

CONNSWATER CHRONICLE

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Tenants' Newsletter published by Connswater Homes

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We offer Language Line services to people whose first language is not English.

This newsletter and other documents can be translated into different languages on request. Please contact us if you require any of these services.

The newsletter is also available electronically from our website.

Have you visited our website?

Do you know that we have a website?

Below is an image of the home page of Connswater Homes website. As more and more people are turning to the internet for shopping, booking holidays, entertainment, downloading music and movies, chatting to friends—virtually anything, the Association would encourage you to log-on and have a look at what's available.

www.connswater.org.uk

The screenshot shows the Connswater Homes website homepage. At the top is the logo and navigation menu with links: HOME, ABOUT, GOT A COMPLAINT?, DEVELOPMENT, TENANT INFO / FAQs, REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, CONTACT. Below the menu are several news items:

- Disability Action Plan** (17 August 2007): A statement of the Association's commitment to its proposals for fulfilling its statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Act 2006. It outlines new duties on public authorities and lists two key points: to provide positive attitudes towards disabled people, and to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- Take part in AdviceNI's new e-consultation** (7 December 2006): A consultation on rising house prices and affordability, with a link to www.adviceNI.net.
- Connswater Homes - the new name for Connswater Housing Association!** (1 September 2006): A notice of the name change and a map of the location at 157 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast.
- Tenant Forum Opportunity** (1 September 2006): An invitation for tenants to participate in a new Tenant's Forum.

On the right side of the homepage, there are several utility buttons: 'Get help in an EMERGENCY', 'Interested in getting involved in your local community?', 'Find out about Repairs & Maintenance for your home', 'EQUALITY', 'Download our ANNUAL REPORT 2005/06', 'TENANCY HANDBOOK PDF DOWNLOAD', and 'Get Adobe Reader'.

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Christmas & New Year Opening Hours

The office will be closed from 12.00noon on Friday 21 December 2007 until 9.00am on Wednesday 2 January 2008

For emergencies during this period please use the Careline number 0800 731 3081

Connswater Homes

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New staff

Connswater Homes Ltd welcomes two new members of staff since our last edition of the Chronicle and says farewell to Leeanne Laverty the Housing Services Assistant who has moved on to pastures new.

Lorna Dunlop is our new Office Administrator/PA.

Lorna has joined us from the Northern Ireland Court Service where she worked for 4 years.

Catherine Waterworth is our new Business Improvement Manager.

Catherine comes from a background in the BELB where she worked in the public library service for 11 years.



www.connswater.org.uk

Policies & Equality Duty



As part of our ongoing commitment to tenants, the Association regularly reviews its policies to ensure they are up to date and meet with current legislation.

Since our last edition, the following policies have been reviewed; Governance & Accountability, Tenant Participation, Community Consultation, Equal Opportunities, Recruitment, ICT usage, Workplace policy, Complaints policy, Data Protection, Rent Setting, Health and Safety and Gas Safety Management policy. Copies of these policies are available on request.

Connswater Homes Disability Action Plan was delivered to the Equality Commission on the 29th June 2007. To obtain a copy please contact Michael Cooke at the office on 90656155 or alternatively you can view it on the website www.connswater.org.uk.

The Associations year 2 Equality Impact Assessments for Housing Management and Maintenance are now available for consultation.



Building Scheme Updates

The Association's development programme for 2007/08 is in full swing.

The Association has secured sites at the following locations which are due to commence on site throughout the year:

Location	Proposal	Lead Consultants	Estimated Cost	Estimated On Site Date.	Estimated Contract Period
Bangor Road, Newtownards	Construction of: 8No. 3P/2B Apartments	Isherwood & Ellis	£700,000	January 2008	12-15 Months
6/10 Severn Street, Belfast	Construction of: 6No. 5P/3B Houses	NIHE	£700,000	October / November 2007	12-15 Months
Harland Walk, Newtownards Road, Belfast	Construction of: 9No. 5P/3B Houses 8No. 3P/2B Houses 1No. 3P/2B Wheelchair Bungalow	Harry Rolston Architects Ltd	£1,600,000	November 2007	18 Months
36-38 Park Ave, Belfast	Construction of: 24No. 3P/2B Apartments	Harry Rolston Architects Ltd	£ 1,700,000	February 2008	20 Months
Connswater Redevelopment Phase 3, Mersey Street, Belfast	57No. 5P/3B Houses 6No. 6P/4B Houses 7No. 3P/2B Wheelchair Bungalows 16No. 3P/2B Apartments	The Boyd Partnership	£16,000,000	March 2008	26 Months

Tenants Satisfaction Survey

As an Association we are committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of our service. To help us in our planning and to see where we need to make improvements for you, our tenants, the Association enlisted an outside agency to carry out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey during June and July 2007.

50% of tenants were surveyed. These tenants were selected at random by the team carrying out the survey. The chosen participants were given the choice of completing the survey by post or by a personal interview. A total of 135 tenants completed a personal interview in their homes with members of the survey team. The other tenants completed the survey questionnaire and posted it back. 87% of the people asked to take part in the survey participated. The respondents names and addresses have been kept confidential from the Association.

The survey covered areas which included your home, your area, repairs, anti social behaviour and customer services

The Association received the initial results of the survey at the beginning of September and the key outcomes are given in the table opposite.

We are keen to address any areas where you feel that we do not provide a good or satisfactory service. To be able to deal with these areas effectively we need to know what they are! So if you have an issue you would like to raise, **please let us know**, you can do this by filling in the feedback form on our website, e-mailing us directly at housing@connswater.org.uk , by telephone to the office or in writing.

The feedback on satisfaction with repairs and the opportunity for involvement indicated a level of dissatisfaction.

The Association has continuously sought involvement from residents in setting up a Tenants Forum to promote participation. However this has failed to materialize due to insufficient numbers. We are keen to improve on this score and would welcome your input and suggestions.

The Association regularly achieves its repairs targets and is disappointed that the view of the tenant's interviewed does not reflect this. We feel that some defects which are not required to be resolved immediately may be causing concern and we will work hard to address this.

On a positive note we are delighted that we scored so highly in the area of customer relations. This score was in fact the top mark within the UK benchmarking group used.

Individual comments received from tenants.....

"I'm satisfied with everything. I do like my home."

"Happy with Connswater, very satisfied overall."

"Small repairs carried out very promptly."

Tenants Satisfaction Survey 2007	Connswater Homes Mark	UK Benchmark
% of tenants who are satisfied with services provided by Connswater Homes	79%	76%
% of tenants who thought the rent charged was good value for money or satisfactory	80%	72%
% of tenants who were satisfied with the condition of their accommodation	86%	77%
% of tenants who said their accommodation suited their physical requirements	84%	81%
% of tenants who were satisfied with their area	86%	75%
% of tenants who were satisfied with the repairs service	65%	71%
% of tenants who were satisfied with the range of contact methods available	97%	Not available
% of tenants who said Connswater Homes were good at keeping them informed	82%	79%
% of tenants who were satisfied with opportunities for Involvement	57%	58%
% of tenants who on average felt they were treated fairly across all 9 equality dimensions	99%	Not available
% of tenants who were satisfied that the staff were able to deal with their problem.	94%	74%
% of tenants who were satisfied with the final outcome of the contact with the Association	84%	64%

Tenants Forum

If you would like to improve the area you live in, why not do something positive and join the tenant's forum. The Association has had a number of responses to a recent request for people wanting to get involved.

There is still time to do so if you are interested.

You should contact the Association by phone leaving your name, address and telephone number **by no later than the 12th October 2007.**

An initial meeting will be held to progress this issue in the Autumn.

Don't miss out on Winter Fuel cash

Who is eligible?

If you are aged 60 to 79 and you are entitled to receive a Winter Fuel Payment. Depending on your personal circumstances in the qualifying week (17-23 September 2007) you will be awarded either £100 or £200.

If you are aged 80 or over and you are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment, you will get an extra £50 or £100, so you could get up to £300, depending on your circumstances in the qualifying week.

The tax-free annual benefit is normally paid from November. Your income and savings don't affect your entitlement to the payment.

How is it paid?

If you're getting another benefit or State Pension by Direct Payment, Winter Fuel Payment will be made with one of these payments. If you're not getting a State Pension or benefits, Winter Fuel Payment will be paid into your bank, building society, National Savings or other account that accepts Direct Payment.

Claim forms can be obtained by ringing the **Winter Fuel Payment helpline** on **08459 15 15 15**. Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm or forms can be downloaded from **www.thepensionersservice.gov.uk** Claims must be received by 30 March 2008.

Your Views

Is there anything that you would like to see featured in this **YOUR** newsletter?

Please let us know.

Any ideas just give us a ring at the office or send an e-mail to catherine@connswater.org.uk

Paying rent with your rent payment card

If you pay your rent with a payment card please note that in addition to the post office you can now also make rent payments with your card at any shop or outlet displaying the Pay Zone logo.





Carbon Monoxide: the silent killer

The tragic story of 2 children who died from carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty gas boiler while on holiday was widely reported in the news last year.

In fact, every year children and adults die unnecessarily because their gas appliances are unsafe.

As your landlord, we are responsible for getting the gas systems in your homes inspected every year.

It is vitally important that you let our gas contractors into your home to carry out the annual safety check.

We will write to you with an appointment date. It will only take an hour for them to service your gas boiler.

It costs you nothing and it could save your life.

If the time we give you is not convenient, just phone us to re-arrange it.

Whatever you do, don't ignore it. Your family's lives could depend on it.

There are always a few residents who refuse to allow us access to carry out this important service.

Connswater can apply for a court injunction to gain access to those properties without a valid safety certificate, but we prefer not to – it just causes delays.

If you can't be certain that your appliances have had a safety check in the last year, please get in touch with us urgently. We'll check our records for you and if necessary make an appointment for a time that's convenient to you.

Debtline NI
CONSUMER CREDIT *Counselling Service*
A Registered Charity

Are you worried about debt?
Concerned over credit card bills etc?
Feeling anxious about what might happen or how you are going to cope?

There is help out there— Debtline NI
They are not a debt consolidation service, they are a charity—so you aren't charged for their services.

Everything is free and confidential, from budgeting advice to practical debt management plans.

No matter how serious your situation seems right now there is a way out of it.

Free helpline from 8.00am—8.00pm
Monday—Friday

0800 027 4990

Keep Warm, Keep Well this Winter

There are a number of things you can do to keep yourself and your home warmer in winter:

Dress Appropriately

Wear layers of clothes rather than one thick layer
Choose clothes made with wool, cotton, or fleecy synthetic materials.

Stay Active

Don't stay sitting still for long periods.
Keep moving as gentle exercise helps.
Spread chores throughout the day and alternate between rest and activity.
Exercise without taking risks in wet or icy weather.
Get a flu jab.

Eat Well

Eat at least one hot meal a day
Sip hot drinks regularly all day
Keep a flask of hot drinks beside your bed in case you wake up feeling cold

Prepare Your Home

Stock up on provisions in case its too cold to go to the shops
If you are using an electric blanket make sure it is checked by a safety expert at least once every 3 years
Close curtains at night to keep the heat in.

For more advice telephone the Winter Warmth Advice Line on Freephone **0800 085 7000**
8.00am—8.00pm Mon—Fri



HARRY POTTER—OBJECTS

Words can go horizontally, vertically and diagonally in all directions

D E S I R E F O R O R R I M F S X S T H
 S N O E L L A G O R F E T A L O C O H C
 X R W Y E S E L K C I S T U N K X R E T
 M T L K E E W J W Q X Z F I B G N C S I
 Y X Y B N P W R Q I M P U G B D N E O N
 I N V I S I B I L I T Y C L O A K R R S
 N I M B U S T W O T H O U S A N D E T N
 L F A T L A D Y P O R T R A I T P R I E
 T E H P O R P Y L I A D E H T R N S N D
 D N A W L I A T X I N E O H P S B S G L
 Q U I D D I T C H C U P X K N K N T H O
 S N A E B S T T O B E I T R E B Q O A G
 T W I Z A R D C A R D S I L C B Q N T B
 H O U S E C U P E L L A R B M E M E R P

- FatLadyPortrait
- HouseCup
- MirrorOfErised
- QuidditchCup
- SorcerersStone
- WizardCards
- BertieBottsBeans
- Galleons
- InvisibilityCloak
- NimbusTwoThousand
- Remembrall
- TheDailyProphet
- ChocolateFrog
- GoldenSnitch
- Knuts
- PhoenixTailWand
- Sickles
- TheSortingHat

Tenants are again reminded that the out-of-hours telephone number we have provided is to be used for **emergencies outside office hours only**

Any calls other than emergencies and/or that are not the Association's responsibility will be charged directly to the tenant. Please check your list of Repairs Rights and Responsibilities before making that call!



HELPLINE — 0800 731 3081