

Tenants' Newsletter

Autumn 2023

Newington
Housing Association
(1975) Ltd.



Summer Family Fun & Information Day



Thursday 3rd August was the start of the New Lodge Festival Programme.

As part of the New Lodge festival programme, a 'Summer Family Fun & Information Day', organised by Newington Housing Association in partnership with Ashton Community Trust, was held at St Patricks School on Thursday, 3rd August 2023.

★ This event was open to all families in North Belfast and was a mix of fun and information on several brilliant services working within North Belfast.

The sun shone and the children were entertained outside with the bouncy castles and go karts. With the delicious smell of bar-b-que wafting who could resist a burger or hotdog after all the activities. Parents were able to sit in the sun whilst the children played and conversations and catch ups were had, with for a change no worries about rain.

Inside there were other fun activities for the children including arts and crafts and hair tinselling.

Groups and organisation's such as Ashton Family Services, Newington Housing Association, Action Mental Health, Community Restorative Justice Ireland and Belfast Advice all had information stands, with a plethora of advice and some very useful freebies on offer.

One mum who attended said: "Myself and the kids were very much looking forward to today. They have had so much fun and so have I. You miss catching up with others when the school is off, so today has been that, sitting in the sun and chatting and catching up with other mums.

I picked up some useful information from the stands inside and will have a look through it later. The festival is always brilliant and so much effort is put in. Thank you to everyone for today."

Given the wonderful weather, no-one in a rush to go home, with conversations, catch ups and the fun running well into the late afternoon.





New community facilities delivered at New Lodge Youth Centre

In 2020, the Association set aside funding of £20k and started to explore ways to better utilise and enhance the vacant land beside New Lodge Youth Centre (NLYC) in Upper Meadow Street. Working from the outset in partnership and close cooperation with Ashton Community Trust (ACT) and New Lodge Youth Centre (NLYC), we then commenced discussion on how we could create a meaningful project on the site.

The first phase of the project involved intensive consultation with over 100 local young people that use NLYC, followed by the next phase of the process which entailed the close engagement with local residents that live within the general locality to get their input and ideas, allow their voice and opinions to be heard and to address any concerns residents may have, before progressing towards the practical implementation of the project.

In late 2022, we were delighted to see all this co-operation and hard work finally pay off as the space has now been transformed, with new facilities and amenities installed

that will benefit residents within the greater New Lodge for many years to come.

The site was cleared and landscaped and had benches, tables, a pergola frame, planting beds and a projector facility for outdoor screening of films installed.

Some additional work is still required, but it will shortly be ready to house other equipment such as a covered area, BBQ, pizza oven and kitchen point and the activity space will eventually be enclosed with trees which will be planted along the perimeter. The site will also be adaptable and as time passes open to change and conversion based on the needs and desires of the young people that use the youth centre.

On behalf of everyone at Newington, we want to extend our appreciation to the team at Ashton Community Trust, who have played a pivotal role in the design, planning and delivery of the improvement works and also to the staff and young people from NLYC for their input, ideas and vision.

Camberwell Hub – Heat, Eat & Meet

Working in partnership with representatives from Newington Residents Group (NRG) and other local stakeholders, the 'Camberwell Hub – Heat, Eat & Meet initiative' was rolled out several months ago and focussed on creating a warm and welcoming environment for locals to call for a hot meal, company and some advice and support.

These weekly events have been a great success and could not have been delivered but for the tireless work of volunteers from the local community, particularly those from NRG.

This initiative was warmly welcomed by the residents of Camberwell Court, who were fully supportive of the project from the outset.

The Association wishes to express a special thank you to Alison, Michelle and Aisling who gave up their spare time to make the project such a great success.



Housing & Community News

Review of our Community Investment activities during 2022/2023



Supporting the retention of a Welfare Advice post

At the start of 2022, our Board of Management approved the retention of the independent Welfare Advice post beyond the initially planned 2 years. The post was funded by Newington, in partnership with Belfast City Council.

Our Student Bursary Scheme Awards 2022

In October 2022, via our Student Bursary Scheme, we provided financial support to eleven members of Newington's households who are undertaking educational courses up to Degree level. These bursaries (£500 per applicant per annum.) are designed to support and assist the successful applicants throughout the duration of their course.

Our Brian Mullan Community Fund Awards 2022

In November 2022, the Association distributed £10k via our Brian Mullan Community Fund. Grants ranging from £250 to £1,000 were awarded to various groups and organisations delivering services and programmes throughout North Belfast.

Our Grow NI Garden Project at Camberwell Court

Newington continued to fund our partner Grow NI to ensure the successful delivery of our community gardening project at our Sheltered Scheme, Camberwell Court. This project encourages social interaction, improves resident's mental health and well-being, and helps them to develop new skills, through involvement in gardening, cooking, etc.

Funding provided to two local Advice Centres

During 2022/23, the Association provided financial support to two local community advice centres, New Lodge Housing Office and Tar Isteach. These awards were made to support the essential and critical work both projects do to support the most vulnerable within our society.

Ashton Community Trust – Combatting Poverty

At Newington's Board meeting in November 2022, members approved funding to Ashton Community Trust to support the delivery of projects and initiatives that were to be rolled out by various local groups and organisations who are members of the New Lodge Community Empowerment Partnership. This was to ensure a more co-ordinated approach in the delivery of local services and support networks and to provided targeted support to those within the greater New Lodge and surrounding areas.



Breakdown of our other main highlights during 2022 - 2023 and associated costs



£10,000

Brian Mullan Community Fund was distributed via grants to various community groups and organisations located throughout North Belfast.

£6,168



Funding provided to assist with the delivery or sponsorship of Tenant & Community events/projects (i.e., Camberwell Hub - Heat, Eat & Meet initiative, sports clubs, fundays, local sponsorship of community fundraising events, youth excursions, etc.)

£4,847

Funding provided to NHA tenants via our Hardship/Energy Support Fund

£10K

Funding provided to Ashton Community Trust to help deliver ideas and initiatives arising from their Anti-Poverty Strategy

£7K

Funding provided to Grow NI funding to sustain residents gardening project for Camberwell Court sheltered housing scheme.



£20K

Funding provided to develop unused Green Space into a Community Garden beside New Lodge Youth Centre.



£6,300

Funding provided to Tar Isteach to help sustain local advice and support services.

£5K

Funding provided to New Lodge Housing Office to help sustain local advice and support services.



£5.5k

Funding provided for 11 no. Student Bursaries of £500, which awarded to eleven Newington tenants and family members.



£10,693

Funding provided to sustain the Welfare Advice post, which is currently funded in partnership with Belfast City Council.

Information about our Tenant Forum

As a tenant of Newington your knowledge of tenancy matters is important to us as it will help shape the services we provide. Newington currently has an active Tenant Forum but is seeking to acquire new members. The Tenants' Forum is a group of volunteers who give up some of their free time to improve the services and information tenants receive from Newington.

Members also meet to have their say about what's happening. They discuss policy changes, home improvement specifications, events held for tenants and lots more.

Would you like chance to have your say? To bring your expertise as a tenant. To attend training events and develop existing and learn new skills. This group will introduce you to lots of other tenants, learn more about Newington and have your chance to respond to proposed changes.

How to get Involved

If you would like to join our Tenant Forum or get involved in with any of our tenant or community engagement activities, why not contact our Community Engagement Officer, Sadie Reid directly by emailing s.reid@newingtonha.co.uk or alternatively by phoning on 028 9074 4055.

Information about our Annual Student Bursary Scheme

The Association is delighted to announce that our annual Student Bursary Scheme is now open for applications.



YOU MAY APPLY FOR A BURSARY IF:

- » You are aged over 18 and entering a third level or higher-level education course on a full or part basis.
- » You have not received a previous bursary from Newington HA

If you would like to apply for a Student Bursary or require any additional information, please contact our Community Engagement Officer, **Sadie Reid** on 028 9074 4055 or email s.reid@newingtonha.co.uk

Why not join Newington's Match Savings Scheme



Newington Housing continues to work in partnership with Newington Credit Union to deliver a Match Savings Scheme to our tenants. When joining the scheme, you must initially save a minimum of £10 per month on a regular basis for the first 6 months.



At the end of the 6 months, we will check with Newington Credit Union to ensure you have adhered to the terms of the Scheme. If you have met the terms of the Scheme, the Association will deposit the amount of £60.00 (i.e., match the minimum savings amount you will have saved over the first 6 months into your account as a reward).



You can qualify for Newington's Match Savings Scheme if you do not currently have a credit union account or if your credit union account has been inactive for more than 2 years.



YOUR CREDIT UNION

Planning for tomorrow

If any tenant is interested in joining the Match Savings Scheme, please call us on 028 9074 4005 and we will be happy to assist you through the application process.



Gavin McGrattan

Director of Finance & Corporate Services

Gavin joined Newington in January of this year and oversees the organisation's Finances, HR, IT and Corporate Services functions. Before joining Newington, Gavin was previously Head of Finance and Business Operations at a local children's cancer charity.

Gavin has worked in finance for the past 30 years for a range of organisations, including banking, road haulage, entertainment, media & publishing and renewable energy.

Initially, born in Belfast, he has lived in Downpatrick for the past 30 years.

Outside of Newington he serves as a school governor and advises various businesses that are involved in renewable energy and organic farming.



Samuel Fasoyin

Finance Officer

Samuel (Sam) joined Newington in January 2023. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in accounting and is a certified bookkeeper with Association of Accounting Technician and is currently studying for his Chartered Institute of Management Accounting exams to become a Management Accountant.

Sam has worked in various Housing Associations within Northern Ireland for the past five years, with very strong dedication to see the development and improvement of social housing within NI.

Sam is a passionate and dedicated member of the finance team helping to achieve the mission and vision of Newington and helping the team prepare and present Management Account Reports on time to the Board and external stakeholders.

Also, outside of work, Sam likes to research fashion trends and continues to update his ever-growing wardrobe on a regular basis.



Sarah McCall

Property Services Officer

Sarah McCall has lived in North Belfast her whole life and has worked in the Housing Association sector for over 20 years. She has experience within all departments, i.e. maintenance, allocations, rents, ASB and spent a brief spell working in finance. Sarah is settling well and enjoying meeting Newington tenants.

She is highly invested in the local community, not only living in the area, but also working and volunteering with younger years, as a Youth Leader within a local youth club.

She has a passion for working within the community and it brings her great joy to see people being re-housed within their local community.

Since starting her role as Property Services Officer, she quickly became an integral part of the team and is always ready to lend a hand wherever needed.

Her hobbies include spending quality time with her children and family, fishing and the occasional night out with friends.



Don McKee

Planned Maintenance Officer

Don McKee joined NHA in April 2023 and has been working in Housing Maintenance for 30 plus years, prior to joining NHA.

Don has worked for 20 years as a Project Manager within the planned maintenance sector managing numerous schemes bringing this experience into Newington's planned maintenance department.

He has also worked with a contractor for 5 years as Contracts Manager working on maintenance projects within West and East Belfast.

His hobbies include spending time with his children and family, golfing and taking short breaks.



Catherine Hamill

Administrator

Catherine's background is in private health where she worked across Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. After spending a lot of time in a local community garden in North Belfast, she decided to leave the health sector to move into a community-based role.

Her role in Newington Housing Association as Property Services Administrator has allowed her to connect with tenants and the wider Newington community.

As part of her role, she has enjoyed participating in street clean up initiatives, visiting tenants and taking part in community events.

Meet some of the new members of Our Team!

Also, Newington is delighted to welcome back Margaret Duffy as our Communities Manager and wishes to extend a warm welcome to Kevina Callan, our new Scheme Co-Ordinator at Camberwell Court



Sadie Reid

Community Engagement Officer

Sadie has recently taken up the post as Community Engagement Officer with Newington Housing, having previously worked as a Community Engagement Tenant Support worker for the past 3 years.

Sadie has been a community worker for the past 30 years, originally in West Belfast, but has worked in North Belfast for the past 6 years and her experience is in supporting families and working on a one-to-one basis. Her qualifications include Community Development, Health and Social Care and Advice & Guidance.



Aodhan Thompon

Housing Apprentice

Aodhan Thompson, has been working with the organisation since January 2023 as a Housing Apprentice and this September will be starting a housing-accredited course at the North West Regional College, one day a week for two years.

Aodhan is gaining experience and knowledge across all departments. Working with tenants answering repair and housing queries and working closely with tenants at Camberwell Court.

Aodhan advises he has learnt many lessons and a lot about himself since starting his new role with Newington and is extremely grateful for the opportunity to gain guidance and knowledge from his colleagues within the organisation.



Need a Repair?

Contact details

If you require a repair, when contacting the Association, please provide us with your correct contact details. Also when our contractors are due to call with you, please ensure you have made adequate arrangement for them to gain access. If you request a repair and you then fail to provide access, you will be requested to repay the Association the associated callout charge.

Boiler Service

The Association is still conducting our annual programme of cyclical gas servicing to all our properties. We appreciate all your assistance in facilitating access to our contractors. If anyone has not had their gas boiler serviced within the last 12 months or is aware that an engineer has recently called with them and failed to gain access (i.e. they have left a calling card with you), can they please contact the Association immediately?



How to make a Complaint?

Are you dissatisfied with the service we provide?

If so, please contact us immediately. Information on how to make a complaint is provided within your Tenants Handbook. Complaint Forms can be provided to you, by contacting or calling into our office.

We welcome your feedback and views, and strive to put things right when they go wrong. Staff are available to assist you with this simple process and to ensure a satisfactory resolution is found. **Just call us on 028 90 744055.**

If we cannot resolve your complaint immediately, we will forward you a complaints form or take your complaint over the phone.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and investigated. Our team aim is to treat all complaints as opportunities to improve our services to tenants, so please contact us when you need to.



Tenancy Fraud and Subletting of NHA properties

Newington H.A. is committed to tackling tenancy fraud to ensure our properties are used to their full potential by those designated to reside within them.

Addressing tenancy fraud can only be achieved with the support of our tenants and the information we receive. If you suspect that someone is committing tenancy fraud or subletting their home to someone else, please contact us immediately.

Tenancy Fraud has a major impact on all those currently awaiting a new home. To report any suspected Tenancy Fraud, please contact our Housing Team on **028 90 744055.**