

Winter 2023 / 2024

Your help
and support
guide

With winter here we want to support you to ensure your home is safe and warm and you are prepared for the cold weather.

From repairs and financial support, to boiler breakdowns and frozen pipes, we're here to help.

What's inside

- Protecting your home from winter weather
- Repairs, condensation, damp and mould
- Cost of living support
- Staying safe – fires, accidents and more
- What to do in an emergency
- Your tenant partner contact details



Tackling winter weather

Frozen pipes

Frozen pipes can cause problems with heating and boilers when the cold weather arrives. In fact, this is one of the biggest causes of call outs when temperatures drop.

A tell-tale sign of a frozen pipe is if you turn a tap on during a period of freezing temperatures and you find that little to no water comes out.

So how can you prevent and resolve this common problem? Read our step-by-step guide here.

STEP

1

Ensure you're prepared before temperatures drop

- The first thing to do is identify any taps that continually drip. Even a small trickle can lead to a frozen pipe when temperatures drop below zero. So don't wait, report those issues to us now.
- You should also find out where your stop tap is – most are fitted under the kitchen sink – and understand how to turn it off so you can do step two.

STEP

2

How to thaw a frozen pipe

- Turn off the water supply at the stop tap.
- Check any pipes that run outside of your property. If the pipe has burst, you will need to contact us, skip on to step three.
- If it hasn't burst, slowly thaw the pipe by holding a hot water bottle or a towel soaked in hot water around the pipe. You can also use a hair dryer on the lowest setting.
- When it has thawed, reset your boiler by holding in the reset button for 10 seconds and waiting for the boiler to re-fire.

STEP

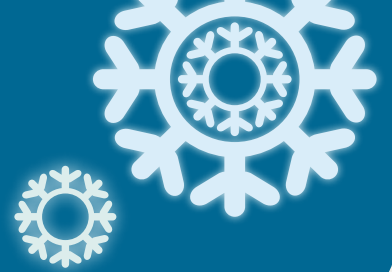
3

If a pipe has burst

- Turn off the water supply at the stop tap.
- Turn on all your taps to reduce any flooding and soak up any escaping water with towels.
- Report it to us immediately.



Protect your home now!



Staying safe

Thawing a frozen pipe is a safe thing to do so long as you follow the tips below:

- Don't disconnect the pipe
- Don't try to thaw it above waist height.
- Don't try to access the pipe or other pipes within the boiler.
- Look out for ice on the ground where you poured hot water to thaw the pipe. This could make the ground below slippery.
- Never use a naked flame or blowlamp to thaw it.



Don't wait – test your heating now



Boiler breakdowns and heating problems are common in winter. We get a lot of callouts at a time where demand for all of our services, and for replacement boiler parts, is at its highest. That means that waiting times can often be longer than during summer or autumn.

But did you know that often those problems could be identified and fixed before winter comes?

One of the biggest pieces of advice we can give is to check your boiler now.

Make sure you're satisfied that it's working perfectly by turning it on for a few hours.

If it's not, don't wait until winter.

Get it solved now by reporting it to us.



Video support guides

Riverside has a handy winter toolkit section on the website.

Head over to the web page below to take a look.

www.riverside.org.uk/winter

Pre-payment energy meters

If your pre-payment meter has run out of credit, you will need to reset your gas meter after topping up to reinstate your gas supply.

Please visit your supplier's website for instructions on how to do that. If you are unsure who the supplier is, you can find out by visiting

www.findmysupplier.energy

Our repairs services

We know that if you've got a problem in your home, whether it's a minor or major issue, you want it to be resolved quickly. It's the number one issue thing that customers tells us matters to them.

So, just in case you need it, here's our quick guide to all things repairs.



How to report issues

Want to report a non-emergency repair?

The quickest and easiest way to report a repair is via our CSC on 0345 112 6600.

We recommend you use this method in the first instance in all non-emergencies. If you have issues getting through you can contact your tenant partner direct.

Is it an emergency?

Call us immediately on 0345 112 6600.

You can find out more on what we class as emergencies on our website but things like loss of heating or hot water, gas or water leaks, broken toilets, floods, loss of electricity, issues that cause your home to be unsecured or anything that is hazardous to health and wellbeing are all included.

Repairs after a mutual exchange

In the 12 months following a mutual exchange we will now only carry out emergency repairs. Therefore, both tenants should ensure they view the properties and are happy to accept it in its current condition and state of repair.

Our service standards

To be clear on what you can expect from us, our repairs policy sets out clear standards on how quickly a job should be done.

We always aim to meet these standards and in more than 90% of cases, we do.

If we don't, we expect our contractors to be in touch with you to explain any challenges they have in completing the job, and ensure you're not inconvenienced.

If that doesn't happen, please let us know urgently.



Health & Safety
Within 4 hours



Emergencies
Within 12 hours



Urgent Repairs
Within 5 days



Routine Repairs
Within 28 days

Tackling condensation, damp and mould



Condensation, damp and mould

A key priority for Riverside Scotland is to ensure we're providing customers with warm, dry homes which are free of condensation, damp and mould. So, what should you do if you identify signs in your home?

The key thing to remember is not to wait – report it straight away. Even a small sign of condensation, damp or mould can be a sign of a defect with your property.

Reducing the possibility of condensation

Condensation usually appears where there isn't enough ventilation, so you might see it in the bathroom or kitchen, or in places where air doesn't flow easily.

In the kitchen



When you're cooking or boiling a kettle, try to keep the door closed to prevent steam moving around your home. Steam will collect on walls and windows and create condensation.



Make sure your extractor fan is switched on if you have one, if you do not have one in your kitchen please report this to us as soon as possible so that we can arrange one to be installed.



Cover your pans with lids when you're cooking and leave your extractor fans on, you can also open your windows. Both of these will help to clear the air of moisture.

In the bathroom



Condensation, damp and mould in the bathroom is caused by hot baths and showers that send moisture into the air.

When you're taking a shower or bath, make sure your extractor fan is switched on if you have one.



You can also open a window to get rid of the steam.

Elsewhere in the home



When possible and safe, try to keep your windows open to encourage fresh air to flow around your home.



Try to avoid drying clothes inside or over radiators.



Try and keep your furniture at least 5cm away from walls to allow air to flow around it.



Try to leave your central heating on a constant, low setting for as much time as possible, or set the timer to boost the heating in the morning and the evening.



Don't overfill your wardrobes and cupboards as warm, damp air can collect inside.



If you have a tumble dryer, make sure that it is vented to an outside wall, or the condenser is regularly emptied.

Supporting customers

We want to ensure you are being supported across all aspects of your tenancy. At the start of the year we redesigned our services to invest more resources in supporting customers, including more staff on our estates and enhanced financial support.

Find out how to get in touch if you are struggling financially and hear how we are supporting customers to maximise their income.



Let's Talk Rent

Our Let's Talk Rent team are here to help you if you face financial difficulty that affects your ability to pay your rent.

They are able to help you manage a crisis and can look at how we can help with payment arrangements which work best for you.

To support customers amidst the cost of living crisis, we recruited Cath Stone, Affordability Officer to the team in March.

The new service has been a welcome support to customers experiencing difficulties with payment of rent, utilities, and wider debt issues.

Cath carries out benefit checks for new tenants to ensure that all benefits are correct and the tenancy can be maintained, as well as supporting existing customers applying for benefits.

Cath also ensures that payment arrangements for rent arrears are affordable and manageable for customers.

You can call Cath direct on 07974 751 084.

Let's Talk Money

Our Let's Talk Money team are here to help you with money and benefits advice.

They can support you to ensure you're receiving all of the benefits and support you're entitled to and challenge decisions if they are unfair.

In summer 2022 our free Money Advice Service celebrated ten years helping customers get the benefits and grants they are entitled to.

Since April the service has had 45 successful claims for benefits resulting in annual gains of £97,584.80 for customers, including back-payments of £15,068.56.

Now in its eleventh year running, the service has secured more than £4 million pounds for customers.



Putting money back in your pocket



Case study

Earlier this year our affordability officer, Cath received a referral from the income collection team for John, a customer who was in high rent arrears, and for whom the next step would be court action.

When Cath visited John, she discovered that sadly John had lost his child a few years back and had struggled with his mental health ever since. John was suffering in silence and not dealing with daily life, including his bills. Cath listened and understood his situation and instantly got to work looking at how we could assist and support John.

Cath suggested that John apply for Scottish Adult Disability Payment (ADP) as his mental health was so impaired that he couldn't go about his normal daily functions. Scottish ADP can take a long time to process, but Cath kept in regular contact with John to make sure he was doing okay and managing with his rent and other household bills. We were able to help John with £100 funding from the Scottish Government's Fuel Insecurity Fund.

John finally got his award from Scottish ADP in October, and he was awarded both rates of ADP which increased his weekly income by £156.90 per week. This was backdated and he received a lump sum of £3957.43 - a brilliant result for both John and Cath.

Now that John is getting the benefits he is entitled to, he has been able to get back on track with his rent and is now able to afford payments towards the rent arrears he had built up.

John is now coping better and has regular contact with his tenant partner.

If you are struggling with your rent, please get in touch.

For more information and to book an appointment call our Affordability Officer on **07974 751 084**

Staying safe in your home

Fire safety

We want you and your neighbours to be safe in your homes – but to do this we need a little help from you.

Being familiar with your fire evacuation procedures and understanding the role of fire doors and other fire safety measures can make a huge difference and save lives.

Fire safety in flats and shared buildings

There are two main types of evacuation procedure in Riverside flats and shared buildings.

Stay put



This means that you only need to evacuate if the fire is in your own flat, otherwise you should be safe to remain.

Full evacuation

This means that if any detector activates, all flats will be alerted, and everyone should evacuate and call **999** followed by **Riverside** on **0345 112 6600**.


You will have a sign in your entrance lobby, which will tell you which procedure applies to where you live.

Please look for the sign next time you leave the building to check which one applies.



FIRE ACTION NOTICE

IF FIRE BREAKS OUT IN YOUR FLAT:

- 1: Get everyone in your flat to leave straight away, closing the front door behind you.
- 2: Do not stay behind to try and put the fire out.
- 3: Do not use lifts.
- 4: Wait outside away from the building.
- 5: Dial 999 for the Fire Service.





IF THERE IS A FIRE IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BUILDING:

- 1: The building is designed to contain a fire in the flat where it starts. This means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere in the building.
- 2: Leave immediately if heat or smoke affects your own flat.
- 3: If you are in the communal area evacuate the building.
- 4: Do not use lifts.
- 5: Wait outside away from the building or at the designated Assembly Point:
- 6: Dial 999 for the Fire Service.


If you have any queries regarding fire safety within these premises, please contact Riverside Customer Service Centre on: 0345 111 0000

Stay-put sign



FIRE ACTION NOTICE

IF FIRE BREAKS OUT IN YOUR FLAT:

- 1: Get everyone in your flat to leave straight away, closing the front door behind you.
- 2: Do not stay behind to try and put the fire out.
- 3: Do not use lifts.
- 4: Press the nearest fire alarm call point.
- 4: Wait outside away from the building or at the designated Assembly Point:
- 5: Dial 999 for the Fire Service.



IF THERE IS A FIRE IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BUILDING:

- 1: If a communal fire alarm sounds or the smoke alarms within your own flat sound, leave immediately as the fire may be elsewhere in the building.
- 2: Leave immediately if heat or smoke affects your own flat.
- 3: If in doubt – Get out.
- 4: Do not use lifts.
- 5: Wait outside away from the building.
- 6: Dial 999 for the Fire Service.

If you have any queries regarding fire safety within these premises, please contact Riverside Customer Service Centre on: 0345 111 0000

Full-evacuation sign

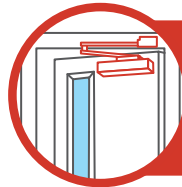
Fire doors

Fire doors help to create a barrier from the spread of fire and smoke and prevent it from traveling around a building, allowing safe access for the fire service or evacuation by residents.

Flat entrance doors and communal corridor doors should never be wedged open and closing devices should never be removed.

We carry out annual checks of all flat entrance doors and quarterly checks for communal doors in blocks of five storeys and above.

Checking your fire doors – it's as easy as 1, 2, 3



1

Check you have a self-closing device. The door should close firmly onto the latch without sticking to the floor or the frame.



2

Check fire strips (usually a plastic strip with a fuzzy brush) are around the top and sides of the door or frame. Check they're intact with no signs of damage.



3

Check your door fully shuts into the frame, and has no damage or holes. Open it six inches and make sure it can fully self-close.

What we do to keep you safe

We check all communal areas and shared facilities such as corridors, stairwells, lounges, kitchens, and laundry rooms regularly to make sure they're clear and safe for everyone. We also carry out fire risk assessments in our buildings and follow up any concerns to reduce the risk of fire.

Wherever fire alarms, fire doors and safety equipment such as emergency lighting are needed in communal areas, we fit them and check them regularly.

When we carry out safety checks, we'll report any emergency repairs in communal areas, which usually means one of our repair's contractors will visit within 12 hours. We'll also carry out regular visual checks of your front door, if it opens into a communal area, for any repairs needed to the door, frame, closer and fire strips.

These checks are part of your tenancy, lease, or license agreement with us. We may need access to your home to do them, so please let us in when we call.

Here's a few things you can do to keep your home and family safe from a fire:

Check your smoke alarm works

We want to keep you safe. We recommend you check your alarm once a week to make sure.

All you have to do is press the button on your alarm. If there is no sound, change the batteries.

Take extra care when you are cooking

When the cooker is switched on, don't leave children alone in the kitchen and stay alert. Keep tea towels, cloths and any other materials away from the cooker. Make sure when you are finished, all of the appliances are switched off.

Be careful when smoking in your home

It is always best to use glass, metal or ceramic ashtrays that can't burn. Make sure when you stub your cigarette it is right out and not still alight. Don't smoke in bed where you could fall asleep and forget about it.

Tidy homes are less hazardous

Rubbish can be a fire accelerant so make sure your home is clean and tidy so you can easily escape if there is a fire.

Check your electrics are safe

At night, switch off all of your plugs and any air-fresheners. Regularly check for any hot plugs or plugs that have black or dark marks. Check if there are any broken or loose wires. If you find any of these, or feel there is a fault, contact us straight away.

Emergencies

Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register is free to join. It helps utility companies, including energy suppliers, electricity, gas and water networks to look after customers who have extra communication, access or safety needs.

It helps them tailor their services to support households who need extra help with everyday energy matters like bills, and also in the unlikely event of a power cut, gas or water supply interruption.



The benefits

- Wherever possible, advanced notice of scheduled power cuts. If you rely on your energy supply for medical reasons your network operator can tell you about planned power cuts. For example, when they plan engineering work.
- Priority support in an emergency.
- Priority support when calling your network operator.
- Identification and password scheme. This could include arranging a password or agreed on picture cards if callers need to visit or contact you. This way you can feel confident they are genuine.
- Nominee scheme. You can nominate someone to receive communications and bills from your supplier. For example, a family member, carer or someone you trust.
- Help with prepayment meter access. For example, moving a meter if you can't safely get to it to top up.
- Regular meter reading services. For example, if nobody can read your meter.
- Accessible information. For example, account info and bills in large print or braille.
- Help reconnecting your gas supply, if you need it.

Eligibility

Eligibility for the Priority Services Register is assessed by the companies that run them but you may be eligible if:

- you have reached your state pension age
- are disabled or have a long-term medical condition
- are recovering from an injury
- have a hearing or sight condition
- have a mental health condition
- are pregnant or have young children
- have extra communication needs (such as if you don't speak or read English well)
- need to use medical equipment that requires a power supply
- have poor or no sense of smell
- would struggle to answer the door or get help in an emergency.

Go to www.thepsr.co.uk to register.



Make sure you're prepared

Power cuts, floods and other problems

Every year, at least some of our customers get into difficulty due to events beyond their control, such as power cuts or floods. So, it never hurts to be prepared, just in case. Here are our top tips for preparing for potential emergencies.

Flooding

- Sign up for flood alerts
- Prepare a personal flood plan
- Check your long-term flood risk

www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding



Power cuts

- Ensure you have an alternative source of lighting e.g. torches or a well-charged smartphone
- Keep a supply of food which doesn't require electricity to heat and eat
- Sign up for the Priority Services Register if you rely on electricity for your health and wellbeing or that of a dependent e.g., a young child.

www.nationalgrid.com



Home contents insurance

When it comes to your home, Riverside Scotland is responsible for insuring the structure of the building you live in; we've got that covered for you.

However, we don't insure your furniture or personal belongings – that's your responsibility.

We recommend Thistle Tenant Risks who offer specialist tenants policies.

Call Thistle on **0345 450 7286** or visit www.thistletenants-scotland.co.uk for more information or to request a call back.

Social phone and broadband tariffs

Social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits.

They're delivered in the same way as normal packages, just at a lower price. Amid rising living costs, Ofcom is encouraging companies to offer social tariffs to help customers on low incomes.

Contact a provider for more information or visit www.ofcom.org.uk and search social tariffs for more information.

Contacting your Tenant Partner

For general enquiries and repairs please call our **CSC** on **0345 112 6600**. If you are experiencing issues getting in touch with us via our CSC, you can contact your tenant partner directly 10am-4pm Monday to Friday for any tenancy related enquiries. Please leave a message and we will get back to you.

Pauline Lamont – 07980 162175

Dundonald, Lawthorn (Strathmore Park), Bourtreehill, Kilmarnock

Tania Fulton – 07967 443573

Drongan (Sinclairston/Millmannoch/Barbeth), Springside (Springhill), Tarryholme (Gailes Wynd, Gailes Gardens), Irvine (Castle Place), Pennyburn (Cranberry, Coodham, Garallan), Kilwinning (Abbeygate, Main Street, Hawthorn Place)

Patricia Milligan – 07967 442169

Harbourside, Pennyburn (Sundrum, Kelburn, Muirside), Bourtreehill (Cheviot, Parkside)

Aileen Paxton – 07855 442741

(Thu/Fri, alternate Wed)

Pennyburn (Glenapp, Cloncaird), Largs and Montgomerie Park (Pavilion Gardens)

Thomas Templeton – 07792 181769

Arran, Tarryholme (Gailes Crescent, Gailes Court, Gailes Place, Pennyburn (Skelmorlie, Culzean, Daljarrock, Cambusdoon)

Sharon Black – 07805 201547

Lawthorn (Broughton Green), Irvine (Thornhouse), Harbourside (Gottries), Pennyburn Squares

Kathryn Morrison – 07773 216480

Lawthorn (Littlestane, Aberfeldy, Bowmore, Millburn, Aberlour, Linkwood, Haddington Gardens), Dregghorn, Bourtreehill. Pennyburn (Bargeny, Dunure, Enterkine), Kilwinning (Caley House, Muirfield Place)

Jacqui Monaghan – 07970 982524

Drongan (Mainsford, Burnbrae, Coronation Road), Girdle Toll, Pennyburn (Kilkerran), Kilwinning (West Doura). Dumfries (Newbridge, Farnland, Lawbank, Shortridge)

Carol Wadsworth – 07583 677453

Dumfries (College Street, Goldie Avenue, Goldie Crescent, Union Street, Forsyth Street, Nithbank Avenue, Sunderries Road, Sunderries Avenue, Downs Place, Nellieville Road, Cairn Drive)

Jill Edgar – 07580 103350

Dumfries (Goldie Avenue, Nithside Avenue, Stakeford Street, Steel Avenue)

Arlene Inches – 07730 687904

Drongan (Barbieston, Bonnyton, Carston), Irvine, Kilwinning (Muirside, Pathfoot), Pennyburn (Enterkine), Monkton

If your street is not listed above please get in touch with any of our tenant partners who will be able to help with your enquiry.

