



THE ELDER



Autumn Newsletter 2015

Issue
10

1% Rent Reduction

The Government's plan for a 1% rent reduction was a topical issue at the recent tenant meetings, these changes are summarised below.

There was a government formula in place whereby social rents charged by housing associations would be increased annually by inflation plus 1%. It was, however, announced in the Government's July budget that this agreement was being scrapped and for four years from 1 April 2016 all housing associations, including Norwich Housing Society, will have to reduce rents by 1% each year. For example, this means that for a rent currently of £80 per week, this would fall over the next four years to £79.20, £78.41, £77.63 and £76.85 per week giving an average saving of £1.98 per week over this period. Individually this saving is very small but to the Society the cost is well over £500,000 compared to the original Government formula. We have reviewed our Business Plan and budgets and, compared with many other associations, we are

reasonably well placed to cope with this loss of income. However, it will undoubtedly have some effect as nearly 70% of the Society's income is spent on properties and services. We will be looking at both additional income streams and reviewing our costs to compensate for this shortfall.

- Mike Allen, Chief Executive

Do you ever make rent payments over the counter at a bank? If you do, please could you follow this up with a telephone call to the office. This will ensure your payment gets allocated to the correct rent account.

Local MP visits the Bracondale Office



Clive Lewis, MP for Norwich South (pictured fifth left), was invited to the office in Bracondale on 24 September to hear directly from Carol Sangster and Mike Allen, the Society's Chairman and Chief Executive respectively, board members and residents about how the government's policy towards housing associations was adversely affecting the Society to fulfil its ambitions. Clive left the meeting better informed about how smaller housing associations operate and the difficulties that may arise from a government policy of reducing regulated rental incomes.

- Mike Allen, Chief Executive

A little reminder.....

Please ensure your washing is removed from the machines promptly after completion of the washing / drying cycle – make a note of the time you start your washing. Only do your laundry when you know you will be around when the cycle ends to ensure others aren't waiting. If your washing has finished its cycle and you are not around, residents are permitted to remove the contents from the machine and place to one side. Please remember not to cramp the washing machine to 'full', leave space for your washing to 'wash'.

You could be entitled to an Attendance Allowance

You may be able to claim Attendance Allowance if your ability to keep safe or look after your own personal care is affected by physical or mental illness or disability.

Attendance Allowance has 2 weekly rates, and the rate you get depends on the help you need. You'll get:

- £55.10 if you need help in the day **or** at night
- £82.30 if you need help both in the day **and** at night

These rates apply from **April 2015 to April 2016**.

Claiming Attendance Allowance won't reduce any other income you receive, and it's tax-free. If you're awarded it, you may become entitled to other benefits, such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, or an increase in these benefits.

As we get older, many of us need a little extra help to look after ourselves, especially if we have a long-term illness or disability.

You could be eligible for Attendance Allowance if you:

- are 65 or over (if you're under 65, you may be eligible for Personal Independence Payment instead)

- could benefit from help with personal care, such as getting washed or dressed, or supervision to keep you safe during the day or night
- have any type of disability or illness, including sight or hearing impairments, or mental health issues such as dementia
- have needed help for at least 6 months. (If you're terminally ill you can make a claim straight away.)

Attendance Allowance isn't means-tested, so your income and savings aren't taken into account. You don't actually have to receive help from a carer, as Attendance Allowance is based on the help you need, not the help you actually get.

And you don't have to spend your Attendance Allowance on care – it's up to you how you use it. Attendance Allowance can help you to stay independent in your own home. So don't delay in making a claim if you think you could be eligible.

Attendance Allowance is awarded based on your needs, not just on your medical condition.

Many applications are turned down because people don't mention or aren't clear about how their illness or disability affects their lives. Don't underestimate your needs when filling in the form.

Think about all the things you can't do, or have trouble with, because of your condition. Don't leave things out, even if you feel you can manage well enough.

- Describe any accidents or falls you've had.
- Explain the effects of all your disabilities and health conditions, and how they interact with each other.
- List things that you struggle to do unaided, even if you've developed ways to cope. If an activity takes you much longer than it would somebody without a disability, or if it's difficult to do safely, this can be taken into account. Say if you need reminding or encouraging to do things, as this also counts as help.
- Focus on how frequently you need help. To qualify for the lower rate of Attendance Allowance, you have to show you need help 'frequently' during the day or at night. For example, if you need help looking after your appearance, this could add up to six or seven times a day, if you include help to check your clothes are clean after a meal, help to find a coat and matching shoes, and so on.
- Give plenty of information in your own words about your personal circumstances. Don't worry if you need to repeat yourself.

You can get a claim form by calling the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0845 605 6055** or **0345 605 6055** (textphone: **0845 604 5312**). You can also download a claim form or claim online.

Bear in mind that Attendance Allowance doesn't usually take into account problems with housework, cooking, shopping and gardening. If you mention problems with carrying out these activities, make sure you also include other problems as you're unlikely to receive support if this is the focus of your application.

You can call the local Age UK on 01603 787111, you can ask if they can help you fill in the form to increase your chances of being awarded Attendance Allowance.

If your application is turned down, ask an advice agency such as Age UK about whether you should challenge the decision.

Do you know that over 30% of pensioners entitled to pension credit do not claim it?

The Benefit Information Service is offering a free benefit health check so don't be nervous give them a call.

They will tell you what you could be claiming and the rest is up to you, you have nothing to lose so call them on 0330 6061463.

The Importance of using your Extractor Fans!

There are many reasons why **having extractor fans in your home are an important necessity.**

Bathroom Extractor Fan

The primary purpose for having an extractor fan is to remove the moisture out of the bathroom. These fans help to control and eliminate bathroom odours. Additionally, they add to the safety of the home and the residents by **reducing fumes from cleaning agents that could potentially cause health related issues.**

Reducing the humidity in a bathroom is vital for its upkeep. **Excessive moisture can wreak havoc on bathroom walls by causing paint and wallpaper to peel.** In extreme cases it can even cause doors to warp! Most importantly, the **humidity can cause mould to accumulate.** These spores can grow rapidly and can be difficult to get rid of. Therefore, it is crucial to use bathroom extractor fans to prevent this from happening.

Bathrooms are typically cleaned with aggressive chemicals, which can cause a variety of health issues when inhaled. This is a major concern especially for small children, the elderly, or those with current lung conditions. Additionally, if the bathroom is already experiencing a mould problem, the fan will help to remove the build-up of spores in the air. This in turn will also help to slow down the mould's growth rate. Most fans have an over run time – this is in place to assist in the process, once you have left the bathroom, please allow fans to run. Normally this is around 10-15 mins.

Kitchen Extractor Fan

The fundamental ground for a kitchen extractor fan, is extraction of air, smoke, steam and the smells in that air. Extractor fans provide this by pulling the old air out of the kitchen and allowing it to escape through exterior vents. This ensures that kitchens, which are often the hub of the home, don't end up steam and smoke filled areas. This makes the kitchen a more comfortable place for all, and can lead to an improved quality of life.

Kitchens are often filled with the grease, smoke and moisture of cooking. This unwanted produce of cooking can cause all sorts of problems for a home. Residue of smells and smoke often stick to walls, ceilings, carpets and furniture and can be difficult to get rid of, maybe even causing damage. Regular cleaning and upkeep can cost a lot of money. Extractor fans can remove these greasy pollutants and ensure things are working smoothly and that there are no problems with your possessions caused by your cooking.

In the summer especially, the kitchen can be a very warm and uncomfortable place to be. Extractor fans ease this burden and provide proper ventilation in the kitchen. They also remove the smoke caused by cooking, which can cause health issues. The products and particles of cooking cover your kitchen during cooking. In time these can cause problems for you if not removed. The extractor fan removes these pollutants immediately, ensuring they aren't left around the home and then may damage your health.

If you currently do not have a kitchen extractor fan fitted, it is advisable to open a window while cooking to allow some air changes to take place.

If you have an extractor fan – please ensure you use it!

Please let us know if your contact details change or you expect to be away from your home for a while.

There have been instances recently, where a resident has been admitted to hospital and we have only found out accidentally – we do care about our residents and like to know if there are problems.

Likewise, if you are planning an extended holiday, just let us or the office know so we don't worry.

The minutes from the recent tenant meetings can be found on the notice boards/laundry areas.

Gripe over.....good advice!
It is better to know about us but not need us, then to need us but not know about us.....

- Sue Closs, Scheme Manager

Heating – self help guide to individual central heating /hot water problems

Radiator problems?

Do you have a cold radiator, but your heating is on? Well, first check if just one or all radiators are not working. If you find that one radiator is faulty try to turn the radiator valves to maximum (turn the knob anti-clockwise). If this doesn't work you may have to bleed the radiator to remove trapped air.

You will need:

- a radiator bleed key - these can be bought from a DIY shop
- a dry cloth
- a cold central heating system (which ideally is turned off)

How to bleed a radiator

1. For safety, turn the central heating and hot water off on the timer/programmer.
2. Place the dry cloth under the radiator to catch any water that may come out.
3. Find the square bleed screw at the top of the radiator, at one of the ends.
4. Insert the bleed key and turn it slowly anti-clockwise (by no more than 2 turns as the screw shouldn't be removed completely) until you hear a hissing noise.
5. Wait until the hissing stops and you start to see small amounts of water coming from the bleed screw.
6. Retighten the screw but be careful not to over-tighten it.
7. Is your boiler a combination boiler? Check the pressure gauge on the front of the boiler. If it's below its normal setting, you'll need to add water to your boiler. See your boiler manual on how to do this.
8. Turn the heating on and the room thermostat up.

If this doesn't work please report this to the office on 01603 625078.

Leaking radiators?

To minimise any damage from a water leak, turn off the radiator valve at each end of the radiator - use a container to hold any water leaking - then call the office on 01603 625078.

No central heating or hot water?

There are numerous reasons why you may have lost your hot water and central heating.

Sometimes you can fix this yourself and avoid having to wait for an engineer.

1. Ensure gas, electric and water is on. Surprisingly this is often the fault.
2. Does your boiler have a pressure gauge? If so it should be set to approx. 1 bar.
3. Do you have a permanent pilot light? Check it is on.
4. Check the room thermostat and timer are on.
5. Set the heating to maximum and try to turn it on.
6. Have you had a power cut, as the timer may have reset itself.
7. Do you have a consumer-operated reset switch (not one that needs you to remove any casing)? Check your user manual, they are usually found on the front of the boiler.
8. Could your pipes be frozen?
9. Is your gas cooker or fire affected?
10. Try turning the electricity supply to the boiler on and off.

For sealed system boilers or combination boilers

This is a type of boiler that does not have a header tank, being a closed system.

Has the system pressure dropped? This can stop the system working properly.

Check the pressure gauge; this should be set at 1 bar. A red indicator needle sometimes shows where the pressure should be.

Look in your user manual to see if you can re-pressurise the boiler yourself - you can also find instructions on the rear of the control panel. But if your boiler panel needs tools to remove it, do NOT touch it, call the office on 01603 625078.

I have a leak on my central heating

1. Check where it is coming from in case it's not from the central heating (for instance, look at the seal around the bath or roof).

2. If it is the central heating that is leaking, turn off your heating and your cold water stop tap to limit the damage. Call the office on 01603 625078 to book an engineer.
3. If you have an open vented system with a header tank in the loft it can take a while to stop leaking. Don't worry if it doesn't stop immediately, it soon will.

Lanchester Court's Fright Night!



Residents at Lanchester Court enjoyed Maureen's lovely home made Pumpkin Soup, and Pumpkin Pie. The evening included a visit from Casper the Ghost, and Winnie the Witch. All agreed they were perfectly harmless and friendly, apart from two who fainted with fright!

- Roy Westgate, Resident at Lanchester Court

Have you had your flu jab yet?

We have it on good authority that the success rate makes it worth doing & new stocks have just arrived.

Reminder.....

**Eleanor Road Christmas Fayre Saturday 5th December at 2pm
Always good for a bargain!**

Wedding Celebrations

I got married this year, and on my last day at work as a 'Miss', the staff surprised me with a little get together at the Bracondale office to wish me luck for my special day. I had no idea it had been planned for me! It was a very relaxed and fairly un-traditional wedding. It was the hottest day of the year (it sure felt like it!), but thankfully it didn't put the guests off and everyone had a very good time!



From left to right, Carol Sangster, Chairman of the Board. Sarah Batchelor, Scheme Manager. Kelly Jackson, Administration Assistant. Andy Broom, Property Services Manager. Joanna Oakley, Administration Assistant. Fiona Steggall, Administration Officer. Sarah Tiffen, Administration Assistant. Kate Dickson, Finance Officer. Steve Gamble, Scheme Manager.

Great British Cake Off



Good fun was had at a 'Great British Cake Off' event held at Eleanor Road recently to raise money for the Macmillan Coffee morning.

Rather than just sell cakes we had all made, we spiced it up a bit with a competition 'loosely'

based on the TV programme. It was a huge amount of fun with not a soggy bottom in sight! Results were as follows:

Best Buns – Irene Young

Best Taste – Joanna from the office with a very yummy strawberry cheesecake

Worst Cake – Kathy Glanville who put salt in her buns instead of sugar!

Most cakes eaten award must go to Len Carver – who was never without a cake! Star Baker went to me, Sue Closs! It was all above board, honestly! It was a Mocha Marble Cake that stole the show! More importantly the morning raised £183.80 which was a very pleasing result.

- Sue Closs, Scheme Manager

Rotary Court's annual Halloween get together!



Rotary Court got into the `spirit` of the occasion on Halloween night, 11 residents got together and enjoyed the dressing up, a good quiz and ate hot dogs and loaded jacked potatoes.

- Sarah Batchelor, Scheme Manager

Does the mobile library visit your scheme?

“Use it or Lose it”

We've heard this service will cease if people don't use it. We urge you to take advantage of the mobile library, it would be such a shame if it became a thing of the past.

Competition Time!



These two entertainers are really keen on entering next years Britain's Got Talent! It's been their life long dream to perform in front of the Queen! But they are faced with one big problem.....they don't have an act yet! This is where we need your help. We would like you to suggest an act and a name for this duo that could take them all the way to the final! As you can see they are very flexible! Maybe some sort of dance act??

The resident who suggests the best idea for what this gruesome twosome can audition for and a name for them will win a £10.00 Marks and Spencer gift card. Please contact the office on 01603 625078

or email reception@norwichhousingsociety.co.uk. Only 1 suggestion permitted per resident. The winner will be decided by the office staff. Closing date is 5pm on 11th December 2015.

What would you like to see in the next newsletter?
If you have any stories, poems, jokes, interesting hobbies, recipes, holiday stories or if you would like to see anything else in the newsletter; we would love to hear from you, please get in touch on: 01603 625078 or email:
reception@norwichhousingsociety.co.uk

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