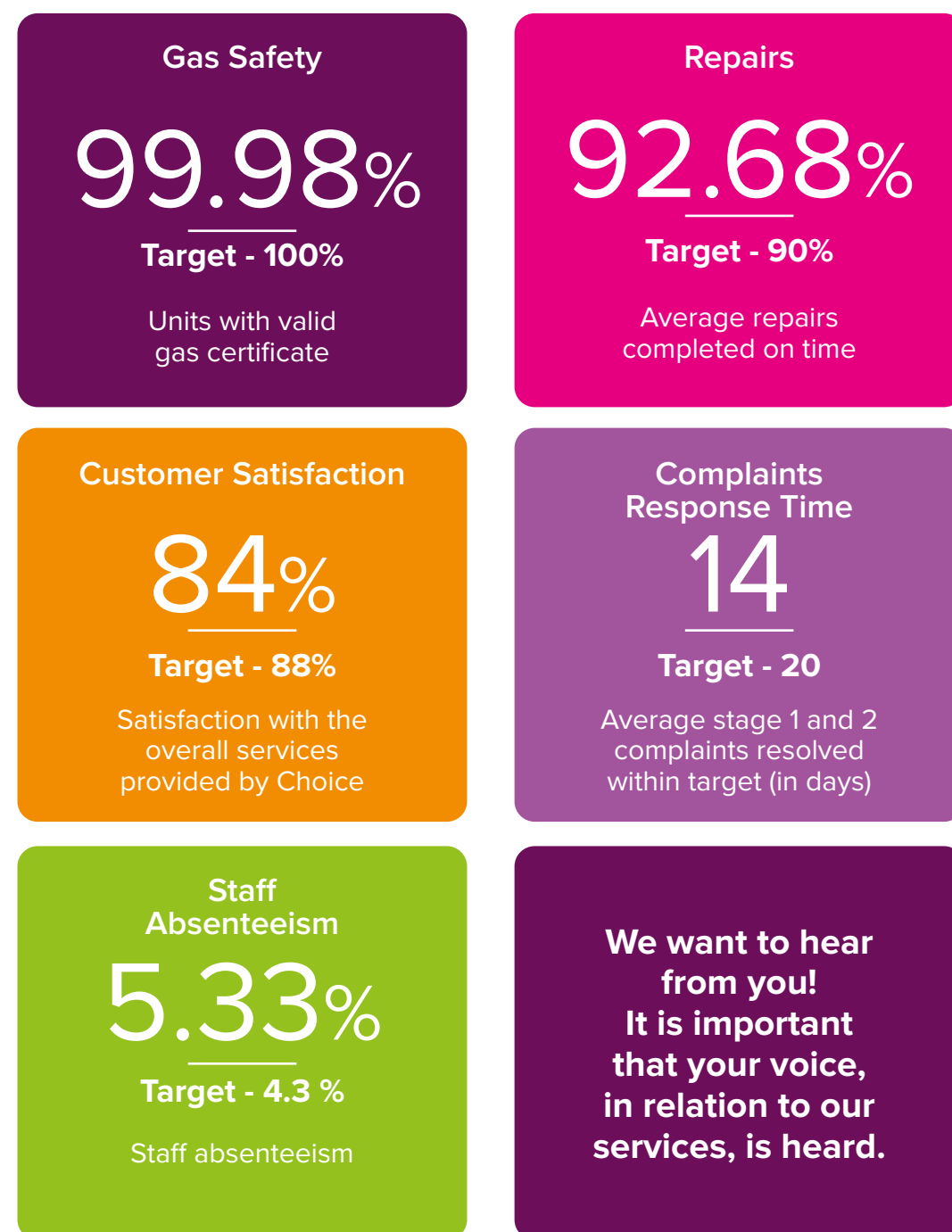
Only boil what you need when using a kettle.

Further information and help is available by contacting the Northern Ireland Energy Advice Line on **0800 111 44 55**. You can also download Choice's Energy Saving Guide, visit: www.choice-housing.org/energy

How we're performing

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.



Performance figures are from April 2022 to March 2023

Work with us

Career Opportunities

Choice employs over 400 staff at various locations throughout Northern Ireland providing careers in:

Housing Management

Development

Administration

Assets

Information Technology

Human Resources

Finance

Sustainability & Energy

and a range of support roles in our sheltered living schemes

WHY WORK AT CHOICE?

We believe every team member is integral to our success and contributes to achieving our mission of enriching lives through great homes, services and communities. We are driven by our values in being Caring, Committed and Creative:



We are caring:

We offer all employees free access to a Health Cash Plan; we provide Mental Health, First Aiders, Menopause Champions and Health & Wellbeing Champions; Death in Service Benefit and generous holiday entitlement.

We are committed:

We offer family friendly initiatives to help employees achieve work life balance.

We are creative:

We set our people up for success with opportunities to complete external qualifications, training and continuous professional and personal development.

Check out our website for information on our current job vacancies:
<https://www.choice-housing.org/work-with-us>



SAFE PLACE

Choice head quarters are safe places



Hybrid opportunities available for relevant roles

Choice Housing sign off charity partnership with Cancer Fund for Children and Air Ambulance

Choice has marked the end of their voluntary partnership with local charities Air Ambulance and Cancer Fund for Children with an amazing £8K fundraising total. Choice announced their partnership with the charities in 2022 and will split the total amount between the two organisations.

Each year Choice staff nominate two local charities to support for one year, with the Fundraising Committee organising a busy calendar of fundraising events aimed at raising much needed funds and involving staff teams in a range of initiatives.

Julie Dineen, Chair of Choice Fundraising Committee said,

"With the ongoing cost of living crisis and the impact of the pandemic, local charities are struggling to maintain a range of their vital support services, relying more on fundraising efforts from individuals and businesses to help them sustain their support provision."

"We also recognise that families and individuals are equally struggling with cost of living and there is less disposable income available that would normally go to things like donations to charities that are important to them."

"Our fundraising Committee looked to organise engaging events and initiatives that encouraged donations whilst also creating experiences. Partnerships with charities is an important element of Choices' commitment to supporting local communities across Northern Ireland."

The charity Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, provides the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) for Northern Ireland. The service brings urgent medical assistance to anywhere in the province, operating seven days a week for 12 hours per day. It can get to anywhere in Northern Ireland in approximately twenty-five minutes. Since its inception in July 2017 the medical crew have been tasked 3,434 times.

The HEMS team attend patients who are seriously ill or injured, bringing emergency pre-hospital care direct to the casualty with the aim of saving lives, brains, and limbs. Air Ambulance NI aspires to raise £2.5 million each year to maintain and sustain this service so public donations are crucial.



Grace Williams from Air Ambulance added, *"We are so grateful to the team at Choice for their incredible support throughout 2022. A lot of hard work and effort has gone into all of their fundraising, and we are so touched they chose to support us in this way."*

"The funds raised will help the medical team lift off by helicopter to reach future patients, wherever that may be in Northern Ireland. This is very much a service that no one wishes to need but is there for every one of us."

"As a service we rely heavily on charitable donations to keep the medical team in the air, delivering critical care to patients who have suffered trauma throughout Northern Ireland - without this type of support, the team simply couldn't fly. Every single penny counts."

Cancer Fund for Children works to empower, connect, and strengthen children, young people and families impacted by cancer. They offer informal emotional, social, and therapeutic support in the home, on the hospital ward and at their therapeutic short break centre, Daisy Lodge. Cancer Fund for Children supports over 1500 young people and 500 families every year.

Commenting on the fundraising effort from Choice, Jordana Stoney-Wilson from the charity said, *"Throughout the partnership, the team at Choice have gone above and beyond for Cancer Fund for Children. Thank you so much to all of the team for their support in helping us ensure no child has to face cancer alone."*

Examples of some of the activity undertaken include raffles, pound for pound challenge, marathon relay teams, walk to work, cold water dips and sunrise climb at Divis Mountain. Throughout the year staff donate £2 per month in non-uniform money, raising over £2000.



Oaklee Housing Separates from the Choice Group

As from 1st April 2023 Oaklee Housing, a housing association registered in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), has separated from the Choice Group. This is a change to the group structure and will not affect you as a tenant.

Oaklee Housing is a significant social housing provider in its own right. Both Boards acknowledge that there are increasingly divergent policy imperatives and housing support programmes between ROI and Northern Ireland. This includes the stated policy position of the Housing Regulator in ROI, that closer cooperation should occur between Approved Housing Bodies within that jurisdiction.

The Boards concluded that the value they add to, and indeed draw from the current group structure is diminishing and inhibits the cooperation required by the Housing Regulator in ROI.

It is the belief of both Boards that the relationship can and should now transition to a unique strategic partnership grounded in tangible and mutual benefits for entirely independent entities.

Choice Group will retain a specific and shared ongoing commitment to the ROI PPP bundle #1 project into the medium term.



Make Choice your new HOME



At Choice we want to make it as easy as possible for applicants to access our quality homes across Northern Ireland.

Housing Executive

Areas of choice

Did you know that the Housing Executive has made significant changes to the Housing Selection Scheme?

The current Housing Selection Scheme, which is managed and maintained by the Housing Executive and has been in place for more than 20 years, has been updated to reflect the demand for housing in Northern Ireland.

Charlie Temple, Allocations Manager, Choice;

"At Choice we want to make it as easy as possible for applicants to access our quality homes across Northern Ireland.

We often receive calls from applicants who are willing to consider a wide range of areas when it comes to where they would consider living; with this in mind, we want to highlight areas where we have vacant properties which are ready to let.

We advertise our immediately available properties on our website choice-housing.org. Our website is updated each week and applicants can find out how to apply for housing, view available properties, find out which area of choice they fall under for allocation and access information on Choice.

I would encourage applicants to check our website regularly as new properties become available all the time. If one of our available properties on the website is of interest, applicants should get in touch with our Area Housing Teams for further information."

You can now review your application and remove any areas you do not want to be considered for.

If you are a Choice tenant and wish to increase or change your areas of choice you should contact your Housing Officer on 0300 111 2211.



Out & About

Choice has more than 12,000 tenants, over 400 staff and works with 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 our Out & About section to find out more and don't forget to let us know about your events!

Email us: enquiries@choice-housing.org

Contact us at:

editor@choice-housing.org



CENTENARIAN SHINES AT THE SILVERGROVE

Happy 100th birthday to Caroline Smith from The Silvergrove in Belfast! Caroline enjoyed a wonderful celebration at the sheltered living scheme attended by family, friends and Choice staff.

A FOND FAREWELL

A very fond farewell to Anne Ringland, Scheme Coordinator of Millmount House, Lurgan, for 15 years.

Anne was incredibly well thought of by all her tenants, many of whom gathered at her retirement party. Everyone enjoyed the food and good company until the wee hours.



'FLIPPING' GOOD PANCAKES

Tenants at Sperrin Court, Cookstown had a 'flipping' good time enjoying some tasty pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.



POUND FOR POUND

Fundraising for local charities takes place at many of our sheltered schemes across Northern Ireland, and it is always inspiring to see the effort and enthusiasm our tenants have for helping others.

Each year the fundraising team at Pound Green Court, Larne, pick a charity to support, and over the past 12 months the tenants have supported Air Ambulance NI through numerous fundraising events.

Air Ambulance NI is a charity working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, to provide helicopter emergency medical service for the region. Each day costs in the region of £5,500 and £2.5 million is needed each year to keep the Air Ambulance NI service operational.

In January the incredible team at Pound Green Court handed over a huge cheque of £650 to their chosen charity. So many residents at the scheme contributed through coffee mornings, craft classes, bingo and raffles, giving so generously especially in the current climate.

Jessica McBride, Scheme Co-ordinator, Pound Green Court-
"The residents are extremely passionate about fundraising and it's a great way of bringing them all together in aid of a good cause. I would like to give a special thanks to our Active Tenant Jeff Shaw for all his support with the social activities at the scheme."

YOU HAVE TO BE IN IT TO WIN IT!

If you want to be in with the chance of winning £50, make sure you complete our Tenant Repair Feedback survey. Hilary Fleming, Lisburn, did just that and nabbed herself some money!

The team at Choice value tenant feedback and we use it improve our services.

The survey will only take a couple of minutes to complete and you can return it using our freepost address to be entered into our quarterly prize draw.

Congratulations Hilary from everyone at Choice.



90TH BIRTHDAY AT ROTHESAY COURT

Bridie Clyde from Rothersey Court in Coleraine was treated to a very special surprise party by all her friends at our sheltered living scheme. Bridie's neighbours helped her celebrate turning 90 and made it a very special day. Happy birthday Bridie from everyone at Choice!



FINANCIAL STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Our Group Director of Finance and Resources, Michael Rafferty recently met with our Financial Stakeholder Group to highlight some of the difficult financial issues impacting Choice and our tenants for the forthcoming year.

If you would like to join this group please contact us on **0300 111 2211** or email: enquiries@choice-housing.org

JOINT CELEBRATIONS AT ST BRONAGH'S

Tenants at St Bronagh's in Rostrevor held joint birthday celebrations at the sheltered living scheme for Lisa McConville (Housing Officer) and Larlaith Farrell (Building Surveyor Student) at their recent coffee morning with lots of sweet treats for everyone to enjoy!



SNOW DAY

Ballymaglave Court in Ballynahinch enjoyed a great snow day making lots of impressive snowmen!



JOINT BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Our Maintenance Assistant Kevin and Domestic Assistant Marie at St. Bronagh's, Newry, recently celebrated their birthdays. Kevin and Marie are much appreciated and everyone at St. Bronagh's was delighted to celebrate with them!

LORD MAYOR

Our tenants at Blacks Court in Belfast, were delighted to welcome Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Christina Black to the sheltered living scheme.



PLANTING WORKSHOP

Our tenants at Upper Dunmurry Close, Belfast, embracing Spring and participating in a planting workshop.



Out & About



A DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY AT TUGHAN COURT

Congratulations to the Thompsons, a happy couple who have lived at Tughan Court since 2018. They were surprised by their friends and neighbours who had secretly organised a celebration during an Easter gathering at the sheltered living scheme.

The Thompsons were married on 25th March 1963 at Ballysillan Presbyterian Church and had 2 children Gill and Robert. The couple have an adventurous streak and love to travel, they have enjoyed cruises and trips to Germany and France for family holidays. This very special occasion was rounded off with a card from the King and Queen. Congratulations Bertie and Nessie from everyone at Choice!



A NEW CHAPTER

Our Sheltered Living Schemes host entire communities, with many tenants living at the schemes over long periods of time, strong friendships are forged. Ruth Wark has lived at Cabinhill Court, Belfast, for over a decade and is much loved by everyone at the scheme. Ruth recently moved to another Choice sheltered living scheme, nearby Kirk House, and all her neighbours and everyone at Choice wish her well in her new home.

SILVER SCREENINGS

Tenants from Cabinhill Court in Belfast recently enjoyed a Silver Screening show of Sabrina from 1954 at the Strand Cinema. Silver Screenings is a great opportunity not just to see a movie classic, but also for people to meet and interact, and enjoy a trip down memory lane! We hope you all enjoyed the movie and some popcorn too!



HALLOWEEN AT BENMORE COURT

Tenants at Benmore Court in Belfast joined in with the Halloween fun and enjoyed a spooktacular party!



SAFE PLACE

Choice sign up to become a Safe Place organisation

Choice Housing have recently signed up our offices Maple House and Leslie Morrell House, to the Safe Place initiative run by Onus. Safe Place is a simple but effective way for anyone affected by domestic abuse to receive information on the support available to them. The support is available both for Choice staff members and the general public who visit Choice offices.

Our Safe Place sites displays the Safe Place logo and posters on the premises and have Safe Place cards with details of helpline numbers in an accessible location.



Further information on Safe Place can be viewed on the Onus website <https://www.onustraining.co.uk/play-your-part>





Choice wins 5 All Ireland Housing Awards

Choice Housing has been recognised as an innovative, quality housing organisation at this year's CIH All Ireland Housing Awards. Shortlisted in 7 categories, Choice took home 5 awards on the night.

The awards exist to share good practice; highlight innovation; and showcase the work of housing professionals and their communities.

★ Excellence in Customer Service

For the second year running, Choice Services have won the Excellence in Customer Service award. This award recognises housing teams who go above and beyond to deliver truly outstanding customer service.

Choice Services have demonstrated once again that they use an innovative approach to gain insight into the customer needs and experiences of their tenants and have used this to transform the services they offer.

From its establishment in 2017, Choice Services has grown significantly to provide over 80% of Choice Housing's response repairs needs as well as supporting a joint venture project with Oaklee Housing in Greater Dublin. The customer satisfaction and repair completion metrics for Choice Services are extremely strong and represent best practice in the sector.

★ Excellence in Housing Innovation

Under this category, Choice were short-listed for the work of the Choice Financial Inclusion Team and the creation of our Tenant Financial Support Fund. This award recognises projects which can clearly demonstrate how they have developed an innovative approach that has made a real difference to the lives of tenants and customers. In an age of rising household costs and significant cost of living pressures, the combination of advice and financial support for the most vulnerable, truly reflects the values of the Choice Group.



★ Housing Team of the Year

The Choice Development Team won Housing Team of the Year. This award is for teams that have made an outstanding contribution to their organisation and the delivery of its objectives.

Despite many challenges – some anticipated but most not – Choice Development colleagues delivered 442 new build starts in 2021/22 across 14 projects. This achievement was by far and away the largest component of the year's Social Housing Development Programme and therefore contributed substantially to addressing housing need across the country.

The Team has shown sector-leadership around the delivery of mixed-tenure projects - a further 104 homes being delivered for private rent and affordable sale. Kings Hall, Park Avenue, Lewis Mews and Crescent Link may become pivotal "proof of concept" projects. Mixing tenures blurs the lines between social and private, creating mixed communities free from stigma and segregation.

In these difficult times, Choice has been buoyed and uplifted by seeing this team realise its full potential. With over 1,000 homes currently under construction, Choice staff don't have to travel far before being able to point out "one of ours" to friends and family alike.



★ Working in Partnership

This award commends collaboration between organisations that achieves the best possible outcomes. Choice and partners have proved they are working collaboratively to improve service delivery. House 10 Enterprise Court, Bangor, is a shared Supported Housing service for adults with severe complex needs.

The service is available for people aged 18+ and gives opportunities to change lives. House 10 is a bungalow that was extensively redeveloped by Choice in partnership with the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust and Inspire Wellbeing. The project was motivated by the need to create a service for a previously unmet need, a true collaboration. House 10 provides for a vulnerable client base who can now explore new skills and meet their personal potential.

The lead partner agencies have a successful long standing relationship. Those on the working group were able to draw on their significant experience and knowledge to deliver a unique solution for the Service Users. The working group engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the Service Users were not only safe in their new environment but that they thrive.

House 10 provides a new option for people with severe mental health problems. With limited options for this client group, Choice, Inspire and the Trust have created a long term provision for this vulnerable group.

Yvonne Russell- Coyles, Community Services Manager, SEHSCT-

"The newly established service has been a welcome addition to the existing supported living services at Enterprise Court. Through creative partnerships, ongoing commitment and engagement we have enabled the resettlement of six individuals who otherwise would continue to call the Downshire hospital their home. These Service Users now have a chance to experience life within the community, supported to develop their independence and to enjoy the life which they seek and deserve. The integration and inclusion in community everyday tasks such as shopping, eating out, cinema visits, joining a football team and having greater choice is proving to enhance the lives of the new residents."



★ Housing Organisation of the Year

Choice believes every team member is integral to its success and contributes to achieving its mission of enriching lives through great homes, services and communities. Choice continually invests in its staff to drive professional standards, and ensure tenants can always receive quality services and support.

Michael McDonnell- *"We are also pleased to have won Housing Organisation of the Year. This award recognises organisations who are leading the way in driving professionalism, learning and development and inclusion while delivering a great service for tenants. We believe that Choice has a great story to tell around good outcomes for our staff in promoting equality and diversity."*

The health and wellbeing and equality and diversity initiatives that Choice have implemented demonstrate that Choice is committed to making a positive, meaningful impact within its organisation and the communities in which it works. Our initiatives around menopause support, mental health first aid, Belfast Mela, Belfast Pride, Choice Academy, and Safe Places for victims of domestic violence have created an informed, inclusive workforce at Choice.

The Association's Environmental, Social and Governance Report is testament to the organisation driving professional standards across the organisation. The report details key targets and outcomes across a range of environmental, social and governance led commitments. Risk management, community investment, tenant engagement, and managing environmental impact all form part of commitments that are aimed at delivering great outcomes for tenants and contributing to a better society for all.



40th Anniversary of Medway Court



Residents and staff came together to mark the 40th anniversary of Medway Court, a sheltered living scheme in the heart of East Belfast.

Located just off the Newtownards Road, Medway Court was opened on 28th April 1983 by former Lord Mayor of Belfast Tom Patton. The scheme is designed to provide independent living for older people with support available when needed.

A lively celebration took place, reflecting on the past 40 years and how much has changed in that time. Flowers were presented to the longest standing resident Dorothy Robinson, who made her home at Medway Court 19 years ago, back in 2004.

Choice provides a mix of supported, sheltered and general needs housing in Northern Ireland, providing over 12,000 homes across the region, with over 5,000 in the Belfast City Council area. Since 2018, Choice has invested over £66m in new social housing provision in Belfast with plans for further investment over the next five years.

Medway Court is located in East Belfast on Medway Street. It is well serviced by public transport and is close to local amenities such as doctor's surgeries, shops, cafes and eateries on the nearby Newtownards Road, with Connswater Shopping Centre less than a mile away. The scheme is comprised of 37 self-contained apartments, with lift access, including 14 single bedroom apartments, 22 double bedroom apartments and one two bedroom apartment. All apartments are energy efficient and are equipped with gas central heating, double glazing and a fully fitted kitchen.

If you are interested in Sheltered Living accommodation with Choice, please contact the team on **0300 111 2211** or visit www.choice-housing.org



Michelle McAnespy, Regional Head of Tenant and Client Services at Choice said:

"Reaching the 40th anniversary is a milestone to be proud of and at Choice, we are committed to developing not only quality and affordable housing but sustainable and cohesive communities. More importantly, this significant anniversary shows how our tenants contribute to the lifeblood of all our schemes."



The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award 2023

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

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.

- 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?
- The person nominated and the nominator must both be tenants 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.

Ts & Cs apply.

Closing Date:
Friday 25th August 2023.

WIN
£100
Shopping
Voucher



Best Kept Garden Competition 2023

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 tenant's garden, or a scheme garden providing it is tended by the tenant 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 25th August 2023** to the Editor, **Choice News** FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 6BR.



WIN
£100
Shopping
Voucher

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

Ts & Cs apply.

The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award 2023

Your details

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Nominee Detail

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Reasons for nomination:

All nominations should be forwarded to:
Marketing Officer,
Choice
FREEPOST BEL2371,
Belfast BT1 6BR
by 12 noon on
Friday 25th August 2023.

choice
Together we enrich lives

Best Kept Garden Competition 2023

Your details

Name:

Address:

Telephone No:

Email:

Nominee Detail (if different)

Name:

Address:

Telephone No:

Email:

choice
Together we enrich lives



Children's Colouring Competition

Open to children 16 years and under

Win
a family
pass to
Belfast Zoo!



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 25th August 2023**.

(Please note that the parent or guardian must be a tenant of Choice Housing Ireland). Ts & Cs apply.



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

Name Age

Address

Daytime Tel. Evening Tel.

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:



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



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.



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, shop, 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 is automatically paid directly to your rent account. However, if this does not cover the full amount of your rent you need to pay the difference.

Support for our customers - Anti-social Behaviour

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.

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

Please note the following:

- This additional 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.

**Available
immediately**

SHELTERED LIVING

Edgar Boyd Court
Killynure Gardens
Carryduff
BT8 8RT



Visit our regularly updated website
for properties available in your area.

choice-housing.org

**For more information
and to apply contact:**

T: 0300 111 2211

enquiries@choice-housing.org

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HOMES IN
THE **HEART**
OF THE
COMMUNITY



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**

choice 
Together we enrich lives

Choice
Leslie Morrell House
37 - 41 May Street
Belfast
BT1 4DN

T: 0300 111 2211
E: enquiries@choice-housing.org

choice-housing.org

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