

Choice News

Issue 3
Summer 2016
The Newsletter
for Choice Housing
Ireland Tenants



Choice delivers boost for Clean and Green Community Scheme

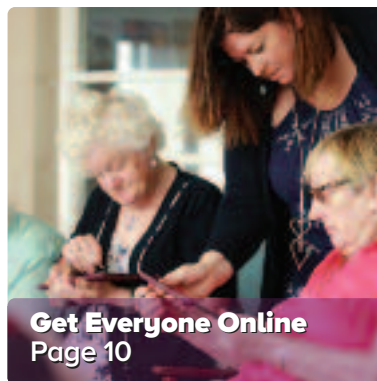
Creating a better environment for our communities



Live Here Love Here
Page 4



**Your Housing Officer
Working for You**
Page 6



Get Everyone Online
Page 10



Summer Competitions
Pages 16 and Pages 20

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choice 

choice-housing.org

£280m for social housing Page 3
New Home... New Look Page 9
Talking Rubbish Page 13
Killynure Green Awards Page 15
Welfare Reform Update Page 32

A Message from our Group Chief Executive



Leading change and doing things differently

Michael McDonnell
Group Chief Executive

It's my very great pleasure to write the foreword to the Summer 2016 edition of Choice News. I'm now just over six months into my role as Chief Executive of Choice. Even in this relatively short period of time, much has changed – and continues to change – in both the local economy, and within Choice as we seek to anticipate current and prospective tenant needs.

Whilst recent news is dominated by the implications of the 'Brexit' referendum, the draft NI Programme for Government is still out for consultation. This blueprint for the next Assembly term will have a significant impact on all of us, and Choice has taken the opportunity to provide our views on how and where priorities could be enhanced. More specifically, I believe that access to a good quality and affordable home should be a fundamental right for everyone across Northern Ireland. We have also highlighted to our new Minister, the importance of sheltered and supported housing as an investment that delivers 'downstream' savings and enhanced benefits for the most vulnerable sections of our society. Finally, we would encourage the NI Executive to prioritise the building of a shared society, rather than merely increasing shared space.

The potential challenges around ongoing welfare reform are well documented, and you should be assured that Choice will play its part in helping tenants to prepare for the changes already signalled. However, the level of detail around timelines and revised welfare procedures is still quite limited, and I would not be surprised if additional proposals emerge in the Autumn budget statement. At Choice and across the Housing Association movement, we believe that our 'profit for a purpose' social enterprise model continues to make a significant contribution to the socio-economic prosperity of Northern Ireland. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our public, private and third sector partners to deliver great homes and thriving communities.

Within Choice, we are progressing a range of improvement initiatives under the heading of 'Leading Change'. This year our board have set a number of stretching targets one of which is to deliver over 400 new homes and the allocation over £100,000 of funding to deliver a range of social projects that help us build stronger inclusive communities. Maintaining our housing stock to the highest standards remains a key priority and this year we will invest over £24million pounds in a range of kitchen, bathroom, heating and planned upgrades to our properties.

We have recently made a number of revisions to our departmental structures to bring all of our customer services – including housing management, response repairs and the customer contact centre – within one Directorate. We are also reviewing the current customer 'journey' to ensure a seamless and integrated delivery structure and ultimately enhance tenant satisfaction. In an era of austerity for all, it is also critically important that we make best use of our charitable assets and limited resources to ensure that we continue to build and maintain high quality, energy efficient and affordable homes for all. Our voluntary board has therefore just approved a new 'Value for Money' strategy, and our tenant forums will work closely with senior management and colleagues to provide a renewed focus on the impact of everything that we do.

I'd like to conclude by thanking everyone who returned a customer satisfaction survey. We have so much to do not only to improve our current services but to expand these services to meet your needs – and your views are crucial.

I hope that you have a great summer and thanks for choosing Choice as your landlord.

Working together for positive change

European Investment Bank confirms £150 million for Choice Housing

The European Investment Bank (EIB) will provide a £150m for Choice social housing in Northern Ireland.

Apex housing association also received EIB approval for £130m loan. The long-term loans mark the Bank's first direct engagement with Housing Associations in Northern Ireland and will lower the cost of borrowing. We will now join a shortlist of high performing associations in the UK and Ireland that have met the EIB's requirements for credit approval.

The funding, alongside statutory support from the Department for Communities, will enable Choice to begin construction on 2,700 new social homes over the next five years and retro-fit of many existing units.

Jonathan Taylor, European Investment Bank Vice President said: "The European Investment Bank has a firm commitment to supporting new investment in social and affordable housing across the UK that represents nearly half of overall EIB backing for social housing in Europe. I am pleased to be in Belfast today to confirm our largest ever support for social housing investment in Northern Ireland with Choice. The overall investment that will improve lives, create jobs, benefit local suppliers and cut heating bills in homes across Northern Ireland."

Michael McDonnell, Chief Executive of Choice Housing said: "This investment package demonstrates

confidence in our ability to deliver high quality outcomes and gives us access to the most cost-effective long-term finance arrangements ever used in Northern Ireland. Ultimately that means we can make public money go further and put more social homes in the areas where they are needed most. As a social enterprise, we direct our resources and commercial ambition towards long-term opportunities that can deliver more for the communities we serve. This is a great result for us, EIB and for the region."

Paul Givan MLA, Minister for Communities, welcomed the investment: "This funding shows the confidence that the European Investment Bank has in the work of local housing associations and is a clear indication that social housing is a strong market which continues to deliver. My Department already provides significant funding for social housing and this combination of public and private financing will enable Choice Housing to build more social housing for those in most need across Northern Ireland."

The new EIB support was formally announced during a site visit by Jonathan Taylor, Vice President of the European Investment Bank to a new Choice Housing development in Greenisland.

Michael McDonnell, Choice Group Chief Executive with Jonathan Taylor, European Investment Bank Vice President.



Choice delivers boost for Clean and Green Community Scheme



One of the largest grant schemes aimed at improving urban environments in Northern Ireland today secured a £60,000 boost from Choice Housing

The Live Here Love Here campaign, which is backed by several local councils and Tourism Northern Ireland, supports communities to transform their neighbourhoods and provides resources to help volunteers, groups and schools to create more green space and clean up littering, dog fouling and graffiti.

The new three-year investment from Choice will add further funding for clean-ups, green-ups and spruce-ups and help develop more free branded bags, clean-up kits as well as helpful fact sheets and leaflets. Applications for Live Here Love Here grants, can be made now by logging on to www.liveherelovehere.org.



The Small Grants Scheme is designed to help groups improve the quality of their local environment by reducing littering and dog fouling; enhancing the environmental management of a local area; contributing to the development of civic pride within a community with a focus on environmental improvements or to enhance or attract tourism to their community through environmental improvements.

Ian Humphreys, Chief Executive at Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, says: “These small grants support voluntary practical action where people want to grow a strong ‘can-do’ community spirit. It is exciting to see the grant scheme growing with the seven councils, Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Tourism NI now joined by Choice Housing and Coca Cola. This simply means more money reaching the places and people whose ambition

is to bring about positive change where they live.”

Michael McDonnell, Chief Executive of Choice Housing said: “Since launching in 2014, Live Here Love Here has supported groups to take small but important actions that have made a big difference in our communities. We all want cleaner streets, with less mess and graffiti, and more green spaces in our neighbourhoods. These grants give everyone a chance to improve their environment and the sense of pride in the places they live.

“Our partnership with the campaign is one of a series of investments that Choice is committing to this year and that enable people to secure tangible benefits and build stronger community spirit. We hope that our support will help amplify the campaign’s efforts to revitalise and reenergise neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland.”



For more information on the Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme please visit www.liveherelovehere.org or contact Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful on 028 9073 6920.

Choice have a dedicated team of Housing Officers who work to deliver housing services to all of our customers. They are there to help, from the very first day you move in to your property.

Your Housing Officer



Michael Stuart

Housing Area: **North Down and Newtownards**

I have worked in housing for around ten years, I previously worked with SHAC Housing Association before Choice. I have a degree in Housing Management and enjoy the day to day interaction with tenants and staff members. I manage a number of sheltered, cat 1 and general needs schemes. No day is the same in housing which makes the job very interesting!

What does my Housing Officer do?

Our Housing Officers are here to support you throughout your tenancy by:

Stephen Adair

Housing Area: **Belfast City Centre and East Belfast**

I have just joined the Association as I previously worked for South Ulster Housing Association where I was involved in all aspects of housing and tenancy management. In 2015, I completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Housing Studies at Ulster University. I look forward to meeting tenants and working with colleagues throughout Choice.



- Supporting the development of your community, and helping you to find out more about how you can get involved.
- Working to make sure that your estate and neighbourhood is clean and tidy, and carrying out Estate Walkabouts in your area.

In Choice News we will be profiling our Estates Management Team so you can learn a little bit more about each of the Housing Officers.

Working for You



Niamh Donnelly

Housing Area: **West Belfast**

Hi there! I am a new member of the Housing Management Team. I started my career as a Housing Officer a year ago with Habinteg Housing Association after spending three years working in Estate Management in the private sector. I completed my Degree in University of Ulster, Jordanstown and graduated with a Bsc Hons Housing Management with a Diploma in Industrial Studies in July 2012.

- Offering you help with any tenancy issues such as changes to your circumstances or queries about moving home or your Tenancy Agreement.
- Helping you with any queries on your rent account, offering guidance about where you can get financial support if you are struggling to pay your rent or are in arrears.

Leeanne Magee

Housing Area: **East Belfast**

I have worked for Choice for eight years, previously as an advisor in Choice Services Centre so I am sure you all know my voice well!

I completed a HND in Housing Management in 2012. I have finally achieved my career goal of becoming a Housing Officer in Choice and I can't wait to get started!



If you would like to get in touch with your Housing Officer please contact Choice on 0300 111 2211.

- Carrying out home visits to meet both new and long-standing tenants, to check if you are satisfied with our services and to ensure that you are complying with the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement.
- Dealing with any issues of neighbourhood nuisance or Anti-Social Behaviour that you may experience.

Smoke Alarm Safety

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) is reminding people to be 'Fire Safe' at home as tragically 28 people have died as a result of accidental house fires in the past three years.

NIFRS Assistant Chief Fire Officer Alan Walmsley said: "Every house should have a working smoke alarm fitted on each floor. By taking a few lifesaving minutes to check your smoke alarm once a week, you are keeping yourself and your family safe from the dangers of fire. Every household should have a fire escape plan and everyone in the house should know what to do in the event of a fire. You should 'get out, stay out and get the Fire & Rescue Service out'.

"By following our simple fire safety advice you will greatly reduce your risk of fire in the home.

"If you are concerned about the fire safety of a family member or neighbour then you can contact NIFRS via our website and fill in the Home Fire Safety Check referral form – www.nifrs.org. You will also find practical Fire Safety advice on our website. Follow NIFRS on Facebook www.facebook.com/nifrsofficial and on Twitter @nifrsofficial for fire safety advice and updates about the work we do."



Fire Safety Advice from NIFRS

Fit a smoke alarm and test it weekly

Make a fire escape plan

Extinguish cigarettes when finished and never smoke in bed

Blow out candles before leaving the house or going to bed

Never leave cooking unattended

Don't overload sockets and adapters and unplug electrical appliances when not in use

In the event of a fire, dial 999 and get out, stay out and get the Fire & Rescue Service out

Choice's New Home... New Look...



Choice are pleased to announce the launch of our new website, designed with a fresh new look, user-friendly navigation and updated with the latest information about our range of housing and services.

Visit us at www.choice-housing.org.

At Choice our focus is on delivering more homes, better services and stronger inclusive communities. We have developed our new 'Find a Home' page, which has all the information our customers need to search for a new home, apply for housing and get the right support they need. Visitors to the site can also learn about our many partners who are instrumental in delivering effective support services for our customers with complex needs.

We built the website with our customers in mind and worked with our Tenants' Forum to ensure that the new website is more agile, interactive, and easier to navigate, enabling our customers to find what they need quickly. You'll find our new site has a number of easy to use tools for our customers to pay rent, report a repair, join our tenants' forum and find a new home.

Choice have also launched new social media channels; Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and LinkedIn to help strengthen communication with our customers.

We will continue to improve and update our website and phase two will launch 'MY CHOICE' enabling our customers to access their account information online to pay rent, report and monitor a repair and contact Choice Services Centre all at their fingertips from a phone, tablet or computer!



Coming
Soon
**My
Choice**

We hope you will enjoy browsing our new site!
If you have any questions, comments or suggestions
please send them to enquiries@choice-housing.org.



Choice has signed up to an exciting pilot programme that will help tenants in two sheltered schemes to get to grips with the internet and its advantages for everyday life

Get Everyone Online

New pilot programme to develop digital skills

The Get Everyone Online programme, available to all tenants in Knockagh Court and Victoria Court, is coordinated in partnership with e-learning specialist Digital Unite through its influential Digital Champions Network. You can download the Get Everyone Online booklet to find out further information from our website www.choice-housing.org.

The initiative will train a number of volunteers who will work with residents to build their confidence and ability to log on and become digitally active. If you are interested in volunteering as a Digital Champion you can download the Become a Digital Champion booklet from our website www.choice-housing.org.

Technology makes it easier and quicker for people with even a basic level of skill to access services and information online that can save time and money while creating a more connected and better-informed society.

The friendly support and guidance from well-trained Digital Champions will assist those with little or no experience of computers to take their first steps online and address almost any question – no matter how big or small.

For those interested in becoming a Digital Champion, the programme includes easy-to-follow online courses that outline the fundamentals of helping and

inspiring new learners. The courses are also linked to the national Open Badge scheme for professional verification and all Digital Champion activity is tracked and evaluated.

Brian McKenna, Group Director of Governance and Communications at Choice Housing said: “Digital technology plays a central role in modern life and, as that is likely to increase, it is essential that our customers have the right level of support to become active online. Digital inclusion is important to us and we’re stepping up to the challenge of getting everyone online with a team of trained volunteers who are ready to make a positive difference in people’s lives. We are looking forward to seeing the impact of the pilot over the coming few months and rolling out the programme more widely.”

Kathy Valdes, Managing Director at Digital Unite, said: “We are delighted to welcome Choice Housing to the Digital Champions Network. Those who are new to the internet or have limited digital skills need personal and regular support to help build their confidence and knowledge so they can make the internet part of their everyday lives. That’s why more and more organisations are using the Digital Champion model, with our Network at the centre, as a meaningful and sustainable digital skills solution.”

Life A!ert

If an adult shows this card to you they may need your help!

This person has a learning disability.

Please listen carefully. Speak clearly, but do not shout.

This person may want you to explain or repeat what you are saying.

You can contact the Life Alert group at AMH Promote Telephone 028 9127 5953



Knockagh Court Celebrates its 30th Anniversary

Choice sheltered housing scheme, Knockagh Court in Greenisland celebrated its 30th Anniversary recently. A party was held to mark the milestone anniversary and was attended by staff, residents and Mayor of East Antrim Borough, Councillor Audrey Wales, MBE.

Knockagh Court was opened in March 1986 and is currently home to 32 residents who enjoy independent living within a safe and supported environment.

Special recognition was given to both Ann Montgomery who has lived in Knockagh Court since January 2012 and Kate McManus since February 2004.

Michael McDonnell spoke at the celebratory event and said: "It is fantastic to be able to celebrate 30 happy years at Knockagh Court with the Mayor and our residents. For our residents, the scheme is more than just their home, it is a vital part of the community, enabling older people to live safely and independently and offering their families peace of mind."



Choice Customer Satisfaction Survey



Next Steps

The Choice Customer Satisfaction Survey closed on 7th August 2016. Thank you to everyone who returned a survey to Millward Brown Ulster. Your views are important to us and we really appreciate you taking the time to give us your feedback. We were encouraged by the response rate and to thank you for taking part in the survey, all customers who completed and returned a survey were entered into our prize draw. The winners will be randomly selected by Millward Brown Ulster and we will be in touch with the winners soon!

At Choice, tenants and service users should expect and receive the very best support from our teams. This year, we're seeking your help to gain a better understanding of those areas that you are satisfied with and those that need improved.

Millward Brown Ulster will analyse your responses and produce a report on the findings. You can rest assured that your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and, as a member of the Market Research Society, Millward Brown Ulster is required to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. Individual responses and details will not be accessible to Choice staff and it will not be possible for the views of any individual person to be identified in the report of the results.

Once Millward Brown Ulster have collated the results we will be working with our management team and the Central Tenants' Forum to develop an improvement action plan. The results will also be published on our website and Choice News.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, please contact Victoria Love on **0300 111 2211** at Choice.



We all want to live in a clean, safe environment. This engenders pride in our homes and neighbourhoods. Choice are committed to working in partnership with our customers, local authorities and voluntary bodies to ensure the homes we provide meet the needs and expectations of our customers.

We would ask all our residents to make every effort to prevent rubbish from building up at their home. We would also encourage everyone to make full use of the recycling options provided by Choice and the local councils.

Talking Rubbish!

Here is some useful information on how to manage your waste disposal.

In flats and apartment blocks, it is important that you keep shared areas clean and tidy of rubbish and avoid cluttering them with things like toys, furniture, bicycles and prams. These are escape routes and if there is a fire and they are blocked, it could make evacuating the building quickly and safely more difficult.



If you live in a street property you will have at least a wheelie bin. If you live in a block, there are communal bins for your rubbish. We ask all our residents to dispose of their rubbish and waste responsibly and for you to consider your neighbours.

If you have wheelie bins, put them out for collection on the right day. Put it away as soon as possible after it is emptied and we recommend that you put an identification mark on your bin so you know which are your bins e.g. your house number.

If your bins tip over and rubbish is on the street, bin store area or garden – please take responsibility for it and clear the rubbish.

If you have recycling bins please use the correct bin for the waste eg. garden waste for the garden bin.

Large or heavy items, such as furniture and white goods, cannot be taken on normal bin collection rounds.

However, most councils offer to collect these items from your home or you can take them to a Bulky Household Waste Site. Please contact your local council to find out more.

Items such as good quality furniture or other household items, can often be recycled or re-used by local charities



If you would like any further information or advise on waste disposal you can contact your Property Services Officer on 0300 111 2211

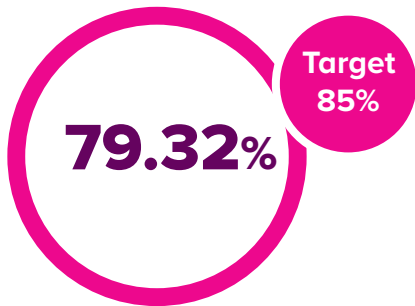
How we're performing

Choice are at the forefront in the provision of social housing and are committed to delivering quality housing and excellent customer services that enhance the lives of customers and communities.

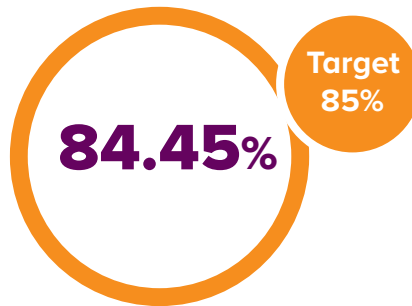
It is important that your voice, in relation to our services, is heard as the feedback that we receive is vital for Choice to identify and correct any problems within our service delivery and to ensure that we meet the needs of all our customers.

It is important that your voice, in relation to our services, is heard.

Customer Enquiries



of enquiries resolved at first point of contact

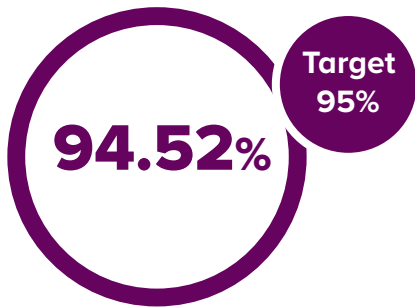


of customers satisfaction rating of Choice Services Centre



Average working days to respond to stage 1 complaints

Customer Services



Call Advisor Call Quality

Gas Safety



of gas boilers were serviced within a year

Human Resources



overall sickness absence in the year

Repairs



Customers satisfied with repairs carried out



Emergency repairs completed within 24 Hours



Urgent repairs completed within 4 working days



Routine repairs completed within 20 working days

County Down housing scheme named among UK's top eco-friendly developments



An ultra-energy efficient Choice Housing scheme in County Down has been named on a shortlist of the UK's most environmentally friendly developments.

Killynure Green in Carryduff, which is classed as 'zero carbon', impressed a slew of international judges to secure a rare nomination at the prestigious Green Apple Environment Awards, which take place in August. Established in 1994, the annual awards recognise, reward and promote environmental best practice.

Completed last year, the 40-unit social housing development employs a range of cutting-edge renewable technologies that recycle water and solar power and help tenants reduce costly energy usage. The ground-breaking scheme was the first in Northern Ireland to achieve the highest grading possible for sustainable homes – meeting strict targets for CO₂ emissions, water usage, ecology and waste – and remains one of the largest of its kind in the UK.

Michael McDonnell, Chief Executive of Choice said: "It's hugely rewarding to be told by anyone that you are among the best, but it means more when you're judged against peers and by experts who understand exceptional quality and the challenges of achieving excellence. Killynure Green is a unique development in Northern Ireland and has been designed to show how we can set and achieve the highest possible standards for customers.

"The recognition of our work has galvanised our team and our customers who share in our efforts and rewards. We are excited to be named among the very best construction projects in the UK and hope to bring home good news in August."

Earlier this year, Killynure Green claimed the coveted Best Social Housing Project title at the Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) awards, the Chartered Institute of Housing's Sustainable Development Award and also claimed an Action Renewable award in recognition of excellence in planning.



Awards

Winner

Royal Society of Ulster Architects
Best Social Housing Project Award



Chartered Institute of Housing
Sustainable Development Award
Action Renewable Award



Nominated – August 2016
Green Apple Environment Awards



Calling All Keen Gardeners!

To the green fingered among you or your friends and neighbours, it's time to remind you of the annual Best Kept Garden Award



You can nominate your own or another customer's garden, or a scheme garden providing it is tended by the customer and not Choice contractors

If you wish to submit an entry please complete and return the attached slip plus a photo or photos of the nominated garden by Friday 2nd September 2016 to The Editor, Choice News
FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 4BR

Prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place gardens, so get those entries in!

Best Kept Garden Competition 2016

YOUR DETAILS

Name

Address

Daytime telephone number

Evening telephone number

DETAILS OF NOMINEE (if different)

Name

Address

Daytime telephone number

Evening telephone number

Anti-social Behaviour support for customers

Choice has appointed Insec Security to provide assistance to tenants whenever problems are encountered in relation to Anti-social Behaviour (ASB). This may include problems with excessive noise or threatening behaviour.

Please note the following:

- This service is only available to Choice tenants outside office hours.
- Tenants should continue to report all cases of ASB to the Services Centre on **0300 111 2211**, during normal office hours.
- Any tenant who has concerns for their own safety, or believes that a crime has been committed, should contact the PSNI.
- Tenants living in sheltered housing schemes should continue to report all cases of ASB directly to their Scheme Co-ordinators or to the Services Centre on **0300 111 2211**, during normal office hours.
- Insec Security will only visit the person who is causing the ASB. Insec will not visit the tenant making the complaint. This process is to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Please contact the Association if you require further information regarding this service.

Insec Security
028 9020 0080

NOONAN™

Noonan announced as new Response Maintenance Contractor

Choice are delighted to announce the appointment of Noonan Services Group as our provider of building maintenance services for over 9,000 houses in both the south east and north east areas of Northern Ireland.

With a workforce of over 15,000 employees, Noonan is an established provider of social housing maintenance services across the UK and Ireland. Noonan's repairs service for Choice will be managed from their base in Lisburn, and the Choice Services Centre will be in contact with them daily, to manage and track your repairs.

Dairmuid Gilmore, Property Services Manager at Choice has said, "We are confident that Noonan's will deliver a high quality service to all our tenants ensuring that we deliver our promise of better homes and thriving communities."

If you would like further information please do not hesitate to contact us to speak with our customer advisors on 0300 111 2211.



You can report a repair to Choice by contacting the Choice Services Centre on **0300 111 2211** or emailing Choice at repairs@choice-housing.org.

Delivering New Homes

Our Development Team are working on new housing schemes to deliver much needed homes across Northern Ireland.

Much Needed Family Homes for North Belfast

Choice have successfully delivered six new homes to families in Ainsworth Avenue, Belfast in May, 2016. The new homes are a mixture of two and three bedroom houses and will add to our existing housing stock in the area. The new housing cost £640,000 and took approx 13 months to build from start to completion. We hope our customers enjoy their new homes!



Family Housing on its way for Ballymena

Choice signed the Building Contract on 27th April 2016 to commence construction at Larne Road, Ballymena. This scheme will consist of 74 family houses with a mix of two and three bedroom houses and apartments. The family housing scheme will cost approximately £6 million to build and will be on site for 24 months.



New Supported Housing for Whiteabbey

Choice has recently begun construction for Abbots Road, Whiteabbey, in partnership with the Northern Trust this supported housing scheme will provide 24 self-contained ground floor apartments for tenants with dementia. This supported housing scheme will allow for the promotion of greater independence amongst tenants whilst allowing for the provision of a high quality safe accessible service. The development cost is estimated at £3,300,000 and will be on site for 24 months.



If you would like any further information on the new developments please contact Choice Services Centre on **0300 111 2211**.



Devonshire Street, Belfast

Choice recently handed over our new build properties in Devonshire Street, Belfast. This phase of the Devonshire development consists of 11 family houses (8 x 3 bedroom and 3 x 2 bedroom). It was a very exciting day for Choice and the tenants, who were anxious to get their keys to their new homes – some even had their paint brushes ready to go! Choice met with each tenant individually and spoke to them about their new tenancies, answering all of their questions. We wish all the tenants a happy future in their new homes.



The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award 2016

Everyone needs good neighbours and we'd like you to tell us about yours.

Have they helped you out at a time of crisis or are they a good neighbour all the time?

Do they help you with your garden or do the shopping for you when you can't?

Perhaps they have looked after your children so you can have a break or even go to work?

Maybe they've just been there when you needed someone to talk to?



In memory of the late Muriel Smyth, former secretary of the Tenants' Forum, Choice will be awarding their Good Neighbour Award in her honour

The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award

YOUR DETAILS

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Tel: _____

Evening Tel: _____

DETAILS OF NOMINEE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Tel: _____

Evening Tel: _____

Reasons for nomination: _____

To assist you in your nominations here are a few guidelines of what the judges will be looking for:

- The person nominated and the nominator must both be customers of Choice.
- More than one person can be listed as nominators, however, anonymous nominations will not be accepted.
- Listing the special qualities that are the reasons for nomination of the person concerned will assist in the judging.

The Muriel Smyth Good Neighbour Award will be judged by a panel made up of Board Members, Staff and Tenants' Forum Representatives.

You can nominate your neighbour by completing and returning the attached entry form. If you are unable to complete the form or require assistance, please contact the Services Centre by telephone on 0300 111 2211, who will be pleased to help.

Prizes will be awarded to all winners!

All nominations should be forwarded to:

**Marketing Officer, Choice
FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 6BR**

by 12 noon on Friday 2nd September 2016.

Roadshows

Getting Involved

Choice first issued their Menu of Involvement last year to tenants asking them to become involved and have a say in how we do things in Choice.

The Tenants' Forum have been considering new structures for the Forum, reviewing areas of Governance and have developed an action plan to outline our planned activity over the next year.

The Tenants' Forum have now taken to the road!

We are holding a series of roadshows or information sessions throughout Northern Ireland where Choice staff and Tenants' Forum members will talk to interested parties about the Tenant Engagement Programme.

We offer a range of activity areas on our Engagement Programme.

What Choice offer

- A Tenant Newsletter and tenants contribute to this. We are always looking for residents to join this group.
- Choice has a newly designed website and interested tenants are fully involved in its design and layout. We need tenants to evaluate how well or otherwise our website is and to help us make it more user friendly.
- Within the Tenants' Forum we provide training on various areas and this is FREE.
- We are commencing "Mystery Shopping" in September; this allows tenants to test the service we provide to YOU. Free training is also provided for this.
- Become a Tenant Champion, be the eyes and ears and voice for your neighbours. This will help Choice monitor issues like graffiti, litter and rubbish dumping and anti social behaviour.
- Be a Tenant Inspector and carry out estate based inspections with Choice staff – make a real difference!

These are a few of the areas in our Tenant Engagement Programme. The full Menu of Involvement can be seen on page 24 of this newsletter.





The John Hewitt International Summer School 2016

Monday 25th July to Saturday 31st July
The Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre
Market Street, Armagh City,
Co. Armagh, BT61 7BW

Choice provided four bursaries for four Tenants' Forum members to avail of the opportunity to attend The John Hewitt Summer school in Armagh. This experience allows our members to explore Art, Literature and political debate in a neutral environment.

We had a rigorous selection process and both staff and the Chair of the Tenants' Forum were involved in the final selection of the successful tenants.

The four successful applicants attended the Summer School from Monday 25/7/16 to Saturday 31/7/16 in Armagh.

We look forward to hearing from them on their return on the benefits of the Literary summer school.



Choice Savings Scheme for Our Tenants

Over the past month Choice in partnership with the Credit Union in Lisburn teamed up to offer a savings scheme to some of our residents in the Lisburn area. This pilot area covered the Choice developments at Pond Park, Windermere and Ballymacross.

Tenants were invited to an awareness evening advising them of the pilot scheme. Choice want to offer tenants an incentive to start saving and to date 25 Choice tenants have taken the opportunity and started saving regularly through the scheme.

This pilot project if successful may be rolled out to other Choice tenants but this will be considered following an evaluation of the project and a decision taken by Choice.

Choice wants to promote a savings culture and help tenants deal responsibly with their finances.

It's always good to save a little each month.

The Association want to thank those tenants who attended the awareness sessions and also thank those who signed up with the Credit Union and are now regularly saving.

Keep It Going!



Carol Ervine, Group Director of Tenant and Client Services, Martin Bush, Lisburn Credit Union and Chris Symington, Head of Housing.

All Aboard the choice Bus

Help us to help you!

- Choice has a 16 seated bus for use by both tenants and staff for housing events, trips and site visits.
- Access to the bus for tenants is completely free!
- Choice provide the driver.

The bus is for the benefits of tenants. If your group or scheme is interested in the use of the bus for a trip or an event, please contact The Tenant Involvement Team either Sharon Leslie or Claire Darby on 0300 111 2211.



Estate Walkabouts Get Involved

Choice aims to have estates that are safe, clean and support community cohesion so residents can enjoy their homes and local environment.

Join Choice staff on the walkabout for your area and make your voice heard.

If you want to take part in a walkabout in your area contact your Housing Officer on 0300 111 2211.

The programme for Estate Walkabouts will be available on our website choice-housing.org



Menu of Tenant Involvement

Putting
Customers at
the heart of
everything
we do

Together
we will
achieve more

Why get involved?

Being involved with Choice will give you the chance to:

- Be active in shaping Choice services
- Make your area a better place to live in
- Give Choice your views on the services you receive
- Be part of a group to review and improve services
- Help Choice better understand the needs of tenants
- Gain useful skills
- Receive relevant training
- Meet new people

How do I get involved?

You can choose how to get involved and when by selecting the type and level of involvement that suits your lifestyle.

Choice would be delighted to hear from you

Please complete the Menu of Involvement in this newsletter and return to Choice or hand it to a member of Choice staff.

Telephone 0300 111 2211 and ask for the Tenant Involvement Team.

Choice Housing Ireland believes that it is essential to consider the views of our tenants with regard to the services and housing schemes we provide. We are committed to putting our customers at the heart of service delivery and we believe that by listening to and taking on board your views, we can ensure that policies and services are more responsive to changing needs and rising aspirations.

We recognise that it is important to offer a range of involvement methods which are fit for purpose and appropriate to the needs of our tenants, providing the opportunity for you to get involved with us on whatever level best suits your lifestyle.

If you are interested in working with Choice Housing Ireland staff to improve our services, please indicate in the table overleaf which option would be most appropriate for you and return the completed form to the Association.

Have a
say in how
Choice
services are
delivered

Menu of Tenant Involvement

YES NO



<p>Resident Groups Represent your community on a wide range of issues by being part of a Resident Group in your area. Meets as and when required – 2.5 hours per meeting</p>		
<p>Tenant Champion Where no formal Tenant Association exists become a Tenant Champion to represent your local community, working beside Choice housing staff to address any issues in your area. 1 hour per week</p>		
<p>Tenants' Forum Group We currently have one Central Forum and three Regional Forums to cover the province, (Belfast region, North West region and Southern & Western region), discussing housing related issues and sharing best practice ideas. Meets every 8 weeks – 2.5 hours per meeting</p>		
<p>Tenant Inspectors Carry out an inspection of our services alongside housing staff to identify areas for improvement. Training is provided and expenses paid. Meets quarterly – Additional project work every 6 months</p>		
<p>Editorial Team Write and review articles for our Tenant Newsletter and website and report on the work of the Tenants' Forum. Meets quarterly – 2 hours per meeting</p>		
<p>Estate Walkabouts Walk around your estate with your Housing and Property Services Officer to identify areas of concern and agree priorities for the local community. Meets annually – 2 hours per meeting</p>		
<p>Financial Stakeholders Group Review the financial areas of housing, eg Tenants' Forum budgets, service charges and related financial matters. Meets quarterly – 2.5 hours per meeting</p>		
<p>Policy Consultation Group Assist with the development and review of policies and procedures as and when required. We anticipate approximately 4 meetings per year – 2 hours per meeting</p>		
<p>Mystery Shoppers Test services and provide feedback as a mystery shopper by carrying out a series of pre-agreed tasks, such as telephone calls or reception visits, and report on findings. Training will be provided. Meets quarterly over set days</p>		
<p>Information Technology Assist with the ongoing development of Choice website and innovative self-service technology. As and when required</p>		
<p>Tenant Satisfaction Survey Assist with the development of a Tenant Satisfaction Survey to help us identify our strengths and weaknesses. Meets twice per year, as agreed with staff</p>		
<p>Register of Tenants Respond to surveys or comment on specific service areas which you are interested in. We can contact you by text, post, email or telephone call. As and when required – time commitment can be as little as 20 minutes</p>		
<p>Tenant Translator Team Offer your services to other tenants in explaining documents or correspondence to help ensure they are understood. As and when required</p>		

Your Details

Name

Address

Telephone

Return to: **Choice Housing Ireland Ltd, FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 4BR**



Choice show support for

Supporting People

Choice staff and Tenants' Forum members rallied together for positive change at Stormont in May to show their support for an immediate 10% increase in funding for Supporting People services to protect many of Northern Ireland's most vulnerable people.

Supporting People, a £74 million per annum Housing Executive programme, enables more than 20,000 vulnerable people to live as independently as possible. Beneficiaries include frail older people, homeless people and those with

learning disabilities. People can receive support in a hostel, in sheltered housing or in other types of supported housing accommodation, as well as their own family homes.

Martin Meek, Supported Housing Manager spoke at the demonstration: "At Choice we have 44 supported housing partners in receipt of Supporting People funding. A 10% increase would make drastic changes to people's lives and help support people to live more independently within the community".

"... A 10% increase would make drastic changes to people's lives and help support people to live more independently within the community."

Now available to let

Choice have a number of available properties to let.
Please contact the Allocations team on 0300 111 2211
for further information or to arrange a viewing.

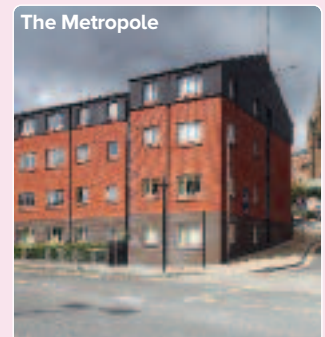
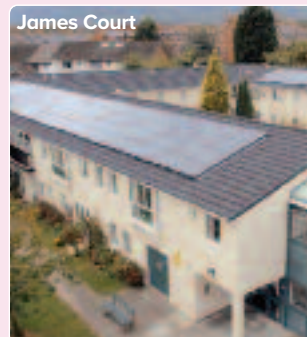
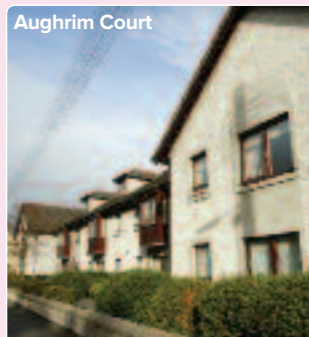
Property Corner

Properties to Let

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing enables older people to live independently and privately in their own dwelling within a safe, friendly and supportive environment.

James Court Belfast
The Milewater Belfast
Lillie Court Lisburn
Old Manor House Lisburn
Aughrim Court Kilkeel
Medway Court Belfast
Tamar Court Belfast
The Oaks Portadown
Donal Casey Court Derry/Londonderry
The Metropole Derry/Londonderry
Elm Court Belfast
Cabinhill Court Belfast



General Needs Housing

General needs housing is used to describe housing for rent that is suitable for anyone over the age of 16 who does not require any help or support, including single people, couples or families.

Corrigan Court Armagh
College Court Central Belfast
Lower Woodstock / Ravenhill Road Belfast



Our general needs housing and sheltered accommodation is allocated through the Housing Executive's Common Selection Scheme.

Out and About



Sperrin Court Information Day

Choice held an information day at Sperrin Court, Cookstown for people to learn more about the benefits of sheltered living!



The Rosses and St Vincent De Paul

Tenants from The Rosses in Derry/Londonderry have raised £777 through coffee mornings and selling arts and crafts for St Vincent De Paul.



A Lift at Aughrim Court

The tenants in Aughrim Court, Newcastle were delighted with their new lift as part of ongoing planned maintenance at the sheltered scheme!



Tenant Celebrates being 94 Again!

There was great excitement in Clachan Court, Derrylinn, as Rosaleen McGuire celebrated being 94 years young.

Rosaleen has lived in Clachan Court for many years, so a coffee morning was organised at the scheme to celebrate her big day. Joining the birthday girl at Clachan Court were her neighbours and friends. A specially baked cake was made for the occasion, which Rosaleen took great pleasure in cutting and sharing!

Special thanks to the Scheme Co-ordinator, Catherine McManus, who organised the event with the help of the other residents. A big happy birthday to Rosaleen from all at Choice!



Congratulations to Choice Five-a-Side football Team!

Our Choice Five-a-Side soccer team won second place at the Street Soccer NI fundraiser tournament at Grosvenor Community Centre Friday on 15th April. Martin Murphy captained, the team; Barry O'Neill, Ferghal McNulty, Tony Houston and Steven Kearns, through nine nail biting games to the final!

Street Soccer NI is a football project set up for the disadvantaged groups of society such as the homeless, drug and alcohol dependant, refugees, asylum seekers and long term unemployed. They aim to bring positive change to peoples' lives using football as a hook. The fundraising tournament included teams from PSNI, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and Belfast City Council.



Esther Burns 80th Birthday

Congratulations to Mrs Esther Burns who recently celebrated her 80th Birthday with friends, neighbours and family with high tea in Strand Court, Belfast on 10th May, 2016.

Mrs Burns's daughter, son in law, daughter in law and grandchildren provided the tasty catering for everyone who attend the celebrations.





McGill 60th Wedding Anniversary

Many congratulations to Felix and Sue McGill from Clachan Court, Derrylin who recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Felix and Sue enjoyed a lovely surprise as tenants at Clachan Court held a surprise party for the couple and presented them with a cake and flowers.



Kilarney Sun

The lucky tenants from Craignagore, Newcastle enjoyed some lovely sunshine on their holiday to Kilarney!



Keeping Cool at Lowtherstown

Tenants of Lowtherstown Court in Irvinestown enjoying the sunshine with some tasty ice cream treats!



Congratulations to The Northern Irish Homeless World Cup Team

Northern Ireland's homeless football team matched Michael O'Neill's Euro 2016 heroes by making it through to the last 16 at the Homeless World Cup in Glasgow this summer.

Players from 52 countries lined out to compete in the 2016 Homeless World Cup. The competition, which is in its 14th year, was broadcast live on STV in Scotland.

Choice are very proud to have continued to sponsor such a successful project. Carol Ervine, Group Director of Tenant and Client Services said, "It is a privilege once again, to sponsor the Northern Ireland Homeless World Cup team. Choice has been inspired by the positive impact the competition has had on players and communities across the globe. Street Soccer NI do wonderful work empowering people and helping create thriving communities, something Choice feels passionate about. It really has been a wonderful summer of soccer for Northern Ireland."

Aidan Byrne from Street Soccer NI said, "Most of the focus is on the football, naturally, but there's serious work going on behind the scenes, tackling homelessness and providing our players with a secure future."

"Players who have passed through our previous squads have seen their lives transformed by the experience and many have found homes of their own and even full-time employment."

Street Soccer NI along with the East Belfast Mission uses football to transform the lives of homeless people.

Funding totalling £73,000 has been provided by the Housing Executive to support the organisation's outreach work to local homeless people and the initiative will soon be on the move around Northern Ireland.

Housing Executive money has also helped pay for team kits, training kits and tracksuits for volunteers, as well as football kits for individual outreach projects across Northern Ireland.

This year's team has also been supported by Belfast City Council, Ulster Bank, Irish FA, Choice, North Belfast Housing Association, Simon Community NI, Extern, Todd's Leap, Playball, Salvation Army, and Browns Funeral services.

Jim Dennison, Simon Community chief in Northern Ireland, said the team will offer players a once in a lifetime experience.

He added: "Street Soccer NI and the Homeless World Cup have offered real opportunities for the future for people experiencing homelessness in Northern Ireland. We are thrilled to have sponsored the Northern Irish squad this year and are so pleased for our residents who secured their place on the team."

A huge congratulations to the team from Choice and we also want to wish Street Soccer NI continued success.

Craigangore fundraising for Macmillan

The generous tenants at Craigangore in Newcastle raised a huge £170 for Macmillan nurses through fundraising at Easter, well done everyone!

Something happening at your scheme?

Let us know and we'll include your story in Out and About!

Out and About



Picture for School

Brendan Burns, tenant at Criagnagore, donated a picture from the sheltered scheme to the local All Children's Integrated School with principal, John Beattie.



Chocolate and Dinner

Tenants from Ashley Lodge in Belfast enjoyed a visit to Aunt Sandras Chocolate Factory for some tasty treats and then on to Malone House for dinner!



Congratulation to Mrs Mairead Burns

After thirteen years together Mairead Burns, Development Assistant married husband Rory on Friday 15th April. The ceremony was held in St. Patricks Chapel, Saul with the reception in The Burrendale Hotel in Newcastle.



Welcome Dayah

Denise Doherty, Development Manager and her family welcomed the arrival of her daughter Dayah on the 7th March 2016. Weighing 9lbs13oz and measuring 58cms long, baby Dayah was a big bundle of joy for the Doherty family.



Mill Manor Highly Commended in the Residential Category

Kelly Devlin, Scheme Manager at Mill Manor in Belfast and Mervyn Garrett, Assistant Director of Inspire attended the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Awards on Friday 6th May 2016. Supported Housing Scheme, Mill Manor was Highly Commended in the Residential Category in La Mon Country House Hotel.



Bill Jeffrey on Nolan Live

Bill Jeffrey, Choice Tenants' Forum Chairman is a man of many talents including his role as a panelist on Nolan Live tackling topical issues affecting Northern Ireland.



Planned Maintenance for Pound Green

Lorna Brown Asset Liaison Officer, advises tenants in Pound Green Court in Larne of the planned maintenance programme for the scheme.



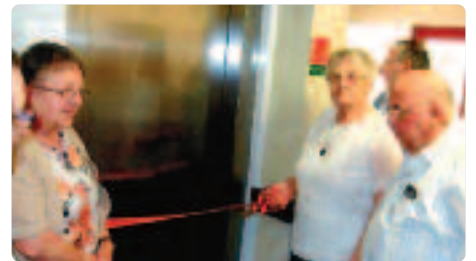
Antrim Coast trip for Hill Court

Hill Court, Lurgan enjoyed a day out in the Choice minibus to the Antrim Coast, with a lovely lunch in Lurah Lodge, Glenariff to take in the scenery, beautiful waterfalls and lovely greenery. The day trip continued to Junction 1 for some shopping! The tenants really enjoyed George Walker as the driver as he pointed out all the Choice properties to us on the way and was very knowledgeable about the area!



Beautiful Fermanagh

Lisnamon Court and Jack Allen Court from Derry/Londonderry enjoyed a day trip to the beautiful Killyhelvin Hotel in Fermanagh for Afternoon Tea. The weather was fabulous and everyone enjoyed their day trip together!



Official Opening of New Lift at Westbridge House

Tenants at Westbridge House were delighted to officially open the new lift at the scheme. Louise Johnston, David Bannon and David Brown officially cut the ribbon of the new lift! One of the tenants spoke of their delight of the installation of the new lift, "It's absolutely brilliant, the best thing that was done to the scheme for a long time!"



Anniversary for Sean and Geraldine

Happy 25th Wedding Anniversary to Sean and Geraldine Mimmagh from Benmore Court, Belfast. Sean and Geraldine are pictured on their wedding day, 7th June 1991.



Coffee for a Lift

Tenants in Victoria Court, Whitehead and Lorna Brown, Asset Project Liaison Officer celebrated their new lift at the scheme with a coffee morning!



Brian Commended in the NI Housing Council Awards

Brian Rankin, Energy Manager at Choice was recently commended at the NI Housing Council Awards, held on 14th April. This recognition, under the Jack Bailie Award, relates to members of staff who introduce an added-value initiative in the delivery of housing services. In recent years, Brian has promoted the procurement of energy to deliver savings for our tenants, the selection of a preferred electricity supplier for our new homes, introduced a pilot energy advice service for our tenants and managed the installation of Solar PV systems on a number of our sheltered housing schemes.

Brian was delighted with the recognition and commented that "the energy team at Choice have been vital to supporting this work and we are continuing to look for new and innovative ways to deliver savings for our tenants and reduce our impact on the environment".



Letter from the Queen

Paul Wallace from Antrim received a lovely card from the Queen to thank him for his kind birthday wishes for her 90th Birthday.

Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland



You will by now have received by post the Welfare Changes booklet from the Northern Ireland Executive, “Benefits are changing for people of working age – what you need to know...”

The booklet clearly outlines the Welfare Changes and what you need to know about; Personal Independent Payments, the Benefit Cap, Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Finance Support, Disputing a Social Security Benefit Decision, Sanctions, Consequences of Benefit Fraud and Direct Earnings Attachments.

You are advised to read the booklet carefully as the changes will affect the amount of benefit you receive and how your rent is paid.

Choice would like to assist and support tenants through the Welfare Reform changes in whatever way possible. However, in order to do so the Association needs to ensure its current records are up to date. Choice previously requested all tenants complete a ‘Tenant Information Update’ form and we appreciate and thank those who returned the completed form. However, we recognise further information is required from a number of tenants.



Therefore, over the coming weeks you may be contacted by Choice with a view to updating your information. We would be obliged if you could assist with this exercise. This process will enable the Association to identify those tenants that may be affected by Welfare Reform in order that we can offer support and assistance where possible.

Welfare Reform Drop-in Clinic

Choice Housing Officers recently attended a welfare reform clinic at Girdwood Community Hub alongside representatives from Advice NI, Housing Rights and the social security agency to answer tenant questions in relation to the Welfare Reform changes.



If you would like any further information on the new legislation please do not hesitate to contact Choice on 0300 111 2211 and ask to speak to your Housing Officer. You can also contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or the Housing Rights Service.

Choice and Abbeyfield & Wesley working together to deliver supported housing

Choice work with more Joint Management Partners than any other housing association and we are proud that our partnerships provide affordable, purpose built housing options whilst offering continuous guidance and support.

We are pleased to announce that Abbeyfield & Wesley signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Choice to manage a new supported living scheme for the frail and elderly at Hamilton Road, Bangor. This scheme comprises of seven ensuite bedrooms with communal facilities with daily support staff on site. Tenants will be moving into their new home at Hamilton Road over the coming weeks.

Abbeyfield & Wesley join over 40 partners currently working with Choice across many programmes of care and support including; learning disability, mental ill health, homelessness, addictions, frail elderly as well as Dementia, Autism, children leaving care and young mothers with babies.

Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association was formed following the merger of Abbeyfield UK (NI) Ltd and Wesley Housing Association Ltd and they are a charity who provide high quality housing and care for older people.

Abbeyfield & Wesley has a range of housing options for older people which include:

- independent living for older people in sheltered housing with scheme supervisors;
- supported sheltered housing which has higher staffing levels and provision of meals; and
- residential care which is staffed 24 hours a day.

Martin Meek, Choice Supported Housing Manager commented on the new SLA: “Choice welcomes Abbeyfield & Wesley as a partner to deliver supported housing in the Bangor area. We are looking forward to welcoming tenants into their new homes”.

We are delighted to be working in partnership with Choice Housing for the provision of a much needed supported, sheltered house in the Bangor area. Living in a supported, sheltered house can help prevent people becoming isolated and lonely. This house is family style in design and provides accommodation for seven older people. The residents can be independent, come and go as they please, have privacy in their own rooms, whilst at the same time have the knowledge that others are nearby so they are not alone and staff are there to provide support. A key feature in alleviating isolation is that home cooked meals, prepared by staff, are eaten together in the communal dining room.

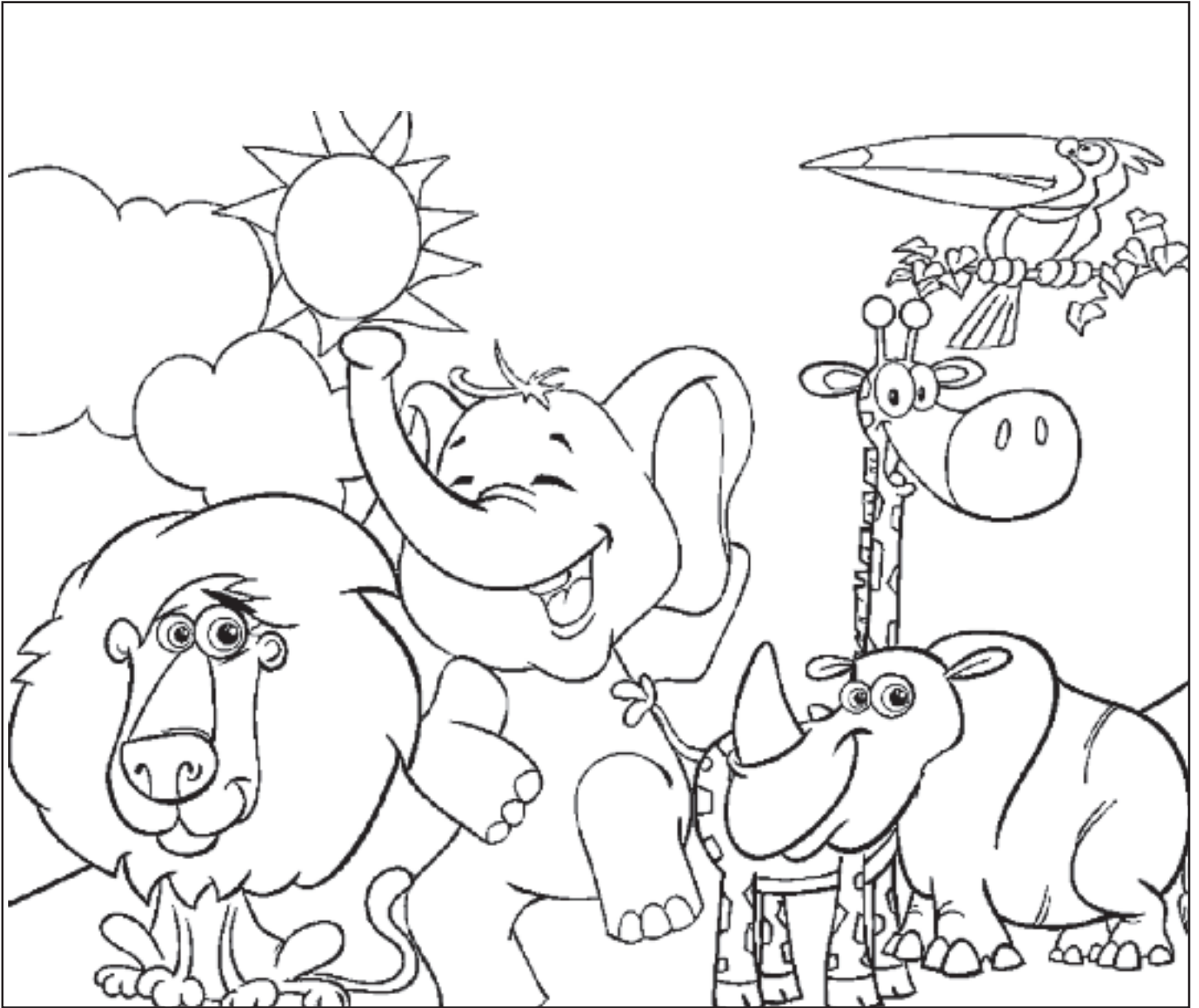
Beverley Surgenor Property and Development Manager at Abbeyfield & Wesley

Colouring Competition

Hey kids this is your chance to show-off your colouring skills

Win a Family Pass to Belfast Zoo

It's really easy to enter, just pull out this page and colour it in anyway you like! Then all you have to do is send it off in the post along with your name, age, address (the parent must be a customer of Choice) and telephone number to the address below. The entry that we like the most will receive this great prize!



Name _____

Age _____

Address _____

Daytime Telephone _____

Evening Telephone _____

Now send this page to:

The Editor, Choice News, FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 4BR (entries must be recieved by 02/09/16)

Different ways to pay your rent and other charges

You can now pay online

In order to make paying your Rent and Service Charges both safe and easy, we offer a wide range of options that will mean you can choose how you pay.

Ways to pay your rent



Going Online – You can now pay your rent online at www.choice-housing.org by clicking on 'Pay Rent' on the homepage.



The allpay App – You can pay your rent via the allpay App which is available to download from the Apple App or Windows Phone store and Google Play enabling you to pay your rent from your Apple, Windows or Android smartphone.



Direct Debit – You can set up a Direct Debit agreement. Please contact the Income Recovery Team on 0300 111 2211.

Debit Card
Credit Card

Phone us using your debit or credit card – You will need to give us your rent reference number (on your rent payment card), your debit or credit card details, and the amount you want to pay.



At any Post Office or shop or garage displaying the Paypoint sign – You can pay cash and show your rent payment card. Make sure you get a receipt and keep it safe.



Post – Send a cheque or postal order to our head office. Never send cash. You need to allow three days for your payment to reach us on time.

Housing Executive

Housing Benefit direct payment – If you claim Housing Benefit, it can be paid directly into your rent account. However, if your Housing Benefit does not cover the full amount you still need to pay us the difference.

choice

Choice Offices – You can pay with cash, cheque, or debit card. We accept MasterCard, Visa, Visa Electron, Solo and Switch.



Colouring Competition Winner



Congratulations to Jorja Caldwell of Crewhill Gardens, Ardglass the winner of the Choice News colouring competition. Jorja aged 6 is pictured with Vincent Laverty, Chris Symington (Head of Housing) and won the fantastic prize of a family pass to Belfast Zoo. We hope you have a lovely time at the zoo and visit the new arrivals; eight gentoo penguin chicks!



Black and White

by James Watson

Remember when the world
was Black and White?
When Drumbeat and Six-five Special
Ruled the evenings.
When our hair was long,
Our treds were tight
And everything, but everything, died on Sundays.

Remember when the world
was black and white?
When Holly and the Animals
filled the airwaves.
When we all had jobs,
and danced all night,
And Mods and Rockers spoiled our Summer outings.

Remember when the world
was black and white?
When Chairman Mao and Guevara
were our Heroes.
When things were sure,
and might was right,
And Televisions flickered in the corner.

But now this self-same world
Is coloured bright,
And blood and misery floods
Into our homes.
Our hair is sparse,
We've failing sight,
And bombs and bullets keep us to our beds.

But ... Do you remember when the world
was Black and White?

We Welcome Your Input

Here is your chance to become involved in future editions

If you would like to submit a feature for consideration – such as a poem, a personal achievement, an interesting story, or indeed anything you feel would be of interest to other Choice tenants – then please send your article(s) to:

The Editor, Choice News, FREEPOST BEL2371, Belfast BT1 6BR

Similarly, if you would like to join the Tenants' Forum Editorial Team to contribute and review articles for the Newsletter please contact the Services Centre on 0300 111 2211.

All contributions gratefully received! And of course, we always appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have for Choice News in general. After all, it is a newsletter for YOU!

**Working together
for positive change**

choice 
choice-housing.org

Choice Housing Ireland Limited
Leslie Morrell House
37-41 May Street
Belfast, BT1 4DN
Email: enquiries@choice-housing.org

For all your housing
repairs and enquiries
Services Centre

0300 111 2211

Poetry
Corner

Properties to Let