

Welcome to this edition of your service update from Riverside Scotland



## The Big Conversation – Tailoring Our Services



To ensure we can deliver the best service, we need to understand our customers; what people want and need from us and how we can make improvements. One way we are delivering on this commitment is by gathering data about our customers through a comprehensive household survey ‘The Big Conversation’.

We want you to tell us what really matters to you and your family, your views and what you need from us. We will base our next three-year customer plan on the findings and tailor our services to provide the support that is needed, where it is needed. This work will also allow us to create more inclusive opportunities for our customers in terms of services and engagement.

We will be carrying out the survey this summer. We are excited to receive the results of the research and start using it to make a real difference to our communities.

**All completed surveys will be entered into a prize draw for a £50 store voucher.**

**Just some of the information and advice inside this issue...**



Transforming **lives**  
Revitalising **neighbourhoods**

### Your **services**

Our new Managing Director and her plans for improving customer experience

### Your **repairs and maintenance**

Our planned investment in our stock 2022/23

### Your **services**

Become a Tenant Board Member and get involved at the heart of our decision-making



## Engagement plan

On 1 April the Scottish Housing Regulator publishes an Engagement Plan for every social landlord in Scotland. This year they are engaging with us around our customer satisfaction, as compared to our peers we score low on several satisfaction indicators. This is not something we weren't aware of, and we know there is lots more we can do to engage with you our customers, starting with our Big Conversation this summer.



## Head Office Update

We have reviewed our head office arrangements following almost two years of working from home throughout the pandemic. We have reduced the space in our head office at Bank Street, Irvine and are currently carrying out refurbishment works which we hope will be finished by the end of the Summer.

As previously, we do not have a reception area, however our new improved office will have a dedicated meeting space for housing officers to meet with customers who have an appointment. We are also happy to continue to visit you in the comfort of your own home.

## Introducing Diana

Our new Managing Director, Diana MacLean started in December. Diana has more than 20 years' experience in housing and customer care, working for both Scottish and English housing associations.

As managing director Diana is responsible for the overall strategic direction of Riverside Scotland leading on service delivery, customer experience, business development, growth and facilitating strong governance by Riverside Scotland's Board.

Diana is passionate about enhancing our customer experience, delivering great outcomes and services for customers and communities, and looks forward to working with Riverside's customers, stakeholders and teams to achieve this.

"I am delighted to take over the reins from Paul Hillard who steered the Association to a position of great strength. I've spent the past few months getting to know the team and begin work on our objectives for the coming year.

"I know that recently we haven't provided the best service with IT issues leading to a backlog of repairs and enquiries. Our team have been working hard to catch up but one of the areas that I really want to focus on is improving customer satisfaction, and my priority is to really drill down to find out what our customers need and want from us going forward. Look out for our forthcoming Big Conversation with customers this summer where you will have the opportunity to tell us what really matters to you, and what you want from us as a landlord.

"I'm looking forward to meeting our customers and getting out and about in our communities now restrictions have eased.

"With the backing of the Riverside Group we are extremely well placed to support more exciting opportunities for new and improved housing and services for Riverside Scotland customers. It's a privilege to have the opportunity to lead on this and I look forward to working in partnership with our customers to achieve an improved customer experience."



## Housing First for Families

Our Housing First for Families support service was launched last year and provides direct support to our tenant households with children, who are struggling to maintain their tenancy, or who have previously been through the homeless system.

**Support co-ordinators Emma Ward and Amanda Robinson have been helping customers to not only settle into their tenancies, but support them in building a stable future going forward and prevent them from ending up in a cycle of homelessness.**

The new service helps customers in a range of ways including providing financial and employment advice and assistance, liaising with other agencies to co-ordinate and manage support provision, facilitating access to required health and social care services, and providing a single point of contact for the household.

Emma explains:

“The Housing First service enables us to provide intensive support to families in a person-centred way. Each family that receives support has their own individual needs and upon meeting them these will be assessed, and a care plan will be agreed with the family, incorporating a multi-agency approach if relevant.

“Many of our families are living in temporary accommodation upon referral so require intense support from the outset, not only with housing but with all aspects within their lives e.g. social work, health care and benefits to name a few. We understand that families are at their most vulnerable when we begin working with them. They are facing uncertainty, dealing with the prospect of homelessness, and trying to support their children and build a stable home for them.

“Our approach is holistic, and person centred, we take the lead on many aspects of the care as the situations that families find themselves in can be very overwhelming. We aim to empower our families to be able to face their adversities and support them with the process from homelessness to a more stable life.

“The service we provide has no time limit and it will be there for as long as each family needs us.”



### What you have told us:

**“So thankful for the support and not giving up on me Emma. You are a great worker; you understand and that’s appreciated.”**

**“Best support I have ever had from a worker, thanks Emma!”**

**“You’ve been amazing for me Amanda. Brilliant for us and great support.”**

**“Thank you so much for all you do for us Amanda. We appreciate you so much.”**



# Your repairs and maintenance

## Get Garden Ready



**Our housing officers will be on the lookout for our Garden of the Week throughout the summer. We'll be looking for homes with tidy, well maintained front gardens and there are plenty of vouchers up for grabs.**

We will also be running our Harbourside In Bloom competition where all Riverside Scotland Irvine Harbourside residents are eligible to enter their front garden.

To enter please send your name, address and contact number by Friday 1 July 2022 to Lyndsay McLaughlan, Customer Involvement Officer Lyndsay. [mclaughlan@riversidescotland.org.uk](mailto:mclaughlan@riversidescotland.org.uk)



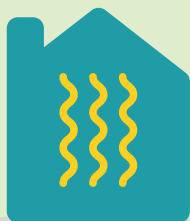
## New Contractors

**We wrote out to you in March to let you know that our repairs contractors were changing. From 1 April 2022 The Bell Group will carry out all reactive repairs to customers' homes and empty properties, as well as undertaking medical adaptation works to properties. GasSure will be responsible for gas servicing and maintenance, as well as gas repairs and the installation of new heating systems.**

Heather Anderson, Head of Service Delivery has led on getting the new repairs function set up, "The new repairs model was designed with both customer service and best value at the forefront. We believe the new set up, with the same contractors across our areas of operation, with exception of Arran will allow us to deliver an improved, cost effective, customer friendly and quality repairs service for all Riverside Scotland customers.

"We are delighted to have appointed Bell Group and GasSure as our new contractors. The day-to-day repairs service is the most used service by all our customers and it's important we get it right and appoint the right people for the job.

"Ensuring our vision aligned with our contractors was also a priority and we know that both companies share our commitment to a customer-centred approach, focusing on our commitment to improving our service offer and making customer satisfaction a key priority. We look forward to a successful partnership with both companies over the next ten years."



## New Grounds Maintenance Contractors

**idverde, one of the UK's top grounds maintenance companies has been selected as our chosen grounds maintenance contractor following a competitive tender process.**

The new contract commenced on 1 April and will run for three years with an option to extend based on performance. The contract will cover all of Riverside Scotland's operational areas incorporating grass cutting, hedge and shrub pruning and weed control.

Heather Anderson, Head of Service Delivery said, "We are delighted to welcome idverde onboard as our chosen contractor and are confident they will provide an excellent grounds maintenance service throughout our estates. idverde are enthusiastic about involving themselves with our communities and we look forward to working with them on social value initiatives that benefit our customers and communities going forward."



## Investing in our stock

**This year we will be investing over £2 million across our housing stock. This will improve the quality of our homes to meet higher standards of energy efficiency and safety.**

Below is a breakdown of the works scheduled for 2022/23:

- **70-80 kitchens**
- **61 windows and door replacements**
- **50-55 roofs and render replacements**
- **80-90 boiler replacements**
- **49 fire door replacements**
- **Bathroom replacements as identified by our asset team surveys**

We are also spending £116k on cyclical painting works to various areas within our stock.

Our team will be in touch to inform you of any works to be carried out on your home.



If you have any questions about how you can access our services, call our 24-hour Customer Service Centre on **0345 112 6600.**

## We're recruiting Tenant Board Members



**We're looking for two tenant members to join our Board. It is important that we have tenant representation in the governance of the Association to ensure our customers' views are at the very heart of our decision-making process.**

We will give you all the support you will need to be part of the Board, to enable you to play a full and meaningful part in the strategic management of your housing association. This is a brilliant opportunity for you to use your individual skills and experience to benefit your community.

**If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Donna Boyle [donna.boyle@riversidescotland.org.uk](mailto:donna.boyle@riversidescotland.org.uk)**



## A military success

**We've made a strong commitment to providing homes for veterans at risk of homelessness by allocating more than 10% of new homes at our Dundonald development in South Ayrshire to veteran households.**

Heather Anderson, Head of Service Delivery has set up a Service Level Agreement with Veterans First Point/NHS Ayrshire and Arran to ensure that veterans are fully supported in their tenancies, and in the transition to civilian life after service in the armed forces.

Royal Highland Fusiliers veteran Scott Devlin, 31 is delighted to finally have a permanent home after being in and out of temporary accommodation for the past year.

"I was brought up in the army. My dad served with the RHF for 25 years and in 2008 when I was aged to join, I signed up straight away. Unfortunately, my career was cut short when I permanently lost my hearing in one ear and suffered trauma to the other during a live fire exercise in Kenya. Military life was all I had known and returning to civilian life wasn't easy. I was depressed, my relationship broke down, I was unemployed and found myself homeless. I was in a bad way and my mental health really suffered.

"I found out about Veterans First Point and haven't looked back. They have helped me get back on my feet."

"I've lived in four temporary homes throughout Ayrshire in the past year – some in such poor conditions that I couldn't even have my kids to stay. I was over the moon when I found out I had been allocated a brand-new modular home in Dundonald. It's a completely new start for my family and I can't thank the team at Riverside Scotland enough. I am definitely beginning 2022 on a high note."



# Better and Stronger Together

## One Housing Group Partnership

We wrote to all Riverside Scotland customers a couple of months ago to make you aware that discussions regarding an organisational partnership between our parent company, Riverside, and One Housing Group had begun, with the aim of achieving the following benefits for Riverside customers:

- Better services for customers by protecting rents and tenancy rights.
- Ensuring there is a louder customer voice by providing more opportunities for customers to be involved in Board and committee decision-making.
- Investing nearly £1bn in improving and repairing homes over the next 5 years.
- Improving Riverside care and support services.
- More investment in employment support and money advice services.

We are pleased to advise that the organisational partnership is now in place. As a Riverside Scotland tenant you will not be directly affected by and there will be no change to the services you receive. Riverside Scotland continues to be a subsidiary of the wider Riverside Group, as well as an independent Scottish Housing Association with its own Governing Board.

Whilst this remains the case, we feel it is important that you are made aware of merger activity involving our parent company, and the extremely positive work that is ongoing to strengthen and shape the wider organisation

## North Ayrshire Domestic Abuse Policy

North Ayrshire Council has launched a new Domestic Abuse Policy for North Ayrshire residents in partnership with ourselves and Cunninghame Housing Association.

Sadly, customers in our homes can be affected by domestic abuse. The new policy will provide support to victims in North Ayrshire and be sensitive and supportive towards any household experiencing domestic abuse, holding perpetrators to account.

The framework we have set out, sends a strong message that violence will never be tolerated, and we will take the actions necessary to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and ensure that their needs are at the centre of our housing provision.

To view the full policy click on the link below

<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/Documents/Domestic-Abuse-Policy.pdf>

The local authorities in our other areas of operation have similar policies, guidance and schemes in place. Please refer to your local authority website for details of the domestic abuse support in your area.



If you have any questions about how you can access our services, call our 24-hour Customer Service Centre on **0345 112 6600**.



## Tips to reduce your bills

We know that times are tough right now with the increased cost of living and hikes in energy prices. Check out The Energy Saving Trust website for simple tips which could help reduce your bills. They all add up and could save you a couple of hundred pounds a year.

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/hub/quick-tips-to-save-energy/>

## Find a foodbank near you

There are many foodbanks and community larders operating throughout our areas.

To find a foodbank in your local area visit our website and search for 'foodbank'.

# Remember to update your Universal Credit following the rent increase

If you get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit paid direct to you it's your responsibility to make sure Housing Benefit, or for Universal Credit, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), know your new charges and make any relevant changes.

If you're on Universal Credit, these are the screens you'll see in your UC account.

Confirm your housing costs

### Date of change

Did your housing costs change on 4 April 2022?

Check the letter from your landlord for the date of the change.

☐ Yes

☐ No

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Confirm your housing costs

### Changes to your rent

You are currently charged £100.00 per week in rent.

Your landlord should have written recently with details of changes to rent or eligible service charges.

Are you still charged weekly for your rent?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How much is your new rent per week?

Do not include any service charges or rent arrears.

£

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Confirm your housing costs

### Changes to your service charges

You are currently charged £5.45 per week in eligible service charges.

Your landlord should have written recently with details of changes to rent or eligible service charges.

Are you still charged weekly for service charges?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How much are your new eligible services charges per week?

Only include 'eligible' service charges. They will be listed separately on the letter from your landlord.

£

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If you are struggling to update your details, please contact our Tenancy Sustainability Team on **01294 316784**



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You can talk to us and keep up to date by joining us on social media. Search for 'RiversideScotland' on Facebook and @RiversideScot on Twitter.