

Tenant Topics

Newsletter for Two Rivers
Housing Tenants

A helping hand for all our tenants

The last two years have been challenging for everyone. The impact of the pandemic is still being felt by many of us and the increasing cost of food, fuel and energy bills is taking its toll on families up and down the country.

We've been looking at how we can support our tenants and provide additional help to those facing the many difficulties that have come as a result of the current situation. We spoke to our tenant Challenge & Change Group and gathered their feedback on what they felt would be the most beneficial to tenants facing a wide range of issues.

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your chance
to win a
£15 voucher!



A helping hand for all our tenants cont.

We know the challenges that our tenants are facing are complex and varied. This is why we are partnering with a specialist organisation to provide free support and advice for our tenants when they need it.

Our new Tenant Support & Wellbeing Service provides practical information, resources and counselling to help you balance your work, family and personal life. It's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is completely free for all Two Rivers Housing tenants.

The service is provided by Life & Progress and is completely confidential. They can provide support on a wide range of issues including:

- Health and wellbeing
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Relationships
- Family matters
- Managing debt
- Workplace issues
- Consumer rights
- And much more

As a Two Rivers Housing tenant, you can access these services quickly, easily and in complete confidence – the service does not provide us with any details on who has used it. Simply visit the website and enter the username and password or pick up the phone and call.

Tenant Support & Wellbeing Service

Keep these details safe in case you need them.

Website: www.tsws-assist.co.uk

Telephone: 0330 094 8845

Username: **tworivers**

Password: **tenant**



Improve your mental wellbeing

There are lots of free resources to help you improve your mental wellbeing. We've shared five from the Mind website (www.mind.org.uk) below:

1. Relax and reduce stress: Take a break, do something you enjoy, try mindfulness and get some tech-free time.
2. Find ways to learn and be creative: Paint, draw or craft, join a class or group or complete an online course.
3. Spend time in nature: Spend time outdoors, bring nature indoors with potted plants or flowers, spend time with your pets.
4. Connect with others: Talk to someone you trust, volunteer or find a local support group.
5. Look after your physical health: Drink plenty of water, look after yourself, try to keep active.

Star tip

It's always ok to ask for help. If you need help, talk to a friend, your doctor or contact a charity such as the Samaritans or Mind.





Repairs update

It has been another busy period for our repairs team. On average, we receive more than 1,000 repairs every month. This includes all kinds of work from small repairs right through to plastering, plumbing and ground works. Alongside this, we are still working hard on the backlog created by the pandemic, which has not only impacted our colleagues but also the supply of some materials.

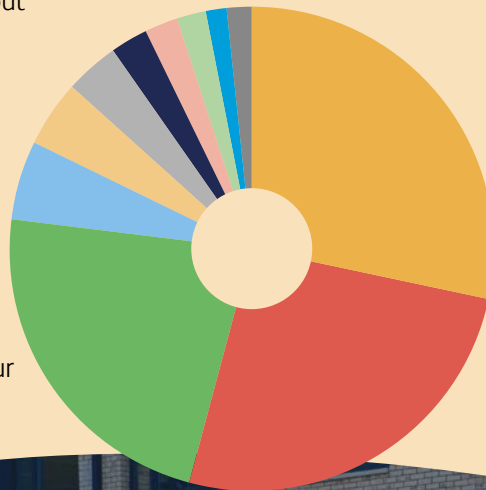
Between October and December 2021, we received 3,090 new repairs requests from tenants and completed 2,746.

We are doing everything we can to catch-up including, recruiting more operatives, batching some repairs by type and working with our preferred suppliers to increase the resources available to us.

Repairs in numbers – October-December 2021:

3,090 new jobs raised
2,746 repairs completed

Jobs raised by type:



- Plumbing 884
- Electrical 793
- Carpentry 706
- Roof and chimney works 163
- Other 140
- Plastering 104
- Brickwork 81
- Fencing 66
- Groundworks 60
- Glazing 48
- Drainage 45



New vans for our Centigen Operatives

In December 2021, we took delivery of new vans for our Centigen team from Bristol-based ALD Automotive limited. The new deal will produce significant reductions in the costs of leasing our vehicles, as well as reducing the carbon emissions produced by the previous fleet.

In addition, ALD will also provide mobile servicing and glass and tyre replacement from a dedicated team to support our operatives. This will ensure that the fleet remains on the road, resulting in fewer cancelled repairs appointments due to vehicle breakdowns.





Welcome home!

We helped **56** families find a warm, safe, affordable home between October and December 2021!

Including **22** that moved into one of our HomePlus schemes

We also helped **8** families complete mutual exchanges into more suitable properties.

Welcome home to the Price family, who moved into their new home in December!



Natasha, Cameron and Archie getting the keys to their new home!



Peter and Margaret on moving day!

Providing more affordable homes

In 2018, we pledged to deliver 1,000 new affordable homes over the next 10 years. Our development team has been busy between October and December, taking handover of new properties and working with our development partners to submit planning permissions at a number of sites across the County.

Between October and December 2021:

20 new homes were handed over to our team
 Planning was submitted for **31** new homes at our site in Eastington in Stroud
 So far, we've delivered **389** new homes since 2018!

Star tip

For more help with managing your budgets, visit our website www.tworivershousing.org.uk



Free, confidential welfare, debt, and benefit advice

Managing family budgets can be tough. With the cost of gas and electricity continuing to rise, many of us will be wondering how to make our money go further. Our Welfare, Debt and Benefit Advisors can help.

If you want to get a hold of your monthly budgets, need help with

applying for benefits or just need to talk to someone about your finances, get in touch with the team.

Last year, they helped more than 300 tenants claim more than £1million in benefits and grants. If you need free, confidential financial advice, contact our team.

Email: WBDATeam@2rh.org.uk

Telephone: **0800 316 0897** and ask to speak to one of our debt and welfare advisors.

Tackling anti-social behaviour

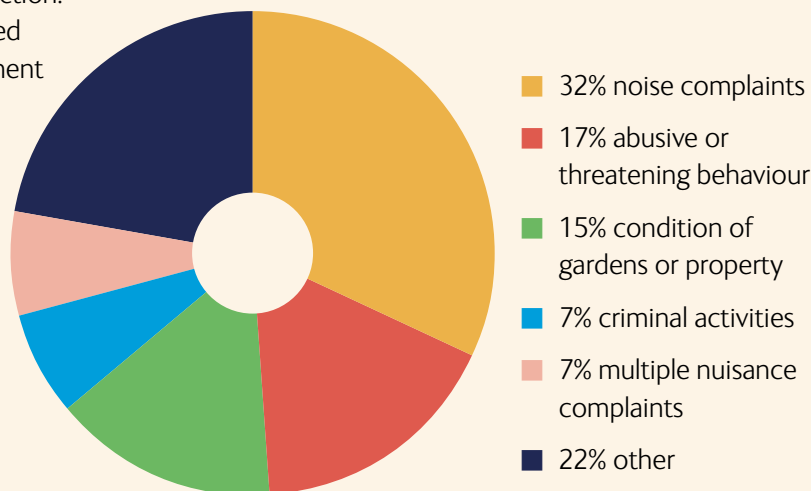


Dealing with anti-social behaviour is often complex. Getting to the root cause of the issue takes time and we often need to gather evidence before we can take action. We know this can be frustrating for everyone involved but, where there is a clear breach of tenancy agreement or anti-social behaviour in our communities, we will take appropriate and proportionate action.

We have a dedicated team of Tenancy Compliance Officers, who investigate anti-social behaviour complaints. Between October and December 2021, we received:

60 reports of anti-social behaviour, and
45 cases were closed.

What anti-social behaviour is being reported in our communities:



Tackling noisy neighbours

Tackling noise complaints can be particularly tricky. When houses are close together, there will always be noise from everyday activities, such as washing machines, tumble driers and even children playing. However, when noise becomes constant, excessive or takes place at anti-social hours, it can have a negative affect on our wellbeing.

In most cases, and if you feel comfortable doing so, noise complaints can be easily resolved by talking to your neighbour. It may be that they had no idea you could hear their TV or sound system in your home, so simply making them aware can make all the difference.

However, if after talking to your neighbour the problem persists, there are more formal actions that can be taken.

Initially, we will work with you to try to resolve the problem.

We'll ask you to keep a record of the noise that is causing the nuisance, which will help us understand the problem. We may also provide an app for your mobile phone to help

you record evidence of the issue. Once we have collected this evidence, we will talk to your neighbour about the impact this is having and encourage them to stop this behaviour.

We can also offer mediation between you and your neighbours.

Working with Restorative Gloucestershire, we will talk to all parties concerned and try to find a resolution that works for everyone involved. You can find more information about this service at www.restorativegloucestershire.co.uk.

If this does not work, we will work with local councils to support further investigation.

In cases where the activity is damaging your health or causing a nuisance (known as a 'statutory nuisance'), you can go direct to your local council for help. You'll find more information on how to make a complaint on the council websites.

For advice on noise related issues, you can contact our team on **0800 316 0897** or by email customerservices@2rh.org.uk or go to www.gov.uk and enter your postcode to find your local council.

Star tip

To report noise nuisance to the Forest of Dean District Council visit: www.fdean.gov.uk/environment



Star tip

To report noise nuisance to the Gloucester City Council visit: www.gloucester.gov.uk/environment-waste-recycling/nuisance



Handling complaints

43

new complaints logged

Your feedback, good and bad, is important to us. We use it to identify areas for improvement and help our team understand how they can provide better service to all our tenants. Below you'll find some information on the complaints we handled between October and December 2021.

Most common types of complaint

30% time taken

16% lack of contact

12% missed appointments

Complaints by service area:

- 72% repairs and maintenance
- 12% neighbourhood housing
- 10% homeownership
- 2% development
- 2% lettings
- 2% contact centre

Meet our Complaints Business Partner

In 2021, we created a new role of Complaints Business Partner to investigate our stage one complaints and act as a critical friend to both tenants and our team. Andrea Brown joined us in June and we caught up with her to find out a bit more about her and her role.

Andrea has always worked in customer focussed roles. As a former tenant and a former Tenant Board Member, she has a unique understanding of the impact on both our tenants and our organisation.

In her role as Complaints Business Partner, she handles all stage one complaints. *"In a typical day, I'll be collecting information from different people across the organisation, speaking with tenants and making sure we hit our deadlines for responses."* Andrea told us. *"It's a great job and a real opportunity to learn more about housing."*



"It's a great job and a real opportunity to learn more about housing."

A key part of Andrea's role is sharing learning with teams, so that we can make improvements to our services.

"As I'm not linked to any one department, I can look at things impartially and help the organisation to understand where and why things have gone wrong." Andrea explained. *"This is really important, because it helps us prevent the same issue happening again."*

We are committed to providing a first-class service to our tenants and learning from our mistakes.

We hope that having Andrea in place working with both tenants and our teams, will help us continually improve and deliver excellent service to our tenants.

Latest STAR results

Every year, we ask hundreds of tenants to provide feedback on our homes and services.

We undertake the research in three waves spread out across the year. This helps us understand how our tenants feel about our homes and services and identify areas where we need to make improvements.

We know that the pandemic has disrupted many of our services and caused a backlog of work, which is causing frustration for some tenants. However, in the latest set of results (wave two), we were pleased to see improvements across all four areas, which shows that we are making improvements based on the feedback from our tenants.

STAR ratings year to date (after two waves):

Overall satisfaction

84%

Quality of homes

83%

Safe and secure homes

91%

Easy to deal with

83.5%

Housing ombudsman verdict

In 2021, we had a complaint investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS).

The HOS is an independent organisation that investigates complaints on behalf of tenants. It has several powers, which it can apply to landlords who do not meet its standards including, sanctions, fines, and referrals to the Regulator.

Following its investigation, the Ombudsman found that:

- We had acted in line with our policy and completed the initial inspection within our published timescales.
- We were not at fault for the delays to completing the work or making the permanent repair or reinspecting the property.
- Our contractors were competent, and it was reasonable for us to continue to use them.
- We consistently advised that we were willing to reinspect the works and carry out the internal works, once we were given access to the property.

It therefore deemed that there was no maladministration in the way in which we handled the repairs.

Your feedback, both positive and negative is important to us. It gives us the opportunity to improve our services and monitor our standards. You can provide feedback in writing, online, over the phone or in person.

To find out more download our Compliments and Complaints leaflet from the library on our website.

Housing
Ombudsman Service

Homes that work for you

Adapting our homes to meet the changing needs of our tenants is a key part of our service. This can include simple measures such as the installation of handrails or lever taps, right through to major works to improve access or modify kitchens and bathrooms.

We work with tenants, occupational therapists, and local councils to identify the changes needed, before producing a practical plan and completing the work. Between October and December 2021, we made more than 30 adaptations, including:

Installing **3** level access showers,
adapting the access to **2** properties,
1 kitchen modification, and
installing **9** grab bars.

Star tip

If you'd like to know more about our adaptations process, download our Adaptations Leaflet from the library on our website.



News in short

SPOT the scammers

We've received reports of an attempted scam where the perpetrators call up and claim that they are taking over your repair service. If you are in any doubt as to whether a call is genuine or not, hang up the phone. Never provide the caller with any personal or financial information and, if you think you have fallen for a scam, contact your bank immediately.

Regulator confirms ratings

In October 2021, the Regulator of Social Housing completed its annual assessment of Two Rivers Housing and reconfirmed our G1/V1 rating.

Remaining within the G1 and V2 or above ratings for governance and viability is important. It means that the Regulator is confident that your housing association is financially strong, well governed, provides value for money to its tenants and understands and manages its risks effectively.

Cyber Essentials Plus

In January 2022, Two Rivers Housing was awarded Cyber Essential Plus certification.

Cyber Essentials Plus is a simple but broad and effective government-backed scheme that helps organisations protect themselves against cyber-attacks. It also demonstrates that we have cyber security controls in place and are keeping on top of our cyber security risks.



Health & Safety in our homes



Remove trailing cables or cover them to prevent trip hazards

Keeping our homes safe

All landlords have a duty to make sure their homes are safe. This includes regularly servicing and checking heating systems, managing fire risks and carrying out inspections. With more than 4,000 homes to look after this is no quick task!

Between October and December 2021, our planned maintenance team carried out:

723 gas services

81 solid fuel services

67 electrical inspections

So far we've completed

88 fire risk assessments,

inspected **726** fire doors, and

serviced **11** lifts in 2021/2022.

Stay safe: Preventing slips, trips and falls in your home

In the last six months, 86% of health and safety incidents involving tenants reported to us related to slips, trips and falls. In fact, according to the NHS, one in three adults over the age of 65 who live at home will have at least one fall each year.

We spoke to our Health and Safety Business Partner Jonny, and he gave us his top tips for preventing slips, trips and falls in your home:

1. Clean up any spills quickly making sure the floor is completely dry.
2. Remove obstacles and clutter from floors, stairs, and hallways.
3. Secure rugs, mats and carpets that do not lie flat.
4. Remove trailing cables or cover them to prevent trip hazards.
5. Make sure rooms are well lit.

If you have mobility issues or health conditions that cause you to be unsteady on your feet, you may also want to consider installing additional handrails or grab bars. These will help reduce the risk of falls and give you the confidence to move around your home safely.

Good housekeeping can make a real difference when it comes to preventing slips, trips and falls in your home, helping you to stay safe and injury free.

Our journey to net zero carbon



Work to fully retrofit a number of homes in Blakeney is in full swing. Over the last few months, we've been undertaking enabling works such as, moving drainage systems, erecting scaffolding and completing work on the outside of the homes.

Star tip

Replace any bulbs which are not LED, with LED bulbs, once they are no longer usable.



We've also installed brand new windows and doors at several properties and started to install the external wall insulation too. As part of the project, we will be installing air source heat pumps, which will replace the old heating systems in the properties and putting solar panels on the roofs.

The changes we are making will reduce the amount of heat lost through the fabric of the building. Combined with the new, more energy efficient heating systems, we hope to reduce the carbon emissions of these homes by at least 45%.

This will ultimately make them warmer, healthier homes and help to reduce the cost of heating them – a fantastic result for our tenants.

Star tip

Boil the kettle with only the amount of water you need.



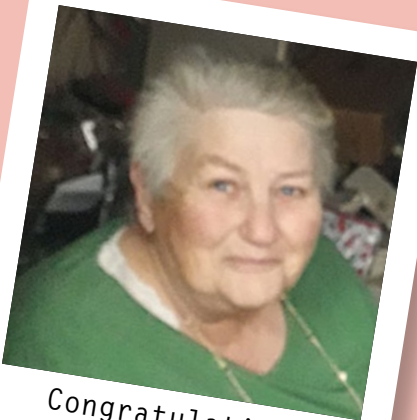
As we continue on our journey to reach net-zero carbon, we will take what we learn from this project and apply it to our homes across the Forest of Dean – helping us make improvements to more of our homes and reducing our carbon footprint.

Supporting our communities



Congratulations!

In the last issue of Tenant Topics, we asked you to provide feedback on our services. There were 30 £25 vouchers up for grabs for those who completed the survey, here are a few pictures of the lucky winners!



Congratulations
Noreen Bevan



Congratulations Brenda
and Kevin Morgan



Congratulations
Sheila Powell



Left: Elaine, Pauline, Jean, and Rachel joined our read and chat session run by Adult Education.
Right: Karen and her beautiful box of home-made truffles at Hilldean.



As restrictions continue to lift, our team has been eager to get back out into our communities and support our tenants. In the lead up to Christmas, we ran several arts and crafts events at our HomePlus schemes.

It's been fantastic to see so many tenants get involved in these activities and we've lots more planned throughout the year, so keep an eye out for more details of upcoming activities at our HomePlus Schemes.



Christmas cheer for local children

A mountain of gifts including books, toys, games and clothes appeared under the Christmas Tree at our Rivers Meet office as the team dug deep to donate to the Salvation Army's Christmas present appeal.

Major Vivienne Prescott collected the gifts just before Christmas, she thanked the team for their efforts saying: "I am overwhelmed by the generosity of the Two Rivers Housing team again this year. As always, it was an amazing contribution and so needed after a tough time for many local families. I would like to thank them all from the bottom of my heart and on behalf of these families."



I D V B F M A N P A R C C E
 S A D Q V R K I L E H X S Z
 Y S R E W O L F T O G M D E
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 V L D D N N T F U N R A V L
 M E V Y Y D N I A R L P S N

Which of these
 Spring words is
 missing from the
 wordsearch?

- Bunny
- Flowers
- Candy
- Chocolate
- Chicks
- Lamb
- Blossom
- Spring
- Easter
- Rain
- Green
- Eggs

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number/email: _____

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

Spring tea break

You can enter by emailing your name, full postal address 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 **30 April 2022** will win a £15 gift voucher.

The missing word in our winter wordsearch was **SNOWMAN**.

Good luck!

Win a £15 voucher!

Grab a pen and a cuppa, sit back and complete our springtime 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

