

# t1c

Tenants' and leaseholders'  
community magazine



**NORWICH**  
City Council

**Summer 2015**

**ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARDS 2015**

**FINALIST**



**Tenant approved**



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# Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris

## Welcome to the summer edition of *t/c* magazine

Councillor Gail Harris, Norwich City Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and wellbeing.

Firstly, I'd like to introduce myself as your new cabinet member for housing and wellbeing. My name is Gail Harris. I was elected as a council representative for Catton Grove Ward in 2012 and have spent the last year serving as the cabinet member for customer services.

I would like to thank Councillor Bert Bremner for all his hard work during his time as cabinet member for housing and feel the improved STAR results displayed overleaf are testament to his efforts. I believe there is still more work to be done and look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the coming year, to find out where you feel we can improve further.

If you would like to be more involved in directly shaping the council services you receive, our tenant training programme is a great way of doing so. You will learn new skills and gain confidence, while expanding your knowledge of the council at the same time, and who knows where it could lead?

Patch panels are a less formal way to be involved but still enable you to make a real difference to where you live and help to improve your neighbourhood.

If you have a neighbour that you would like to be recognised for the good work they already do in your community, then please don't forget to enter

them into this year's good neighbour competition.

The introduction of Universal Credit will bring about big changes to the benefit system over the next 12 months. Extra help is available to get online and take better control of your finances to ensure you're ready for the changes.

Finally, I'm delighted to see all of the energy efficiency improvements we're making to your homes and look forward to us building new homes to the highest possible environmental standards in the future.

Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy this issue of *t/c*.

## How are we doing?

To see how our housing service is performing, check out the latest scorecard in the housing section of our website: [www.norwich.gov.uk](http://www.norwich.gov.uk) or call **0344 980 3333** to request a copy.



If you would like this information in another language or format such as large print or CD, please phone **0344 980 3333** or email [info@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:info@norwich.gov.uk).

Cover image: Good neighbours Miriam Bowgen and John Tilney.

Follow us



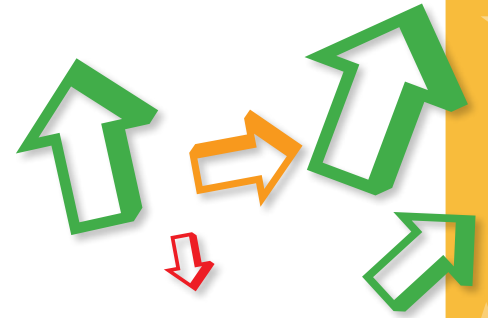
@NorwichCC  
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Norwich City Council events

# STAR results show great improvement

Thank you to everyone who took part in the STAR (Survey of Tenants And Residents) earlier this year. The survey measures your satisfaction across key areas of our performance and we're delighted to see that you feel we've improved.



We appointed independent market research company Wyman Dillon to carry out the survey on our behalf.

As part of their work, from January to March of this year, the company called a cross-section of tenants to gauge views.

Some 975 tenants answered seven questions relating to their customer satisfaction within specific areas of our housing services.

We can now reveal the results, which show some fantastic improvements compared with the last survey in 2012.

We've improved in six out of seven key areas, making sizeable percentage increases in many, including an 11 percentage point increase in your overall satisfaction with the housing services in general.

Using the same STAR questions as other social housing landlords enables us to also

compare our performance against similar organisations.

At the time of our submission we were one of 13 local authorities taking part in the survey who manage 10,000 homes or more. Out of this group we have been placed joint third in terms of our score for overall tenant satisfaction, which is another great achievement.

The city council's head of housing, Tracy John, said: "I'm delighted with these results and feel the increase in tenants' overall satisfaction shows that the hard work of our staff and business partners is making a real difference across all aspects of the services that tenants receive.

"We're currently performing well compared to our peers, which shows the work we have undertaken to assist tenants to maintain tenancies in the face of welfare reform, improve their homes and neighbourhoods and offer value for money services, is having a real impact.

"It's important we don't stand still and continue to work with our tenants to deliver continuous improvements to housing services."

## STAR RESULTS COMPARISON TABLE

Question	2012	2015	Change
Overall satisfaction with the housing service	71%	82%	↑
Satisfaction with the overall quality of your home	73%	77%	↑
Satisfaction with your neighbourhood as a place to live	80%	80%	→
Satisfaction that your rent provides value for money	81%	82%	↑
Satisfaction that your service charges provide value for money	60%	77%	↑
Satisfaction with the way the housing service deals with repairs and maintenance	61%	72%	↑
Satisfaction that the housing service listens to your views and acts on them	58%	67%	↑



# Have you considered tenant training? Who knows where it could lead...

**Council tenant, Charmain Woollard, was elected as a Councillor for Mile Cross ward last year and is now heavily involved in improving housing services. Her journey began with a free training course, so we caught up with her to find out more...**

## **Please tell us a bit about yourself**

I've been a city council tenant since getting my first council flat on the Heartsease estate when I was 18 and have been living with my husband and three children in Mile Cross

since 2011. I've always had a passion for helping people and worked in residential care for a number of years until an injury forced me to give up my job in 2003.

## **How did you come to be involved with the council?**

I was speaking to council staff at the Mile Cross festival about some housing issues I had at the time, when they told me about the free tenant training they were offering. I wasn't working then and they asked me if I was interested in taking part.

## **How did you find the training?**

I was sceptical at first because I wasn't a very confident person, but I thought I would give it a go, as I really wanted to make a difference. Once I became more confident I

started to enjoy the training and wanted to learn as much about the council as I could.

## **What did you get from it?**

More than anything, the training gave me confidence. It made me more outgoing and rekindled my passion for wanting to help others. I also

developed my communication skills and gained a greater understanding of tenant empowerment.

## **Did you ever think you would become a councillor?**

No, not at all, which shows you the impact the training had on me. Following the training, I joined the tenant scrutiny panel and helped set up a Rainbows unit for young Girl Guides. Then the opportunity to stand as a candidate for the city council came up.

## **What do you want to achieve?**

I want to be a strong voice for my community. Through my support role to the cabinet member for housing, I want to see more council houses being built and improve conditions in the private rented sector.

## **What would you say to others thinking of getting involved?**

Just go for it! Everyone has the ability to make a positive difference to where they live. Even if you don't wish to be directly involved with the council, the free training on offer can give you confidence and valuable new skills.

To find out about tenant training opportunities, email **involvement@norwich.gov.uk** or call **0344 980 3333**.

*Council tenant and Mile Cross Councillor Charmain Woollard.*



# Improving neighbourhoods together



**With your help we've been making improvements to neighbourhoods across the city and we want to work with you to do more.**

We reported previously in *t/c* on the patch panel events held at Sleaford Green last autumn. Since then, we've made a number of

improvements to the area which have included new waste and recycling areas, the installation of a new anti-climb fence, and close working with residents and the local police to successfully tackle issues with antisocial behaviour.

Residents have been working with us on estate projects across the city which have led to a host of improvements, large and small. These have

included new pathways, walls, railings, benches, bollards, improved parking facilities, shed makeovers and playground games, to name a few, with more on the way.

**If you'd like to discuss how you think we can improve the area where you live, email [involvement@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:involvement@norwich.gov.uk) or speak to your neighbourhood housing officer on 0344 980 3333.**



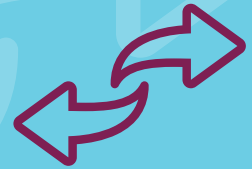
Before



*St James and Barrack Street after the improvements.*



# Increase your home options with mutual exchange



**A mutual exchange is when two or more tenants swap homes. Moving home in this way allows you to avoid waiting lists, giving you greater choice over the area and type of property you want, as well as offering a number of financial incentives if you're looking to downsize.**

Mrs Patricia Hall had lived in her three-bedroom council house in Catton Grove for over 33 years and had raised her family there. Her children had all grown up and left home and she'd been living in the property alone for some time.

She knew it was time to move to a smaller place, but particularly wanted a bungalow, rather than a flat, which would be difficult to acquire through the council's Home Options system.

She decided to register for a mutual exchange and was

invited by her neighbourhood housing officer to a local event.

Meanwhile, Mr and Mrs Warner had been living in a two-bedroom bungalow in Catton with their daughter, Chloe, for the last nine years. They felt they had outgrown their property, but wanted to stay in the same area for their daughter's school and ideally needed a driveway for Mr Warner's work vehicle.

They knew that with only one child they would be unlikely to get the property they wanted through Home Options,

so they also registered for a mutual exchange.

Mrs Hall was alerted to their property at the mutual exchange event she attended, and as both properties were in such great condition, both parties were eager to proceed as soon as possible. Mrs Hall even received £250 because she was downsizing by one bedroom.

Mr Warner said:  
**"The whole process was made easy as everything is done for you. We're really happy with our new home."**

Neighbourhood housing officer, Jill Tacon, said: "Mutual exchange allows under occupation by one bedroom, which enables you to get a bigger home than you would otherwise be eligible for through Home Options.

"It's easy to register online and it's even possible to move elsewhere in the country, if you want to.

"For people downsizing, there are some great financial incentives too."



*The Warners in their new home.*

**For more information, call us on 0344 980 3333 or register online at [www.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.houseexchange.org.uk)**

# Help is at hand

Managing your money and accessing local services are vital tools in day-to-day life, and there is so much support available for council tenants. So, don't be afraid to ask!

## Have you joined the digital revolution?

Whether it's getting to grips with smartphones and tablets, setting up an email address, or even getting access to a computer, we want to make sure that all tenants have the chance to overcome any barriers that stand between them and the internet.

The Barclays Digital Eagles offer free guidance on any web activity. Simply come along with a question and/or the device you are looking for help with.

**Where:** The Forum, Millennium Plain

**When:** Every second Tuesday of the month, 9.30am to 4pm.



## Money advice

Our money advice team can help you to take control of your finances and relieve the burden of debt. Your personal money adviser can meet you at your home or at another convenient location to provide free and confidential advice on:

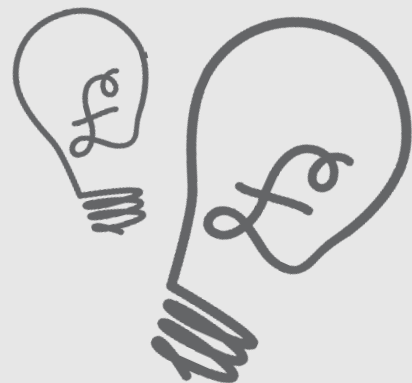
- bank accounts
- dealing with debt
- entitlement to benefits
- access to other financial services.

## Budgeting advice

From advice on running a household budget to saving money on everyday bills, a 'financial health check' with a budgeting adviser will help you make the most of the money you have.

If you'd like to chat to us about anything money related, over the phone or face-to-face, then get in touch in one of the following ways:

- email the team at [moneyadvisers@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:moneyadvisers@norwich.gov.uk)
- speak to your neighbourhood housing officer or income officer
- call the customer contact team on **0344 980 3333**.



## ★ TOP TIP ★

**Having a bank account not only makes it easier for people to pay you money, it also allows you to pay others through direct debits and standing orders – giving you greater control of your finances and access to cheaper rates on things like electricity.**

## Are you ready?

Universal Credit, the new benefit that some people will claim instead of Housing Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance, will arrive in Norwich within the next 12 months.

Initially, this change will only affect people making new claims for Job Seekers Allowance, but it will eventually include most working age benefit claimants.

Universal Credit is designed to be administered online and requires claimants to have an appropriate bank account, so we want to make sure that all new claimants have the online access and financial support they need.

Latest news and information about Universal Credit's arrival in Norwich can be found at [www.norwich.gov.uk/universalcredit](http://www.norwich.gov.uk/universalcredit)

# Do you have a good neighbour?

Win  
£100

**Is there an unsung hero in your neighbourhood who deserves to be recognised?**

**Do you know someone who helps others with shopping or gardening?**

**Is your neighbour a good and supportive listener?**

**We'd like you to tell us!**

Fill in the form and post it to Service development team, Norwich City Council, City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH, or take it to City Hall. Or you can send an email to **involvement@norwich.gov.uk** with the details asked for in the box.

A panel made up of Norwich City Council tenants will select

a winner, who will receive a £100 prize. All finalists will be invited to afternoon tea in the Lord Mayor's Parlour.

The person you nominate must be a Norwich City Council

tenant and will not be eligible if they are in breach of their tenancy agreement.

The deadline for nominations is **Friday 28 August.**

Your name: .....

Your address: .....

Name of good neighbour: .....

Address of good neighbour: .....

Reason for nominating: .....

Please use a separate sheet and give as much information as possible.

## Good neighbours for 48 years

Mr John Tilney, a finalist in last year's competition, was nominated by his neighbour, Mrs Miriam Bowgen. On attending the tea party for finalists held every year in the Lord Mayor's Parlour, it came to light that Mr Tilney, together with his wife Margaret, had been living next door to Mrs Bowgen since 1967!



*Pictured from left: Miriam, John and Margaret.*

These good neighbours, along with several other local residents still living nearby, had all moved in when the houses were built. Many of the original female residents have sadly now lost the men in their lives, which means Mr Tilney is much in demand! This has involved doing work in his neighbour's garden as well as lending a

hand with many other little day-to-day essentials – such as opening bottle tops and jars.

Chatting to Mrs Bowgen, we realised she may look familiar to some readers as she worked on her family flower stall on Norwich Market from the age of 12, until just two years ago.

**We'd love to know if we have residents out there who've had the same good neighbours for even longer than Mrs Bowgen. But whether you're new to the street, or have lived there 60 years, please tell us about your worthy good neighbours on the entry form above.**



# Keep your rent account up to date and you could *Win* a week's free rent!

Your rent and service charges help us to fund the management, maintenance and improvement of your homes. As a thank you to all tenants who pay their rent promptly, every tenant who has kept a clear rent account balance during the three months prior to the draw date is automatically entered into a quarterly prize draw.

We've increased the prize money for each draw to £80, which is roughly equal to an average week's rent for a council property. Prize money is paid directly into winners' bank accounts.



The next £80 draws will take place in July and October 2015 and January 2016.

Winners will be selected at random from all eligible

tenants in each quarter. To qualify for the prize draw you must not be in breach of any tenancy conditions.

★ Good luck! ★

## Your Right To Buy is changing

The Right to Buy scheme gives council tenants with a secure tenancy the chance to buy their home at a discount. Applicants previously needed five years of qualifying tenancy to be eligible, but as of 26 May 2015, the rules have changed.

To qualify for the Right to Buy, tenants must have held their secure tenancy with Norwich City Council, or other qualifying landlords for a minimum of three years. Other qualifying landlords include other local authorities or the Armed Forces, along with some housing associations and public bodies. There are certain situations in which tenants are unable to qualify – such as if they live in



sheltered or supported housing, or if their tenancy was granted under homeless legislation.

### How does the scheme work?

A discount is applied to the purchase price of the property,

depending on the type of property and how long someone has been a secure tenant. The maximum discount available is £77,900. This figure increases annually by a percentage equal to the percentage change in the consumer price index (rounded down to the nearest £100).

**For more information on how the calculations are made, to check if you are eligible, or to obtain an application form, please search 'right to buy' on the A to Z of the council's website [www.norwich.gov.uk](http://www.norwich.gov.uk) or call us on 0344 980 3333.**



## Housing contracts, repairs and maintenance update

**You may have heard about our future plans to build new council homes to the highest possible environmental standards. On top of this we're also implementing a range of initiatives designed to increase the energy efficiency of our existing homes and reduce fuel bills for our tenants. Below are some selected highlights to illustrate this work.**

### **Thermal hot water systems**

The Lawrences were the first family to benefit from one of these fantastic new systems in spring 2014. We've since installed them at a further 27 properties



*The Lawrences*

and have 104 installations programmed for this year.

### **PV4FREE**

This trial project will see a further 200 homes fitted with solar or photovoltaic panels at no cost to the council but which will still deliver full benefit to tenants in terms of free electricity. The installations are currently underway and should be completed within a matter of weeks.

### **Voltage optimisation devices**

These are little units that smooth the flow of electricity around the circuits of the home, lowering bills by reducing overall energy consumption, as well as extending the life of your appliances. We're in the process of finding a new supplier for this product and will shortly begin installing them in every property as part of our programmed electrical upgrades.

### **Insulation**

Increasing insulation in properties (particularly wall insulation) is a highly effective way of reducing fuel bills for tenants, as well as lowering the occurrence of condensation and mould. We now install 300mm loft insulation as standard on our re-roofing work, which is well above the level required by building regulations.

Many homes have been fitted with external wall insulation but where this is not possible we've

## Share your views for your chance to win!

Your feedback is important to us. Our contractors run quarterly prize draws for everyone who completes a survey, so make sure you fill one in for your chance to win.

Mrs Barnes, from Lakenham, was the lucky winner of the Norse draw for April 2015. She doesn't know what she'll spend it on yet, but said she will definitely treat herself!



*Lisa Tye (Norse) with Mrs Barnes*

been investigating alternative solutions. Following a successful trial we're installing internal wall insulation at a number of properties, starting with flats in Suffolk Square.

Hundreds of additional homes could also be about to benefit from external wall insulation, made possible through ECO grant assisted funding provided by British Gas.

# Information for leaseholders

## Annual general meeting (AGM)

This year's AGM of the Norwich Leaseholders' Association (NLA) will be held in the Council Chamber at City Hall on **Thursday 23 July at 7.30pm**, with council officers on hand from 7pm.

All city council leaseholders are invited to attend. Any matters of interest must be raised by Thursday 16 July.

Any nominations for NLA officers and committee members should also be received before 16 July, although an opportunity to present nominations from the floor will be given during the meeting. Access to City Hall will be via the side entrance on Bethel Street.

The NLA is a group run by leaseholders that discusses issues affecting leaseholders, such as service charges, improvements and maintenance. In addition to the AGM, the NLA committee meets regularly with council officers throughout the year, which all leaseholders are welcome to attend.

If you'd like to be involved, please contact the NLA directly or the home ownership team on the details below:

**Kevin Hayes – NLA chair**  
**t: 01603 259781**  
**e: kevinjhayes@talktalk.net**

**Lorna Kirk – secretary**  
**t: 01603 615132**  
**e: kirklorna@gmail.com**



*The NLA committee members.*

## Help is on hand to manage the costs of home ownership

Owning your own home can be an expensive business, but our home ownership team is here to help.

The council's responsibility for maintaining the building's structure and communal areas means that from time to time we will need to carry out work, which as a leaseholder, you will be legally required to contribute towards.

You will be consulted in advance on any work required, including the likely costs, and we will

always take your feedback into account. However, the ultimate decision to proceed will be based on the overall need for the work and your financial circumstances cannot be taken into consideration. It is therefore important to consider, as early as possible, how you might meet such costs.

If you have a mortgage on your property you may be able to increase it in order to pay your contribution and extend the payment term to ensure your

monthly payments don't increase. For your own protection we'd urge you to seek independent financial advice before entering into any such arrangement.

If borrowing money isn't possible then please call our team on 01603 213144 or email **homeownership@norwich.gov.uk** as soon as possible. We will be happy to discuss a repayment plan which can be tailored to your own personal circumstances, based on your income and expenditure.



# Contacting Norwich City Council



[www.norwich.gov.uk](http://www.norwich.gov.uk)

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

**EMAIL** You can email your enquiry to Norwich City Council by sending it to [info@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:info@norwich.gov.uk)

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

**IN PERSON** The customer centre at City Hall, via the Bethel Street entrance, is open 8.45am to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 1pm to 5pm on Wednesdays.

**PHONE** 0344 980 3333.  
Lines open 8am to 5pm,  
Monday to Friday.

**Out of hours emergencies:**  
01603 412180.

**Telephone payment hotline:**  
(24 hour): 01603 212282.

**Money advisers:**  
0344 980 3333 or email  
[moneyadvisers@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:moneyadvisers@norwich.gov.uk)

**Text relay users only:**  
18001 01603 212587  
(8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

**Leaseholders:**  
For help and advice on your rights and responsibilities, contact the home ownership team on 01603 213143 or 213144 or at [homeownership@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:homeownership@norwich.gov.uk)

## Do you have a good neighbour?

Is your neighbour an unsung hero who deserves to be recognised?

**DON'T** forget to enter your good neighbour into this year's competition.

SEE PAGE 8 FOR FULL DETAILS AND ENTRY FORM.

Win  
£100

## Want to LEARN NEW SKILLS? AND BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE?

Join our **FREE** training course  
exclusively for Norwich City Council tenants

Just 2 hours per week

Small, friendly group in a venue to suit you

Day and evening options available

FREE refreshments and transport (if needed)

To find out more or to book your free place

t: 01603 212235

e: [involvement@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:involvement@norwich.gov.uk)

### 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.

## Have your say...

Please contact us if you have any concerns as a tenant or leaseholder, or if you would like to share something.

Write to *TLC* magazine, Conesford Room, City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH or email [involvement@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:involvement@norwich.gov.uk)