

# Tenant Topics

Newsletter for  
Two Rivers Housing  
Tenants



## CINDERFORD'S YOUNG WILL BE **FIGHTING FIT!**



*A joint effort has brought the Forest Fighting Fit Club to life.*

Young people in Cinderford can improve their fitness and learn some valuable life-skills, thanks to the launch of a fantastic new boxing club in the town.

Forest Fighting Fit Club opened at the beginning of June, offering coaching in boxing, boxercise and general fitness training under the expert tuition of former boxer Mason Carr.

Not only will this make youngsters stronger and more agile, but it will help to channel their energy positively and reduce anti-social behaviour in the area.

Many local organisations – including Two Rivers Housing – worked together to get this exciting project off the ground. Forest of Dean District Council, Cinderford Leisure Centre, the Town Council, Bromford Housing and GreenSquare Housing all helped bring the vision to life.

Our Community Projects Co-ordinator, Jane Cordier, worked with the Forest of Dean District Council to win funding from the Police Commissioner's Leader Project Fund to get the club up-and-running at the Miners Welfare Hall, and it proved to be a hit from the word go.

A taster session in April generated great interest from

## Summer 2015

Inside this issue....

- P3 Phone changes
- P5 They're United!
- P7 Forest trail opens
- P7 Bid for bursary
- P8 Spruced for spring
- P10 Life-savers
- P11 Get knitted!
- P11 Scam warning

boys and girls of all ages, and many parents were also keen to get involved.

*"This is an excellent example of how organisations can make a difference to their community," said Jane. "We're delighted to have helped provide such first-class facilities, and hope that the whole area will benefit from it."*

If your child is interested in joining the new club or you would like to find out more, contact Jane by calling our Customer Services team on **0800 316 0897**.

**Enter our 2015 gardening competition**  
page 5



[www.tworivershousing.org.uk](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk)

## COLIN'S OUR WINNER!

Congratulations to Colin Graham from Berry Hill who won £100 in our calendar competition. He returned the survey asking for feedback about our Annual Review and was overjoyed to find out he was the lucky winner.

Mr Graham said: *"I quite often enter these types of competition – but I never usually win anything. I was so surprised when I heard I had won! I had completely forgotten about it."*

The winnings are most likely to be invested in his garden. *"It's the right time of year and I enjoy gardening,"* he said.

The winner is selected at random from all the surveys received and, for the second year running, it has been awarded to a resident in the Coleford area, giving Neighbourhood Housing Advisor, Justine Skitt, the joyous job of presenting the money to the winner again.



*Lucky Colin Graham is looking forward to spending his cash windfall on his garden.*

Thank you to everyone who entered. All your comments and feedback are being used in helping us to plan this year's report, which you will see in the autumn.

## DYMOCK HOUSES ARE MOVING UP!

The final roof tile has been fitted at our new homes in Dymock – a scheme which could be the catalyst for many local benefits.

Western Way will offer a variety of much-needed affordable homes in the village through low-cost rent, Shared Ownership, market rent and sale. The development also includes a new play area, footpath, car park and canal basin as part of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire canal restoration programme.

Not only that, but the parish council has welcomed the scheme because it will help to increase pupil numbers at the village school and that could have a positive impact on local recreational and tourism facilities, too.

Our Development Manager, Stephen Ingram, said: *"This scheme is more than just a*



*Representatives of Two Rivers, GP Thomas, Dymock parish council and the parish housing committee meet to celebrate reaching a significant milestone in the village's future.*

*new housing development. It's a forward-thinking approach to breathing new life into the community, revitalising the area and safeguarding its future.*

*"With homes in rural areas such as Dymock priced beyond the reach of many people, it's great that we can give younger people the opportunity to stay in the*

*village they grew up in, whether it is through renting or shared ownership."*

A 'topping-out' ceremony was held to mark this important stage in the development and we were joined by representatives from the parish council and building contractor GP Thomas Construction.



# LIVING AND EATING WELL



Nutritionist Di Gaski has a captive audience for her cookery demonstration.

Residents at our Willowdean scheme have been learning how to keep themselves in tip-top condition, in a brand new health and wellbeing course.

Over the five weeks they learnt a variety of healthy recipes from nutritionist Di Gaski, as well as having a different guest speaker at each session advising them how to look after themselves.

With representatives from Gloucestershire library, Age Concern, 2gether NHS



Sheila Sheppard and Ethel Pritchard enjoy sampling some new flavours.

Foundation Trust and Forest of Dean District Council, the group learnt about subjects ranging from diabetes and dementia, to what books to read and how to keep fit.

They also picked up a lot of recipe ideas and tasted a wide range of new foods following cookery demonstrations that included step-by-step guidance on how to make dishes such as frittata, macaroni cheese and chickpea and potato curry.

Kathleen Preece said: *"It was lovely! It was the first time I had tasted chickpeas and the first time I had tasted curry. I've never made anything like it before, but I might give it a go!"*

The course was made possible by funds secured from Gloucestershire County Council by our Community Projects

## CHANGES TO OUR PHONE NUMBER

From 1 July, tenants calling our office are advised to use our main Freephone number – **0800 316 0897** – as this will be free of charge to all callers, whether they use a mobile phone or a landline.

The **0300 100 0896** number that has previously offered people calling from a mobile phone a potentially cheaper alternative, will therefore become redundant.

These changes are being introduced across the whole country following a review by the regulator, Ofcom. As a result, all numbers starting with 080 will be free to use from both fixed and mobile telephones.

Co-ordinator, Jane Cordier. She also raised enough money to be able to take the course to five other HomePlus schemes and the residents of Western Way in Dymock and Ryelands Road in Bream will be the next to benefit.

If you live in one of the above schemes and are interested in signing up, please speak to your Neighbourhood Assistant.

# PLEASE CONTROL YOUR DOGS

An increasing number of our staff have reported either being bitten, or feeling threatened by dogs, when visiting tenants in their homes.

If you own a dog you are legally bound (under the Dangerous Dogs Act 2014) to make sure that the dog is under control in both public and private places. This, therefore, applies to your home and garden.

If you rely on gates, walls, fences or compounds to keep your dog secure outside, they must be of adequate strength and height to do the job, and

free from damage or gaps. If not, the dog must be tethered by a chain fixed to a suitably strong anchor point, and the chain must be a length that prevents the dog from reaching a person.

It is not enough to have a warning sign, such as 'Beware of the dog'. And if you say the dog is OK and then its behaviour changes and attacks someone, you will be regarded as having failed to control the dog under the Act.

The Police have the power to remove and destroy a dog if a case is reported to them, and



*Please make sure your dog is kept under control, for the safety of all visitors.*

the owner could face a fine or a prison sentence.

If you have a dog, please help everyone by keeping it under control.

## HERE'S TIMMY!

Meet 'Timmy' – a new and very good friend of Two Rivers Housing. He's only just hatched but he's already soaring high and is destined to make a big and colourful impact, locally.

Find out more about Timmy in the next issue of Tenant Topics – but, in the meantime, keep an eye out for him in people's front gardens when you're out and about.

Who knows where he might land next?!



## MAKING LOANS MORE AFFORDABLE

Two Rivers tenants who need a short-term loan can apply to borrow money from a new affordable money-lending service that has our backing.

My Home Finance offers an alternative to borrowing from payday and doorstep lenders. Benefits are counted as income and all applicants are assessed to make sure they can repay the loan before an offer is made. Payments are then collected by instalments through Direct Debit.

Carolyn Pritchard is the local representative of My Home Finance. You will find her at our Cinderford and Lydney schemes on the following days:

- Monday, 9.30am – 12.30pm – Hilldene, Cinderford
- Monday, 12.30pm – 3.30pm – Rowandean, Cinderford



- Wednesday, 9.30am – 3.30pm – Watermead, Lydney
- Friday, 9.00am – 2.30pm – Watermead, Lydney

If you would like to find out more or to make an appointment to meet Carolyn, you can contact her directly by email - **Carolyn.Pritchard@myhomefinance.org.uk** – or book a slot by calling **01905 25805**.

My Home Finance is run by the National Housing Federation. You can also find out more on **[www.myhomefinance.org.uk](http://www.myhomefinance.org.uk)**.



# CONTRACTOR'S NEW NAME



Our open events are a great opportunity to find out what's involved when your kitchen or bathroom is due for replacement.

One of our contractors has recently changed its name and tenants will get used to seeing a new logo on vans, clothes and badges.

Bullock Construction – which carries out our kitchen, bathroom and electrical

replacement work – is now known as United Living Group following its merger with another company.

You will still meet the same staff and their contact details have not changed but they will now be



driving vans with the new logo on them and carrying a United Living ID badge.

You should always ask to see this before they enter your home and, if you have any doubts at all about its validity, please contact a member of the local team or call us at Rivers Meet on **0800 316 0897**.

We are currently meeting tenants in the first two phases of the 2015/16 kitchen and bathroom improvement programme, giving them the chance to meet the team, find out what's involved and see the colours and designs to choose from.

We will be holding these events throughout the year and, if your home is included in this year's programme, you will receive an invitation letter from us.

## HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

The gardening competition is back and we're on the hunt for our most green-fingered tenants!

Our subsidiary company Centigen Facilities Management, which provides our grounds maintenance service, is offering vouchers to the value of £50 for the winner and £25 for the runner-up in two categories:

- Most Improved Garden
- Best Flowerbed

We know there are some fabulous gardens out there and, when you think yours can't get any better, take some photos of it and email them to [info@centigenfm.co.uk](mailto:info@centigenfm.co.uk) or put them in the post to Gardening Competition, Centigen Facilities Management, Rivers Meet, Cleeve Mill Lane, Newent, GL18 1DS.

Don't forget – we need 'before' and 'after' pictures if you're entering the Most Improved Garden category.

The closing date is Friday 14 August. Good luck everyone!



# LUNCH CLUB IS UNMISSABLE!

A fabulous feast awaited two members of our staff when they were invited to join the Thursday lunch club at Ryelands Road.

Chief Executive, Garry King, and Corporate Director of Operations, Jon Coe, took along some tasty treats to add to the brimming buffet table in Bream and enjoyed a very sociable lunch break.

This popular event started 18 months ago when Ann Payne shared leftover Christmas cheese and biscuits with her fellow HomePlus residents.

*"I thought I would bring them along and share them out," she said. "It's been going*



Lunch club organiser Ann Payne makes sure her Two Rivers guests Jon and Garry have a tasty lunch.

*ever since and just grown and grown."*

Now everyone brings a dish with them and, with nearly 20 people attending most weeks, it's become unmissable.

Brian Prosser said: *"I never miss Thursday lunch club. I always rush back from golf to make sure I get here in time!"*

## NEW WEBSITE IS LIVE

Have you visited our new website yet? It went live in April and we know many of you have already registered to use 'My account'.

This is the section with information about your home, recent and current repair jobs, dates of major improvements and details of your rent account, but you need to register to use it.

As a tenant of ours, you'll also find lots of general and useful information in the section called 'Your home', although there's plenty to learn across the whole site.

If you haven't already done so, take a look at how we're showcasing our Shared Ownership properties ('Find a home'), see how many homes we've built and refurbished in

the 'About us' section (under the 'Building new homes' sub-section) and find out what it's like to work for us ('Careers').

We've just produced a booklet with basic information on how to get onto the website and find your way around. If you'd like a copy to start you off, please contact Customer Services by email or phone - or you can find a pdf of the booklet on the first page of 'Your home' and in the 'Library' (under 'News and library') if you're able to navigate your way there.

Even though this is a new website, we know it can be improved and welcome your suggestions. Why not use the 'General enquiry' form (under 'Contact us') to let us have your thoughts?

Your information | Rent | Repairs and maintenance | Contact us

Your information

Rent

Repairs and maintenance

Contact us

### My account

Not yet registered or forgotten your password? If you had previously registered for 'My account' on our old website, please complete [this form](#).

Log In

User Name:

Password:

Log In

Password Reset

Username Reminder



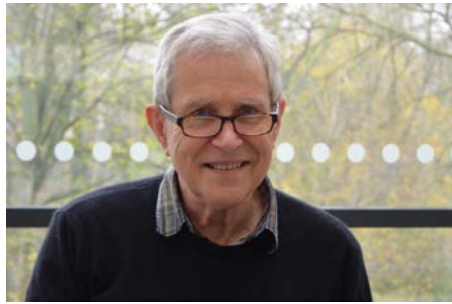
# WE'LL HELP UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL

Would training help you to get more out of your working life, but are you held back by the cost?

If so, the Two Rivers Housing, David Garnett Bursary could be the answer.

Set up to help people associated with Two Rivers Housing achieve more through training and education, the bursary could contribute towards costs such as:

- a short-term training course.
- child care to make study/course attendance possible.
- tuition leading to a qualification (eg degree, HNC, BTEC).
- travel or hotel expenses to support study or training.



*David Garnett wants to help our tenants achieve more.*

The bursary is named after our former Chair David Garnett, who believes learning can help people achieve their dreams.

He sees the award as potentially making a difference to the direction of people's lives.

*"Education is at the heart of everything we do and this*

*bursary could help unlock someone's future," he explained.*

*"If a Two Rivers tenant learns a new skill that leads to a job offer or studies a subject that allows their career to flourish, then it will have proved its worth."*

Any Two Rivers tenant or member of their immediate family who lives with them can apply for up to £1,000 through the bursary. This could be awarded to one applicant, or divided between several.

Find more information and an application form in the 'Careers' section of our website. The closing date for applications is 1 October 2015.

## ANCIENT FOREST TRAIL RE-OPENS

The Soudley and Blakeney footpath has officially opened, just in time for visitors to enjoy its full spring and summer time splendour.

This project, which re-established an ancient pathway between the two villages, was funded by The People's

Millions after it was put to public vote at the end of 2013.

Since then, the two villages have been bringing their dream to life and, on a Sunday in May, well-wishers of all ages turned out to walk the path together and cut symbolic ribbons at both villages.



*Village schoolchildren cut a ribbon to officially open the trail in Blakeney.*



*No celebration is complete without cake!*

Now Soudley schoolchildren are preparing a booklet about its history and interesting features for all those who follow the beautiful three-mile trail through the Forest to enjoy.

# SPICK AND SPAN FOR SUMMER

Spring is a fabulous time for a clear-out and many of our HomePlus residents have been de-cluttering and making their homes and our schemes spotless.

Right across the Forest of Dean – at the Springs and Watermead in Lydney, at Parkside, Oakfields and Worcester Road in Coleford – our residents have been filling skips and having a thorough tidy.

Centigen operatives were on hand to clear any overgrowth on the paths and communal garden areas, while the Forest of Dean District Council Street Wardens helped our staff and residents by picking litter and collecting unwanted items from tenants' homes.

Karl, our Handyperson, was also present with his toolbox and spent the mornings repairing, fixing and



Look how much rubbish can be collected in just one morning!

sorting out all those odd jobs that you never get round to!

At each event, after a morning's hard graft, the group rewarded itself with lunch, and a little time to stand back and admire the fruits of its labours.

We'll be holding more of these events over the summer.

Look out for details locally and in the events calendar on our website (under 'News and library') and come and lend a hand! We'd love to see you.



The willing band of workers line up, after a satisfying purge.

# THANKS FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

Thanks to everyone who took part in our recent survey to find out what you think about Tenant Topics.

It's great to find out that most of you are very positive about our

quarterly newsletter, and your comments will really help us to improve some aspects.

Overall you felt the length of Tenant Topics and its frequency is about right. You most like reading about community stories and articles about the area where you live, so we'll try to make sure we dig out news from across our patch.

Many of you wanted to carry on receiving news via Tenant Topics, but you also liked to find out about Two Rivers information online. This is good news because there are lots of stories, updates and

useful tips on our Facebook and Twitter pages and, of course, our recently-launched brand new website. And now we know you like it, we'll carry on doing it!

We'll be making some changes to Tenant Topics later in the year, so watch this space!

If you have suggestions for articles or would like to tell us what you do and don't like about Tenant Topics, please email us at **communications@2rh.org.uk** and let us know.

## Tenant Topics

Newsletter for Two Rivers Housing Tenants

Two Rivers HELPED ME TURN MY LIFE AROUND

Chloe, Phil, Cora and Oliver are grateful for the roof over their heads at Two Rivers.

A young Coleford woman has described Two Rivers as "a god send" for helping to get her back on track after a series of disasters threw her life into chaos.

In a brand new two-bedroom Two Rivers house with their five-year-old daughter Cora and the newest addition to the family, baby Oliver, who was born in February.

Spring 2015

Inside this issue...

- P2 We're the tops!
- P4 Website ready for launch
- P6 New idea in flexible living
- P7 Become an inspector
- P7 Campaign for more homes
- P8 Time for a clean sweep
- P10 Looking for a loan?
- P11 Make the switch

"Then I could not believe it when we were offered this house. It's brand new, it's lovely and we're so happy! We could never afford to rent somewhere like this before! We would not have..."



# TUFTHORN IS TRANSFORMED

The transformation of Coleford's Tufthorn Avenue is complete, with four new flats bringing this major regeneration programme to a close.

Two years ago we completed a project to replace 34 run-down post-War houses with 43 new energy-efficient homes. A play area and a community garden helped to restore the neighbourhood feel.

Now four one-bedroom flats stand on the site of a former bungalow, completing the programme and meeting demand for smaller properties in the area. They have been built to the same energy-efficiency levels as the other homes in Tufthorn Avenue, helping tenants to keep fuel bills to a minimum.



*New flats complete the look*

*"Tufthorn Avenue is unrecognisable from how it was a few years ago," says Angharad Hodge, our Development Manager. "This was a massive undertaking at the time we started and it's great to see how the area has been transformed and the homes are now being enjoyed by a wide range of single people, couples and families."*

*"There is huge demand for smaller homes at the moment and these one-bedroom flats were a popular*



*Tufthorn Avenue as it is today*

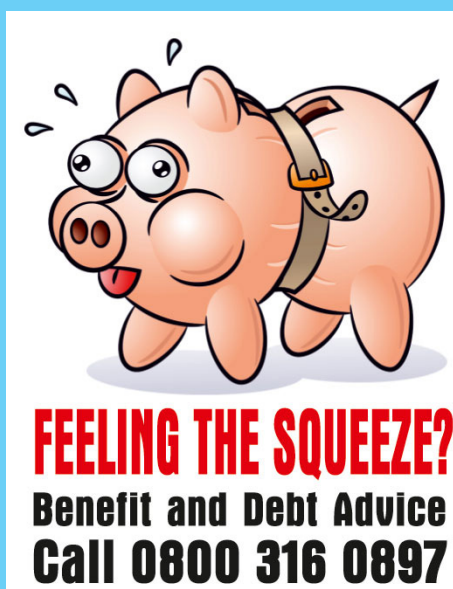
*choice. We hope our tenants will spend many happy years living in them, and will feel the benefit in their pockets from the energy-efficiency features built in."*

## UNIVERSAL CREDIT IS HERE

Universal Credit has arrived in our area, having launched in Herefordshire and throughout the Forest this spring.

At the moment, only single people who are claiming benefits for the first time (eg if they leave full-time education or become unemployed) are eligible for Universal Credit, but it will ultimately affect everyone (under pension credit age) who claims Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit is a monthly payment that covers six benefits and is paid in arrears. Claimants



receive the money directly into their bank account and have to make any payments – such as their rent – themselves.

This important change to the benefits system will be extended to Gloucester and Stroud in the coming months, and we will let you know of further developments as we hear of them.

You will be informed by the Department for Work and Pensions if you are to be affected by Universal Credit but, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. Alternatively, take a look at <http://ucpp.dwp.gov.uk/universal-credit-preparation> to see if there's anything you can do to prepare.

# HELPING TO SAVE LIVES

Two Rivers has funded 11 life-saving defibrillators across the Forest, massively increasing the chances of survival for someone experiencing a heart attack.

The first was installed on the outside wall of our Newent office and the other 10 have been provided at our various schemes in Berry Hill, Bream, Broadwell, Cinderford, Coleford, Newent, Sedbury and Staunton near Gloucester.

A defibrillator delivers an electronic current through the chest which aims to shock the heart back into a normal rhythm. All staff have been given an overview of the equipment, and six have been extensively trained in how to use it.

The defibrillators are available 24 hours a day. If they are needed, the ambulance service will give the code to the box to the caller who will be able to begin life-saving treatment before the paramedics arrive.

Jon Coe, our Corporate Director of Operations, said: "We



Matt Jones, Assistant Community Responder Officer for South Western Ambulance Service with the defibrillator at the Two Rivers office.

*obviously hope the defibrillators are not needed but it's reassuring to know they are there – just in case."*

And proof of its worth came when the kit at our office was put to use by a member of the public, just weeks after it was fitted.

Training in how to use the defibrillators is published locally and on our website – [www.tworivershousing.org.uk](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk).



Two Rivers staff train on the new equipment.

## WIN SHOPPING VOUCHERS!

Ever wondered what you would do with £1,000? Well, 2015 could be the year you find out if you switch to pay your rent by Direct Debit.

Every Two Rivers tenant who signs up before the end of October will be entered into a national competition, with a fantastic prize of £1,000 in Love2shop vouchers.

Direct Debit is a simple and convenient way to pay regular outgoings, such as rent, with payments taken automatically so you don't have to worry about forgetting and falling behind with your bills. Just set it up once, and the rest will happen for you.



To be in with a chance of winning this fantastic prize, call our Customer Service team on **0800 316 0897** or visit our office to switch to paying your rent by Direct Debit before 30 October.

More information can be found on <http://www.directdebit.co.uk/nationalhousingrents>.



# LADIES GET KNITTED!

Babies at Gloucester Royal Hospital will be offering thanks to the Get Knitted Club at Wynols Close for a range of blankets and warm clothing its members are churning out for them.

Blankets, bonnets, booties and jackets are all part of the range of knitted items the Coleford ladies are busily producing for the hospital's Special Care Baby Unit. Between them, they have knitted more than 1,000 items in just over 12 months.

*"I hadn't knitted for over 40 years, but it's like riding a bike – you don't*

*forget how to do it!"* explained Jane Smith.

Another member, Ingrid Lawson, said: *"I was knitting a blanket for myself before I joined the club, but I put it on hold because I thought the babies need a blanket more than me, and I've been making blankets for them instead."*

The Get Knitted Club is always keen to welcome new members to join them on Mondays between 12.00 and 3.00pm. Just come along to Wynols Close Communal Scheme – and don't forget your needles!



# HAPPY 90TH!

Joan Prosser's 90th birthday at The Springs Communal Centre in Lydney looked like a very happy occasion judging by this photograph.

Mrs Prosser, who lives at neighbouring Watermead, was joined in her celebrations by many friends and family – plus our Neighbourhood Assistant Claire Carter who said *"she really is a lovely lady"*.



# SCAM WARNING

We've had reports of a man and woman visiting our tenants' homes, claiming to be working on behalf of Two Rivers and offering to clean their gutters.

They're quoting very large sums to do this work, and asking to be paid by cash or cheque at

the time, but advising tenants that Two Rivers will refund the money.

We have not authorised anyone to carry out this work on our behalf and would urge all our tenants to be cautious if anyone turns up at their door unannounced, claiming to represent us.

If repairs or maintenance work is due at your home, our representative will carry an identification card and we will certainly not ask you to pay any money.

If in any doubt at all, please call us on **0800 316 0897** to confirm the legitimacy of the caller.

# STEP ONTO THE HOUSING LADDER

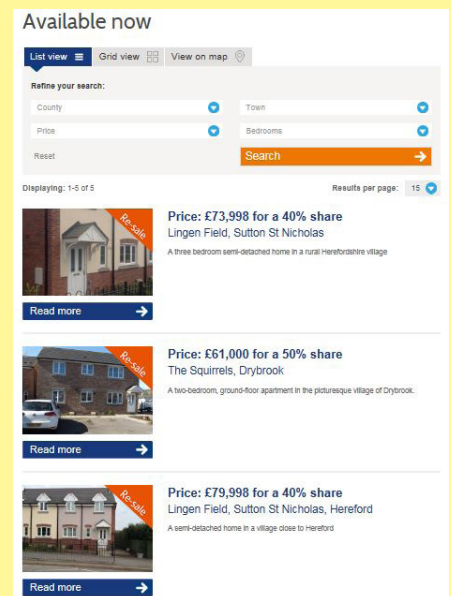
Have you ever considered Shared Ownership – the part-rent, part-buy option that gives you a step towards owning your own home?

We are currently marketing two and three-bedroom homes in Bream, Coalway, Drybrook, Staunton and Sutton St Nicholas near Hereford which could give you this exciting start.

Our new website has all the information you need to decide

if this is for you – both in terms of explaining how Shared Ownership works, and specific details about the properties themselves.

Just go to **www.tworivershousing.org.uk**, look at the section called 'Find a home' and choose the page called 'Shared ownership'. Alternatively, contact our Home Ownership team by email – **homeownershipteam@2rh.org.uk** or call **0800 316 0897**.



## IT'S AN ELECTRIFYING EXPERIENCE!

Students from Gloucestershire College took a tour of our new development in Dymock to learn all about working on a building site.

The eight trainee electricians, aged between 16 and 18, are in their second year of an electrical installation course and the trip gave them the opportunity to see how the theory learned in the classroom, is put into practice.

After listening to a talk from a representative of building contractor GP Thomas Construction, the group was then guided around by an electrician working on the build. He explained what he would do on the very first day on site, right through to when the electrical work is complete, and showed them examples of his handiwork.



*A group of enthusiastic student electricians on a visit to our site in Dymock.*

We are keen to give students the opportunity to get out of the classroom and see what they will be doing when they start working in their chosen profession, and we hope visits like these give them

the enthusiasm to continue their studies.

Maybe one day we'll find them installing the electrics at one of our sites, for real!

### Contact us:

If you want this in large print, on audio CD or in another language.

Freephone **0800 316 0897**

Join the Two Rivers community on  @TRHousing and 



Registered Charity No1104723