

# Introducing Our New Customer Care Policy – Putting You First

**Our brand new Customer Care Policy was created with input from our customers and designed to make every interaction with us clearer, easier, and more supportive.**

**Our commitment is simple: to treat every customer with fairness, respect, and understanding — every time you contact us.**

## What's New?

Our policy sets out what you can expect from us and how we'll work to deliver great service. Here are the key highlights:

### Our Four Golden Rules

#### 1. We'll Get Things Right First Time

We'll respond quickly, explain what happens next, and keep you updated.

#### 2. We'll Provide Services You Need and Want

We'll listen to your feedback, understand your needs, and adapt services to suit all customers — especially those who may require additional support.

#### 3. We'll Learn from Mistakes

If we get something wrong, we'll apologise, put it right, and use your feedback to improve the way we work.

#### 4. We'll Support Our Team to Support You

Our staff are trained, informed, and equipped to deliver excellent service in every interaction.



## Easy and Equal Access for Everyone

**We want our services to be accessible to all.**

That means offering information in a way that works for you — whether that's over the phone, face to face, online, or via translation and accessibility tools.

## Clear Service Standards

**The policy also explains what you can expect when you contact us, including:**

- Acknowledgement of written enquiries within 2 working days
- Our aim to resolve your query at the first point of contact
- Updates within 2 working days if your enquiry is passed to a specialist team
- Respectful, professional service whether you contact us online, by phone, or during a home visit

You can read the full **Customer Care Policy** and view the new **Customer Care Policy Leaflet** on our website.



Customer Care Policy



## Join us in shaping the future of your community!

Have your say and get involved with Riverside Scotland to make a real difference in your area. Visit the Have Your Say page on our website to learn more and participate. You can also talk to us and keep up to date by joining us on Facebook. Search for **'RiversideScotland'**



## Rent Consultation 2026/27:



Thank you to everyone who took part in this year's rent consultation. We received **283 responses**, representing **11.34%** of our tenants. Here's what you told us:

- **87.3%** agreed with our approach of applying the lowest possible rent increase rather than offering higher options
- **88.34%** supported the priorities in our investment plan
- **67.14%** said they were not concerned about being able to afford their rent
- **5.3%** asked for support from our Income Collection Team or Affordability Officer

We also asked for any additional comments you wanted us to consider. From the 90 comments received, the main themes were:

- A need for **repairs and upgrades**
- A desire to tackle **estate and landscaping issues**
- Requests for more **social and welfare support** for vulnerable tenants

Following the consultation, a report was presented to our Board in January 2026. After carefully considering your feedback, the Board approved a **5.7% rent increase** for 2026/27. We will write to you four weeks before changes come into effect, and will publicise investment plans in the new financial year.

## Your Rent in Action

As part of the 2025/26 rent increase, we ringfenced **£73,000** to deliver specific improvement works across our communities

**This funding was allocated to:**

- Enhanced landscaping and estate management, including fencing replacements and essential tree maintenance.
- Additional planned and cyclical maintenance, such as external painting.
- Increased support for tenants facing cost of living pressures, including advice, practical help, and assistance with essential household items.

**We're pleased to share that we have delivered on this commitment. The £73,000 investment has provided:**

- An increased number of fencing replacements across our estates.
- Additional tree works, particularly following recent storms.
- A skip day in Pennyburn, with further skip days planned for Drongan and Dumfries before April 2026.
- Car park line painting in Pennyburn, to be completed by April 2026, helping to create additional parking spaces.
- Three small landscape improvement projects, now completed, including planting, turfing and paving enhancements.



## Helping Hands Fund

### Supporting tenants when it matters most

**Between April and December 2025, Riverside's Helping Hands Fund provided £6,199 in direct support to tenants who needed a little extra help.**

The **Helping Hands Fund** is a small, discretionary pot designed to offer **practical, immediate assistance** to tenants facing unexpected financial pressures. The fund can help with essentials such as:

- **Basic household items**
- **Food or fuel support**
- **Emergency needs**
- **One off costs that help you maintain your tenancy or wellbeing**

The support is tailored to each individual's circumstances and is intended to offer a helping hand when times are difficult.

**If you think you may benefit from the Helping Hands Fund or would like advice on other financial support available, please get in touch — we're here to help.**



## Support for Veterans

**If you're a veteran or part of a Forces family, there is a strong network of organisations across Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway offering practical, emotional, and wellbeing support. On our website there's a list of what's available locally. Search 'support for veterans' on our website.**

Our Affordability Officer, Cath Stone, brings not only years of experience in supporting customers but also a personal understanding of military life. Cath joined the Women's Royal Naval Service in November 1988, serving across the UK and overseas, including the United States, Belgium and Gibraltar.

Because of her background, Cath has a strong insight into the unique challenges veterans and their families can face. She is also able to identify and access specialist funding, benefits and support specifically available to veterans, helping customers navigate what can often be a complex system. Her lived experience brings empathy, understanding and practical expertise to the tailored support we provide.

Cath has helped tenants, including veterans access an incredible £517,027.22 in financial support between April and December 2025. This includes help with benefits, grants, budgeting support, and other financial assistance. If you're struggling with household costs or would like advice on what support you may be entitled to, we're here to help. Get in touch with Cath on 07974 751 084 for confidential support.



## Bringing Christmas joy to our communities

We had a wonderful Christmas celebration at Hawthorn Place, where retirement living residents enjoyed live music, tasty treats, and the chance to catch up in our newly refurbished communal room. A huge thank you to Michelle, our brilliant Retirement Living Assistant, for organising such a special event.

This Christmas, we also helped spread joy through our Annual Christmas Toy Campaign. For the third year running we worked with our Tenant Partners to identify 124 children in need—more than double last year. Thanks to the generosity of colleagues, contractors and support from Cash for Kids, we made a real difference for families facing tough times.

Colleagues also supported North Ayrshire Foodbank by donating much needed items, helping ensure local families had essential supplies during one of the hardest times of the year.



## Apprenticeship Opportunities

To celebrate Scottish Apprenticeship Week, we're delighted to announce that we will soon be recruiting for two exciting apprenticeship roles — one in Housing and one in Business Administration.

These apprenticeships offer the chance to gain hands-on experience, develop valuable professional skills, and build a long-term career within a friendly, supportive, and community-focused organisation. They're ideal for anyone looking to take their first steps into a meaningful and rewarding career.

We'll be sharing full details, including job descriptions and application links, on our website and Facebook page in the coming weeks — so keep an eye out!

**If you, or someone you know, is looking for a great opportunity to learn, grow, and make a difference, this could be the perfect start. We'd like to encourage applications from people in our communities.**

**Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2-6 March 2026**

**WORKING FOR SCOTLAND**

**🔍 apprenticeships.scot**

A graphic with a purple and pink plaid background. It features a white arrow pointing up and right, framing the text. The text includes 'Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2-6 March 2026', 'WORKING FOR SCOTLAND', and a search icon followed by 'apprenticeships.scot'.

## Did you know your local community group could receive funding support?

We offer **Community Funding** to help local groups deliver activities, events, and projects that make a positive difference in our neighbourhoods. This funding is part of our **Communities and Livelihoods Strategy**, which focuses on strengthening and connecting communities beyond our core housing services.

Community groups can apply for support for initiatives such as fun days, day trips, community events, or projects that bring people together—provided they align with the strategy and benefit Riverside Scotland customers. Each application is assessed fairly, taking into account the value to local people and the number of customers involved.

You can find the application form and full details on the **Your Community/Support** section of our website.



## Tips to combat loneliness & build connections



We recognise that the early part of the year can feel challenging for many. With shorter daylight hours, poor weather, and limited opportunities to get outside, it's common to feel isolated or disconnected. Here's practical ways to stay connected and supported.

### —Engage locally

Attend community groups, classes, or library events. The NHS Inform Directory allows you to search by postcode to find groups and events near you.

### —Offer to help others

Volunteering boosts mental health, helps you feel valued, and connects you with like-minded people.

### —Take small steps

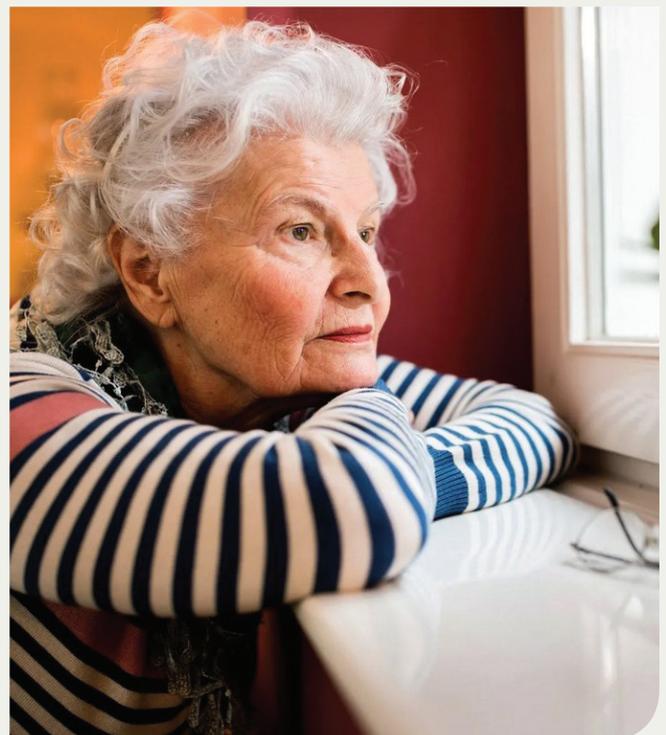
Even one short walk a week, or chat can help build confidence and reduce feelings of isolation.

### —Be proactive reaching out

Invite neighbours for a cup of tea or get involved in local community groups or one of our Riverside Scotland groups. Contact our Customer and Community Engagement Officer for more information.

### —Join peer support or befriending services

The British Red Cross Get Help With Loneliness service offers workshops, digital peer support, and telephone befriending options

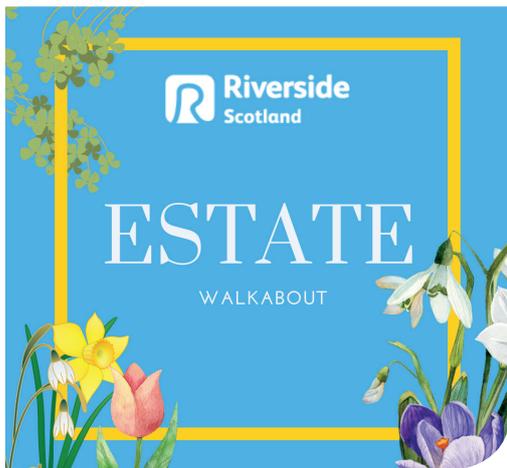


**Search 'volunteering' on our website for volunteer opportunities in your area.**

## Keeping our communities looking their best: Estate inspections & walkabouts

We're committed to keeping our neighbourhoods safe, clean, and well maintained. That's why we carry out regular estate inspections all year round, ensuring issues are spotted and dealt with promptly.

Alongside these ongoing inspections, we also hold planned Estate Walkabouts with tenants, staff, local authority and partner agencies. These walkabouts give everyone the chance to come together, discuss concerns, and agree actions that make a real difference.



### They're designed to:

- Engage directly with residents, giving tenants a chance to voice concerns and priorities.
- Identify issues on site; such as litter, repairs, unsafe trees, fly-tipping, uneven pathways, parking, fencing, or lighting — and log them for action.
- Foster collaboration, strengthening partnerships between tenants, Riverside staff, local authorities, and contractors to deliver real improvements.

In 2025 we carried out **35 estate walkabouts** and have completed ten so far in 2026.

### Issues raised at recent walkabouts include:

- Repairs & Safety: Raised paving, uneven slabs, blocked drains, broken gates, and missing water mains covers reported to councils and contractors.
- Grounds Maintenance: Weeds, hedge cutting concerns, and missed grass cutting flagged for follow-up.
- Fly-tipping: Multiple incidents cleared across Irvine, Pennyburn, Kilwinning, and Dumfries.
- Trees & Lighting: Overgrown trees checked for safety and light obstruction.
- Community Issues: Parking concerns, bins left outside gardens, and antisocial behaviour addressed with police and tenant partners.



**Want to know when the next walkabout is happening?**

Follow us on Facebook or visit our website for upcoming dates and updates.



## Neighbourhood Plans Actions & Updates



Thank you to everyone who took part in our recent Neighbourhood Plan surveys. We're pleased to share that the surveys for both Irvine and Dumfries are now complete, with a 20% response rate for both communities.

We are now collating and analysing all the feedback you've given us. Using this information, we aim to develop a clear local offer and share it with tenants by the end of March 2026.

### Pennyburn

We're pleased to let you know that work is underway to identify car parks in Pennyburn that would benefit from new bay lining – one of the issues highlighted in the Pennyburn neighbourhood plan survey. This is being funded by ringfenced funds from last year's rent increase and will help improve parking layout, make better use of available space, and create a safer, more organised environment for residents and visitors.

Our first two planned locations are:

- Kirkhill Car Park
- Cranberry Moss Car Park

We aim to complete bay lining works in these areas by April 2026.

If the project is successful, we hope to roll this out to other car parks across the area.

### Landscaping Improvements

ID Verde has now completed the three small landscaping projects planned in Pennyburn. These were selected as part of our new review of estate areas needing minor improvements.

### Glenapp Place

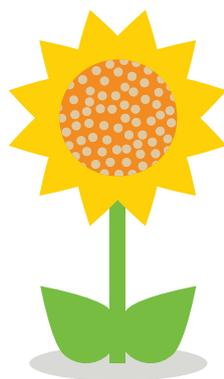
Overgrown shrubs were removed and the area was slabbed to create a clear space for bin storage, after feedback about bins blocking a driveway.

### Sundrum Place

Dead shrubs were cleared and the area was turfed, greatly improving the appearance of the street.

### Culzean Place

Untidy shrubs at the car park were removed and replaced with turf, helping to open up and tidy the area.



### Drongan

#### Community Events and Activities

Gavin Wiffen, Customer and Community Engagement Officer is continuing to explore opportunities for community events, particularly activities for children. So far, support has been provided through the Community Fund, which has helped make the following events possible:

- D in the Park
- Santa Sleigh event at Christmas
- Easter egg donations

We'll continue to look for ways to support local activities that bring the community together.

#### Bins and Dog Waste Concerns

A number of tenants told us there are not enough general waste and dog waste bins across the estate. We've contacted East Ayrshire Council about this issue and they are currently carrying out a review of bins and will be looking to relocate bins within communities to more suitable places. We'll keep you updated as soon as the council provides further information.



#### Untidy Gardens

Another priority raised through the Neighbourhood Plan was the issue of untidy gardens. We have been taking active steps to address this and will continue to do so.

Where necessary, this may include legal action, as keeping gardens maintained is an important part of looking after the local environment and supporting community pride.

## Quarterly Performance

We're committed to being transparent about how we're doing and where we can improve. Here's a snapshot of our performance from October to December 2025 (Q3) compared with the previous quarter.

<b>68.7%</b> Satisfaction with your latest repair 70.3% in Q2	<b>76.22%</b> Non-emergency repairs completed right first time 67.8% in Q2	<b>3 hours</b> Emergency repairs target of 4 hours 3 hours in Q2 Target of 12 hours – 4hrs 38mins (4 hours 12 minutes in Q2)	<b>100%</b> Gas safety certificates 100% in Q2
<b>99.87%</b> Electrical safety certificates 99.91% in Q2 as 1 outstanding with arrangement to resolve	<b>19.1 days</b> Days taken to re-let empty homes 19 days in Q2	<b>90.7%</b> New tenancies sustained for more than a year 85% in Q2	<b>10 mins 50 secs</b> Call handling times Averaging 8 minutes 49 seconds in Q2
<b>0</b> Landscaping contract complaints Quality checks are completed during estate inspections. No complaints in Q2		<b>48</b> Complaints 60 in Q2	We're experiencing high call volumes and staff shortages, and are working to improve this. Thank you for your patience—don't forget our digital tools: My Riverside app, email, and Live Chat.

## Smart Meters

Smart meters put you in control of your energy use — and they help us manage homes more efficiently too.

By installing a smart meter, you'll get accurate bills, real time information on your energy use and better insights into how to save money. Smart meters also make it easier for Riverside Scotland to manage energy in empty homes, helping us reduce unnecessary costs and speed up the process of getting properties ready for new tenants.

**Want to find out more about getting a smart meter? Contact your energy supplier today.**

## Get Involved

Riverside is committed to making its customer voice louder than ever and is inviting Scottish tenants to help shape the future of our services by joining the new Tenant & Resident Influence Partnership (TRIP).

TRIP brings together customers from across the UK to work with Riverside, ensuring your ideas and experiences influence how we make decisions. We're looking for tenants who want to make a difference — whether you've been involved before or are completely new to customer engagement.

As a TRIP member, you'll work with Riverside teams, review important areas of performance and help improve services for customers in Scotland and beyond. It's a great way to build skills, meet other tenants and have a real impact.

To find out more and apply, please visit the TRIP webpage by **scanning the QR code** or contact **Gavin Wiffen, Customer & Community Engagement Officer** on **07970 348 724**.

