

OPEN DOOR

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2026



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A community clean-up that made a real difference

In July, tenants, council staff, local charities and the police came together for a community clean-up day in Harrogate. The event took place during Anti-social Behaviour Awareness Week. It was a chance to listen to tenants, offer advice and support, and help people feel proud of where they live. Two skips were provided so tenants could get rid of large items they no longer needed. Council teams were joined by Connected Spaces, NY Horizons, Red Rose Recovery, Reawakening North Yorkshire and North Yorkshire Police. For one tenant, the day made a big difference. After staff helped clear bulky items from her garden, she said:

“ I appreciate this so much. I suffer with depression and it's been getting me down. I feel like a weight has been lifted. ”

Small changes can make a big difference to how people feel about their home and their area. Thank you to everyone who came along, used the skips, helped with the litter pick or spoke to us about life in your community. We really value hearing from tenants about what's important in their neighbourhoods and welcome ideas for future community initiatives - please email myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk

You can read more about anti-social behaviour and how to report it at northyorks.gov.uk/ASBSupportForTenants

Do you need this newsletter in large print or another language?

Please contact myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk

Welcome from the tenant editorial panel

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Open Door from your tenant editorial panel.

In this issue, you can read updates from the housing service, including getting your home ready for winter. Look out for the Autumn recipe and crossword too.

With this newsletter, you will also find the 2025-26 Annual Report - this tells you how the housing service performed in the last financial year and also explains how your rent was spent. We hope this helps you see what has been done, what has improved, and where more work is needed.

If you have an idea for a future story, or something you think tenants should know about, please get in touch. Your views help make this newsletter better.

Best wishes

The Tenant Editorial Panel

Hello from Craig, the new Head of Housing

Following Andrew Rowe's retirement in July, we'd like to wish him all the best and thank him for all his work on improving things for tenants.

A warm welcome to Craig Simpson who is joining North Yorkshire Council as the new Assistant Director for Housing.

Craig said:

"I am pleased to be joining North Yorkshire Council, and I wanted to introduce myself.

I am joining from Leeds City Council where I led a large programme to improve council homes. I also managed Leeds Building Services, where around 600 staff looked after homes and council buildings.

I started my working life as a gas engineer with British Gas. Since then, I have worked in housing repairs, building services and council housing. Starting on the front line helped me understand how important it is to listen to staff and tenants.

I am a Yorkshireman and already feel a strong link to North Yorkshire. At weekends, I enjoy walking in the Yorkshire Dales or the North York Moors with my family and our dog.

During the recruitment process, I was pleased to meet panel members and hear from tenants. I am looking forward to building on those early conversations.

My first job will be to listen and learn. I want to meet teams across the county, hear what is working well and understand what could be better. I believe good housing services start with understanding what tenants need and supporting the people who provide those services every day."

If you have a question for Craig, please email myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk - we'll include answers to your questions in the next issue.



The aim of this newsletter is to tell you about things that affect you and your home.

It was made together with the tenant editorial panel - we hope you find it interesting!

If you have a story you'd like us to tell email myhousingvoice@northyorks.gov.uk

Tenant Satisfaction Measures – April to June 2026

From April to June 2026, we asked tenants what they thought about our housing service. Overall, more tenants were happy with the service than before. Satisfaction has gone up by three percentage points since the last survey to 75%.

The biggest drop was in how happy tenants are with shared outdoor areas. Satisfaction went down from 76% to 48%. Some tenants told us that grass cutting, parking areas, outside lights and hedges are not being looked after well enough. Some also said there are not enough bins or street cleaning in their area. We know this is a big drop, so we are looking into it. The Parks and Countryside team who deliver part of the service that looks after outdoor areas said:

"The warm and wet weather earlier this year created ideal growing conditions and resulted in some challenges in maintaining grass cutting schedules across the county. We recognise this affected standards in some locations, and our teams have worked hard to catch up. Services are now back on track. Looking ahead, a new Service Level Agreement is being prepared that will provide greater clarity on service standards, priorities and expectations, helping us to deliver a more consistent service for tenants in the future."

Check your heating and alarms now

Please turn your heating on now, before the cold weather arrives to help you check it is working properly. Make sure your radiators feel warm at the top and bottom. Keeping your home warm also helps prevent damp and mould. Find out more at northyorks.gov.uk/housingdamp

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms can save lives. Please test them once a month by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds. If an alarm does not make a sound, keeps beeping, is broken, or is missing, please tell us straight away.

Do not remove the alarm or take out the batteries. If there is a fire, get out, stay out and call **999**. If your carbon monoxide alarm goes off, open the windows, leave the room and call the **National Gas Emergency Service** on **0800 111 999**.

You can report problems with your heating, or faulty or missing alarms, using the 'report a repair' details on the back page of this newsletter.

Keeping your home safe: electrical checks

We need to check the electrics in your home at least every five years. This helps keep you, your family and your neighbours safe. The check looks at things like wiring, sockets, lights and the fuse box. When your home is due for a check, we will send you a letter. Please read it and let the electrician in at the agreed time. They may need to turn the power off for a short time. If any work is needed, we will arrange it. You will get a certificate afterwards, by post or email - please keep it safe.

Don't miss your chance to have your say

We are checking that the electoral register is correct. This happens every year and we have to do it by law. If you have had a letter or email from the council, please reply as soon as you can, even if nothing has changed.

It's quick and easy to reply - please follow the instructions in your letter or email. If you haven't received a letter or an email, please contact elections@northyorks.gov.uk

Compensation, repair recharges and contents insurance: what's the difference?

If something goes wrong in your home, it can be worrying. You may hear words like **compensation**, **repair recharge** and **contents insurance**. They sound similar, but they mean different things.

Compensation is money we may pay you if we have not given you the service we should have. For example, if a repair took too long, poor work caused extra trouble, or you had costs because something was not put right sooner. Compensation is not automatic. We look at each case individually. Report repairs as soon as you notice a problem. Keep photos, receipts and repair reference numbers.

A **repair recharge** is money you may need to pay the council. This can happen if a repair is needed because of damage caused by you, someone in your household, or a visitor. We do not charge for normal wear and tear, which means things wearing out through everyday use.

Contents insurance protects the things you own. We insure the building, including the walls, roof and structure, but this usually does not cover your furniture, carpets, clothes, electrical items or other personal belongings.

Think about how much it would cost to replace your belongings after a fire, flood, leak or theft. For many people, this would be expensive. Contents insurance can help with these costs, depending on the policy you choose.

Did you know?

Making a complaint and making an insurance claim are not the same thing. If your furniture, carpets, clothes or other belongings are damaged, you would usually contact your contents insurance company first.

Making a complaint does not automatically mean you will receive compensation. We will investigate what happened and decide whether we made a mistake or provided a poor service.

Which one applies?

"My boiler leaked and damaged my TV."

This would usually be a contents insurance claim because it involves damage to your belongings.

"My child made a hole in the wall with a toy."

You may be charged for the repair through a repair recharge because the damage was not caused by normal wear and tear.

"I took a day off work for a repair appointment, but nobody arrived."

If we find there was a service failure, this may be considered under our compensation policy.



Think about contents insurance now

Contents insurance can help protect the things that make your home yours. You can choose a policy that's right for you - the council recommends a home insurance policy for tenants from Intact (who used to be called RSA), or you can shop around. It can give peace of mind by helping to cover the cost of replacing belongings like carpets, clothes, furniture, TVs, phones or freezer food if they are damaged by fire, theft, flood or a water leak. Do not wait until something goes wrong — it is best to think about contents insurance now, before you need to make a claim.

You can get a quote from Intact here

northyorks.gov.uk/home-insurance-council-tenants or call 0345 671 8172.

It starts at 45p per week, £1.47 per month or £15.65 for 12 months cover.

Help when life gets difficult

Tenant editorial panel member Barbara spoke to Will, one of our team of four Tenancy Support Officers who work across the county. Read on to find out what they do and how tenants can get help when they need it.

How do Tenancy Support Officers support tenants?

My job is to help tenants keep their tenancy on track when life gets hard.

This could mean helping someone who is worried about money, feels overwhelmed, finds it hard to look after their home, or needs help to get the right support.

I also work with Housing Officers, council teams and other organisations, so tenants do not have to deal with everything on their own.

Can you tell us about a positive change you have made for a tenant?

I recently helped a tenant who was struggling to look after themselves and their home. They felt overwhelmed by everyday life, and there were concerns about their wellbeing.

I worked with other professionals and helped put more support in place.

That is often what tenancy support is about. It may be helping someone contact a service, sorting out a problem at home, or helping them take the first step when they do not know where to start.

What is it like being a Tenancy Support Officer?

I enjoy it because no two days are the same. It is a job about trust, problem solving and teamwork. The most rewarding part is seeing a tenant make progress and keep their home.

How can tenants ask for support?

The easiest way is to speak to your Housing Officer. They can refer you to a Tenancy Support Officer if they think extra help would be useful.

Please do not wait until a problem becomes a crisis. If something is worrying you, ask for help early. No problem is too small for a conversation. We are here to help.



Your neighbourhood, looking its best

We listened to your feedback earlier this year about the Grounds Maintenance Policy. At the time of writing this newsletter, the policy was due to go to Cllr Simon Myers for his decision in August. The policy will be published on our website in due course, and this will include details of the maintenance schedules.

Why don't we collect grass cuttings?

Some of you have asked why we leave the grass cuttings on the ground after cutting. This helps the grass stay healthy. The cuttings break down quickly and feed the soil. It also means we can cut more areas in the same amount time, so your green spaces are looked after more often.

Collecting grass would take longer, cost more money, and use more fuel. Leaving the cuttings is better for the environment and helps keep costs down.

Your garden responsibilities

If your garden borders a path, please make sure your hedges and bushes don't grow over or block it. This is part of your tenancy agreement and helps keep paths safe for everyone.



Competition winners and gardening stars!

A big thank you to everyone who entered our Summer Gardening Competition.

The dry weather certainly gave our gardeners an extra challenge, but you still managed to grow some fantastic displays! Entries are now closed and judging will take place in September. We'll contact the finalists, and reveal the winners in our winter edition.

Congratulations to Delilah, Daniel and Marnie, the three lucky winners of our Summer Fun Colouring Competition. Each winner received a £10 shopping voucher — well done!



Celebrating Gene's 101st birthday

There were smiles all round when residents at Queens Court in Richmond came together to celebrate a very special birthday for Gene Blackley, who turned 101 on 15 June.

A party was held for Gene in the communal lounge at her independent living scheme. Friends and neighbours joined her to wish her a happy birthday and enjoy the celebration together.

The Mayor, Councillor Clive World, and Mayoress Niki Rutland also came along to mark the big day. They presented Gene with a lovely bouquet of flowers.

Gene is a much-loved member of the scheme. She takes part in the coffee morning every Wednesday and enjoys the sit-down exercise class every Friday. She also loves the fish and chip nights and Chinese food nights.

Independent living gives tenants like Gene the chance to have their own home, while also being part of a friendly community. There are people nearby to chat to, activities to join in with, and shared spaces where neighbours can come together.

At 101, Gene is still enjoying life, keeping active and making the most of each week. Her birthday was a wonderful reminder that age does not have to stop you from joining in, making friends and living life to the full.



Summer crossword answers:

Across

- (2) Scuba
- (3) Humid
- (5) Sunscreen
- (11) Fireworks
- (13) Crab
- (14) Sandals
- (15) Sandcastle
- (16) Ice

Down

- (1) Beach
- (4) Mosquito
- (6) Sunglasses
- (7) Icicle
- (8) Summer
- (9) Pool
- (10) Picnic
- (12) Vacation

Autumn recipe

Salmon or tuna egg pie

Ingredients

- 1 large tin of salmon or tuna
- Half a tablespoon of butter
- 2 tablespoons of flour
- 1 cup of milk
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- ½ teaspoon of mustard (optional)
- 2 tablespoon grated cheese
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups of mashed potato

Method

Open salmon or tuna and drain off the liquid (keep the liquid)

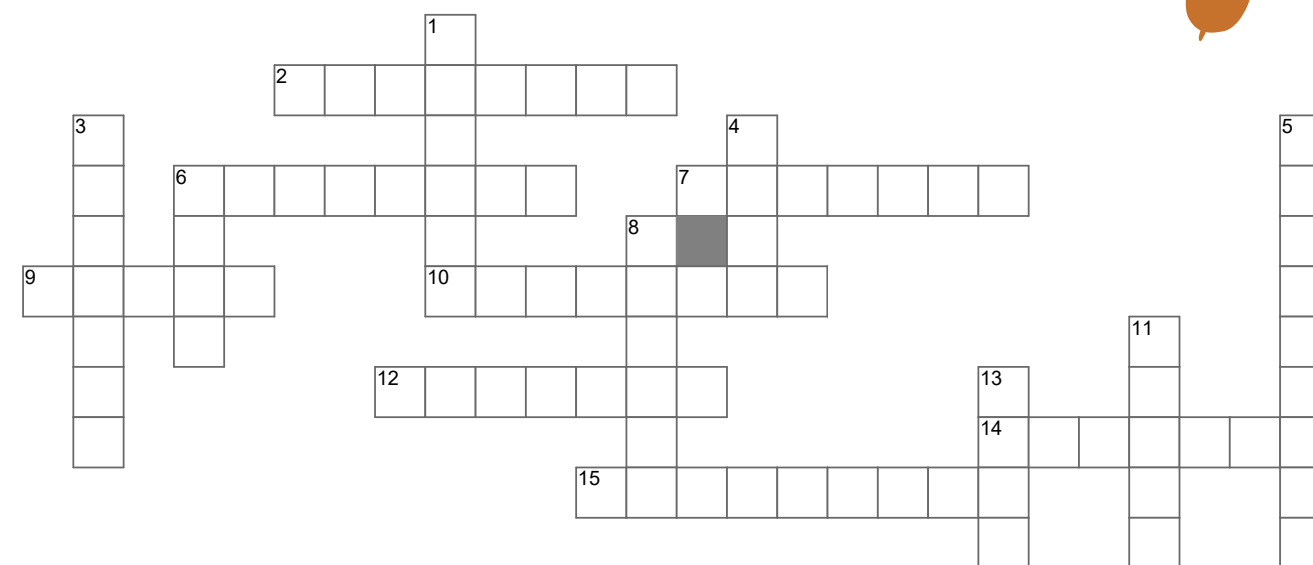
1. Break up fish roughly and place in a greased casserole dish

2. In a saucepan melt butter and stir in flour gradually then add the milk
3. Cook for 2/3 mins continuing to stir
4. Add drained liquid from the tinned fish, the cheese and seasoning
5. Stir in vinegar
6. Add the beaten eggs
7. Beat well and pour over the fish in the casserole dish
8. Cover with creamy mashed pot and rough up with a fork
9. Place in oven until potatoes are brown (about 30 mins)

Eat hot or cold.



Autumn fun crossword



ACROSS

2. Last month of Autumn
6. An organised day or period of celebration.
7. The process or period of gathering in crops.
9. A variety of this fruit is marketed as "Autumn Glory"
10. Likes to store and eat nuts
12. Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter are the four
14. Another Autumn month
15. First month of Autumn

DOWN

1. What falls from a tree in Autumn.
3. You can use it to make a pie or for carving
4. You can gather fallen leaves with this
5. Used to scare the crows from fields
6. Another name for Autumn (American)
8. Autumn leaves colour
11. Fruit of the oak tree
13. Grain that grows in stalks

How to...

...get in touch

northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us

By telephone: **0300 131 2 131** (please say **'tenant newsletter'** 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

Make sure your voice is heard by taking part in North Yorkshire Council consultations at northyorks.gov.uk/consultations



Please recycle this newsletter when you have finished reading it.

Follow us on
social media
[@northyorksc](https://northyorksc)

...make a complaint

By telephone – call our Customer Service Team on **0300 131 2 131** (please say **'tenant complaint'** when prompted).

Online here northyorks.gov.uk/complaints

In writing: North Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Northallerton North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD

In person: to North Yorkshire Council housing staff

Or, with your permission, via a third party/representative.

For free impartial advice you can contact the Housing Ombudsman, housing-ombudsman.org.uk or call **0300 111 3000**

Beware of 'No Win, No Fee' disrepair claims.

Individuals may pressure you to sign legal papers without explaining risks. Please report any repairs or make a complaint directly to us.

...report repairs or damp and mould

Online: northyorks.gov.uk/housingrepair

Do not use the online form to report an emergency repair.

By telephone: **0300 131 2 131**. Please say **'Housing repairs'** when prompted.

Before you report a repair, please check that is it the council's responsibility and gather as much information as you can about it.

If you are reporting an emergency repair outside normal office hours, and during weekends and bank holidays you should use the same contact telephone number;

0300 131 2 131, which will connect you to the emergency repair call handling team.

Go to northyorks.gov.uk/outofhours for more information.

If you smell gas call the National Gas Network immediately on 0800 111 999 (minicom 0800 5875055).

If you have problems with damp and/or mould go to northyorks.gov.uk/housingdamp or phone **0300 131 2 131** and say **'damp, mould and condensation'** when prompted.

Would you be happy to get this newsletter on email?

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

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

If you're experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone - North Yorkshire Council can help with emergency accommodation, longer-term housing options, and referrals to specialist support services. Visit northyorks.gov.uk/housing-domestic-abuse for confidential advice and support.