

Your help and support guide

Winter 2024/2025

Winter is always our busiest time. From repairs and financial support to boiler breakdowns and frozen pipes, we always get more calls and messages from you, our customers. We want to support you to prepare for winter and prevent problems from happening in the first place.

In this leaflet we've got all the information you will need on our support services.

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
- Winter pruning schedule



www.riverside.org.uk/winter

Tackling winter weather

Follow the guidance and advice below to better prepare you and your home for those cold and cosy winter nights.



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.

When that happens, it often occurs in large numbers all at once, meaning we can't always provide a fix inside of a day.

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 hairdryer, just be sure this is on the lowest setting and at least 6 inches away from the pipe.
- When it has thawed, reset your boiler by holding in the reset button for 10 seconds and waiting for the boiler to re-fire.

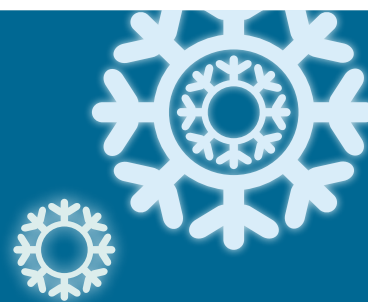
STEP

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 call outs 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

When people want to find out how to do something, these days the first thing many people do is search it on YouTube.

So, we're making our own. Just head to our 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

www.riverside.org.uk/winter

Tackling condensation, damp and mould

Condensation, damp and mould

A key priority for us 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 which is better addressed proactively, rather than waiting until the problem gets worse.

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.



If your extractor fan is broken please report a repair as soon as possible. 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.

Our repairs services

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

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

If you haven't already, download **My Riverside App** to report repairs ▶▶▶

With the **My Riverside App** you can update your details, make secure payments or report a repair in a few taps.



Go to the Apple App Store or Google Play or simply scan the QR code, it's free!

How to report issues

Want to report a non-emergency repair?

The **quickest and easiest way to report a repair is via our app**. Simply scan the QR code to get started. You can also use the online version of **My Riverside** via our website. You can still call us. 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

Cost-of-living

Cost-of-living has impacted us all. From rising prices in the supermarket, higher energy bills and wages that don't keep up with inflation, it has affected everyone. So, we're here to help.

Below we've set out the measures we've put in place through our Let's Talk Campaign to support you, including how to get in touch if you are struggling financially.



We're here to help if you are experiencing difficulty in paying your rent. Our Income Collection Team can help with affordable and manageable payment arrangements. Call the team direct on **0800 529 8789**.



Earlier this year, the government announced that winter fuel payments had been scrapped for millions of pensioners across the country.

You may still be eligible for Pension Credit. Contact our Affordability Officer, Cath Stone on **07974 751 084** to check your eligibility and for help applying.

Several UK energy suppliers are offering support to customers e.g. discretionary credits and grants. Contact your energy supplier directly to see what specific support they can offer.



Our affordability service is funded by The Riverside Foundation and is a lifeline for those experiencing difficulties with payment of rent, utilities, and wider debt issues. We can ensure you're receiving all of the benefits and support you're entitled to and challenge decisions if they are unfair.

We are delighted that funding has been extended for a further year, having supported over 400 customers in 2023/24 resulting in £237,694.39 in payments for tenants, including backdated payments of £36,081.06.

For money advice get in touch with Cath Stone, Affordability Officer on **07974 751 084**.



We are partnering with employability services in our local authorities to support you to find a job, upgrade your CV, prepare for interviews and more.

If you would like to be referred please contact Gavin Wiffen, Customer and Community Engagement Officer on **07970 348 724**.



Are you sleeping in poor conditions because you are having to prioritise money for food and heating?

We've partnered up with our contractors Bell Group and James Frew to provide beds, mattresses and bedding to tenants experiencing bed poverty. **Contact your Tenant Partner for more information.**



Putting money back in your pocket

Cath's dedication for tenant leads to life-changing support

Affordability Officer, Cath Stone recently received a referral to check if a tenant was eligible for a Community Care Grant and to conduct a benefit check, as the tenant was paying full rent. During her visit, Cath noticed discrepancies in the tenant's income and was concerned about how he was managing on such a low amount.

During the appointment, the tenant allowed Cath to review his internet banking, which revealed that he had not received any State Pension payments for some time. Cath promptly contacted the Pension Service and discovered that the tenant's State Pension had been stopped because he had not responded to a letter requesting updated details.

With Cath's assistance, the tenant's State Pension was reinstated and backdated, resulting in over £15,000 in back payments. Additionally, his weekly income increased by £231.07.

This case highlights the importance of thorough benefit checks and the positive impact they can have on our tenants' lives. Thanks to Cath's dedication and attention to detail, the tenant now has the financial support he needs to live more comfortably.

LET'S
Talk



Could you benefit from a free benefit check?

Here's a quick guide to the process.

Initial Assessment: Cath will gather information about your current financial situation, including income, savings, and any existing benefits you receive.

Eligibility Check: Cath will determine if you are eligible for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, depending on your circumstances. Housing Benefit is being phased out and replaced by Universal Credit, but some people may still qualify for Housing Benefit, such as those in supported, sheltered, or temporary housing.

Documentation: You will need to provide various documents, such as proof of income, identification, and details of your housing costs. This helps verify your eligibility and the amount of benefit you can receive.

Calculation and Application: Cath will calculate the amount of benefit you are entitled to based on your financial information and housing costs. This may include rent, service charges, and other housing-related expenses. Cath will apply for the benefit on your behalf.

Notification: You will be informed of the outcome of the benefit check, including the amount of benefit you will receive and how it will be paid.

Ongoing Support: Cath may offer ongoing support to ensure you continue to receive the correct amount of benefit. This includes helping you report any changes in your circumstances that could affect your benefit entitlement. This process helps ensure that you receive the financial support you need to cover your housing costs and maintain your tenancy.

If you would like to get in touch for a free benefit check, please call Cath direct on **07974 751 084**

Staying safe in your home

Hoarding: Maintaining a healthy living environment

Hoarding is having so many things that you cannot manage the clutter where you live, and find it difficult or impossible to throw things away, leading to cluttered living spaces that can pose health and safety risks. Hoarding can create fire hazards, attract pests, and cause structural damage. It's important to maintain clear pathways and reduce clutter to prevent accidents and ensure safe living conditions.

Hoarding can affect neighbours and the local community by creating unpleasant odours, attracting vermin, and lowering the overall quality of the living environment.

If you or one of your neighbours is struggling with hoarding, it's important to reach out for support and guidance. Our Tenant Partners can conduct an assessment to understand the extent of hoarding. They may work with social services and other agencies to provide support to tenants, especially if they are vulnerable adults.

If a tenant's hoarding behaviour poses significant risks to themselves or the community, we may take legal action to make the tenant clear their property. This is often a last resort after other support measures have been exhausted.

Clearing out before Christmas

We know people are keen to declutter and get their home ready for Christmas at this time of year. It is extremely important that when you do you dispose of items properly. Please take unwanted items to recycling centres, donation points, or arrange for a bulk waste collection from your local authority.

Do not leave items in common areas, gardens or on the street.

Pro-active Visits

Our Tenant Partners carry out annual visits to ensure that homes are safe, well-maintained, and that any issues are addressed promptly. We will contact you in advance to arrange a suitable time.

At the visit we will:

- check the condition of the property to ensure it meets safety standards and is well-maintained.
- discuss any concerns or issues you may have with your tenancy.
- check on your well-being and address any concerns e.g. financial matters or support required.

Gas and Electrical Safety Check Access

When it comes to ensuring the safety of your home, allowing access for gas and electrical safety inspections is crucial. We as your landlord, have a legal obligation to ensure your home is safe and to do that we need to carry out regular checks on appliances within your home.

These checks help ensure:

Your safety - they highlight any potential hazards

The safety of your family and neighbours - they prevent faulty gas appliances that can lead to fires, explosions or carbon monoxide leaks.

If you are unable to give access at your arranged appointment time or date, please get in touch with either our Customer Service Centre, your Tenant Partner or our contractor James Frew.

Tenant Partners can be contacted on their mobile.

CSC: 0345 112 6600 James Frew: 01294 468113



Fire safety

Understanding the role of fire doors and other fire safety measures can make a huge difference and save lives.

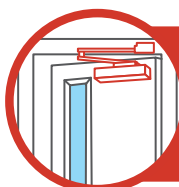
Fire doors

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.

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 a free support service to help people in tough situations.

Energy suppliers and network operators offer it and each company keeps their own register.

If you're eligible, it's well worth contacting your energy supplier or network operator to get on it.



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.

To find out more, visit:
www.thepsr.co.uk



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

We know that money is tight for people right now. But one essential you really can't do without is having the appropriate insurance.

When it comes to your home, we are 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.

There have been many times we've seen customers come unstuck after experiencing an issue at their property and not having the appropriate cover.

So don't get caught out – make sure you're covered.

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

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.

For general enquiries please call our CSC on **0345 112 6600**.

Annmarie Murray - 07730 687 904

Dundonald, Lawthorn (Strathmore Park), Bourtreehill, Kilmarnock, Weavers Wynd

Tania Fulton - 07967 443 573

Springside (Springhill), Tarryholme (Gailes Wynd, Gailes Gardens), Pennyburn (Cranberry, Coodham, Muirside Place, Muirside Court), Kilwinning (Abbeygate, Main Street, Hawthorn Place), Cheviot Head, Cheviot Way, Parkside

Patricia Milligan - 07967 442 169

Harbourside, Pennyburn (Sundrum, Glenapp Place, Glenapp Court), Thornhouse Court, Montgomerie Park (Pavilion Gardens)

Thomas Templeton - 07792 181 769

Arran, Tarryholme (Gailes Crescent, Gailes Court, Gailes Place, Pennyburn (Skelmorlie, Culzean, Cambusdoon), Kilwinning (West Doura)

Sharon Black - 07805 201 547

Harbourside (Gottries), Pennyburn Squares, Irvine (Castle Place, Burns Street, East Road, High Street), Girdle Toll

Kathryn Morrison - 07773 216 480

Lawthorn (Littlestane, Aberfeldy, Bowmore, Millburn, Aberlour, Linkwood), Dreghorn, Bourtreehill. Pennyburn (Bargeny, Dunure, Enterkine, Garallan), Kilwinning (Caley House, Muirfield Place, Pathfoot, Bridgend), Largs

Jacqui Monaghan - 07970 982 524

Drongan, Dumfries (Newbridge, Farnland, Lawbank, Shortridge)

Carol Wadsworth - 07583 677 453

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

Jill Edgar - 07580 103 350

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

Arlene Inches - 07730 687 904

Irvine (Loudon Rigg, Sanderson Avenue, Carters Rigg), Monkton, Montgomerie Park (Pavilion Gardens), Lawthorn (Broughton Green)

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.

ID Verde Winter Pruning Schedule

Please note that dates are approximate and the schedule is subject to change based on weather and ground conditions.

Bourtreehill/Broomlands: End of October

Kilwinning Outlying:

Muirside & Cranberry, Abbeygate, West Doura, Dunure Court, Hawthorn Place, Glenapp Court, Caley House, Pathfoot/Bridgend, Muirfield Place: **Throughout November/early December**

Irvine Outlying:

Springside, Thornhouse Court, Townfoot Lane, Pavillion Gardens: **End of October/early November**
Tarryholme: **November**

Carters/Loudon Rigg, Castle Place, Cheviot Head, Parkside, Harbour Area: **December**

Harbour Area, Strathmore Park, Broughton Green: January

Other:

Drongan: **Late November**

Monkton and Dundonald:

Late November

Dumfries: **Early December**

Arran: **Late January**

Pennyburn Areas:

Sightlines & Lanes: **Late November**

Cranberry Rd: **End of January**

Muirside Rd, Culzean Place, Glenapp Place, Sundrun Place: **February**

Cambusdoon Place, Skelmorlie Place/Coodham Place: **March**



Part of The Riverside Group Limited

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