

OPEN DOOR

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2025



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Cameron, one of our housing allocations officers, visiting a property - see the update on housing allocations on page 3

The aim of this newsletter is to keep you informed about things that affect you and your property. This issue has been co-produced with involved tenants - we hope you find some useful information inside.

If you have a story that you want to share please email myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk or speak to your tenant involvement officer.

Do you need this newsletter in large print or a different language?

Please contact myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk

This newsletter is also available online at www.northyorks.gov.uk/tenantinvolvement

Welcome from Sarah, Tenant Involvement Manager



Welcome to the Spring edition of Open Door Magazine!

As the flowers bloom and the days grow longer, we're pleased to bring you the latest updates and important information from your landlord, North Yorkshire Council.

This newsletter has been created in collaboration with our Tenant Editorial Panel.

In this issue, there's an update on the improvements we are making mentioned in the last newsletter, and the results of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey that some of you took part in. We also look at how navigating the housing application process in the Harrogate area will get easier with the rollout of North Yorkshire Home Choice - see page 3 for more info.

Also, on this page, is some information about how our income management team can help with the move to Universal Credit for some tenants. We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter, and, as always, we welcome your feedback - see the back page for how to contact us.

Happy reading!

Sarah

Welcome Annette to the Team

A warm welcome to our new tenant involvement officer, Annette Mullaney. Annette brings lots of experience to the team from her previous role as a housing officer in the Selby area.



The income management team is here to help

The ongoing cost of living crisis is impacting many of you, and we understand how challenging it can be to manage your finances during these times. That's why our Income Management Team is here to offer support and guidance.

We know that the move to Universal Credit can feel overwhelming. The new system may seem complex, and you might have questions about how it will affect your finances and housing situation.

Our friendly advisors are available to discuss your situation and provide tailored advice.

If you are currently receiving Housing Benefit, the move to Universal Credit will bring some changes:

- You will receive a 'migration notice' from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), informing you that you need to apply for Universal Credit – usually within three months. It's important that you act promptly to avoid any disruption in your benefits
- You will need to apply for Universal Credit online or over the phone. If you need assistance, our team is here to help you
- Unlike Housing Benefit, which is often paid directly to your landlord, Universal Credit is paid directly to you every month. You will then be responsible for paying your rent to your landlord. This change may require some adjustment in managing your finances
- After submitting your Universal Credit claim, there is typically a five-week wait before you receive your first payment. It's important to plan your finances accordingly during this period



- You can use online benefits calculators to understand how moving to Universal Credit will impact your overall benefits. These tools can help you see if you are eligible for any top-up payments if you'll be worse off under Universal Credit.

SUCCESS STORY: SARAH'S JOURNEY

Sarah, a tenant, was unsure about how the new system would affect her finances and was worried about managing her rent payments. We provided her with support and guided her through the application process. We also helped signpost Sarah to the Benefits Maximisation Team here at North Yorkshire Council. They help residents to maximise their income by ensuring they receive all the financial support they are entitled to. They can also offer guidance on managing money and debt. With our support, Sarah successfully navigated the move to Universal Credit. She now feels more confident and informed about her finances and can manage her rent payments.

Changes to how social housing is allocated in 2025

In the December edition of Open Door, we told you about some changes to how social and affordable housing will be allocated across North Yorkshire.

Our new allocations policy is in place, and we now operate a single housing register for the whole of the North Yorkshire Council area. These changes will offer a more streamlined, consistent, and transparent approach for applicants, and will introduce choice-based lettings to the Harrogate area. Choice-based lettings empowers applicants to have more control over where they live, as they can choose from a list of available properties across North Yorkshire that are advertised on a weekly basis, with properties offered to those who have the highest housing need.

From 2 April 2025, all applicants currently registered with Harrogate, who still wish to be considered for re-housing, will now need to submit a new housing application online at www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk

Commonly asked questions, and further information about the North Yorkshire Home Choice partnership and how to apply for housing, can also be found here.

We will be on hand to support anyone who needs help with the new system and believe that these changes will be beneficial for everyone. Please be patient at this busy time with regards to your housing application, and any enquiries you have, as it may take us a little longer than normal to respond to you.

Housing improvement update

In the last issue of Open Door, Andrew, the Assistant Director for Housing, explained our improvement journey following our C3 regulatory judgement from the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). The C3 judgement means that we need to make significant improvements. We referred ourselves to them last year after carrying out a self-assessment of our services. We are meeting with the regulator every month and updating them on our progress against our Housing Improvement Plan (HIP). The HIP is the document that we use to track our improvement journey against the seven issues that were flagged by the RSH - it shows the actions we need to take to improve in each area, and the target date to complete the actions. The improvement plan will be on the North Yorkshire Council website soon and we will also give you regular updates in this newsletter. We are also doing quarterly telephone surveys with tenants selected at random - these give us really valuable insights into how you are feeling, what you are happy with and what needs to improve.

See below for the results of the December 2024 survey.

Telephone surveys - what you told us

As we explained in the last issue of Open Door, the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are part of a new system which helps tenants to see how the council is performing as your landlord, and enable you to hold us to account.

The TSMs also help the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) to see which landlords need to make improvements. Some of you will have received a phone call late last year asking you to take part in a survey.

The good news is, some of you told us you appreciate the prompt and efficient repairs, polite and helpful staff, good living conditions, support for specific needs, and overall satisfaction with

your living situation, citing good service, a sense of security, and a pleasant living environment. However, some tenants report long waits for repairs, poor quality of maintenance, communication problems with the housing service, issues with living conditions such as damp and inefficient heating, lack of necessary adaptations for tenants with disabilities, ongoing neighbour problems, and a general sense of frustration and neglect.

We are very aware of these issues and our housing improvement plan is the framework for helping us to address them - there is a lot of work to do but we are listening.

Stay safe: How to recognise and avoid scams

This is the first of our three part series on how to recognise, avoid and watch out for scams. Part one is about recognising scams.

It's important to stay vigilant against scams that can target anyone. Scammers are becoming increasingly sophisticated, but with a few simple steps, you can protect yourself from falling victim to their tricks.

1. **Unexpected contact:** Be wary of unsolicited phone calls, emails, or letters. Scammers often pose as representatives from banks, government agencies, or well-known companies. If you receive unexpected communication asking for personal information or money, it's likely to be a scam.
2. **Too good to be true:** If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. Be cautious of promises of large sums of money, free holidays, or other rewards. Scammers use these tactics to lure you in.
3. **Urgency and pressure:** Scammers often create a sense of urgency to make you act quickly without thinking. They might claim your bank account is at risk or that you owe money to the government. Take your time and verify the information before taking any action.



4. **Requests for personal information:** Legitimate organisations will never ask for sensitive information like your bank details, passwords, or PINs via email or over the phone. If someone asks for this information, it's a red flag.

Staying informed and cautious is the best way to protect yourself from scams. Remember, it's okay to be sceptical and take your time to verify information. By following these tips, you can stay safe and enjoy peace of mind.

A friendly reminder: check your smoke alarms regularly

Your safety is our top priority. Ensuring your smoke alarms are in good working order is one of the simplest yet most effective ways to protect yourself and your loved ones. Smoke alarms provide early warnings in the event of a fire, giving you precious time to escape safely.

Why check your smoke alarms?

Smoke alarms can save lives, but only if they are functioning properly. Regular checks ensure they will work when you need them most.

How to check your smoke alarms

Test monthly: Press the test button once a month to ensure it is working. You should hear a loud beep.

Replace batteries: If your smoke alarm uses batteries, replace them at least once a year or whenever you hear a low battery warning chirp.

Clean regularly: Dust and debris can interfere with your smoke alarm's operation. Gently vacuum around the alarm's vents every few months.



Replace units: Smoke alarms have a lifespan of about 10 years. Check the manufacture date and replace it if it is older than 10 years.

What to do if your alarm sounds

Stay calm: Do not panic.

Check for fire: Look for signs of smoke or fire.

Evacuate: If there is a fire, leave your home immediately and call 999.

False alarm: If there is no fire, reset your alarm and investigate the cause.

Regularly checking your smoke alarms is a simple task that can make a big difference in your safety. Please take a few minutes each month to ensure your alarms are working properly. Your vigilance can help prevent tragedies and keep you safe.

Our new domestic heating servicing, repairs, and maintenance contractor.

We are pleased to introduce Sureserve Compliance as the company who will provide all your domestic heating appliance servicing, repairs and maintenance. They will also be responsible for testing and maintaining your carbon monoxide, smoke, and heat alarms, ensuring your home remains safe and compliant.

Your safety is our priority

This partnership ensures we continue to meet the latest health and safety standards, providing you with reliable and professional servicing.

What does this mean for you?

- Our contact number remains the same – see the back page
- Your servicing appointment letters will now display the name Sureserve Compliance
- All engineers carry Gas Safe ID cards with the Sureserve Compliance or Gas Call logo. Engineers will only visit your home if they have an appointment. If in doubt, call the number on the back page of this newsletter
- During the transition, some engineers and vehicles may still have old logos for 'Sure Maintenance' and 'Gas Call'. These will be updated in the coming months.

To maintain the highest Gas Safe standards, an independent auditing company, Morgan Lambert, will inspect the heating systems in a number of properties each month. If your home is selected for an audit, please allow their engineers access – they are there to ensure our servicing requirements remain at the highest standard.

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Introducing the new Repairs Standard

From March 31st 2025 we've changed the way we deal with repairs. We have invested in a new repairs management system which will improve the way repair requests are logged and managed across all areas. We are also launching a new 'Repairs Standard' ensuring that all tenants across North Yorkshire can expect to receive the same level of service. The North Yorkshire Council Repairs Standard replaces the previous repairs policies that were in place across Harrogate, Selby and Richmondshire.

The new Repairs Standard is based on the following priorities:

Priority 1 – Emergency – response within **2-4 hours, and made safe within 24-hour time frame.**

Problems that put someone's safety, security, or health at immediate risk – for example, no heating or hot water, burst pipes or dangerous electrical fittings.

Priority 2 – Urgent – response within **72 hours.** Not an emergency but a repair that needs to be done quickly to prevent more damage to the home or risk to tenants (for example, loose handrail, blocked sink/basin, partial loss of electricity or water)

Priority 3 – Response within **7 calendar days.** Repairs which pose a moderate risk to tenant safety (for example, missing roof tiles, faulty



extractor fan); or work which has been identified following a survey.

Priority 4 - Response within **28 calendar days** (i.e. plaster work, joinery work to windows/doors, rainwater goods, general surveyor inspection) A tenant handbook is also being developed as a guide, to assist you with identifying where a repair is required, how to deal with some repairs before an operative can get to you and how to report a repair to us.

Details of how to tell us about a repair are on the back cover.

The Coultish Centre, Selby

Our regular look at some hidden gems in our communities around the county - this month we're in Selby.

You'll get a warm welcome at this lovely community centre on Charles Street, just off Flaxley Road in Selby. The Coultish Centre has convenient parking and is regularly attended by locals who enjoy the variety of activities and events on offer. Regular day trips and coach holidays are organised, providing opportunities for socialising and exploring new places.

Follow us on Facebook - search 'Coultish Centre'.



Here are some of the activities you can join:

- **Monday Luncheon:** Enjoy a 2-course luncheon with tea or coffee for just £5.50, along with free bingo and a quiz. (10:30am - 1:30pm)
- **Monday Bingo:** Join in the fun from 5:30pm to 8:00pm.
- **Thursday Breakfast Café and Chat:** A perfect way to start your day, from 10:30am to 12:30pm.
- **Thursday Arts and Crafts:** Get creative from 1:00pm to 3:30pm for only £3.00.
- **Thursday Bingo:** Another chance to play bingo from 5:30pm to 8:00pm.

We also organise various day trips and events, making it a great place to make friends and have a chat. Pop along and join in the fun!

Photos courtesy of Jacqui at the Coultish Centre



Finding trusted and reliable tradespeople

Finding trustworthy tradespeople for jobs like decorating and gardening can be a daunting task. Here are some tips to help you find reliable professionals:

1. Start by asking friends, family, and neighbours for recommendations. Personal referrals are often the most reliable way to find good tradespeople.
2. Websites like Trustpilot, Checkatrade, and Google Reviews can provide valuable insights into the quality of a tradesperson's work. Look for consistently positive feedback and detailed reviews.
3. Ensure the tradesperson has the necessary qualifications and insurance. Membership of professional bodies, such as the Federation of Master Builders or the Guild of Master Craftsmen, can also be a good indicator of reliability.
4. Obtain at least three quotes for the job. This not only helps you compare prices but also gives you a sense of the tradesperson's professionalism and approach.
5. A reputable tradesperson should be able to provide references from previous clients. Contact these references to ask about their experience and satisfaction with the work.
6. Pay attention to your gut feeling when meeting a tradesperson. If something feels off, it's better to keep looking.

We hope these tips help with finding reliable tradespeople to help with your odd jobs.

Support for people affected by domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can take many forms and is not always physical. A partner or family member who wants to control you can cause serious emotional or psychological harm and be a risk to you and any children. Abuse can be physical, emotional, financial, or sexual and can impact anyone.

The council believes everyone has the right to live free from fear of abuse or violence. We work with IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Services), the leading specialist domestic abuse charity in Yorkshire, which works closely with communities to ensure support is available.

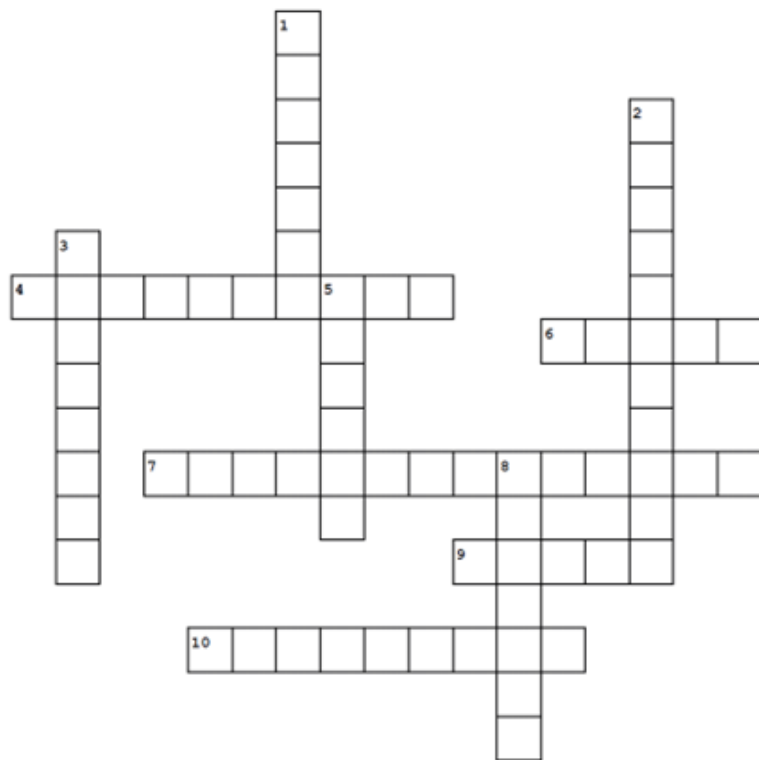
If you are concerned about your own relationship or for a friend or family member, you can contact IDAS directly. They provide non-judgemental advice and support. You can contact them via their live chat from 1pm to 4pm each day, phone the helpline **03000 110 110**, email **info@idas.org.uk** or go to their website.

You can also contact the council or visit our website for more information and support.



Spring crossword free prize draw

Get your thinking cap on and do our Spring crossword to be in with a chance of winning some easter goodies. To enter, take a picture of your completed cross word and email it to myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk or fill in your details below, cut out the crossword and the coupon and send them in an envelope to: **Freepost Plus RTKB-GCTZ-JRSR, Document Management Service, North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Racecourse Lane, Northallerton, DL7 8AL.** You don't need to use a stamp. Deadline for entries: **30 April 2025.** You will be entered into a prize draw to win one of three chocolate Easter treats.



ACROSS

4. Produced by the hawthorn each spring
6. The first month of Spring
7. The annual tidy up!
9. Plant these to create something beautiful
10. Outdoor labour with good results

DOWN

1. A bit of a regular dampener for April
2. Colourful insects
3. A flower associated with springtime
5. When hibernation ends
8. When day and night are of equal length

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Thank you to Teresa, one of our involved tenants for making this crossword.

Look out for the answers in our next edition.

Privacy Notice: North Yorkshire Council is a 'Data Controller' as defined by Article 4(7) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). We are collecting information for entry into a short term competition to win one of 3 easter prizes. By submitting your contact details alongside your crossword, you are providing consent under ***GDPR Article 6(1)(a) Consent*** to be contacted by North Yorkshire Council if you have won the competition. We will retain the information collected for one month after the closing date. If you would like to withdraw consent please contact: My Housing Voice, North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AL by email to myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk. If you would like to contact the Council's Data Protection Officer, Veritau, the email address is Infogov@northyorks.gov.uk. For more information about how the Council uses your data, including your privacy rights and the complaints process, please see North Yorkshire Councils main website for the Corporate Privacy Notice: www.northyorks.gov.uk/privacy-notices

Easter recipe

Easter Biscuits by Evelyn

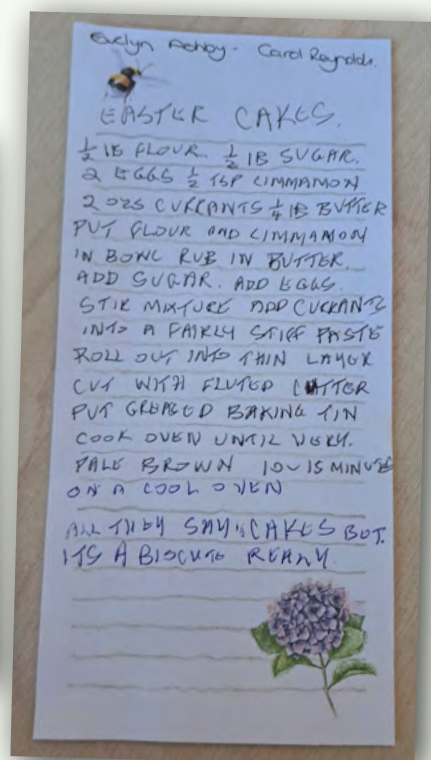
Here is an easy recipe to try from Evelyn, one of our tenants in the Selby area, which you will see she has kindly written out by hand – thank you Evelyn!

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 lb flour	2 eggs
1/2 lb sugar	2 oz currents
1/2 tsp cinnamon	1/4 lb butter

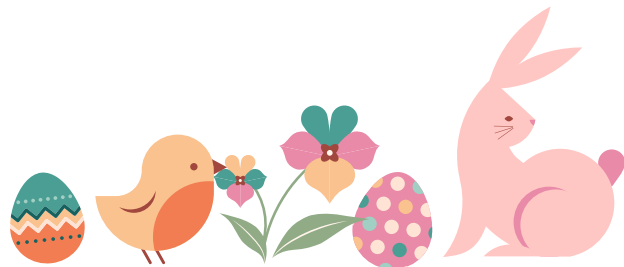
METHOD:

Put flour and cinnamon in a bowl and rub in butter. Add sugar. Add beaten eggs. Stir mixture, add currants. Stir into a fairly stiff paste. Roll out into a thin layer. Cut with fluted cutter. Put into a greased baking tin. Cook in oven until very pale brown – 10-15 mins in a cool oven – enjoy!



How to...

...report a repair



Before you report a repair make sure that you have:

- Checked if the repair is your responsibility or the council's responsibility
- Gathered as much information as you can about the repair.

You can report repairs to us in the following ways:

Online by completing a **'report a repair'** E form and where possible including a photograph of the issue.
By phoning our repairs line on **0300 131 2 131** (please say housing faults when prompted). If your repair is an out of hours emergency, then please phone **0300 131 2 131** (please say housing faults when prompted).
If you smell gas call the National Gas Network immediately on **0800 111 999** (minicom 0800 5875055).

When you report a repair, we will need the following details:

- The type of the repair, including details and the location of the item that needs repairing
- Your full name, address and postcode
- A contact phone number.

After the repair is reported, we will:

- Confirm if the repair is our responsibility
- Record the details of your repair
- Inform you of the date of the appointment
- Tell you if the work will be done by the council or the name of the contractor if the work is to be done by one of the council's contracting services
- We may need to inspect the problem first before carrying out the repair.

After the work is completed we may inspect the work in person or discuss it over the phone.

...get in touch

Online: **[northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us](https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us)**

By telephone: **0300 131 2 131** (please say 'housing' when prompted)

North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton,
North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD

You can request this information in another language or format by emailing **myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk**

You can make sure your voice is heard and take part in North Yorkshire Council consultations at **www.northyorks.gov.uk/consultations**

WE'RE RECRUITING!

The housing service is recruiting for a number of job roles - more details are on the North Yorkshire Council website here **www.northyorks.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers** or scan the QR code with the camera on your phone.

Please have a look and tell anyone who might be interested.



...make a complaint

You can make a complaint or leave a compliment on the North Yorkshire Council website at: **www.northyorks.gov.uk/complaints**



Please recycle this newsletter when you have finished reading it.

Would you be happy to get this update on email?

Let us know by emailing **myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk**

