

tlc

Tenants' and leaseholders'
community magazine



NORWICH
City Council

Autumn/Winter 2021



Safety checks in your home
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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**



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Norwich City Council



Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris

Welcome to the autumn/winter issue of TLC magazine

Deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing

Welcome to the autumn issue of TLC. I hope you had a lovely summer and were able to make the most of things following the easing of Covid restrictions around the city and further afield.

For this issue of the magazine, I am moving away from the usual format of my welcome message to focus on one very important topic – housing compliance in council homes. In short, this relates to safety checks in your homes that we're responsible for.

As the portfolio holder with responsibility for social housing, the safety of our homes is my number one concern. This is why I wanted to take the opportunity to let you know that over the summer we started an internal review

of the way we manage health and safety in our properties – your homes.

We found that not all checks in relation to electrical, fire and water safety have been carried out when they should have.

As soon as we became aware of this, we appointed an independent expert to do a detailed check of health and safety across all these areas.

We then started an urgent work programme to complete all checks, risk assessments and follow up work needed. This work is already underway and we are working hard to complete all checks.

We told the Regulator of Social Housing about these matters and our plans to put things

right and we are working with the regulator to make sure our plan meets what is required.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how deeply sorry and upset I am that this has happened, and to assure you that we are working hard to make sure all safety checks are brought up to date as soon as possible.

We have brought in external experts in key areas to help us with putting things right and to review our policies so this doesn't happen again.

You can read more about this on page four – and find out how to get in touch with the council if you have any concerns or queries about safety checks in your home.



Addressing safety checks in your home

An internal review of safety measures across all our council homes has identified some cases where electrical, fire and water safety checks have not taken place as they should have.

What are we doing about this?

Please see the page three introduction from Councillor Gail Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing, to read about this in more detail.

More about each area

Fire safety

Fire risk assessments (FRAs) are required for blocks of flats with shared/communal areas – inside a block this could include corridors, stairways, door entrances, communal rooms or refuse storage areas. The FRA covers the shared areas up to entrance doors of each flat within a block. If you live in a house or bungalow this does not apply to you.

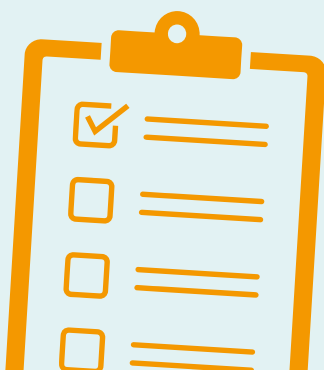
Our fire safety policy requires FRAs to be carried out every 12 months for high-rise buildings. All FRAs required for high-rise blocks are now complete.

Any outstanding FRAs at other buildings with communal areas will be completed by the end of November.

Electrical safety checks

If you moved into your home in the last five years, an electrical safety check will have been completed before you moved in, so won't be outstanding.

Our electrical safety policy states that we will carry out an electrical safety check on council homes every five years. There were 892 properties (6% of homes) where electrical checks were overdue at the time of our review.



We are working hard to complete all checks. If you are affected by this, we will be in touch to schedule an appointment before the end of this year.

Water safety (Legionella)

Our review identified up to 500 properties that may need a Legionella Risk Assessment (LRA). A water hygiene specialist has been appointed to do this work, which is due to start later this month. You will be contacted directly by us if your property needs an inspection.

What do I need to do?

Please be assured that you don't need to do anything. We will contact you if your home requires any checks. Our responsibilities for safety inside leasehold homes varies from that of our tenants' homes, so please consult your lease for details on this if you are a leaseholder.

Find out more and how to get in touch

For more information visit www.norwich.gov.uk/housingcompliance

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like a paper copy of the information we have online, visit www.norwich.gov.uk/forms and complete the 'Housing compliance' form in the housing section or email housingcompliance@norwich.gov.uk or call **0344 980 3333** (select option 3 for housing, then option 5 for housing compliance) Monday to Friday, between 9am and 4pm.

Renewable energy to flow from river into council homes

An innovative heating system using water from the River Wensum is set to achieve a major reduction in carbon emissions from a city council housing development, if plans are approved.

Plans to build a heat pump using river water as a renewable energy source at Barnards Yard, close to the city centre, have received initial approval from the Environment Agency.

The new system will provide heating and hot water to 85 homes, replacing the current system which uses natural gas: a carbon generating fossil fuel. This will significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions, emitting approximately 270 tonnes less carbon dioxide in the atmosphere each year: the equivalent absorption of almost 1,300 fully grown trees.

The pump itself will be powered by renewable electricity, so no particulates will be created by combustion on site.

Increasing the energy efficiency of the housing stock in the city is a key priority in the council's environmental strategy.

Benefits to residents include the introduction of specific billing for each property, meaning their bills will accurately reflect their energy usage, thanks to a computerised tracking system. This will replace the current communal heating charges which means that charges are shared equally between the block, regardless of usage. Barnards Yard residents are being contacted directly with more information about the plans and details of what the work will involve.



Key facts

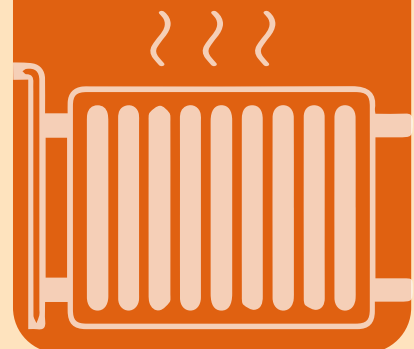
The system will work by removing water from the Wensum and pumping it into a new plant room before it is returned to the river.

A small amount of heat is taken from the abstracted water before it is discharged back into the river.

The heat generated by the heat pumps will heat water stored in buffer vessels in the plant room.

This heated water will be pumped to each dwelling to provide hot water and heating. At no point is the river water mixed with water to be used in homes.

Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (NDRHI) funding by central government will offset the £1.8m initial outlay.



More council services coming back under our wing

Work continues to insource a number of important council services which so many of our residents rely on us to provide.

In recent years, the council's repairs and maintenance and asset management services have been delivered via joint venture arrangements with Norse. But with those arrangements due to come to an end next year, we are continuing with our



plans to insource more services which will give the council greater flexibility over their delivery.

From next April the council's new wholly-owned company, Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL), will take over responsibility for the repairs and maintenance services currently provided by Norwich Norse Building (NNB). The asset management services, currently provided by NPS Norwich, will transfer directly back to the council at the same time.

This means that from next year, you can expect correspondence regarding maintenance and upgrades to be addressed from the city council directly,

rather than NPS Norwich.

You will continue to receive a consistent level of service, and we will communicate any specific changes or new information nearer the time.

Councillor Alan Waters, leader of Norwich City Council, said: "Bringing back these services will allow us to have more direct control over many of the vital services that our residents rely on us to provide.

"As we continue to carry on with all the detailed arrangements to successfully transfer them, our priority is to limit any impact on staff and service delivery."

Sparking community conversations

Among the challenges of the last 18 months have been inspirational stories of neighbours and members of the community checking on people and organising activities that bring joy to each other's lives.

Many people have volunteered to be part of the response to the pandemic, while others have

organised initiatives in their own streets and neighbourhoods.

If you are one of these people, our Community Conversations project would love to hear from you so that we can learn from your experience, build on your ideas and enable others to do simple things to make life better in their local area.

Look out for community pop-up shops and other events in your area inviting people to take part in activities, meet others and get talking about what things would benefit your local community.

Contact Niki Taigel, community conversations officer
nikitaigel@norwich.gov.uk / 07385 392698 to get involved.

Visit **www.lumi.org.uk** for ideas, support and resources to make something happen in your neighbourhood.

Resettling Afghan families in Norwich

Afghan interpreters and their families are being safely housed in Norwich through an initiative being delivered by Norwich City Council's Let NCC team, as the situation in Afghanistan intensified.

The council is taking part in the national Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme, offering relocation to anyone facing intimidation or threat to life because of their employment by the UK Government. As well as interpreters, this can include other members of staff working for British forces.

Four households have already been resettled in the city thanks to swift help from the Let NCC team, which works with landlords to provide

affordable accommodation for people who may not be eligible for social housing. This sits outside of the Home Options allocations system for social housing which requires applicants to have a local connection as part of its criteria.

Officers in the Let NCC team work closely with Norfolk County Council and the Home Office to match families in most need with the properties available. Due to the urgency

of the evacuations from Afghanistan, properties have been turned around with as little as two-weeks' notice and handed to the county council in readiness for the new residents. Some landlords have offered their properties specifically to help refugees and others being housed through resettlement schemes.

This follows the city council's recent efforts to house more than 40 Syrian families through a similar scheme over the past four years.



Councillor Alan Waters, leader of Norwich City Council, said: "Despite the tragic circumstances, I am very proud that our welcoming city is able to offer a safe haven for a small but significant number of people at risk of harm in their home country.

"This builds on the work our team has previously done to help resettle Syrian families. We want to ensure the very best support for those arriving in Norwich from Afghanistan."



If you have a whole property that could house an Afghan refugee family, please contact PSLT@norwich.gov.uk or call 01603 989444.

For more information on what you can do to help people resettling in our area, please visit Norfolk County Council's website.

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

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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