

2014

# Habinteg News

HABINTEG RESIDENTS' NEWSLETTER



Dear Residents

I am delighted to commend to you the 2014 edition of Habinteg News.

The Residents' Forum this year agreed to stick with the approach and format of the 2013 magazine and we hope you are happy with the result. There is a range of articles and information which is of particular interest to residents and much work has gone into completing the finished publication.

If you have any comments or suggestions for Habinteg News, please contact Habinteg.

Enjoy the newsletter.

Best Regards

**Teresa**

TERESA McDONOUGH  
Chair of the Residents' Forum

## New Contractor

Habinteg has joined forces with three other Housing Associations and entered in to a new Accord Measured Term Contract for all our Building and Electrical work, effective from 1 August 2014.

See inside in for details in 'Your Accommodation' ➔



**Habinteg**  
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE



# your Housing Association

## Your Voice

We remain fully committed to supporting tenant involvement: a partnership between you and us which is crucial to the delivery of customer services. We are fully supportive of resident groups, of our strong and well established Residents' Forum and of continued tenant representation at Board and Committee level. Throughout 2013 - 2014, Habinteg tenants across Northern Ireland were involved in these and other successful participation activities. In December 2013, at the request of the Residents' Forum, a Residents Fair was organised, well supported by a range of voluntary, public and private organisations as both exhibitors and speakers. We were delighted to be able to welcome, on the day, two new members to the Residents' Forum.



The Residents' Forum is just one of the ways in which you can speak directly to us and influence the work we do. Throughout the coming year, we are seeking to build on the good work already achieved and increase the ways in which Your Voice can be heard. We are listening.

Please contact us if you would like to know a little more about **Your Voice**:

Tel: 028 9042 7211 Email: [yourvoice@habinteg-ulster.co.uk](mailto:yourvoice@habinteg-ulster.co.uk)

# your new website

[www.habinteg-ulster.co.uk](http://www.habinteg-ulster.co.uk)



Early in 2014, we launched our brand new website. The site has been developed with you, our tenants, in mind - offering quick and easy access to our services.

Using the site, you can access our range of services from the comfort of your own home - pay your rent, report a repair, check on latest developments, access information and download publications. A phone call costs money and takes time, likewise a stamp and envelope. If you have a smartphone or are using wi-fi in your home for tablet or pc, you can save time and money by accessing the information you require, online.

We consulted with our Residents' Forum when developing the site and would like to thank them for their valuable input. Since going live with the new site, our online traffic has dramatically increased and we have received much positive feedback.

We are keen to further increase the use of the website among tenants and would encourage you to take a moment to view the site and send us your comments. We are continually monitoring and developing the site - we recently added a **Browse Aloud** feature to improve accessibility. Now you can 'listen to' the site as well as view it, have it translated into the language of your choice or alter its appearance to suit your own needs.



Alongside our Website, we launched a Twitter account for 2014 to engage with social media and highlight the work being done by Habinteg across Northern Ireland. Events, activities, new housing schemes, information and news - be the first to hear it all: Log on to twitter and follow us at: [www.twitter.com/habintegNI](http://www.twitter.com/habintegNI)

# your Neighbourhood

In our Tenant Handbook - issued to all New Tenants - there is a Good Neighbour Agreement.

This agreement asks tenants to treat their neighbours with respect and look out for them in times of need. In particular, we ask that people support the vulnerable and elderly in their community. We believe that by being a good neighbour you are contributing to a positive, confident and outward looking community.

We do all we can to ensure that our housing schemes are good places to live. Sadly, from time to time, there are incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and we continue to do our very best in dealing with reported cases.

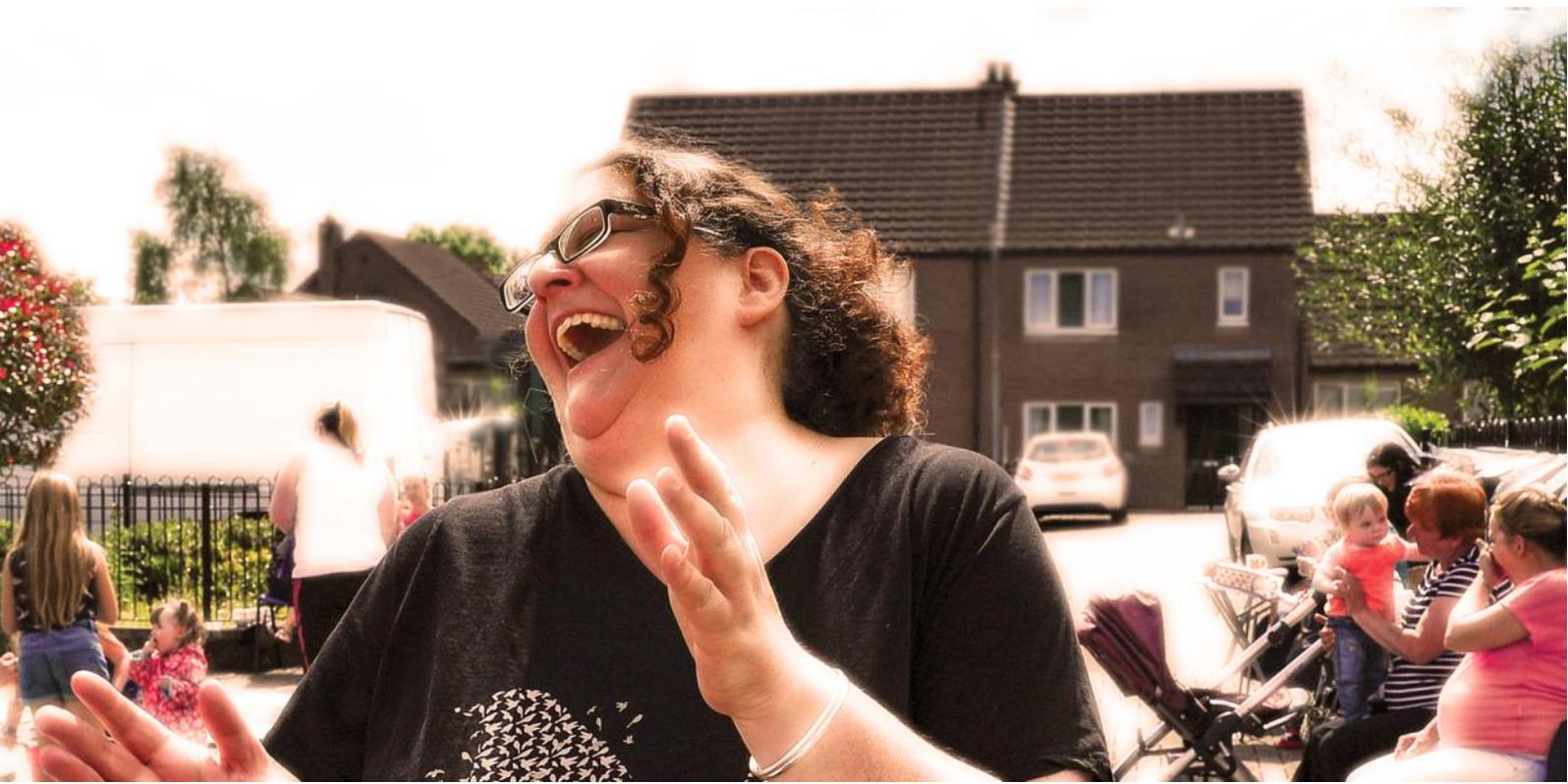
In 2013/2014 there were 23 reported cases of ASB (38 in 2012/2013) of which 5 were unresolved or ongoing at the close of the period. During the same period, Habinteg received 15 complaints (44 in 2012/2013); 9 in the area of Repairs and Maintenance and 6 relating to other areas of service delivery. 5 complaints were unresolved or ongoing at the close of the period.



**ASB reports received by the Association in 2013 / 2014**



**Complaints in the same period (9 Maintenance, 6 service delivery)**





Compliments  
recorded for  
in 2013 / 2014

We were delighted that in 2013/2014 we received more compliments than complaints and ASB reports combined. Among the comments we receive, some of the most rewarding are those which remind us of how people's lives can be transformed by a new home.

The offer of  
this bungalow has  
made such a  
difference  
to our lives.

Lisa Smith  
14 Cathedrals View

I love the  
apartment; All is  
of a high standard.  
I will be secure  
and very happy

Ann Marie Joyce,  
9 Conars Court

Very pleased to  
be offered this house,  
I can now settle  
down with my  
family.

Donna Savage  
2 Linen Mill Court

## 25 years in the North West

Habinteg opened its North West regional office in Derry 25 years ago. The Anniversary was marked this year with Derry Mayor, Brenda Stevenson, joining tenants, staff and guests at Habinteg's Inch View scheme.

Mrs Stevenson's parents - Paddy and Bridget Hume - are former residents of Inch View and the couple spoke fondly of the scheme; recalling the children's Christmas Choir - led by Paddy in full Santa outfit. 'It had a great community spirit,' said Bridget 'it was a great place'.

Also sharing reminisces was Kathleen McCool who moved into Inch View on its completion in April 1989. Kathleen told how she watched the properties being built, thinking 'this could be my house'. It turned out to be true and her daughter Mandy, born three months after the move, became the first Inch View baby. 'Through good times and bad, people came together to help each other' she said.

Do you  
have a  
Story?

We have introduced **My Story** to the **Tenant Information** section of our website. In interviews with Housing Officers, residents tell their unique housing stories. Do you have a story to tell? [info@habinteg-ulster.co.uk](mailto:info@habinteg-ulster.co.uk)

# your Accommodation

## New Maintenance Contract

We are committed to delivering and efficient and effective repair service to our tenants. In August 2014, along with our partner housing associations in the Accord Procurement Group, we appointed a new contractor.

The new contractor - D. Martin - will be responsible for all Building and Electrical works for our properties. We look forward to a successful partnership with D. Martin, and our response maintenance team will be working hard on your behalf.

Remember you can report a repair directly to us via our website, telephone, email, your Community Assistant (where applicable) or call into the office in person. Provide contact details and explain the nature of the repair. Sometimes an inspection may be required. Please see the back cover of this newsletter for contact details and repair times.

## Dulux discount for tenants

We have teamed up with Dulux to provide all our tenants with a whole range of in-store and online discounts and savings. To find out more go to [www.duluxdecoratorcentre.co.uk/housing/habinteg](http://www.duluxdecoratorcentre.co.uk/housing/habinteg).

## Improving Housing Stock

A Planned Maintenance Manager was appointed in 2013, as part of our commitment to improving the condition of our housing stock. The new manager will be responsible for developing an organisational stock investment strategy, further improving consultation processes with tenants and ensuring the successful implementation of an escalating Planned Maintenance Programme.

2013/2014 saw continued significant investment in planned maintenance works: £1,051,000 to general housing stock and a further £815,000 on our supported housing schemes at Newry and Larne, managed in partnership with Simon Community. £1.2 million has been committed for Planned Maintenance work in 2014/2015



An additional £85,560 was spent on cyclical maintenance at 122 properties, including repaints to doors, windows, fascia and fences.

# New homes 2013 · 2014

Following a successful re-inspection from the Department for Social Development (DSD), a busy year for our Development Team saw 98 new properties completed or acquired in 2013 - 2014.

## Conars Court, Derry

32 apartments (apts):  
25 x 3 person 2 bedroom apts  
1 x 4 person 2 bedroom apts  
3 x 4 person 3 bedroom apts  
3 x 5 person 3 bedroom apts

## Mount Street, Newtownabbey

4 x 4 person 3 bedroom houses

## Laganville Park, Lisburn

6 x 3 person 2 bedroom apts  
4 x 5 person 3 bedroom houses

## 2 Upper Suffolk Road, Belfast

5 x 4 person 3 bedroom houses

## 94 Cliftonville Road, Belfast

11 x 3 person 2 bedroom apts  
Cat 1 (active elderly)

## The Cloisters, Dungannon

12 X 3 person 2 bedroom apts

## 163-165 Glen Road, Belfast

24 X 3 person 2 bed apts

The Cloisters, Dungannon

# In your Interest

Our adopted charity is:

## MACMILLAN. CANCER SUPPORT

Each year, at Habinteg, we 'adopt' a charity and for 2014 it is Macmillan Cancer Support. Staff members have been organising and taking part in charity events throughout the year to raise funds for this most worthwhile of causes. From coffee mornings, to collections, to parachute jumps and boat races, staff members have ensured that we are on course to break all previous fund raising totals

We are very grateful to tenants who have supported any events which have taken place at our schemes. If you would like to help us in our efforts or would simply like to know more about our charity work, please call us at our offices. We have an online charity page at JustGiving - you can follow the link to it from the homepage on our own website.



## Welfare Reform Update

Possible changes to Housing Benefit which may affect you and your family are in proposed legislation that may be discussed in the NI Assembly. Changes are unlikely to affect cases where the tenant or their partner (if any) are born before 6th October 1951. At the moment, if tenants claim Housing Benefit there is no restriction on the amount of benefit they are entitled to, in relation to the size of their home. If the new legislation goes ahead, this may change. We will advise tenants as and when information becomes available. You can check up to date information at [www.nidirect.gov](http://www.nidirect.gov)

## Growth of Foodbanks

The past year has seen a significant rise in the number of Foodbanks across Northern Ireland. Rising food and fuel prices, static incomes, underemployment and changes to benefits are all factors.

The Trussel Trust is the largest charity providing Foodbanks. Their website is [www.trusseltrust.org](http://www.trusseltrust.org) The site has a map where you can search for Foodbanks in your area.

# Did you know?

We produce a range of informational leaflets on a range of subjects of interest to for tenants - **Winter Freeze Advice, Gas and Oil Safety, Condensation, Adaptations etc** - all can be downloaded from our website at [www.habinteg-ulster.co.uk](http://www.habinteg-ulster.co.uk)

## Make sure you're covered

**We encourage all tenants to take out household contents insurance.** There are numerous policies available - check in yellow pages, contact your local insurance broker or comparison sites on the internet. Always choose a broker who is registered through the Financial Services Authority and remember to read the policy carefully.

## Is your TV licensed

**You need a TV Licence to watch or record television programmes as they are shown, whether you are watching on a TV, mobile phone, PC or other device.** There are many ways to pay for a licence - you can spread the cost with a Payment Card. Without a licence, you could be fined.

Remember, if you are aged 75 or over, you are entitled to a free TV Licence.

To find out more call **0300 790 6115** or visit [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)



## Focus on Housing Fraud

Every year, people on the housing waiting list are denied a home because of fraud: giving false information, abandoning a property, occupying without entitlement or sub-letting without permission. Persons found guilty are likely to lose their tenancy and may lose the right to social housing.

 **7 Properties recovered & relet**

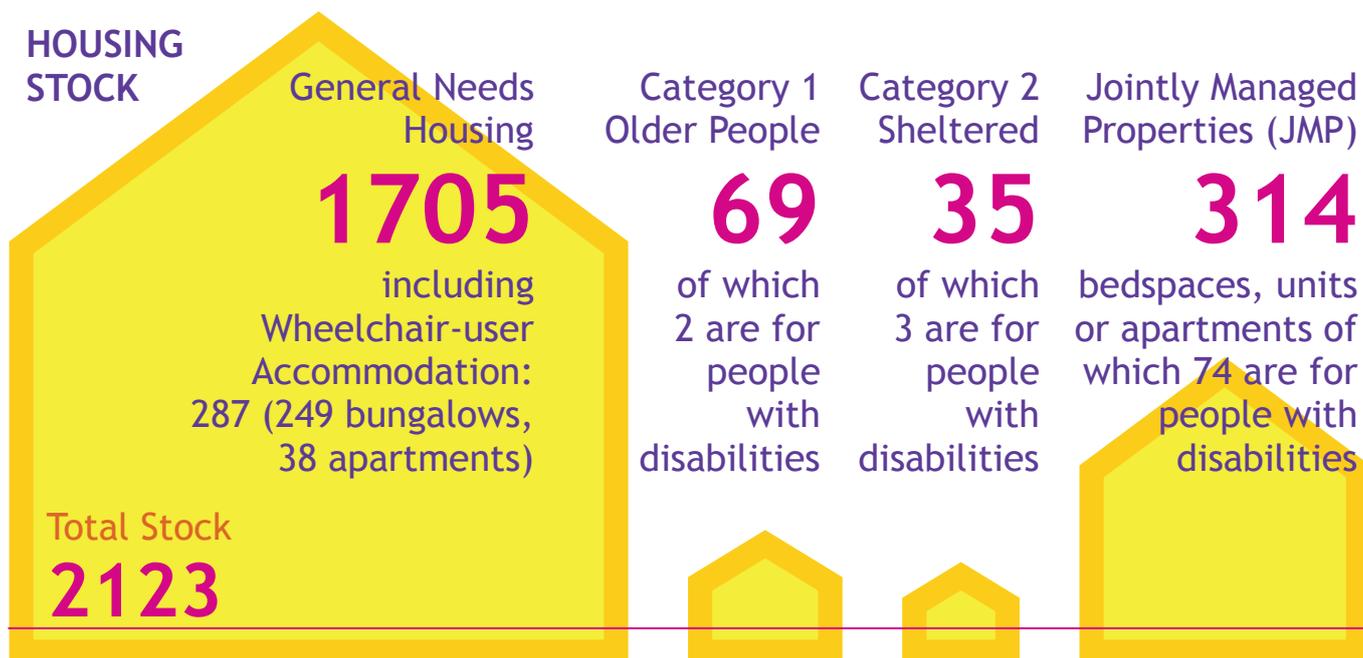
We are committed to tackling housing fraud and have finalised our new Policy and Procedure in this area. Over the course of the last year our investigations uncovered 7 cases of unlawful subletting. All properties involved were recovered and relet to those in urgent need of housing.

We encourage people to report any suspected incidents. You can write to us, telephone, report online through our website or send an email to [tenancyfraud@habinteg-ulster.co.uk](mailto:tenancyfraud@habinteg-ulster.co.uk) You can report confidentially and will not need to give your name / address.

Concerns raised through reporting will be investigated and, where necessary, action will be taken.

# our properties

Information on our Housing Stock and Maintenance service for 2013/2014  
 Figures given for twelve month period ending 31 March 2014



- Lettings** There were **202** lettings in the period (including **74** new lets).
- JMP relets** There were **554** JMP\* relets including **9** self contained lettings.
- Exchanges** There were **15** Direct Exchanges and **4** Successions.
- Sales** **2** properties were sold to tenants.
- Voids** The average void period for directly managed stock was **30 days**.

**£10.5m** Invested in new homes and upgrades to stock

**98** New properties completed or acquired in 2013/2014; 74 properties handed over

**2123** Total housing stock at 31.3.2014 including jointly managed units

Repair Requests issued	Completed in timescale	%
Emergency 24 hours	2096	1345
Urgent 4 working days	3110	2570
Routine 28 working days	3693	3077
Total	8890	6992
		79

\*JMP = Joint Management Partners

## TENANTS' SERVICES ACCOUNT 12 MONTHS ENDED 31 MARCH 2014

<b>INCOME (£)</b>	2014	2013
Service charges receivable	502,901	454,580
Sundry income	3,413	3,270
Less: voids	(6,124)	
	<u>500,190</u>	<u>457,850</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE (£)</b>	2014	2013
Community assistants - all salaries in total	227,126	235,125
Rent and rates	64,377	71,268
Telephone and helpline	33,486	24,961
Heat and light	67,295	69,955
Miscellaneous	117,793	84,985
	<u>510,077</u>	<u>486,294</u>
<b>DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR (£)</b>	(9,887)	(28,444)

## RENT INCOME AND ARREARS TO 31 MARCH 2014

<b>RENT COLLECTION</b>	
Rent and other charges to be collected	£9,269,814
Percentage of rent receivable collected	98.46%
Arrears (not including outstanding Housing Benefit/ Supporting People Funding)	Current £210,525 Former £118,762
Arrears as percentage of non-technical income due	10%
Void losses (rent loss due to homes not let)	£74,947
Void losses as a percentage of gross total charges	0.83%
<b>AVERAGE NET RENT: THREE BEDROOM HOUSE (EX RATES/SERVICE CHARGE)</b>	
Decontrolled rent	£83.77
Controlled rent (tenancies created before Sept 1992)	£77.16

# Contact Information

We welcome your feedback on our customer services. We are particularly interested to hear your comments regarding the ways in which we communicate with you and how we provide you with information. Do you have any comments, suggestions or questions regarding this newsletter, for instance, or regarding the tenant section of the Habinteg website?

If you would like to provide feedback, please contact us using the contact details below or complete the feedback form on our website.

## Head office

22 Hibernia Street  
Holywood BT18 9JE  
T 028 9042 7211 F 028 9042 8069  
E [info@habinteg-ulster.co.uk](mailto:info@habinteg-ulster.co.uk)

## North West Office

2 Abercorn Road  
Londonderry BT48 6SA  
T 028 7136 0015 F 028 7137 3986  
E [derryoffice@habinteg-ulster.co.uk](mailto:derryoffice@habinteg-ulster.co.uk)

[www.habinteg-ulster.co.uk](http://www.habinteg-ulster.co.uk)

For emergency repairs (eg serious plumbing, electrical faults etc) outside our normal office hours please call FREEPHONE 0800 7313081.

**Please note - ONLY EMERGENCY REPAIRS are dealt with under this service.**

Additional emergency numbers

**Northern Ireland Electricity  
Emergency Service 08457 643 643**

**Northern Ireland Water  
Emergency Service 08457 440 088**

**Gas (Phoenix & Firmus)  
Emergency Service 0800 002 001**

For emergencies relating to fire, crime or serious injury call **999**

Habinteg's offices open  
**8:45am to 4:45pm** on  
Monday to Thursday and  
**8:45am to 4:30pm** on  
Fridays.

Offices will be closed on  
the following Public and  
Bank Holidays:

**2014**

Wednesday 24 December  
Thursday 25 December  
Friday 26 December

**2015**

Thursday 1 January  
Tuesday 17 March  
Monday 6 April  
Tuesday 7 April  
Monday 4 May  
Monday 25 May  
Monday 13 July  
Tuesday 14 July  
Monday 31 August  
Thursday 24 December  
Friday 25 December  
Monday 28 December

**2016**

Friday 1 January



**Habinteg**  
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd