

# Your house & home

Welcome to this edition of your service update from Riverside Scotland



## Big Conversation – Results

The **BIG**  
Conversation

Thank you to all **615** customers who took part in our Big Conversation throughout the summer. We surveyed customers to measure the overall customer experience and the quality of service delivery by Riverside Scotland. We wanted to find out what services our customers need from us in a 'post Covid' world, what's important to you and how we need to adapt and change our services to improve customer satisfaction and ensure you are getting the best possible service.

We knocked on **1208** doors – over half of our stock!

We made **790** telephone calls

We spoke to **261** people

**208** customers returned online surveys

**146** customers returned postal surveys

**114** customers expressed an interest in being involved in Focus Groups

We really appreciate and value your feedback and honesty. The outcomes of this survey will shape the future delivery of our services, including how we can work more proactively with customers to improve our local neighbourhoods and communities, how we can best support customers through the cost-of-living crisis to sustain their tenancies, and how we can improve our digital service delivery options to make it easier for customers to access our services online.

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



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Revitalising **neighbourhoods**

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Our 63 modular homes at Dundonald are complete



## You Said... We Did

### Customers wanted to know who their housing officer is and how to contact them

All new housing officers have been introduced in this newsletter.

### Customers want to see Riverside Scotland employees out and about within communities.

We will be setting up drop in surgeries across all operating areas.

### Customers looking for more support to help with cost-of-living crisis.

We've created an affordability officer post within our Tenancy Sustainment Team to support new and existing tenants in arrears to maximise income and navigate the cost-of-living crisis.

### Customers told us our response to repair requests should be more joined up and proactive.

We have now introduced a process where a full property inspection will be carried out if a customer reports multiple repairs within a week.

# Big Conversation

## What you told us were your priorities

- Local presence and access to staff
- Property investment
- Management of anti-social behaviour
- Repairs contractor management
- Effective tenant and community participation
- Sense of place

## What have we done?

- We're reorganising how we deliver our services to provide more visible housing officers.
- We'll be contacting everyone to introduce their new housing officer in the New Year and offer an initial visit.
- We're employing more asset officers to inspect repairs and help tenants get repairs done.
- We're working closely with our contractor to improve services and have developed an improvement plan with them. They have recruited more staff which should help us see an improvement in services.

- We've appointed a new board member, who came along to a focus group meeting, who is a tenant to increase tenant involvement in our decision making.
- We've got lots more to do and when we have developed a full action plan we will share it with you and you can help us monitor progress.



## Keeping you informed

Have you changed your number recently? To ensure we have up to date contact details for you call us on **0345 112 6600** or email **info@riversidescotland.org.uk**

If we have your mobile number and email, we can keep you up to date about drop-ins and events in your area.





## Introducing our new housing officers

In the New Year your housing officer will be in contact to introduce themselves and arrange a visit. We thought we'd use this opportunity to introduce the new team so you can put a face to the name!

**For tenancy related enquiries you can contact your housing officer direct 10am-4pm Monday to Friday. For general enquiries please call the CSC.**

### Pauline Lamont

**07980 162175 – Kilwinning, Girdle Toll, Springside, Woodside, Arran**

I have worked for both the public and private sectors within a diverse range of services such as Trading Standards, welfare rights, and personal/corporate insolvency. Most recently, I spent almost 9 years as a Financial Inclusion Officer within a social housing environment and have experience of many of the issues that social housing tenants can face. All my working life has involved providing advice and assistance to customers with difficult or complex issues. I get real job satisfaction from making a difference to people's lives and hope to continue that with Riverside Scotland.



### Thomas Templeton

**07792 181769 – Drongan, Kilmarnock, Tarryholme, Pennyburn**

I previously worked in Local Authority for over ten years and have experience in housing support, property management and other housing related issues. I really enjoy working in the community and look forward to working with Riverside Scotland customers.



### Tania Fulton

**07967 443573 - Bourtreehill, Dundonald, Pennyburn**

I have worked for Riverside for five years in income collection. When the housing officer job came up, I thought it was a great opportunity to make a difference in people's lives and I'd be able to further support our customers by actually meeting them face to face, rather than over the phone. I'm loving the job and have met



a few of my customers so far and looking forward to meeting a lot more in the coming months.

### Sharon Black

**07805 201547 – Girdle Toll, Weavers Wynd, Kilwinning, Lawthorn, Pennyburn**

My previous roles have been centred around housing and homelessness with a focus on housing support and property management. I am looking forward to using this experience in a new setting and look forward to building relationships with my customers and communities.



### Patricia Milligan

**07967 442169 - Lawthorn, Largs, Harbourside, Howgate, Pennyburn**

Prior to joining Riverside Scotland, I worked with the local authority for 15 years supporting tenants with their housing issues. I have worked for Riverside Scotland since July 2019 in our housing options team where I deal with allocating homes and processing applications for housing. I'm excited for this new challenge where I can get out into the estates and meet customers living in our homes. I will be job-sharing with Aileen Paxton (07855 442741) and will work Monday, Tuesday and every second Wednesday.



### Jill Edgar

**07583 677453 – Dumfries**

Frontline housing roles in both local authorities and housing associations are what I have enjoyed the most throughout my career. I am enjoying being out and about meeting and supporting tenants and their families. Everyone has made me so welcome in their homes which has been appreciated and has helped me quickly settle into the role. I work part-time alongside Carol Wadsworth.



## Customer Service Centre Update

**We know that being able to get through to us on the telephone is important to you and that it isn't always easy.**

Over recent months, performance has not been as we'd like and we're sorry this has been such an inconvenience.

To tackle the problem, one of the key measures has been installing a new telephone system. This new smarter system will help us to route your calls more effectively as well as providing a range of extra tools to help us help you in the future. We appreciate there have been a few initial issues following the implementation of this new technology and this has had an adverse effect on you trying to get to speak to one of our advisors.

We're sorry that this has happened and we are working through these issues. We're confident the new system, along with ensuring we're always as near as we can be to having a full complement of team members, will make a real difference and start to reduce those waiting times over the coming days and weeks.

**In the meantime, do let us know if you have an emergency when you contact us and we will get to your call as quickly as possible. Please also note that our quieter times are after 7pm in the evening.**



## Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour

**We know that nuisances and anti-social behaviour (ASB) can be upsetting and stressful for all those who are affected by it. That is why we want to help as much as we can to make sure you are able to enjoy the peace and quiet of your own home without feeling scared or frustrated.**

**If you are experiencing ASB here are some points to keep in mind:**

- Keep a note of everything that is happening, i.e. times, frequency, names of people involved
- Talk things through – your neighbour may not be aware that they are causing a disturbance
- Report the issue to us
- Contact Police Scotland if a crime has been committed
- Contact environmental health for notice/garden waste etc
- Contact your Local Authority private landlord team for help with private landlords
- Consult a lawyer for advice

**Steps Riverside Scotland can take to deal with anti-social behaviour/neighbour disputes:**

- Contact all parties to gather information
- Mediate between parties
- Contact Police Scotland to obtain police reports if an incident has been reported
- Issue warning letters
- Consider offering a probationary tenancy to monitor behaviour over a set period of time
- Eviction is the last resort and would only be taken when there is sufficient evidence corroborated by the Police Scotland

**What we cannot do:**

- Evict or move someone from their home unless there is sufficient and corroborated evidence of them being a perpetrator of severe, and in most cases, repeated anti-social behaviour
- Deal with social media disputes between neighbours

You can report ASB by calling us on **0345 112 6600** or by completing a report on our website.



## Repairs Service

Since our new repairs and maintenance contracts started in April, we've been making good progress and are working hard with our contractors to improve our repairs and maintenance services.

Below is a reminder and some examples of Riverside Scotland repairs timescales:

### 4 hours for an emergency health and safety repair:

fire, gas leak, boiler fumes leak, water mains leak within property (or flat above), no power, burst radiator (not a minor leak), insecure property, blocked or broken WC (if only one in property), community alarm failure, smoke alarm failure, health & safety related matters.

### 12 hours for an emergency repair:

water leak, part power failure, leaking radiator (not a major leak), no hot water, faulty drainage, common stair lighting failure, major rain penetration through roof, safety related matters.

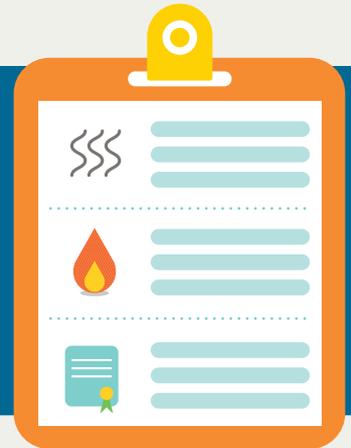
### 28 days for a routine repair:

If a repair is not classified as emergency or urgent then it is a routine repair.



## Providing access for safety inspections

As a landlord we need to ensure your home is safe. We carry out gas safety checks once a year and electrical safety inspections every five years. When your property is due for either inspection, our contractor will start to contact you 56 days beforehand to arrange an appointment for the check to be carried out. It is extremely important that you provide access to our contractors so we can ensure your property remains safe and complies with Regulatory standards. If you have any concerns about your property relating to Gas or Electrical maintenance, please do not hesitate to report them to our Customer Service Centre.



## Reporting a Repair

We have been experiencing delays in repairs being reported through the My Riverside app and the online repairs form on our website.

We are working towards a more streamline and customer friendly process whereby repairs raised on the app will be sent directly to our contractor, enabling customers to select their preferred appointment time there and then.

In the meantime, please report repairs by calling our Customer Service Centre **0345 112 6600** and please state if it is an emergency.



# Your repairs and maintenance

## Dealing with damp and mould

Tackling condensation, damp and mould in our homes is so important. The health and safety of our customer is our priority. Recent stories in the media have highlighted the importance and are a stark reminder of the tragic consequences severe cases can have.



In December our Board approved a new Damp and Mould Policy which places a greater responsibility on us to ensure that we identify repairs cases where damp and mould has been raised as a concern and work with customers to provide long term solutions in all cases. Through this policy, we will establish appropriate processes, guidance, and knowledge to ensure all our properties are well maintained and free of damp and mould that could risk the health and safety of customers. Our frontline staff have attended training on the rollout of the new policy.

In addition, we have launched a dedicated online training course for frontline colleagues who deal with the reporting, management and tackling of damp and mould cases.

**The new Damp and Mould Policy is available to view in the Freedom of Information section of our website.**

## Love your home – Five top tips



### Setting the temperature

Set your thermostat to a minimum of 18 degrees to ensure your home is sufficiently heated.

Use your heating controls to set the heating to come on only when you're at home. You may have thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) on your radiators. You can also use these to turn down the temperature in rooms you don't use very often.



### Reduce draughts

Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows and check for draughts around windows and doors.



### Switch off unused appliances

Don't leave appliances on

standby as many devices continue to use electricity unless they are switched off at the socket. Make sure you don't leave devices like laptops and phone chargers on when you're not using them as they will still use energy, most phones and small devices are fully charged within just two hours.



### Don't waste water

Only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the elements

if you're using an electric kettle). A dripping hot water tap wastes energy and can waste enough water to fill half a bath in less than a week. If you do ever find a leak, please report it to us straight away via My Riverside (see back page for how).



### Smart meter

Smart meters mean accurate energy bills and they allow you to see your usage and reduce energy consumption by

displaying how much money you have spent. You also won't need someone to enter your home to read your meter. You can use your smart meter to identify any spikes in energy usage and tackle them proactively. They also allow you to identify any appliances that are consuming energy even when you're not using them.

### Preventing condensation, damp and mould

- ✓ Try to avoid drying clothes inside and over radiators. If you can't do this, place the clothes on a rack in a room next to an open window, with the door closed and where possible the extractor fan switched on.
- ✓ Ensure ventilation devices are used, leaving trickle vents in windows open and keeping extractor fans on at all times.
- ✓ Keep lids on pans to prevent the moisture in the air from going into colder rooms which will cause condensation to form if it touches a cold surface.
- ✓ Remember to wipe moisture from windows in the morning and open windows to ventilate for 20 minutes.

## Modular homes complete!

The last of our 63 homes at Dundonald, the first large-scale affordable modular housing development in Scotland, were handed over to customers in November. The new homes have inspired the next generation of construction workers after four year old Hector Hodge from Dundonald became fascinated by the scheme on his way to nursery. Hector struck up a friendship with the builders, so we were delighted when he accepted our invitation to cut the ribbon and declare the development complete!

Hector is pictured with Diana MacLean, Managing Director of Riverside Scotland, and Jennifer Higgins, Managing Director of Connect Modular. Read the full story on the latest news pages of our website.



### Would you like to help improve social landlord services in Scotland?

Add your voice to the Scottish Housing Regulator National Panel. Join today for a chance to win £50.

The Panel is one of the ways that the Scottish Housing Regulator hears from tenants and people who use council or housing association services. Feedback helps the Regulator focus on the important things. There are more than 400 people already having their say. Members receive occasional surveys and take part in other feedback exercises and participation is always optional.

To find out more search for 'Regulator National Panel' on our website.



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

# Your updates

## Our annual rent consultation is now open

You will have received a copy of our consultation leaflet and a covering letter in the post.

You've probably heard that between now and the end of March 2023, all rents – for social housing tenants and for private tenants – have been frozen by the Scottish Government because of the cost-of-living crisis. This hasn't affected your rent yet, as we only set rents once a year, every April.

The Scottish Government will confirm by 14 January 2023 whether housing associations are allowed to raise rents in April 2023.

However, both the Scottish Government and Scottish Housing Regulator have said that housing associations should still carry out normal consultations with tenants on rents for next year.

Please let us know your views by completing and returning the feedback form or by completing our online survey on our website homepage by 3 January 2023. Alternatively, you can email: [involvement@riversidescotland.org.uk](mailto:involvement@riversidescotland.org.uk)

**All completed feedback will be entered into a prize draw for a chance to win a £50 shopping voucher.**

## Rent Payment Text

You may have noticed that we have started to send texts to some customers about their rent payments.

Texts state that they are from Riverside, include a link to make a payment and your easy pay reference number. If you are unsure about making a payment following receipt of a text, call the income team for free on 0800 529 8789. We're here to help, if you fall behind with your payments so contact us immediately if you receive a text, letter, email or phone call; your home could be at risk if you fail to maintain your payments.

## Performance Reports

In May each year, every social landlord submits their Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The ARC is a series of measures designed to demonstrate how a landlord is performing and whether they are meeting the outcomes of the Charter.

Our Landlord Report and this year's Annual Review are available to view on our website.



Our customer service centre is open 24/7 over the holidays.

Contact us on **0345 112 6600.**

Wishing our customers a **Merry Christmas** and all the best for **2023**



### Find us on Facebook and Twitter

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.

