

Tenant Topics

Newsletter for Two Rivers
Housing Tenants

Introducing Town Days - a new approach to scheduling repairs

We are making some changes to how we book and schedule repairs. This will help us increase the number of jobs we are able to complete each day and help to reduce waiting times for our tenants.

We know that getting repairs completed as quickly as possible is important to you and hope that our new approach will help us improve the repairs service we are able to provide.

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See
back page for
your chance
to win a
£15 voucher!




tworivers
HOUSING

Glorious Gardens!

Meet our competition winners

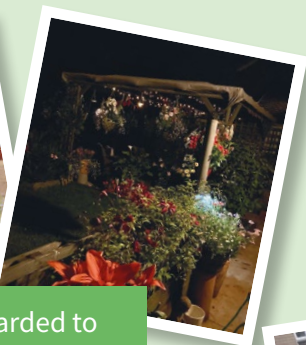
Earlier this year, we launched our annual Garden Competition celebrating the best blooms, blossoms, and bouquets in our communities. The categories for this year were:

- Best garden**
- Best tubs, pots, and baskets**
- Best edible garden**
- Best use of initiative and creativity in a small space**
- Best communal garden**
- Plot on a plate – our new kids category**

The judges met in September to choose our winners. We had some great entries this year, and after much deliberation, we can now reveal our winners...



Best garden was awarded to Teresa Basher for her beautiful garden.



Who wouldn't want to sample the runner beans and pears growing in Cynthia Cassar's garden while taking in the beautiful surroundings? She won the '**Best edible garden**' category.



Steve Childs took the prize for '**Best tubs, pots, and baskets**' with his stunning hanging baskets and planters.



Bringing breathtaking blooms and brightening up the space shared by the community, saw Keith Fletcher win our '**Best communal garden**' award.



Good things come in small spaces! As Georgia Smith proved in taking the '**Best use of initiative and creativity in small spaces**' category.



Kids corner!

We were blown away by the creativity shown by Sacha Lee, who took us back to the age of the dinosaurs with this beauty! It was a 'roaring success' and won our '**Plot on a plate**' competition!



Walk away the winter blues!



FoD Community Walks

Everybody knows that walking is a great way to keep healthy for free and, thanks to Forest of Dean Community Health Walks, you won't even feel like you're exercising.

The group provides walks that are suitable for people of all fitness levels, with the added bonus of walking with a friendly and supportive group.

Led by trained volunteers, the walks range from easy 15-20 minute routes on flat surfaces, to more challenging routes over uneven ground and slopes that may take up to an hour to complete. You can pick the level that suits you best and of course, all walks end with refreshments and a chance to chat.



The walks start in various places across the Forest of Dean and take place on a weekly basis, so you can exercise while making new friends and enjoying the fabulous forest on our doorstep.

Everyone is welcome, but please note that a carer will need to accompany any walker who normally needs such support. Unfortunately, we can only accommodate assistance dogs on the walks.

Get out of the cold with the Forest Youth Association!



Looking for a warm welcome, a place to build lasting friendships, and a chance to learn something new?

Then join us at the Coleford Youth Hub, Mitcheldean Youth Café, Blakeney Youth Club, and Ruardean Youth Club. We've got a packed programme of activities to keep you entertained and warm as the temperatures drop this winter.



Thanks to a grant funding from the Department of Education and Gloucestershire County Council, we are also able to provide a wide range of activities for children and

young people through the Holidays Activity Programme. There really is something for everyone, whether you are into sports, arts and crafts, or looking for tickets to local attractions come and have a look at what we have to offer.

We are committed to providing a safe space for young people in the Forest of Dean and work with youth clubs and other organisations to

provide support and opportunities for everyone.

We also run a Young Mums Group, which provides an environment to share laughter, experiences and support. It's a chance to relax with other mums, play games or take part in one of our much-loved theme nights.

You can book our Holiday Activity Programme events on our website: www.fvaf.org.uk

Star tip

For more details on our walks visit:
www.fodcommunitywalks.wixsite.com/mysite

Find us on Facebook:
[@Forest of Dean Community Walks](https://www.facebook.com/ForestofDeanCommunityWalks)
or call 01594 841 964



Where do our walks start?

Our walks start from 13 locations across the Forest:

Bream	Mitcheldean
Cinderford	Newent
Coleford	Parkend
Hartpury	St. Briavels
Lydbrook	Sedbury
Lydney	Staunton
	Yorkley

Star tip

Stay in the loop by following our Facebook page at **FoDYouthAssociation**
For more info, email hi.ya@fvaf.org.uk





In our communities

Christmas cheer!

We started the holiday festivities in some of our communities early including at our HomePlus Scheme in Ryelands, where tenants have been busy creating decorations for the Community Christmas Tree.



Our Tenant Director Rita Jones joined in the fun creating decorations for the tree alongside fellow tenant Andrea Wylde.

Tenants at Parkside also held a Christmas Bazaar in November. The money raised will go towards their Christmas lunch in December.

Our community engagement team were spreading some Christmas cheer at Hillside. Alongside a very special guest, they gave out some Christmas goodie bags and were on hand to speak to tenants.



Parkside residents raise a glass and some funds for their Christmas party at the Christmas Bazaar.



Star tip

Want to know more about our community events? Follow us on Facebook @TwoRiversHousing



Star tip

In an emergency, you can contact us on **0800 316 0897** at any time and our out of hours service will be ready to take your call



Christmas opening times

If you need us over the Christmas holidays, our team will be available as follows:

Friday 22 December 2023
8:30am – 12pm*

Monday 25 December 2023
CLOSED

Tuesday 26 December 2023
CLOSED

Wednesday 27 December 2023
9am – 4pm

Thursday 28 December 2023
9am – 4pm

Friday 29 December 2023
9am – 4pm *

On the days marked with a * our teams will be working, but our Rivers Meet office will be closed.

Poppies take pride of place at Parkside

The Parkside knitting club went all out to remember those that lost their lives at war this year, with this fantastic, knitted display. The poppies covered railings and walls creating a sea of remembrance red for all to see.

What an amazing, heartfelt effort!



The poppies were proudly displayed across Parkside in November.



Spooktacular fun in Tewkesbury!

Our Holiday Club took a spooky turn this October, as we paid a visit to Wheatpieces Community Centre in Tewkesbury. There was face painting, arts and crafts and a prize for the best costume – with lots of high spirits and fun had by all!



Healthy Homes: Tackling damp and mould

As your landlord, providing you with a warm, safe, affordable home is our first priority.

We know that finding damp and mould in your home can be distressing and will work with you to remove it and find the cause of the issue.

In most cases, damp and mould is caused by excess condensation in the property. All homes are at risk of condensation and this risk increases during the winter months. Small amounts of condensation are not usually a problem, and there are some everyday things we can all do to help prevent it.

These include:

- Wiping up condensation on windows and surfaces with a dry cloth.
- Opening windows or using extractor fans when cooking or taking a shower.
- Keeping lids on pans while cooking.
- Drying clothes outside where possible and opening a window or using an extractor fan if you are drying them in your home.
- Moving furniture away from walls to allow air to circulate.

If you have excess condensation in your home, this can lead to problems such as mould growth, which can affect your health and the health of your home.

Green light for more energy improvement work



In the last issue of Tenant Topics, we told you about a pilot project we were running in a number of our homes using the government's ECO4 scheme.

ECO4 is a government-funded grant programme. It provides money to deliver energy saving work in low-income households. We ran a pilot in 20 of our homes in August and, following the successful delivery of this, will be accessing the ECO4 grant to complete work in even more of our homes between now and 2026.

We'll be working with Evolve Home Energy Solutions (Evolve), who will be completing the work on our behalf. Over the next two years, we hope to install new boilers, insulation, heat pumps and central heating systems in more than 150 of our homes.

Using the grant and working with Evolve will save us around £14,500 per property – helping to stretch our maintenance budgets further and deliver the best Value for Money for tenants.

We'll be targeting homes that have the lowest energy performance ratings first and will contact tenants directly if and when their home will be included in the planned work.

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Star tip

If you spot damp and mould in your home, please let us know as soon as possible.
Call **0800 316 0897**



Dealing with pests in your home

At this time of the year, not all visitors to your home are welcome.

As the winter months arrive, domestic pests like mice and rats will be looking for a warmer space to live and they might just choose your home.

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, you are required to remove pests including mice, rats, and ants from your home. If pests do gain access to your home, you must arrange for them to be removed.

We will come to the property and fill or make good any areas that pests may be accessing the property, but we will not set traps, bait, or remove pests from your home as this is your responsibility.

Dealing with pests in shared spaces

If pests have got into an internal shared space or communal area, we will attend the property to fill in any areas where the pests are getting in. We will also instruct our pest control contractor to lay traps and remove any pests from the property.

They will not set traps, bait, or remove pests from an individual tenant's home.

Star tip

Some local councils provide pest control service at a discounted rate. Visit your local council's website to see what services are available in your area.



Introducing Town Days – a new approach to scheduling repairs

Over the next six months we will be trialling a new approach to how we schedule repairs. We have listened to the feedback that you have shared with us and are making some changes which we hope will:

- Help us increase the number of routine repairs we can complete each day.
- Help us keep more scheduled routine repair appointments.
- Reduce the time you have to wait for a routine repair to be done in your home.
- Improve our repairs service so it delivers even better Value For Money.

What you've told us...

80% of you believe that your home is well maintained.

83% of tenants that had a repair within the last 12 months were satisfied with the repairs service and;

81% were satisfied with the time taken to complete the repair.

But almost one in five of you (17%), said that day-to-day repairs is the one thing we could improve. With time being taken and outstanding repairs being the most common reason for frustration.

So, we've been looking at how we can reduce waiting times for repairs and work more efficiently to improve our repairs service for tenants.

What are Town Days?

Town Days is a new approach to how we schedule routine repair appointments. It will help us schedule and complete repairs more efficiently by grouping our homes by location. Each location will have a specific day or days, where we will have a group of operatives working in that area.

Amongst them will be electricians, carpenters, plumbers, and multi-trade operatives. This means that whatever the job in your home, there should be someone nearby who can complete it. It also means that if a tenant is not home when we get to a job, we can move on to the next job more quickly.

We have more than 4,200 homes right across the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, and Herefordshire. By working in set locations on specific days, we will reduce the time our team spends travelling between jobs. This will mean that they can complete more jobs each day and hopefully get to you faster!

What does this mean for tenants?

When you call in to report a routine repair, you will be offered the next available slot on the day that we will be in your area. So, if you live in Lydney, we will look to find the next available appointment on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and if you live in Tetbury, we will look for the next available appointment on a Friday.

If the available appointments are not suitable, then we will look to schedule the appointment on another day.

As our operatives will be working within a smaller community, we will be able to reduce the amount of time they spend travelling between jobs. This means they will be able to complete more jobs each day and you'll get to know the team that is working in your community.

What if you need an urgent or emergency repair?

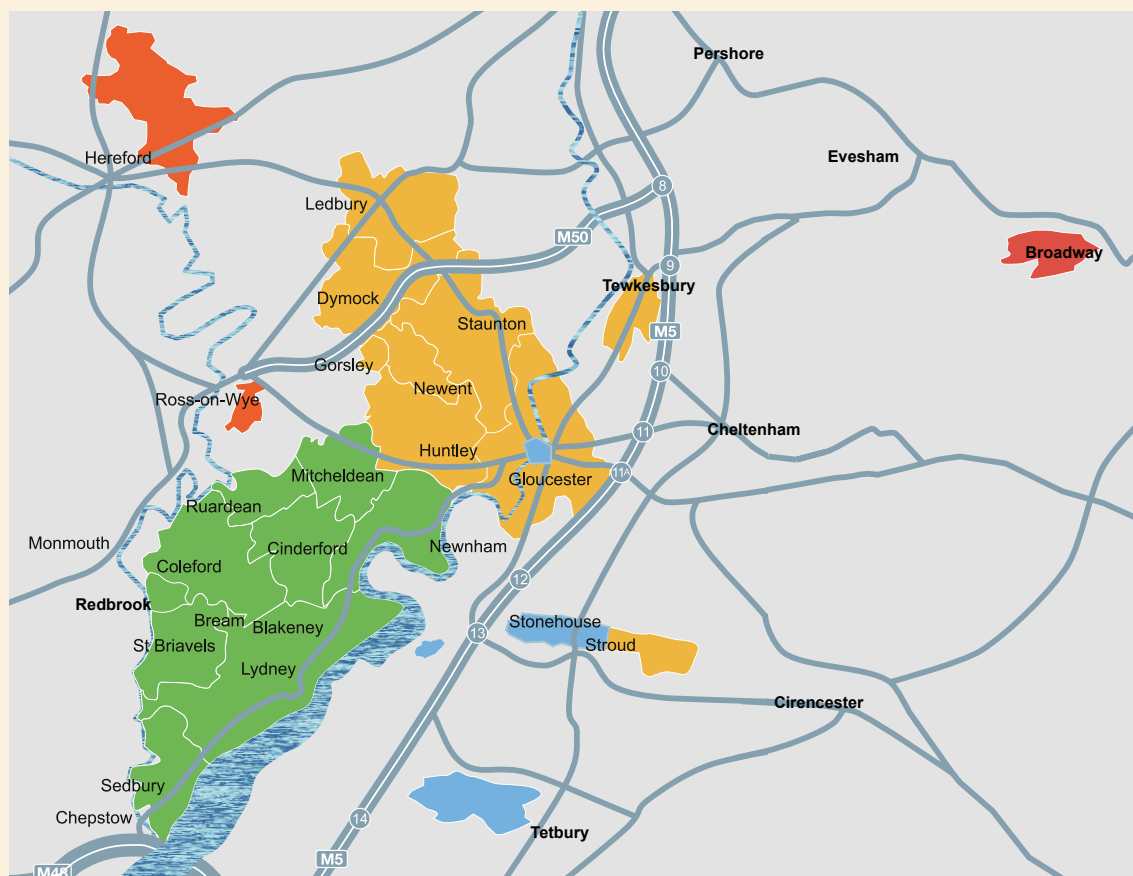
Don't worry, as part of the change we will still have a team of operatives who are able to respond to emergency and urgent jobs.

Not going to be home?

Missed repair appointments cost money and stop us completing repairs in someone's home. If you're not going to be home, let us know so we can use the time to help someone else.

When will we be in your area?

The map below shows which days have been allocated to which areas. Some areas have multiple days – this is because we have more properties in that area and that means we have more repairs to carry out in those areas too!



We will try to schedule as many repairs as possible on the days we are in these areas. However, if this is not convenient, our team will offer the next available appointment on a day that suits you.

DAY	LOCATIONS BY POSTCODE AREA
Monday	GL1, GL8, GL10.
Monday and Friday	GL2, GL3, GL4, GL5, GL18, GL19, GL20, GL54.
Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday	GL14, GL15, GL16, GL17, NP16, NP25
Friday	HR1, HR8, HR9, WR12

How will we know if it's working?

We have set some measures that will help us understand if the trial is working. These include:

- % of appointments kept.
- Average number of days it takes to complete a repair.
- Average number of repairs completed per day.
- Reduction in travel time for our Centigen team.

We'll share how these change during the trail with you in Tenant Topics, on our website or on our Facebook page.

Where can you find out more?

We have created a page on our website, which contains more information about the scheme and some questions and answers about the trial.

If you have any other questions, please get in touch with our team.

Did you know...

In 2022/2023 we completed **13,552** repairs in our homes. We expect to complete more than **15,000** this year!

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Government gives go-ahead for more retrofit works



Over the last three years, we've been looking at how we can make our homes more energy efficient, cheaper to heat, and reduce our carbon footprint.

In 2021, we started our first ever full retrofit project at a small number of our homes in Blakeney and earlier this year we completed a similar project at homes in Huntley and Newent. Both of these projects were partially funded by the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).

The SHDF was created to help housing providers fund retrofit works and forms part of the government's strategy to make the UK net carbon zero by 2050. We are part of a consortium led by Stroud District Council, which has enabled us to bid for funding from the scheme.

Earlier this year, we submitted a third bid for funding from the SHDF to enable us to undertake more retrofit work at some of our homes in Meadow Road and the surrounding areas.

We are delighted to announce that we have been successful in our bid and will be contacting tenants over the coming weeks to discuss the work in more detail.

We'll keep you updated on the project over the next few months, so watch this space.

11 new affordable homes coming to Tewkesbury

There is a shortage of affordable housing in our communities, which is why we are committed to increasing the number of affordable homes available in our communities. In fact, in 2018 we promised to build 1,000 new homes by 2028.

Earlier this year, we hit the halfway point and have delivered more than 500 new homes since we set this target, but we aren't there yet!

Our development team have recently agreed a contract to provide 11 new homes in Tewkesbury. Working with local developer Cotswold Oak, the small development of 35 homes will include eight new homes for affordable rent and three Shared Ownership properties.

The homes will be available to bid on or purchase in 2024.



An artist's impression of the homes that will be built at Althelai Edge in Tewkesbury in 2024.

Dreaming of being a homeowner?

Most of our tenants are happy to rent their homes for many years, safe in the knowledge that any maintenance and repairs issues will be taken care of and that their rent will remain affordable.

But for some tenants, there comes a time when owning their own home just makes sense and, when the time is right, they could take advantage of the government's Right to Acquire scheme.

If you became a Two Rivers Housing tenant after April 2003 and were not a 'secure tenant' of the council before this date you could apply to purchase your home and benefit from a generous discount.

To qualify for the Right to Acquire scheme, you must have been a tenant of a local council or housing association for at least three years or lived in a home provided by the armed forces. Provided your home is not reserved for elderly people and there are no legal reasons the property cannot be sold, the Right to Acquire, could take you one step closer to owning your own home.

Purchasing your home is a big decision. You should always seek professional financial advice before applying to purchase your home, but if you are interested and would like to know more about Right to Acquire you can talk to our homeownership team. You can get in touch by emailing **homeownership@2rh.org.uk**, writing to Homeownership, Two Rivers Housing, Rivers Meet, Cleeve Mill Lane, Newent, Gloucestershire, GL18 1DS or calling **0800 316 0897**.

Star tip

Please note, if you apply to purchase your home through Right to Acquire, we will no longer carry out repairs at the property unless there is a health and safety risk.



Be in the know with Your Community Alerts



Gloucestershire Constabulary and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner have launched a new local service to help keep you up to date with what's going on in your community.

Your Community Alerts is a free messaging system that will help keep you up to date with what's happening across the County.

If you live in the Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Stroud, Cheltenham, or the Cotswolds, you can sign up to get messages about incidents that may affect you. You can choose what types of alerts you will receive, which includes traffic jams, road closures, and crime alerts – so you'll only receive the messages relevant to you.

You can also use the service to reply to messages, giving you another way to share your feedback with the police instantly. Messages can be sent to you by text, email, or voicemail giving you complete control over how you receive the information.

You can register to receive Your Community Alerts by visiting **www.yourcommunityalerts.co.uk**

Your feedback: Tenant Satisfaction Measures

In the last issue of Tenant Topics, we shared some information on the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) that were bought in by the Regulator of Social Housing. These have been developed with tenants and housing providers and are designed to show how landlords are performing in the areas that matter most to their tenants.

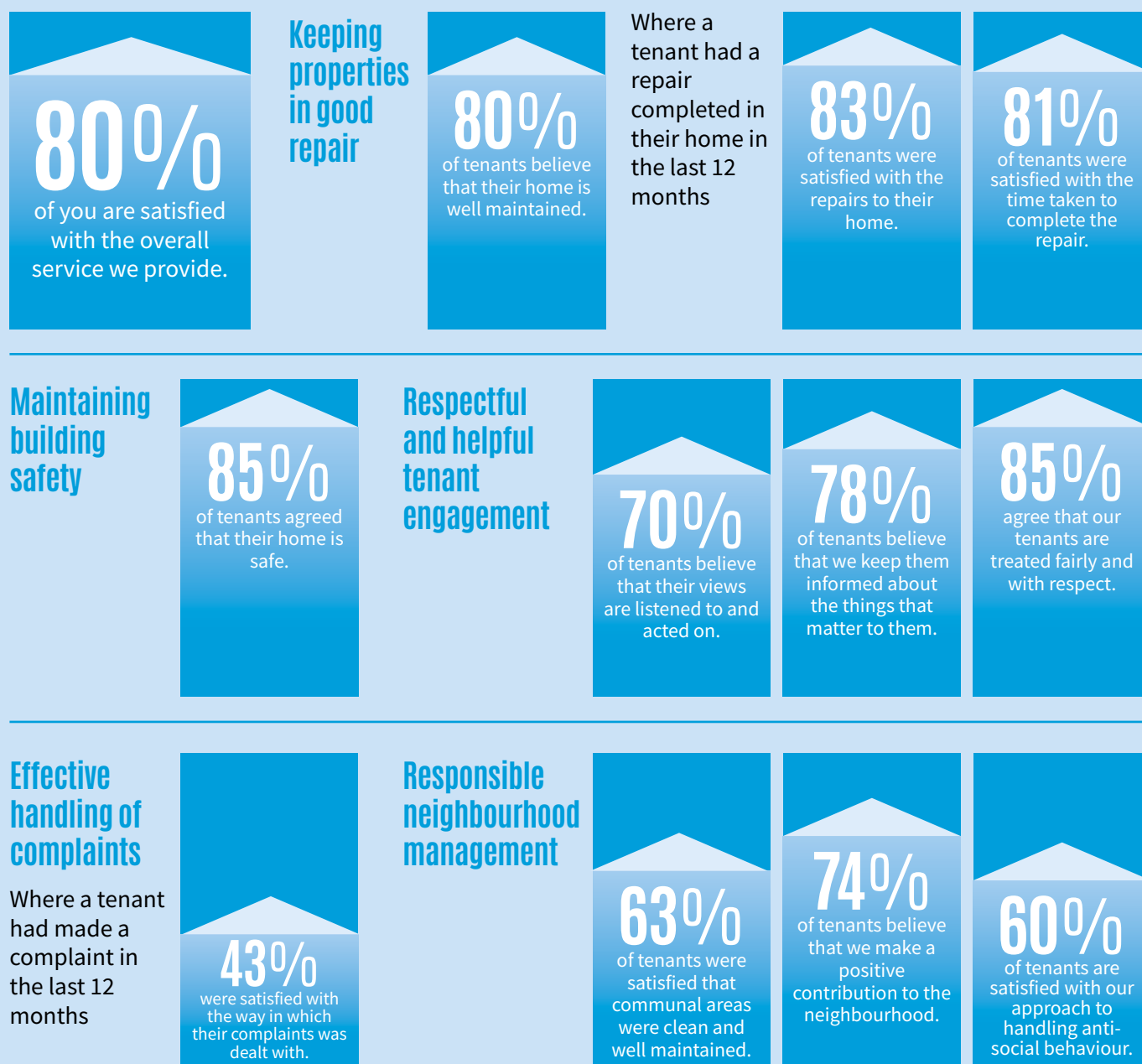
In total there are 22 measures, 12 of these are based on tenant feedback. We use an independent research agency to contact tenants and ask them for their feedback. We usually do this three times a year and contact about 1,000 tenants across the three surveys.

We use your feedback to identify both the things we are getting right and the areas that we need to make improvements. We will also submit our annual results (the combined results from all three surveys) to the Regulator in the spring and publish the full results on our website.

The first of our surveys was completed in the summer and the results are below:

Did you know...

We contact 1,000 tenants each year to check how we are doing, but you can share your feedback at any time by email, phone, in person, or on our website!



Did you know...

TwoCan is our specialist estate agent. It sells properties on behalf of Two Rivers Housing and other housing associations. Any profits it makes are gifted back to us to invest in our homes.



Nicola named National Sales Group Shooting Star 2023!

Our Sales and Lettings Executive Nicola has been identified as a Shooting Star at the National Sales Group Annual Conference.

Nicola works for our specialist estate agent TwoCan, helping families purchase their own home through the government's Shared Ownership scheme. She was nominated for the award by her manager Jasmine who wanted to thank her for the huge contribution she has made to our homeownership team over the last year.

She attended the annual conference in October and had no clue that she had been nominated for an award. In what was quite a shock, she was called to the stage to receive her award in front of everyone who had attended the conference.

We're sure you'll join us in congratulating her on this fantastic personal achievement.

News in short

Two Rivers Housing team raise more than £250 for Macmillan

In September, our team came together for a cake and a cuppa to raise money for Macmillan.

We have some fabulous bakers in the team, who kindly donated their time to bake cakes and other treats for the team to purchase on the day. Together, the team raised over £250 to support those living with cancer.

Retrofit project shortlisted for Inside Housing Award!

Our retrofit pilot project was nominated for an award at the Inside Housing Affordable Housing Awards in November. While we didn't win this one, it was great to be nominated alongside some excellent projects.

AccXel recognises our commitment to skills training

Leading construction school, AccXel has awarded the Two Rivers Housing team a Silver Constructing Futures Award.

The Cinderford-based academy presented the award to our Chief Executive, Garry King at the AccXel Extravaganza on Friday 1 December 2023.

Apprentice Academy: Welcome to the team!



Star tip

A housing apprenticeship can provide a rich and varied career path – keep an eye out for future opportunities coming soon!



As a community-based housing provider, many of our colleagues live and grew up in the communities that we serve. We currently employ around 170 people in a variety of roles and a career in housing can provide a wide range of experience and opportunities.

In October, we launched our new Apprentice Academy programme.

As part of the launch, we welcomed six new apprentices to the Two Rivers Housing team. Harry, Eliemay, Eliana, Oli, Ben, and Jess are the first apprentices to take part in the new programme. They will be working with our housing, surveying, finance, and Centigen teams to gain valuable real-life experience alongside their studies.

At the launch event, our new apprentices were introduced to their mentors and had a chance to get to know their line managers and meet with our other apprentices Jack, Haidee, and Matt. They were also given key information about our organisation and what they can expect from us as we support them through their learning journey.

We're excited to get to know this talented bunch and will be sharing their journey with you right here in Tenant Topics over the coming months.

Want to know more? Look out for Apprenticeship Week in February 2024!

B N O I T A L U S N I K F L
 P I N S C O T E F A A R C R
 S N H O J N H O L R A T O S
 U N W O O K W Z O C O T S Y
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 I T N A R R O N E N L P O N
 S C S N A G R U E T S C A E
 C P I N E C O N E A C S R W

Which of these Winter words is missing from the wordsearch?

Anorak Scarf
 Frost Sleigh
 Insulation Slippery
 Lohnjohns Snowball
 Pinecone Snowflake
 Radiator Sweater

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number/email: _____

Preferred voucher: ☐ Amazon ☐ Tesco ☐ M&S ☐ B&Q ☐ Argos

Winter tea break

You can enter by emailing your name, full postal address, preferred voucher, and the hidden word to us at **communications@2rh.org.uk** or by completing the form and returning it in the post to:

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

The first correct answer selected at random after **31 January 2024** will win a £15 gift voucher.

The missing word in our autumn wordsearch was **APPLES**.

Good luck!

Win a £15 voucher!

Grab a pen and a cuppa, sit back and complete our wintertime teaser!

Simply find the words in the wordsearch and let us know which one is missing and you could win a £15 voucher.



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**



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