



HOUSING NEWS

Lower Oldpark

December 2025. Lower Oldpark Community Association, 9-23 Avoca Street, Belfast BT14 6EN. Tel: 028 96928293. Email: loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com

Santa's Carnegie Christmas Invitation

Santa is inviting Lower Oldpark children to a magical Christmas Storytelling event at the beautiful Carnegie Library building on the Oldpark Road.

The festive fun is open to children aged under 11 years and is being held on Monday 22nd December 2025 between 4.00pm and 6.00pm.

Santa wants Lower Oldpark children to join him and his helpers to share magical Christmas stories and crafts and to visit his cosy Grotto for a special gift and to enjoy delicious festive treats together.

Demand for this event is expected to be high, so to make sure your child



doesn't miss out, book a place early - ring LOCA on 028 90351334 or message it on its Facebook page. For more information contact LOCA Centre Manager, Adele Huddleston.

* Keep an eye out in the early new year for an exciting new arts and heritage project at the Carnegie Library.

Alley Gates - Missed Key Collection Update

Phase Two of the installation of alley gates in Lower Oldpark by Belfast City Council (BCC) is now complete.

If you didn't attend a key allocation session at the LOCA Community Centre in Avoca Street in April this year, and you need access to the alley at the rear of your property, you will need to collect a key from BCC at their office at the Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8PB. You can only collect a key by appointment. To make an

appointment, phone 028 90270469.

To get a key, you must bring two forms of identification, one showing your photograph such as a passport, driving license or bus pass. You must also bring one showing your name and current address such as an electricity or telephone bill, rent book or TV license.

If you live in rented accommodation, you must return the key to your landlord/ NIHE/ housing association at the end of your tenancy.

Lower Oldpark Needs Your Help

Would you like to help improve the local environment in Lower Oldpark?

In the new year, LOCA will be setting up a group of Lower Oldpark resident volunteers to do things like litter picks

and removing dumped rubbish.

If you would like to be part of this, contact Gary Hughes or Adele Huddleston on 028 96928293 or 028 90351334.

Housing Advice Service

Help with housing problems is available from the LOCA Housing and Regeneration Worker, Gary Hughes.

Days: Monday to Friday.

Times: 8.30am-11.30am & 1.00pm - 3.30pm.

Phone: 028 96928293 or 077 13990976.

Email:
loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com

Facebook Message:
[@loweroldparkhousing](https://www.facebook.com/loweroldparkhousing)

Find Out More

Lower Oldpark Community Association has more information on its website and Facebook page.

Website

<https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk>

Our website includes the latest news, back copies of this newsletter, a brief history of the area, details of regeneration plans and much more.

Facebook

[@loweroldparkhousing](https://www.facebook.com/loweroldparkhousing) Please follow and like.

Disability Adaptations

For information about disability adaptations, contact LOCA Housing Regeneration Worker, Gary Hughes, on 028 96928293 or 077 13990976 or email loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com or Facebook Message [@loweroldparkhousing](https://www.facebook.com/loweroldparkhousing)

Help With Applying for Social Housing

There is a significant number of people in Lower Oldpark who don't have their own home and who want to apply for social housing.

Results from the Lower Oldpark Regeneration and Community Needs Survey carried out earlier this year indicated that there were 41 local residents who wanted to get on the social housing waiting list.

LOCA is offering these residents, and

any other Lower Oldpark people who want to apply for housing, help with completing and submitting a housing application form.

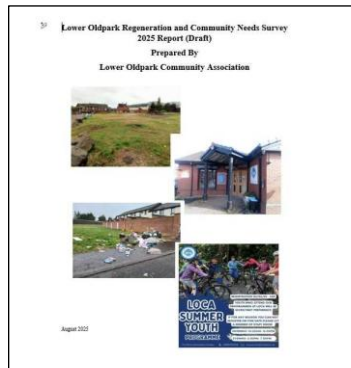
If you want help with applying for social housing, contact the LOCA Housing and Regeneration Worker, Gary Hughes, on 028 96928293 or 077 13990976 or email loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com or message on Facebook [@loweroldparkhousing](https://www.facebook.com/loweroldparkhousing).

Survey Results Shape Draft Lower Oldpark Strategy

Results from a survey of Lower Oldpark residents have shaped the production of a draft Lower Oldpark Regeneration and Community Needs Strategy.

The draft Strategy sets out what LOCA aims to achieve between January 2026 and March 2029 and the actions it will take to secure the regeneration Lower Oldpark and to address the needs of the people of the area.

It covers housing regeneration, along with a broad range of problems highlighted by residents who took part in a household survey carried out by LOCA during the first half of 2025.



The draft Strategy document still has to be considered by LOCA Committee before a summary is made available to Lower Oldpark residents for consideration. This will happen in the new year.

LOCA Continues Push For Social Housing On Bonfire Site

Supported by the results of a community survey, LOCA continues to push for the development of a social housing scheme on the Lower Oldpark 'Bonfire Site' at Mountview Street.

During a meeting with the Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons, on 8th May 2025, LOCA requested that a social housing scheme on the 'Bonfire Site' is included on the NIHE managed Social Housing Development Programme.

LOCA again made the case for social housing on the site during a meeting

on 20th August 2025 with the NIHE Belfast Place Shaping Manager, Fiona McGrath, and the NIHE North Belfast Area Manager, Gerard Flynn. This meeting was organised and attended by Brian Kingston MLA and Councillor Jordan Doran.

LOCA provided the NIHE with copies of the Lower Oldpark Regeneration and Community Needs Survey Report which indicated very strong community support for housing development on all three Lower Oldpark vacant sites including the Bonfire Site.

LOCA AGM Chooses New Committee

The people of Lower Oldpark agreed a new Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) management committee at the group's annual general meeting (AGM) on 23rd October 2025.

Eleven names were put forward and agreed by those present during the meeting.

Seven of the new Committee members are currently Lower Oldpark residents and one is a former long-term resident.

The new Committee members are:

- Thomas Dickson (resigned).
- Peter Edwards.
- Neil Huddleston.
- Laura Hughes.
- Eleanor Jamison.
- Andrea Madden.
- Lorna Osborne.
- Carson Rankin.
- Niomi Patterson.
- Eileen Weir.
- James Wright (Honorary).

At the new Committee's first meeting after the AGM, the following Committee office posts were filled:

- Chairperson – Neil Huddleston.
- Secretary - Andrea Madden.
- Treasurer – Peter Edwards.

LOCA Committee normally meets on a monthly basis to deal with issues related to the delivery of the group's objects which are set down in its articles of association.

Christmas – Not A Time For Dumping

Christmas is a time for giving and receiving presents, a bit of eating and, for some of us, the occasional drink. It is also a time when we have lots of waste.

Please don't leave this waste in the street, in rear access walkways or on open space. Doing this undermines efforts to keep Lower Oldpark clean and tidy and a decent place to live.

If you have no more room in your domestic bins for the post-Christmas collection, why not hold on to the excess waste until the next collection. You can also take this waste to the Belfast City Council civic amenity site in Agnes Street Street/ Huss Row.

You can also bring many items that can be recycled to the depot. These include glass bottles and jars, paper, tins, cans, textiles, household rubble (maximum quantity allowed is two 25kg bags), cardboard, scrap metal.

You can put cards that don't have glitter in your recycling box or blue

bin, but you should remove ribbons and other card decorations.

The cardboard tubes in crackers are suitable for recycling. You can put these in your recycling box or blue bin.

You can put real Christmas trees in the garden waste container at a recycling centre. You can cut up a small tree and put it in the household brown bin if you have one. If you have an artificial Christmas tree, you should check with staff at the recycling centre if the tree is suitable for recycling.

If the wrapping paper is very plain, with no tape, ribbons or glitter, you can recycle it with ordinary paper in your recycling box or bin.

Most Christmas decorations aren't suitable for recycling. These go in the black bin.

For more information on recycling your Christmas waste, go to <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/recycling-your-christmas-waste>.

Lower Oldpark ECM Scheme Progressing

Work on an External Cyclical Maintenance Scheme (ECM) that will benefit over 200 Lower Oldpark NIHE homes started in November.

ECM schemes cover a wide variety of work to the outside of properties e.g. rainwater drainage, soffit board and fascia, handrails and railings, fencing, gates and footpaths. The specific work that will happen at each property will depend on what has been identified as needed during a house survey by the contractor PK Murphy.

The contractor will focus on batches of houses at a time. Scheme work is expected to last 44 weeks from the second week in November 2025.

Not all NIHE properties that will be benefiting from the scheme have been surveyed yet to determine what needs to be done. Those that haven't been surveyed yet will receive a letter in due course.

Help With Drugs /Alcohol/ Gambling Abuse

The following organisations offer help for those struggling with drug, alcohol or gambling abuse.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT)

BHSCT Addiction Services provides treatment for people who misuse alcohol or drugs. There are different teams within addiction services, including outreach, day treatment and substitute prescribing.

Who Can Use the Services? Adults and under 18's.

How To Access the Services: BHSCT Addiction Service accepts referrals from GP's and other relevant healthcare professionals.

Dunlewey Addiction Services

Provides alcohol and substance use one-to-one and family support. Help is also available for those who struggle with gambling.

Who Can Use the Services? Adults.

How To Access the Services? Services are available Monday to Sunday, 9.00am to 11.00pm. Self-referral and referral by professionals.

Phone: 028 90392547. Email: admin@dunlewey.org.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Offers 'open' (public) and 'closed' (private) group sessions for those affected by problematic alcohol use.

Who Can Use the Services? There is no minimum age requirement.

How To Access the Services? Contact to see when/ where meetings are held.

Phone: 028 90351222.

Addiction NI

Provides alcohol and substance use one-to-one and family support.

Who Can Use the Services? Adults.

How To Access the Services? Monday to Friday. 9.00am to 5.00pm. Self-referral and professional referral.

Phone: 028 90664434. Email: enquiries@addictionni.com.

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Help With Drugs /Alcohol/ Gambling Abuse

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Start 360/ ASCERT

Provides a drug and alcohol intervention service for young people.

Who Can Use the Services? 11 to 25 year olds.

How To Access the Services?
Monday to Friday. 8.30am to 5.30pm.
Self-referral.

Phone: 028 90435815. Email:
daisy.east@start360.org .

Al-Anon

Offers support groups for families affected by a loved one's alcohol use.

Who Can Use the Services? Families of those affected by alcohol misuse.

How To Access the Services? Contact Al-Anon to see when and where the next meeting will be held. Meetings are held across Belfast.

Phone: 028 90682368.

Gamblers Anonymous

Support meetings for those affected by gambling addiction.

Who Can Use the Services? Adults.

How To Access the Services?
Meetings: 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month. Self-referral.

Phone: 028 90249185

Email: gabelfast@gmail.com

Advice NI – Debt/ Money Advice

Advice NI provides free, confidential and impartial debt and money advice.

Contact

Phone: 0800 915 4604
Email: advice@adviceni.net

Crumlin Road Social Housing Scheme Consultation Concerns

Work on the development of 14 social properties on the site fronting onto the Crumlin Road at its junction with Yarrow Street is continuing.

The properties are being developed by Choice Housing, the same housing association that completed the eight social houses at 20 - 34 Oldpark Road in 2017.

To obtain approval for most social housing schemes, housing associations must first consult the local community.

LOCA contacted the Department for Communities (DfC) to find out what consultation Choice Housing carried out in relation to the scheme. DfC contacted the NIHE which provided information on who was consulted about the scheme by Choice Housing. This included the MP for North Belfast and the MLA's and Belfast City councillors for North Belfast. Residents in Albertville Drive, Baden Powell Street, Century Street, Crumlin Road and Rosewood Street also received consultation letters. The homes of those who received letters are within, or abut, a red line boundary within a 90 metre radius of the proposed new development. DfC Guidance states that consultation

'written notification should provide an outline of the development proposal, advise of the date, time and location of an information session where outline plans will be made available At the public information session, visual displays of the scheme should be available: together with other relevant information relating to the proposal and the housing association's property management and maintenance arrangements' DfC provided LOCA with copies of the consultation letters distributed by Choice Housing and they do not inform residents of an opportunity to attend an information session. This suggest that Choice Housing may not have carried out consultation in accordance with DfC Guidelines.

DfC consultation guidance also states that, 'if deemed appropriate, notification should also be issued to a local community organisation'. Choice Housing did not consult LOCA in relation to the planned apartment development. This raises questions such as, is Choice permitted to choose not to consult LOCA without good reason, what criteria did Choice use to decide whether to consult LOCA and why was LOCA not consulted?

LOCA will be addressing these issues.

Are You Getting All the Benefits You're Entitled To?

Type of Help Available

A quick call can make a lasting difference. The Department for Communities 'Make the Call' service helps people access all the benefits, support and services they are entitled to.

Who Can Use the Service?

Anyone who wants to find out if they can receive some additional income

through the benefits system.

Contacting the Service

Call 0800 232 1271, or request a call back via text by texting ADVICE to 079 8440 5248.

Make the Call delivered £62 million in additional benefits in 2023/24 helping over 12,000 people access entitlements they had not been claiming with an average additional £99 per week.