

tlc

Tenants' and leaseholders'
community magazine



NORWICH
City Council

Summer 2021

Tenant
approved



Budgeting and money advice
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What would you like to read in TLC?

This magazine is all about tenants, leaseholders and the housing services you're at the heart of.

If you have an idea for a story or want to let us know your views on the magazine, we'd love to hear from you!

**Send your
comments to
communications@
norwich.gov.uk**



If you would like this information in another language or format such as large print, CD or Braille please visit www.norwich.gov.uk/Intran or call 0344 980 3333.

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Norwich City Council



Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris

Welcome to the summer edition of TLC magazine

Deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing

I'm so pleased to be able to introduce this summer issue of tlc, after what has been such a challenging time for so many of our residents.

I'd like to take this opportunity once again to say thank you for your understanding while we've adapted to the most recent lockdown. At time of writing, restrictions are beginning to lift, which allows us to return to delivering normal housing services, however, it may take a while to get back on track and we appreciate your patience – read more on page four.

The pandemic has affected everyone differently, but it's clear that many people are

really struggling with their finances – read about the money and benefit advice we can offer tenants on page five.

A focus of this issue is the social housing white paper, a government report which was published in November 2020 – as a result of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. It is a residents' charter, which sets out the seven commitments social landlords (in this case, us) must make to their residents to prevent such an awful event happening again. We explain more about the white paper on pages six and seven.

At the heart of all our work should be ensuring our residents'

voices are heard, and that we listen and learn from feedback. If you fancy getting involved with shaping our housing service turn to pages eight and nine where we feature some of the opportunities on offer, as well as hear from two people who are already championing the needs and rights of residents. We also set out all the ways you can give feedback on your homes and neighbourhoods on page ten – don't forget, we love hearing your compliments too!

I do hope you find this issue useful and please let us know if there are other topics that you'd like us to feature in the future. Enjoy the summer.



Covid-19 update

Supporting residents in our council housing has continued to be central to our work during the last lockdown. Teams adapted once again to do this in a safe and efficient way, such as contacting residents by phone or video call where a visit was not an option.

Posters have been put up in the tower block communal areas to remind residents and visitors of the need for continued safety – and we really appreciate everyone following this guidance until we hear otherwise.

Our repairs service is now operating as usual, but please be patient as we work through the backlog which has

accumulated over the most recent lockdown.

Gasway engineers have also been continuing their essential visits, so if you are due a gas check, please make sure this can be done.

We know that the pandemic has affected residents in many ways, such as forcing

people to claim benefits who might not have done so before or dealing with debt. Our housing team has continued to provide tailored financial advice over the phone on issues such as claiming benefits and accessing local support schemes – more information on how we can provide support can be found on the opposite page.



Information for leaseholders

Repairs

As a leaseholder you are responsible for looking after the inside of your flat or maisonette, and any service pipes and cables that serve the flat only. This includes items such as internal doors, pipe work, decoration, electrics and heating.

The council is responsible for maintaining the external fabric

of the building and any internal common parts. This includes roofs, drains, windows, external doors, communal lighting and shared paths.

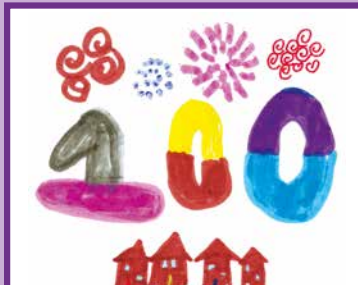
For more information on leaseholder and landlord responsibilities, please visit our website www.norwich.gov.uk/leaseholders

If you believe the council is responsible for a repair that is required, please report this via our website or by calling 0344 980 3333

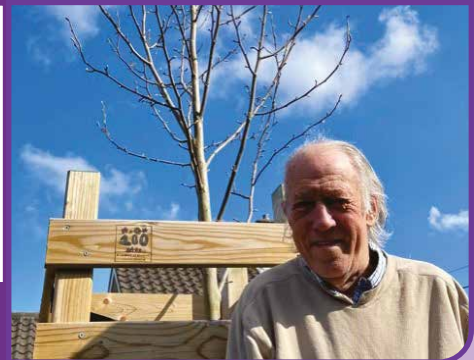


100 years of council housing

We tracked down some of the trees we planted two years ago across the city to celebrate a century of providing social housing. Here's one of our sheltered housing residents with one of the trees just coming into bud.



A century of Norwich council housing



Budgeting and money advice team

If you are worried about debt or wondering how to make your money go that little bit further, we have a specialist team of budgeting and money advisors. This is a dedicated free service for our tenants that can help with:

- General budgeting
- Income maximisation
- Expense reduction
- Multiple debt management
- Local grant applications
- Food/energy vouchers and more.

You can request a referral via:

- www.norwich.gov.uk/moneyadvice
- Budgetingandmoneyadvice@norwich.gov.uk
- 0344 980 3333

Positive outcomes include:

- A money advisor was assigned a case where the gas had been capped. Liaison with the utility provider, tenancy management officer and other organisations resulted in the account being credited and the gas being uncapped within a week.
- Rent verification for universal credit can be a challenge. A budgeting advisor was assigned a case with concerns over incorrect entitlement. Thanks to liaison with the income officer and the Department of Work and Pensions, the entitlement was corrected and backdated making a substantial reduction to debts held.



The charter for social housing residents

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the serious failings identified by the enquiry that followed, the government has published a report - known as the social housing white paper. The aim of the charter is to ensure nothing like Grenfell ever happens again, as well as improve the standard of social housing by ensuring residents are listened to - and know what to expect from their landlord - in this case, Norwich City Council.

The charter sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect.



To be safe in your home



To have your voice heard by your landlord



To be supported to take your first step to ownership



To know how your landlord is performing



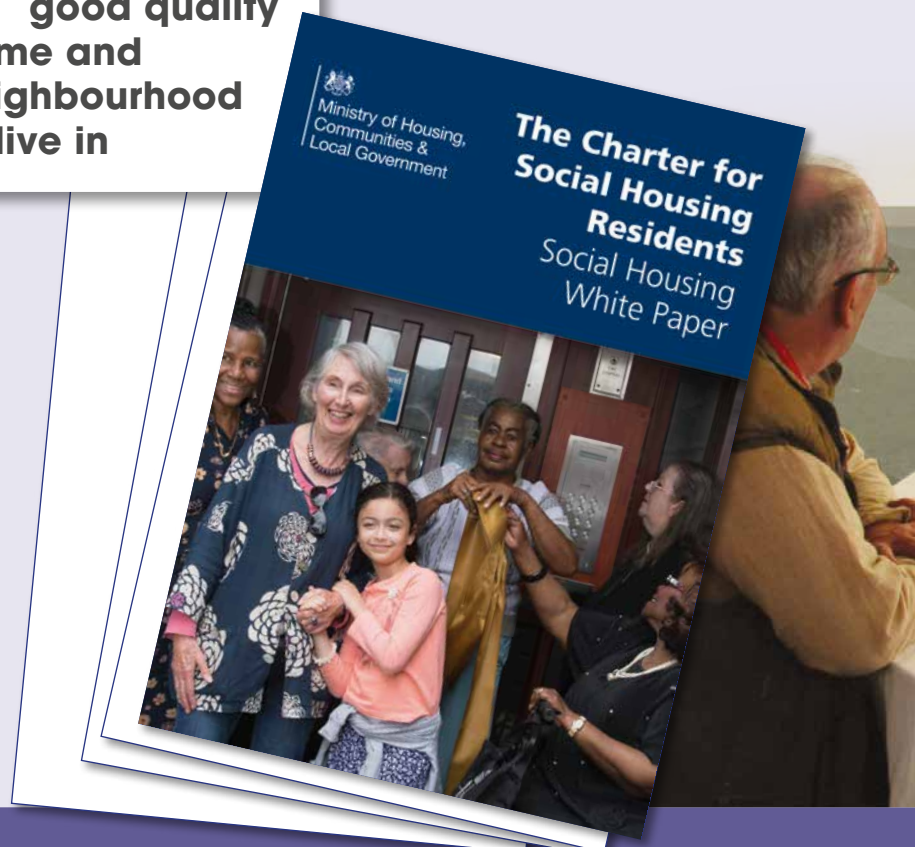
To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in



To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly



To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants



Our response to the social housing white paper.

There are many recommendations set out in the charter. The good news is that we are already doing many of them, but there are areas where we can improve.

Our work so far:

- Undertaken a programme of fire safety works in our tower blocks, including replacement of all entrance doors, as well as doors to sheds in communal areas. We've also installed new hard wired smoke detectors where necessary.
- Revised the questions in our satisfaction survey to find out your views on whether your homes are safe and secure (see page 11 for the first set of results).
- Substantial investment in planned upgrades and improvements to council homes, over and above the Government's Decent Homes Standard to a higher 'Norwich Standard*'.

- Significantly increased the budget to spend on improvements to our estates and neighbourhoods.
- Completed our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling code. Refreshed our complaints policy and information on our website. Find out more: www.norwich.gov.uk/HousingComplaints

We are working on:

- Including even more information in our annual report to increase transparency.
- Making it even easier for tenants to have their say. We already provide a range of involvement opportunities, such as our Tenant Involvement Panel, but we need to do more.

- Improving how we measure and report on our performance in areas that are important to you. We already collect a wide range of data, but we are looking at how we can collect more using tenant satisfaction surveys and performance information from across our housing department.

What next?

Many of the recommendations set up in the white paper will require further government consultations, and some may require changes to the law.

We will continue to respond to government guidance and keep you updated.

Read the full report: www.gov.uk – search for 'charter for social housing'.



Members of our Tenant Involvement Panel (TIP)

*The Norwich Standard means all kitchens are less than 20 years old, all bathrooms are less than 30 years old and all boilers are less than 15 years.

Have your say on where you live!

Social housing landlords need to listen to residents, be more open about how housing services are run, and provide opportunities to get involved - these were some of the key learnings to come out of the social housing white paper, a report which was commissioned to address the failings which led to the Grenfell Tower disaster.

We pride ourselves in putting our residents at the heart of housing matters. Check out some of the ways that you can get involved.

Tenant Involvement Panel (TIP)

Tenant involvement meetings offer you the opportunity to carefully examine our performance as a landlord and recommend improvements.

Although serious issues are covered, TIP is also a sociable event and often attended by senior housing staff, as well as Norwich City Council cabinet member, Cllr Harris

– who are always keen to hear your views.

ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing)

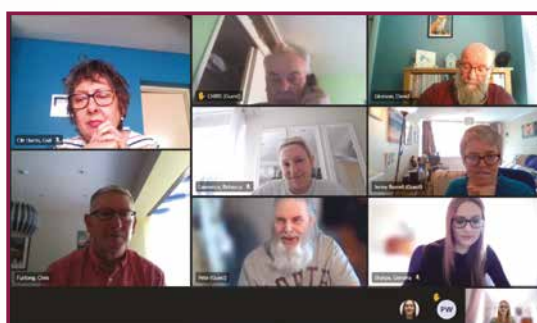
These meetings provide an opportunity to meet council tenants from across the country, discuss relevant issues and share ideas, which are then shared with the wider TIP group. Each year, a few

residents attend the ARCH conference, which has a wide variety of speakers on relevant matters.

Talk back to us!

The Talkback panel is an easy and informal way of influencing your housing services by sharing your views with us on a variety of topics. This feedback will be used to help develop and improve services.

Each survey is very quick and can be completed by SMS text, online or by post. We will limit the number of surveys and you are free to opt-out at any time.



You can find out more about opportunities to get involved by visiting our website www.norwich.gov.uk/CouncilHomes or email involvement@norwich.gov.uk

Getting involved

Two residents tell us about their experience of making their voices heard and influencing the way our housing service is delivered.

Peter Jones has been a member of TIP for three years, we asked him a few questions about his experience.

Why did you choose to join TIP?

I find it rewarding being able to put forward a point of view from the position of a tenant.

What are the benefits of being on the panel?

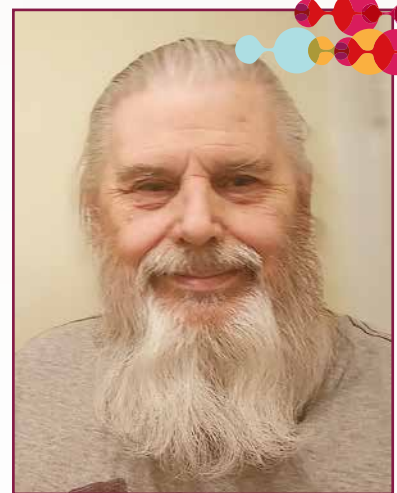
Having an influence on council decisions that affect the lives of all its tenants.

Why should tenants consider joining the panel?

It is a golden opportunity for anyone who wants to put forward a point of view about the daily life of the tenants in Norwich and take part in decisions made by the council.

As a TIP member, what are you most proud of?

I have been proud to meet and work with tenants from all over Norwich.



TIP member, Peter Jones

Chris Gould has been a member of TIP for around five years. He also sits on the ARCH tenants' group.

As a TIP member, I have the opportunity to learn about what the council is doing as a housing landlord. I can try and hold them to account by asking them to clarify their decisions and challenge things I don't like, as well as bring to their notice any shortcomings and problems.

The meetings are very varied indeed. Recent topics have included measures taken to

improve fire safety and how they are performing on service delivery and handling complaints. We also have meetings when there is a proposed rent rise – and I took the opportunity recently

“...if you like nosing, arguing – but not too loudly, and learning, please give membership of our panel your consideration.”

to remind the council of problems people might have in meeting payments due to Covid.

Panel membership has allowed me to learn a little about a lot of large subjects, however we also keep an eye on 'smaller' topics, but which are front page news for tenants, like overgrown gardens or fly tipping.



TIP member, Chris Gould

Housing affects us all. Like all birds we must have our nest, so if you like nosing, arguing – but not too loudly, and learning, please give membership of our panel your consideration.

Complaints or compliments – we need your feedback

Your feedback is important to us as it tells us what we're doing well, but also what we can do to improve. Whatever your experience, good or bad, we need to hear from you so we can improve and take action to put things right. If you have any suggestions on how we could do things differently or make improvements, please let us know.

There are several ways you can give us feedback:

Online: www.norwich.gov.uk/complaints • www.norwich.gov.uk/compliments

Email: listening@norwich.gov.uk

In writing: Norwich City Council, City Hall, St Peter's Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH

Phone: 0344 980 3333

In person to a member of staff or contractors, or by completing and returning satisfaction surveys.

Compliments – tell us when things have gone well

Please let us know when you have been happy with something we have done, this tells us what parts of our service are working well, for example:

- When a service we provide has improved things for you
- When a repair or property improvement has been done well
- Compliment a member of staff or one of our contractors who has gone the extra mile to get things done.



Complaints – let us know when you are unhappy with our service

It is also important that we know as soon as possible when things have not gone so well. This is so we can investigate what has happened and take action to put things right if needed. Your feedback also allows us to continually learn and improve. Please get in touch using any of the methods above.

Housing Ombudsman service

Recently the Housing Ombudsman (an independent public body that looks at complaints within the social housing sector) introduced a new code of conduct to ensure that all complaints from leaseholders and tenants are handled effectively and fairly.

We have looked carefully at our complaints procedure and can confirm that as a landlord we comply with the new code, but we are always looking for ways to improve.

More information on making a complaint

The Government's Make Things Right campaign aims to inform residents on how to raise complaints if they are unhappy with the service from their social housing provider. <https://socialhousingcomplaints.campaign.gov.uk>

We also have lots of information on our website, including how to contact the Ombudsman www.norwich.gov.uk/HousingComplaints

STAR survey

A big thank you to the 250 residents who have taken the time to respond to our satisfaction survey, so far.

We are working towards getting 1,000 responses to be certain they are more representative and will be publishing the results on our website.

Out of the 250 respondents so far:

80%

are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live

76%

are satisfied that Norwich City Council is easy to deal with

86%

are satisfied that Norwich City Council provides a home that is safe and secure

79%

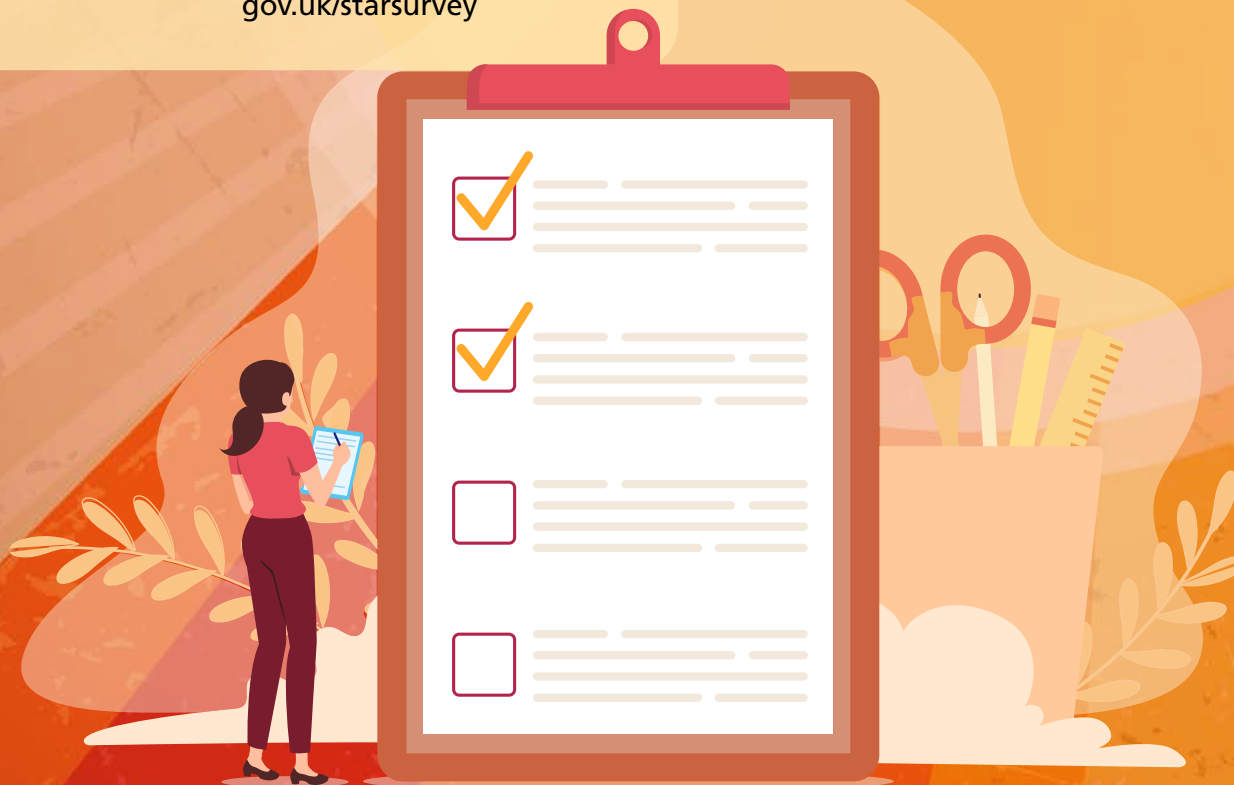
are satisfied with the overall service provided by Norwich City Council

Help us improve

If you get a phone call from Viewpoint, who conduct our survey, please do answer their questions – your feedback helps us make improvements to the way we work.

Thanks to everyone who has taken part so far.

If you do not wish to be contacted for this survey, you can opt out at www.norwich.gov.uk/starsurvey



Contacting Norwich City Council

ONLINE You can report repairs, access council services and make online payments.

www.norwich.gov.uk

Register for 'My Account' to check your rent and council tax balance. Take a look at 'My Norwich' to see what services are available in your area.

POST Norwich City Council,
City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH.

PHONE 0344 980 3333.
Lines open 9am to 4pm,
Monday to Friday.

Out of hours emergencies:
01603 412180.

Free phone payment hotline:
0800 021 7784 (a 24/7 service).

Money advisers:
0344 980 3333 or email
budgetingandmoneyadvice@norwich.gov.uk

Text relay users only:
18001 0344 980 3333
(9am to 4pm, Monday
to Friday).

Leaseholders:
For help and advice on your
rights and responsibilities,
contact the home ownership
team at homeownership@norwich.gov.uk

Report repairs online

A chance
to win
£50!!

*T&Cs apply

To report non-urgent repairs (and for a chance to win £50) go to:

- www.norwich.gov.uk/repairs
- Click 'report a non-urgent repair'
- Enter your details and let the repairs software guide you through the rest...

**Available 24/7 and works on
PCs, tablets and smartphones**



Quick and easy to do



Request your preferred time



No waiting in phone queues



Save the cost of a call

Loss of gas or electricity?

If you have lost your gas or electricity supply you should contact your energy supplier directly in the first instance.

Need space for your car?



Are you confident that you can secure a parking space every time you drive to work? Would you like secure off-street parking at home? Why not rent a garage or parking bay from Norwich City Council? Garages are located throughout the city and available to rent whether you live within the city boundary or not.

For more information, go to www.norwich.gov.uk/garages