

# Tenant Topics

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**Annual Review**

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## Poster girls' warning

Primary school pupils in Newent have put pens to paper, in a bid to slow motorists driving past their school.

An hour spent outside Picklenash Junior School with a speed gun and a police officer saw them hand out 24 'tickets' to

drivers exceeding the 30mph speed limit – and their experience spurred them into action.

Now the students have designed posters for the road outside their school, urging motorists to cut their speed.

The Year 6 pupils took part in the Junior Wardens scheme we launched in 2014 with Forest of Dean District Council street wardens, the Police and local primary schools. It is designed to make schoolchildren aware of the issues that can spoil the area where they live, and encourage them to take pride in their environment. Six schools are currently involved.

PCSO Joshua Griffiths joined the children to see how fast drivers were travelling on the B4421 past their school. Now all drivers will be constantly reminded of the speed limit on that road by the three winners of a design competition – Alexia Agnew, Madeleine Scott and Jessica Ward – who saw Two Rivers turn their creations into posters.



The winning poster girls – left to right, Alexia Agnew, Madeline Scott and Jessica Ward – see their signs go up, watched by, from left to right, Rob Carpenter (FoDDC Street Warden), Julie Burlow (Two Rivers), Anthony Larner (Head Teacher) and Steve Brown (Newent Town Council).

Julie Burlow, from Two Rivers, said:

***"The children always enjoy the session with the speed gun, and this particular group wanted to get the message across more permanently."***

***"They produced some excellent posters and their strong designs carry a very powerful reminder to everyone travelling along that road."***

# Protect your privacy

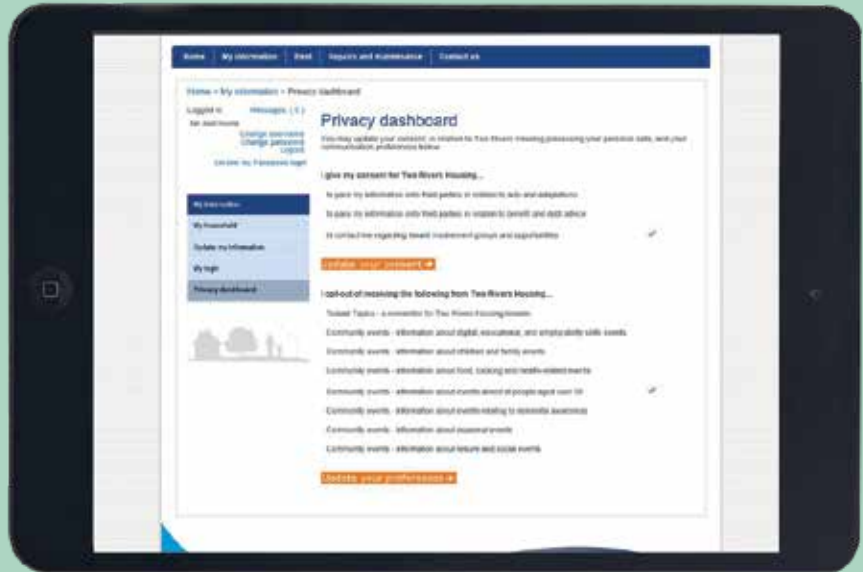
Some services or processes we carry out for you rely on us having your consent to process your personal data.

Following the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation in May, we have introduced a 'Privacy dashboard' in 'My account' on our website, where you can review and update the consent you have given us at any time.

We like to send you Tenant Topics newsletter four times a year and, from time-to-time, we may want to tell you about events we think could be of interest. Your preferences can be updated online via 'My account'.

You can access 'My account' from your computer, your laptop, tablet or smartphone. Just register once and then you can:

- update your preferences.
- book an urgent or routine repair – and choose a convenient appointment for it to be carried out.



- check your rent statement and see when payments were made.
- find out when your home will be assessed for improvements.
- check the date your boiler service is due.
- update your contact details.

It's easy to use and our Online Tenant Information Service expert Otis will be there to guide you through the basics. Alternatively, our Customer Service team will be pleased to help.

## Anyone for coffee?

If you fancy raising money for charity whilst enjoying a nice cup of coffee, make a date for the World's Greatest Coffee Morning on **Friday 28 September**.



Last year the residents of Worcester Road in Cinderford raised an amazing £540 from this event, which included a cake stall, tombola, prize draw and book table. This year they're hoping to do even better!

All proceeds from the coffee morning – between 10am and midday – will go to cancer charity Macmillan Cancer Support.

## Seed of an idea

All keen gardeners will know this is the ideal time to start planning what they'd like to grow for next season's crop.

But not all our tenants have the luxury of a garden suitable for tending the fruit and vegetables they would like. Which is where our 'garden share' scheme comes in.

We have a number of people who would be delighted to share their garden with someone who would like to use it to grow fruit and veg.

And to help them on their way, we're offering a garden centre voucher to all our green-fingered garden-share participants.

If you would like to find out more, please get in touch with our Community Engagement team, and start planning what you'd like to sow. Call **0800 316 0897** or email **communityengagementteam@2rh.org.uk**.



# Feast in the woods!

Coleford Family Feast went al fresco this summer, taking to the woods to cook home-made burgers on an open fire and hunt for wildlife.

We run this monthly event with the Forest of Dean Salvation Army, bringing adults and children together after school to cook, eat and play – and absolutely no cooking skills are required!

Lizzie Cox enjoyed making burgers and was impressed by what she achieved. *"I'm proper proud that I made a burger and it tasted lush!"* she said.

Meanwhile, Chantal Cox has previously learned how to make pasta bake, risotto, chicken divan, banoffee pie and apple crumble with the group.

*"I'm not a bad cook," she explained. "It's just the timing that's difficult and having the confidence to pull it all together at the end. I enjoy the cooking, and it's great to meet other people and for the children to play together."*

Whilst tea was cooking on an open fire, the children went in search of insects, bugs and wildflowers.

Family Feast is open to all and meets once a month on a Tuesday afternoon between 4 and 6pm at the Salvation Army Hub in Broadwell to learn a new recipe and make friends. There is no charge. All ingredients, recipes and cooking guidance will be provided. For further information or to book a place, please call **01594 839106**.



Major Vivienne Prescott from the Salvation Army, Chantal Cox and Lizzie Cox preparing burgers.

## Rapid response

Centigen operatives raced to the rescue when they spotted a fire at a tenant's home early one morning.

As they parked in Meadow Road, Cinderford at about 8.30am, they heard a bang followed by popping and crackling sounds, and then saw smoke and flames coming from an electricity meter box on the side of a bungalow.

Straight away Nathan Bishop, Andrew Hancock and Danny Leyshon knocked on the door to warn the tenant, dialled 999, and alerted a Two Rivers electrician who, as fortune would have it, also happened to be close by.

Together, their quick reactions prevented a situation from getting much worse, and the tenant, who hadn't been up very long, is thanking her lucky stars – and the Centigen team.

*"I was shaking like a leaf when they told me," said June Phelps. "I went outside and waited for the fire brigade to arrive. I don't know what would have happened if it had caught fire in the middle of the night or spread to inside the house. I was very lucky and I'm very grateful."*



June Phelps is very grateful to the Centigen operatives. She's pictured with Danny Leyshon (left) and Andrew Hancock.

## SAVING TIP

Try 'Secret Santa' this year with family and friends.

Set a spending limit, and provide a list of gift ideas, to have a chance of getting something you like!

## Springs to the rescue

Our communal centre at The Springs in Lydney has found a new Sunday vocation – welcoming worshippers from the local Methodist Church.

The church closed down in the summer and the local vicar was drawn to our facilities at The Springs and asked if it would be possible to relocate to our room, permanently.

Now the centre is welcoming people from across the town to enjoy the weekly service.

It's great to know our facilities are being used by the wider community.

# Advisors in Cinderford

Our Welfare, Benefit and Debt advisors are now running a drop-in advice service in Cinderford every other week.

We are using the Citizen's Advice centre in Forest Road as our base, but the service is exclusive to our tenants, making it easier for some people to seek help.

The team has a strong track record in helping our tenants to manage their debts and claim the benefits they are entitled to. A third advisor recently joined the team, so that we can offer even more support.

The drop-in sessions are held **every other**

**Friday** (from 21 September) at the Forest Road Resource Centre between **10am** and **12.30pm**, and a home visit



If you are a Two Rivers Housing tenant you can access:

**Free benefit and debt advice**

Starting Friday 21st September - then every fortnight. Drop-in sessions at Citizens Advice Bureau, Cinderford. 10am - 12.30pm. **Call: 0800 316 0897**

**Email: WBDAteam@2rh.org.uk**

will be offered if a tenant needs more detailed help than can be provided on the day.

Do call in to see us in Cinderford and we'll do our best to help you.

## Time to swap?

If you'd like to move home, but don't want to wait for a transfer, you might like to consider swapping homes with someone else.

As long as you find someone who wants to live where you do, it can often happen quite quickly and it won't cost you anything to arrange it.

The process is called 'Mutual exchange'. We will need to approve your application but, once that's done, you can register with the HomeSwapper website – ([www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)) – and you'll be automatically matched with potential swaps.

There's some extra information and an application form on the Two Rivers website (under the 'Find a home' tab), or call our Lettings team to find out more.



## Help shape our group

Our Disability and Carers' Forum is about to be revamped in a bid to make sure members get what they need from it.

The group aims to support tenants who manage their own disability and those who care for someone with a disability, and a review of the group's role will begin at its November relaunch.

The scope of the group, including the location and frequency of meetings, will be discussed then, and members will determine the way it runs in future.

Group Chair, Sara Beven, is keen to encourage more people to attend, and to welcome tenants of all ages.

*"This is your opportunity to shape the group for the future, and make sure it covers the topics that are most relevant to you," she said.*

The meeting is at 10.30am on **30 November** at Deanholme, Birch Road, Mile End. Transport will be arranged for those who need it.

If you would like to attend – or you wish to be involved but cannot make this meeting – or would just like to find out more, please contact our Community Engagement team at [communityengagementteam@2rh.org.uk](mailto:communityengagementteam@2rh.org.uk) or call **0800 316 0897** and ask to speak to Julie or Penny.





Remco Kroese explains the importance of health and safety for our operatives to the group from Newent school.

Students from a local school had a glimpse of what it's like to work at Two Rivers Housing when they came to visit our office.

We told them how important it is for people to have a safe, warm and well-maintained place to live, and explained how we provide homes that offer a more affordable alternative to buying or renting privately.

We then described some of the varied job roles and opportunities that exist in running our organisation – both customer-facing and behind-the-scenes.

This was part of a three-day programme of visits to local businesses for the Year 9 students from Newent Community School, giving them a taste of different working environments.

# Learning about business

## Fuel for the fire

The hot summer is now behind us and we will soon be thinking of turning the heating on again.

If you have a solid fuel heating system, it is really important to burn the correct type of fuel so that it continues to work effectively.

Using the wrong type can damage the boiler and flue, which may leave you without heating and hot water just when you need it most. And we may recharge you the cost of repairs if we can prove the wrong fuel has been used.

The manufacturer's instructions that came with your boiler will provide more information but, if you don't have these, please get in touch with us. However, most of our homes have a Charnwood boiler fitted, and the following applies.

- Coal – Coal must be dry and large (2" or 50mm minimum). Do not use singles, small nuts or coal dust.
- Wood – Wood must be dry and well-seasoned, ie having been left to dry for at least one year, but preferably two. Hard wood burns better than soft wood. Do not use broken pallets or painted wood.

- Peat – Peat must be completely dry.
- Petroleum coke – This must never be used.

If you are unable to find the fuel you need, ask your supplier, an approved fuel distributor or your local British Coal office to suggest an alternative.

If in doubt, we are happy to advise.

## Spruce up your home

Are you ready for a spot of home improvement, to get your place ready for winter?

Whether it's an indoor project or you're heading outside for some garden work, we have a 'local offer' designed to help you make the most of your home.

All our tenants can benefit from a discount we have negotiated

with builders' merchant Travis Perkins, and you could save 10% on your purchases. It's free and easy to set up, so let your imagination run wild!

**WOW!**

**Save money on DIY**

Planning some home improvements? Take advantage of a fabulous discount from Travis Perkins.

We've negotiated a special deal with the builders' merchant for all our tenants. Once registered, you can save 10% or more on your purchases.

**It's so easy!**

- 1 Visit or telephone the Cinderford branch of Travis Perkins (01594 822157) to register, telling them you're a Two Rivers Housing tenant.
- 2 Give them your name, address, telephone number and email address (if you have one). (They won't check your credit history.)
- 3 Start shopping - online, by phone or in person at any branch.

**tworivers HOUSING**

Bob Turner has learned how to use the internet,  
with the support of Penny Mail.

## Bob's story

*"I started the 10-week computer course at Watermeads, Lydney in January, with little computer experience. I did not own a tablet or laptop but, within a few weeks, I bought a laptop. Emma from Ad Ed and Penny from TRH advised me and helped set up the virus protection."*

*"There were between 10/12 people on the course; some had more knowledge than others. Some brought their own equipment, others borrowed tablets from Ad Ed. Once my laptop was running I used it for the rest of the course."*

*"Every week we were given a list of tasks and introduced to apps, sites such as Wikipedia, maps, bus timetables, shopping sites such as Amazon, local events and the library and keeping in touch with family and friends. TRH tenants were also shown how to set up 'My account', which stores important information and is where we can book a repair."*

*"Emma and Penny were available on a one-to-one basis to help with any problems."*

*"I am still learning and will be attending the next course to improve my skills."*

## Bob's on the right track

Learning to use the internet has transformed the lives of many of our tenants – including those who never believed they would use it.

Bob Turner didn't see what going digital could offer him and wasn't even particularly interested – until he joined one of our free courses and realised how much information was on the internet about his favourite hobby, trains.

Now he's proficient online but is still learning, and is even helping those who are just starting out.

If you would like to find out how to use email, watch videos or TV online, search for your interests, shop on the internet,

or just find out what all the fuss is about, please come to one of our free courses. If you're likely to claim Universal Credit, this will also be a great help.

Absolute beginners are particularly welcome and you don't even need your own equipment.

Our next 10-week free courses start on **Friday 5 October** at:

- Community Library, Mitcheldean, 10am – midday.
- Community Centre, Naas Lane, Lydney, 1-3pm.

To find out more or to book your place, please contact Penny Mail in our Community Engagement team.



## Birthday surprise

When Adele Garner turned 70 recently, members of the Rowandean Monday Club in Cinderford wanted to give their friend a birthday treat.

The members decided to brighten her day by giving her a bright and beautiful rose for her garden and helium birthday balloon, which Adele was overjoyed about.

A thrilled Adele said: "The rose was lovely. It had five buds on it which came out straight away. The colours and scent were amazing."

The yellow and pink rose was called 'Peace', acknowledging her great services to the local Methodist Church, where she likes to help out.

Adele is hoping her rose will bloom again before the end of the flowering season.

### SAVING TIP

Set a budget for Christmas – and stick to it.





# Annual Review

## 2017/18



**tworivers**  
HOUSING

*for you - for your community - not for profit*



A major change affecting tenants and our business this year was the introduction of the new benefits payments system, Universal Credit.

A relatively small number of people are affected at the moment, but more are transferring across all the time. With over two-thirds of our income coming from tenants' rent, we will keep a close eye on the impact of this situation.

We continue to promote our subsidiaries – Centigen Facilities Management and TwoCan estate agents – in order to secure new funds to invest in our homes, and Two Rivers Developments (as Tandem Living) built its first properties to sell on the private market. The profit achieved from sales gives us more valuable revenue to build extra homes for tenants.

We were delighted to secure a Gold Medal from national safety organisation RoSPA, recognising our consistently high standards. Staff also helped achieve our best-ever result in the Top 100 'Best Companies to Work For' (number 11) and a higher-than expected overall tenant satisfaction result (88%) from our annual survey.

Some of this satisfaction could be attributed to our new online repairs booking service. This allows tenants to report a non-emergency repair and book a convenient appointment slot via our website, and is an important part of giving them control of their tenancy.

We saw some significant changes amongst our colleagues. Two excellent new Board members were appointed, but our Chair David Powell stepped down after nine years on the Board. We also said goodbye to Jon Coe, our Director of Operations, who retired in April after 15 years at Two Rivers. We thank them both and wish them well for the future.

Our new 10-year Corporate Plan sets out numerous initiatives we will be developing between now and 2028. They will continue to challenge and stretch us, but ultimately help us to continue 'creating great homes and supporting communities'.

GARRY KING  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

JOHN BLOXSOM  
BOARD CHAIR





Our **Customer Service team** handled nearly

**52,000 CALLS**

**86%** were answered within **20 seconds**

We **received...**

**91**  **63**   
**COMPLIMENTS** **COMPLAINTS**  
(Thank you!) (65% were upheld)

**Regular surveys of our tenants showed...**


**93%** find us **friendly and approachable** 

**91%** believe their **rent is good value** 

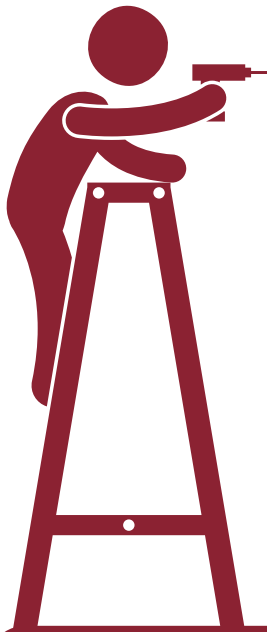
**88%** **like** where they live 

**88%** are **satisfied** with **our service** 

**86%** are **satisfied** with the **quality of their home** 

**82%** are **satisfied** with **our repairs and maintenance service** 





We carried out  
**14,000**  
**REPAIRS**  
WORTH £1.7 MILLION

**2,900**  
EMERGENCY CALL-OUTS  
**998** OUT-OF-HOURS



Our **Handyperson** completed **514 jobs free-of-charge** and another **106 HandypersonPlus** tasks

**99%**

of daytime  
emergencies resolved  
in **less than**  
**24 hours**

**91%**

of urgent jobs  
completed within  
**five working**  
**days**

**95%**

of routine repairs  
completed within  
the **20-day**  
**target**

**7 1/2**

days **average**  
**completion**  
**time**

We fitted:



**101** NEW KITCHENS  
(£487,000)



**322** NEW WINDOWS  
(£80,000)

**73**

NEW BATHROOMS  
(£296,000)



**288**  
HOMES

WITH  
INSULATION  
(£475,000)



**151** NEW DOORS  
(£81,000)



**14**  
HOMES

WITH GAS  
HEATING (£36,000)  
(to replace solid fuel or  
electric)

We carried out:

**142**

heating  
upgrades  
(£616,000)

**500**

solid fuel  
services  
(£31,000)

**416**

property  
surveys

**446**

external  
improvements  
(£1.1 million)

**246**

electrical  
reports  
(£43,000)

**3**

garage site  
refurbishments  
(£121,000)

**27**

electrical  
rewiring tasks  
(£170,000)

**776**

smoke  
detector tests  
(£40,000)

**2,934**

gas  
services  
(£95,000)

**648**

fire door  
inspections



We held **2,400** events at our HomePlus centres  
enjoyed by nearly **31,000** people

We gave free debt, welfare and benefit advice to **488** tenants helping them to claim **£84,000** in back-dated benefits, **£731,000** in new benefits and grant awards totalling **£20,000**, plus **£354,000** to help with non-priority debts.

**181** tenants claimed **Universal Credit**.  
**136** were in arrears, averaging **£550**.



**251** of our existing homes welcomed new tenants to...

**87** flats



**97** bungalows



**67** houses



In addition to this...

**72** people & families moved into brand new rented homes



**39** families swapped their homes



On average, it took...

**17.74** days to prepare an empty home for new tenants



WE DEALT WITH **134** REPORTS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR – AN INCREASE OF **40%**  
THIS INCLUDED...

**41** about noise



**26** about abusive or threatening behaviour



**21** about property condition

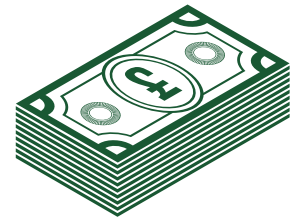


**12** related to drugs





CURRENT TENANTS  
owed us  
**£250,000** **=** **1.25%**  
IN UNPAID RENT  
during the year  
of our TOTAL  
INCOME from RENT  
and SERVICE CHARGES



WE USE A NUMBER OF WAYS TO TRACE FORMER TENANTS WHO OWE US MONEY,  
INCLUDING THE NATIONAL ANTI-FRAUD NETWORK

**12**  
tenants were **evicted**  
for **rent arrears**



**£66,500**  
was collected from **former tenants**  
who left their home **owing us money**



**10**  
**claims** made through  
**Small Claims Court**



## Our staff

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

**110**  
STAFF **gave** **800**  
HOURS **of their time** **SUPPORTING 20**  
community projects through our Helping Hands initiative.

Staff helped charities, hospices, scout groups, playgroups, schools and groups supporting the elderly, people with disabilities or mental health issues.

### PROJECTS INCLUDED:

Gardening 

General Maintenance 

Preparing for a Christmas Fayre 

Painting 

Planting bulbs 

In partnership with **Travis Perkins**, we provided bark, log edging, compost, paint and materials to groups supported through **Helping Hands**.



— WE INVESTED —

**£15.6 million**

(cost spread over the duration of the developments)

on building **95** new homes

and buying **21** new homes



...at Bream, Churcham, Churchdown, Drybrook, Gloucester, Joys Green, Newent, Stonehouse and Tewkesbury.

WORK STARTED ON

— **93** NEW HOMES —

at the Forest of Dean, Stroud & Tewkesbury

TOTALLING

**£15 million**

(cost spread over the duration of the developments)



— WE SOLD —

**6** OLD HOMES



**10**

NEW HOMES



invested the money in building new properties

**22** people bought their home through 'Right to Buy' or 'Right to Acquire'



**20** people chose Shared Ownership

**3** people bought their Shared Ownership homes outright



We have three separate ventures which donate profit to **Two Rivers Housing**, so that it can continue to create great homes and support communities.



Centigen Facilities Management employed **66 staff** in grounds maintenance, cleaning, responsive repairs and voids, who looked after **11 clients** (including housing associations, hotels, house builders and parish councils) across Bristol, the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire and South Wales.



TwoCan estate agency sold **64 homes worth more than £12 million** in its third year of trading.



Tandem Living launched and **built 17 homes** in Newent and bought land at Alfrick, Worcestershire **for 21 more**.



Two Rivers Housing is a registered charity run on a not-for-profit basis. Any money left over after we have paid our bills goes straight back into providing homes and services. It is, therefore, important for us to achieve the most we can from the funds available, whilst making sure we deliver high quality services.

We have a 10-year vision for achieving our core purpose of 'creating great homes and supporting communities'. In order to support this vision, we borrowed nearly £37 million, which will be invested in building new homes over the coming years. Alongside this investment we have continued to provide our core housing services within our communities in-line with our value-for-money ethos.

Our regulator, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), requires us to complete a value-for-money metrics report. This can be found in the Library on our website.

We are bound by a set of RSH Regulatory Standards, including the Governance and Financial Viability Standard.

Further details on the standards can be found on the RSH website at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-standards](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-standards).



**Front cover:** Staff from Two Rivers Housing, Centigen and TwoCan put their thumbprints on this image of a tree to commemorate the part they played in achieving our best-ever Sunday Times Top 100 position (number 11) in 2018. This picture is on display at our office.

## CASH IN

Rent	£18,935,000
New loan	£36,638,000
Shared Ownership and property sales	£3,095,000
Interest received	£2,000
Other income	£248,000
Service charges	£827,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£59,745,000</b>

## CASH OUT

Developing homes and communities	£12,462,000
Managing services	£4,514,000
Buying specialist services	£499,000
Maintaining homes	£7,048,000
Interest paid	£3,188,000
Other fixed assets	£399,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£28,110,000</b>

## HOW EACH POUND IS SPENT:



Maintaining homes	<b>£0.25</b>
Developing homes and communities	<b>£0.44</b>
Managing services	<b>£0.16</b>
Servicing loans	<b>£0.12</b>
Additional services	<b>£0.03</b>



*for you - for your community - not for profit*

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





Kaylei Ellis takes her turn at the Cinderford Jobcentre Plus office for the Income Collection team.

## Please recycle

Recycling is a hot topic at the moment, particularly in relation to plastics, and there's renewed interest in reducing the amount of waste and re-using what can be recycled.

Separating paper, plastic, tins and glass has become a way of life for many of us and it is important we continue doing this, to give us the best chance of preserving our wildlife and our planet.

All councils offer these facilities, both on the doorstep and in recycling centres, although they have different rules on separating items. Please check your local council to find out what they offer and what you need to do.

Some of our flats, such as those in Gloucester city, have large shared bins for waste and recycling, and it is important residents use them correctly. Information is available in those locations about what needs to be put in which bin.

## Drop in centre

If you have questions about your rent or Universal Credit, you might prefer to discuss them face-to-face rather than over the phone.

If so, our Income Collection team now has a desk at the Jobcentres in Cinderford and Coleford each fortnight and you can come and talk to us there.

You can book an appointment if you wish, or you can just drop in between 10am and midday on a Monday. We will be at Cinderford on 1 October and Coleford on 8 October, and then alternate weeks after that.

All our staff should be able to help with your questions, but we run a rota system so, if you wish to see a particular member of the team, please call our office on **0800 316 0897** or email **incomecollectionteam@2rh.org.uk** and find out when they'll be in next.

However, if your query is urgent, please get in touch as soon as possible, and we can arrange a home visit to deal with the issue quickly.

### SAVING TIP

Start Christmas shopping now to spread the cost. Perhaps you can make some gifts? Handmade presents always go down well.

## Blue Badge extended

People with 'hidden' disabilities are being included in the Government's Blue Badge parking scheme.

The permit currently allows people with physical disabilities to park closer to their destination than others, but now those with less visible disabilities such as autism and mental health conditions will be able to join them.

The new criteria will include those who:

- cannot travel without risk of serious harm to their health or safety, or that of any other person (eg young children with autism).
- cannot travel without it causing them very considerable psychological distress.
- have very considerable difficulty when walking.

New guidance is being drawn up to extend the scheme, which is due to be introduced in 2019.



***"We are holding an increasing number of reminiscence sessions with our tenants, and they will really enjoy looking through these boxes," said Julie Burlow, our Community Engagement Team Leader.***

*From left to right, Katy-Jane Eastwood, Andrew Morgan-Watts (Forest of Dean Dementia Action Alliance), Luke Penfold, Julie Burlow (Two Rivers Housing) and Ryan Penfold.*



## Students support dementia

Students at Newent Community School have been helping to stir the memories of local people with dementia.

The pupils have been collecting items to put in memory boxes which have been distributed to ourselves, Forest of Dean Dementia Action Alliance and Newent Library to use with tenants and other local people.

All students in Year 8 complete a Dementia Friend badge and learn how the disease can affect those with the condition and their friends and families. Some of the pupils have grandparents with dementia and understand, first-hand, many of the pressures it can cause.

This year the children collected items that would trigger recollections for

people with dementia, and the memory boxes included soap, books, sweets, toys and even a box of icing sugar priced at 29½p!

We run various reminiscence sessions with older residents to help stimulate conversations and their memories, and these memory boxes will be a great help.

## Gas service change

Annual servicing of all gas appliances is a critical part of our maintenance programme, aimed at keeping tenants safe.

New industry regulations mean we will now be arranging your gas servicing earlier than ever before - although it won't affect the original anniversary date.

This is similar to organising your vehicle MOT, which can be arranged up to four weeks before it runs out, but your expiry date remains the same. In the case of gas servicing, this can be eight weeks before it is due.

This means:

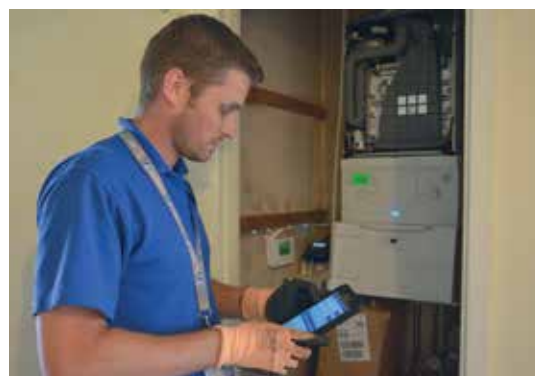
- you will be contacted to arrange your gas service, up to two months before the due date.
- the due date will remain the same each year.
- you will have greater flexibility to arrange your service.

Please give us access to carry out this important work when we ask, or fix a new appointment if the date or time we suggest is not suitable. If you don't, we waste time and money on repeat visits, that could be spent on improvements.

We take your safety very seriously and, if we are not able to complete these vital checks before the expiry date, you risk losing your gas supply, or repaying our costs if we have to go to court to gain access.

Also, the engineer will no longer issue a safety certificate at the end of the visit. Instead, you will receive it by post, within 28 days after the service.

Please contact our Maintenance team if you have any questions.



## Make a date

Our next Holiday Club will be on **Wednesday 24 October** at Forest Community Church, Cinderford between midday and 2pm.

We provide free lunch and entertainment, although we do ask you to stay with any children you bring.

No need to book but, as it is so popular, we advise you to come early. Hope to see you there.



# It's YOUR account



Winners of our monthly free draw for 'My account' users have all said how easy it is to use.

The repairs booking function of 'My account' is a really simple way for tenants to tell us about a repair, and to book an appointment for when they would like it to be carried out.

You can also now use it to tell us about repairs to communal facilities, such as lights not working or doors not fastening.

Don McLeod (pictured above), who won the £25 voucher in July, said: *"I like the fact I can sort a repair when it suits me, rather than just office hours, and I find it easy to do."*

His experience was echoed by Rachel Lane, who won in June, and who said she thought the repairs reporting function was *"wonderful."*

You can use 'My account' day or night, at a time that suits you. To register, go to [www.tworivershousing.org.uk](http://www.tworivershousing.org.uk), click on the 'Log in to your account' button and follow the instructions. If you have any problems with this, please just contact our Customer Service team, who will be happy to help.



# Happy in his home



Most Two Rivers' properties are built on one or two levels, but our latest building is a four-storey block of flats, right in the heart of Gloucester.

The 22 one and two-bedroom apartments in Wellington Street are only a stone's throw from the city centre shops and entertainment, just right for a young man looking forward to setting up his own home.

For 25-year-old Kieron Harper, his flat is just 10 minutes from his family and within a very easy walk or cycle ride to work.

The flats stand on the site of the former Gloucester British School which was built in the 1800s, and

Kieron has always lived in Gloucester and has enjoyed settling in. ***"I love it,"*** he said. ***"The location's perfect and it's home to me."***

the development incorporates some of the historic foundation and memorial stones.

Wellington Street is just one of our recent projects. In the last year we have invested more than £16 million in building 116 homes and we are currently working on another 93 homes worth a further £15 million – all designed to make more affordable homes available in areas where they are needed.

# A voice for change

Our Tenant Forum is becoming a lively group for Two Rivers tenants with ideas and opinions they are happy to share.

The topics are wide-ranging but relevant and, while linked to our services and our tenants, others tackle broader social issues. But it's not just a talking-shop as we try to close each Forum with suggestions/actions to be researched and reported back to future meetings.

As a result of previous discussions, we have reviewed and agreed TRH Local Offers, discussed recycling furniture and white goods, and talked about the impact of poverty and the support available with a speaker from the Forest

Foodbank. Future subjects include the Two Rivers Corporate Plan, objectives and performance.

Meetings are held between 10.30am and 12.30pm and the next three will be on:

- 13 November at Coleford.
- 13 January at Lydney.
- 12 March at Newent.

If you think you might like to be involved, please do get in touch for an informal chat. You can email [communityengagementteam@2rh.org.uk](mailto:communityengagementteam@2rh.org.uk) or call **0800 316 0897** and ask to speak to Julie or Penny.



# Winter work

It's been a tough year for our gardens, with the prolonged cold weather and snow immediately followed by an extended summer drought.

And while the grass and flower beds will no doubt be hoping for some respite, there's no let-up for our grounds maintenance team, which is now preparing to launch its winter programme.

The work required varies according to the location, but Centigen has a full schedule that runs right through from autumn to spring. The team will be busy with a range of duties which includes trimming hedges, pruning trees and shrubs, collecting leaves, pressure washing, spraying weeds and moss and picking up litter.

So, don't be surprised to see the Centigen operatives out-and-about over the winter. And before you know it, it will be time to start cutting the grass again!



*Keeping our grounds tidy is a year-round job for Centigen Operative Danny Leyshon and his colleagues.*

## A smaller Board : Reaching for the STAR

A recent consultation about our Board composition should lead to further streamlining of our membership.

We asked tenants for their thoughts on a proposal to reduce the number of members from nine to seven, in order to make us more cost-effective.

We were, however, very aware of the need to retain a broad mix of skills and experience among our remaining members, so that the Board could continue to run effectively.

As a result of our consultation, it has been recommended we have one less tenant member and one less independent member, and this change will be proposed at our Annual Members' Meeting in October.

Three times a year we ask tenants for feedback on the quality of our services, and the responses are really helpful in showing us what we are doing well, and where we need to improve.

Last year (2017/18) we were really pleased to achieve 88% 'overall satisfaction' with our services, which was slightly above our target. Now the challenge is on to improve further still, as we have set our sights on 89% by the end of March!

Surveys are carried out for us by an independent organisation called Acuity and the numbers from all three surveys are combined to give us our annual result against seven 'key indicators'.

We have the results from one survey so far this year and our scores have dipped on two indicators – 'friendly and approachable staff' (from 93% to 91%) and 'repairs and maintenance' (from



82% to 79%). We aim to improve upon these.

However, four indicators have improved – 'quality of home' (from 86% to 89%), 'neighbourhood' (from 88% to 91%), 'value for money (rent)' (from 91% to 94%) and 'value for money (service charge)' (from 76% to 83%) – which we're really pleased about.

The final indicator – 'overall satisfaction with the services provided' – has stayed at the same level as last year, 88%.

Clearly the numbers go up and down during the year, but we want our tenants to be pleased with our service so the information we glean from these surveys – the comments as well as the scores – is always very helpful.

Thank you to everyone who takes part. We really appreciate your valuable contributions.

### SAVING TIP

*Get the children to design and make their Xmas cards this year.*







# Helping Hands over the summer

## Beat the scammers

Scams affect the lives of millions of people across the UK, with many experiencing shame and social isolation if they get caught out.

They come in many forms: email, letter, telephone conversation or in person.

The most common are fake lotteries, deceptive prize draws, romance scams and false compensation offers, where criminals attempt to trick people into paying a fee, postal or insurance costs, buying an over-valued item, or making a premium rate phone call.

Friends Against Scams is a National Trading Standards initiative which aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims by empowering communities to take a stand, raising awareness and highlighting the scale of the problem.

They offer free awareness sessions or online training, so that anyone can learn about scams, how to spot them and how to support a victim.

Find out more on their website at:  
**[www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk)** or  
**#FriendsAgainstScams**.

Staff have been busily supporting community projects throughout the summer, as part of our 'Helping Hands' volunteering initiative.

We have helped with a variety of indoor and outdoor activities including delivering careers talks for local schools and gardening duties at the ASHA Centre near Flaxley and the Community Orchard at Berry Hill, where the teams have been tidying roses, collecting petals, weeding, mulching and painting.

We also supported 'National Playday' at the Beechenhurst Centre,

where we worked with the Forestry Commission and Forest of Dean Rocks to help children paint rocks they could then hide – and find! It was a huge success, with over 200 children creating their miniature 'works of art'.

***"The school holidays can be a difficult time with finding activities to keep the children amused," said mum-of-two Jessica Shackell. "My son and daughter loved painting the rocks, and the fact it was free was an added bonus. Thank you Two Rivers".***



Rock painting is a great entertainment for all ages



# Autumn tea break

d	n	a	l	d	o	o	w	a	r	t	s	l
h	a	r	v	e	s	t	b	o	c	p	l	e
t	v	u	a	t	k	p	i	n	r	u	t	a
f	i	r	e	p	l	a	c	e	o	m	n	v
o	d	a	c	e	r	p	s	d	p	p	a	e
v	w	i	n	d	y	i	c	l	s	k	r	s
b	r	i	s	k	y	p	e	o	w	i	b	w
t	a	o	c	n	i	a	r	g	s	n	i	g
z	c	t	f	m	u	g	c	o	s	y	v	r

Which autumn word is missing from the grid?

- |           |          |          |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| Brisk     | Harvest  | Straw    |
| Cosy      | Leaves   | Turnip   |
| Crops     | Pumpkin  | Vibrant  |
| Fireplace | Raincoat | Windy    |
| Golden    | Scarf    | Woodland |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel number/email: \_\_\_\_\_

The spot-the-difference competition in the summer issue got the better of some of you, as we had quite a few incorrect entries. Which makes Felicity Gibbons' success all the more worthy! Well done to Felicity, who wins the £15 gift voucher, and I hope everyone else enjoyed the challenge.

This month we return to a popular wordsearch, with an autumnal feel to get you ready for shorter days and wrapping up warm against the chill.

There are 15 words to hunt for in the grid, but only 14 of them are in there. Which one is missing?

Just tell us the missing word and either post it to us or, if you prefer, you can send us an email. As usual, there's a £15 gift voucher for the first correct entry to be drawn after **31 October**.

Email [communications@2rh.org.uk](mailto:communications@2rh.org.uk) or send your entry to:

Communications team  
Two Rivers Housing  
Rivers Meet  
Cleeve Mill Lane  
Newent  
Gloucestershire  
GL18 1DS

## Check all callers



*Don't be embarrassed to ask to see ID. If your caller is legitimate, they won't be offended.*

Please be on your guard when people you don't know call at your home.

We advise you not to let anyone in, unless you can be certain they are a legitimate caller and can be trusted.

All our staff and contractors carry ID badges and, if it isn't offered, please ask to see it before you let them into your home. If you are still unsure of their authenticity and want to check, please leave them outside, shut the door and call us on **0800 316 0897** to ask.

We should be able to quickly tell you if they are who they say, giving you confidence to let them into your home.

## Contact us:

Please tell us if you would like this in large print or on audio CD.

Freephone  
**0800 316 0897**

Email  
[customerservices@2rh.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@2rh.org.uk)

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HOUSING

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