

GROVE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

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NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2017

GLORIA McCLEAN RETIRING



After over 30 years at Grove, Gloria McClean is retiring as Grove's Housing Officer. She says: "I came to work part time for 6 weeks and now after 31 years I have decided to call it a day and retire. I have enjoyed being at Grove as part of a small team and helping all our tenants with their various housing needs and problems. I wish Grove Housing and tenants all the best for the future."

Laura Kerr joins Grove as Housing Officer on 1st February.

RE-CHARGING FOR REPAIRS

Grove is keen to carry out necessary repairs and this service is paid for through rent. We are having more cases however of access difficulties and of repairs being reported and maintenance contractors calling out only to find nothing is wrong. There is also too often damage to houses at the end of tenancies such as holes in doors or badly done DIY.

When this happens it wastes money that could be spent on other better things. Board Members have asked staff to be sure to re-charge tenants or ex-tenants where there are wasted costs, though we will check first to see if there were any circumstances Grove was not aware of.

HOUSING BENEFIT FRAUD INITIATIVE

Some time ago the National Audit Office started an initiative to deal with social housing tenancy fraud, such as a person not using the house they have a tenancy for as their main home, or getting tenancies by deception. This did not directly include fraud relating to Housing Benefit.

The government Department responsible for housing is the Department for Communities and one of their initiatives is to look at Housing Benefit fraud in social housing. Part of this requires housing associations to put more resources than before into checking their tenancies.

Any suspected Housing Benefit fraud, for example not disclosing everyone living in the property or not actually living in it, must be reported to the authorities by housing associations so matters can be investigated.

GROVE COMMUNITY GARDEN

It is time to start preparing for the growing season, so if you would like to get involved with the Community Garden between Ritchie Street and Ivan Street, please contact us at Grove.



PLANNED MAINTENANCE SCHEMES

Smoke detectors

Grove will be replacing existing smoke and heat detectors over 10 years old in the first part of this year. The new alarms will have 10 year life rechargeable batteries, so hopefully there will be no more low battery "beeps" to contend with.

External painting

An external repairs and painting scheme is due this year for all of Grove's properties which run from 15 Shore Road in the Fortwilliam direction. Other properties included in the scheme will be Grove Court, York Road 99-111, 147, 149, 163 & 187-193, and Mineral Street 1 & 3.

The rest of our homes will be painted in 2018.

WELFARE REFORM & HOUSING

Here are some key positive and negative points to be aware of about Welfare Reform. Not everything is settled yet however and there may still be further adjustments due to the political situation or other factors.

Housing Benefit: previously Housing Benefit could be backdated for up to 6 months. This has been reduced to 1 month, so it is very important to provide any required information promptly.

“Bedroom Tax”: this reduces Housing Benefit by 14% for one bedroom more than deemed necessary and by 25% for 2 or more extra bedrooms. Supplementary payments will however cover this shortfall up to March 2020.

Benefit Cap: this limits the total amount of benefits many claimants can receive. Supplementary payments may be available for households with children for up to 4 years.

ARE YOU MISSING OUT?

If you think you might be missing out on benefits, you can call a local Benefit Advisor free on 0800 232 1271.



IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

Grove out of hours repairs (Fold Telecare): 0800 731 3081

Gas emergency service if you smell gas	0800 002 001
Electricity supply faults	03457 643 643
Police Service of N Ireland – emergency :	999
Police Service of N Ireland – non-emergency:	101
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
NI Water – emergency/flooding	03457 440 088
Housing Benefit	03448 920 902
Citizen’s Advice NI	028 9064 1120
Housing Rights Service	028 9024 5460
Women’s Aid Helpline	0808 802 1414
City Council Noise Hotline	028 9037 3006
Anti-social behaviour officer	028 9027 0469
Reporting dog fouling	028 9027 0431
Waste collection	028 9027 0230



OFFICE HOURS

Reception is open Monday to Thursday from 9.30 to 1.00 and 1.45 to 4.30. On Fridays it is open from 9.30 to 1.00.

Phones will be answered 9.00 to 1.00 and 1.45 to 5.00 (4.30 on Fridays). You can leave a message on the answering phone outside these hours.

REMINDERS

Home Contents Insurance is Your Responsibility

Grove insures the building structure of your home – more or less anything we would keep in repair. We do not insure “contents”, which means what you own – things like furniture, clothes, TV and personal items. We recommend that you take out contents insurance cover if you do not already have it.

Anti-social Behaviour

If you are having problems with anti-social behaviour from other tenants of Grove, tell us about them. To take any action we need to build up a case and very occasional reports from only 1 or 2 people is not enough. Reporting incidents to the PSNI is helpful too.

If noise is the problem, you can also contact the Noise Control section at the City Hall on 028 9037 3006. Phone 8.30am to 5pm to talk to the admin team or phone 8pm to 4am to ask officers to come out and hear the noise.

Rent Payments

If you are having difficulty paying your normal rent or keeping to an agreement to pay off arrears, please contact the office immediately so we can work something out together before matters get worse.

We are having to make use of the courts for arrears and evictions and we would much prefer not to have to do so.

If you would like this Newsletter in a different format such as larger print, please let us know.