

For Riverside tenants in the North East



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## Repairs update

### **Riverside has named Mears Limited as the contractor to take on its repairs programme across the North East.**

We initially selected five contractors but after the initial marking process these were shortlisted to three.

The contractors were then interviewed by the project team, including a Tenant Forum member, giving each the chance to tell us about their company's services.

Site visits followed the interviews to assess the contractors' depot and offices and discussions took place in groups with their staff, clients

and customers.

After another round of scoring by the project team, Valueworks provided a report on the total scores, regarding quality and value for money. A meeting took place on 1 February to discuss the report and appoint Mears Ltd as the winning bidder.

Property Services Manager Bob Coffey said: "An extremely busy period lies ahead to mobilise the new contract on 1 April but we look forward to working with Mears Ltd and delivering an excellent service for our tenants."

## Riverside goes Dutch



English and Dutch colleagues

Housing specialists shared their expertise with fellow professionals from Holland, when Dutch housing association Thuswonen visited the area and met its counterparts from Riverside. This visit was arranged because the team from Holland's North East Friesland, found out about Riverside's regeneration work, supported housing and care for the elderly.

Riverside has been awarded

SOCIAL LANDLORD

 **2009**  
OF THE YEAR

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## Have your say on our services

**Riverside is asking tenants to tell us what they think of its services.**

Over the next few months, we are sending out a survey to a selection of customers so we can find out what we do well and where we need to improve. This survey is different from the follow-up calls or feedback forms you may have had in the past – after repair work or when starting your tenancy with Riverside.

If you receive this survey, make sure you fill it in and have your say – and you could win up to £100 in gift vouchers!

## Forward together

**Riverside is set to amalgamate with its sheltered and supported specialist ECHG, after tenants gave plans the green light.**

This is the second stage of a process started last April when other areas of the organisation joined together to cut down on legal red tape and allow us to invest more money in frontline services. Now, after overwhelming support from 90% of tenants across Riverside and ECHG who responded to our consultation, and backing from the relevant authorities, the amalgamation will go ahead on March 31 2010.

From April 1, ECHG will be known as Riverside ECHG and will have a new logo. Tenants should not notice any changes to the service we provide.

**If you receive housing benefit, this should continue as usual. We have written to all the housing benefit offices to tell them about these changes. If they contact you about it, please show them the letter called 'Notice of landlord details' posted to all tenants in April 2010. If you need more help, please call the Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.**

## A lot to offer



Our trailer helped to spread the word

**Riverside has been taking to the road, touring the North Bransholme area of Hull, speaking to potential new tenants.**

We are working with Hull City Council on the transfer of council homes in the area and are currently in consultation with residents to assess their views on the proposed transfer. Riverside's trailer shows a typical kitchen and bathroom refurbishment, to give tenants a flavour of the quality and choice Riverside can offer if the transfer goes ahead.

Members of URBaN (United Residents of Bransholme Area North), the Independent Tenant Advisers, PS Consultants and representatives of Hull City Council staff joined Riverside to provide information on the trailer about the proposed stock transfer.

The tour was officially launched by Councillors Anita Harrison and Nadene Burton, both active members of URBaN.

So far, local tenants and residents welcomed the tour and Riverside's proposals. Here are some comments we received:

"Really impressed at what I've seen and can't wait to vote for change."

"Really pleased with what Riverside have to offer. Please vote to switch now. I have grown up with Riverside from when I lived in Runcorn so come on Bransholme let's get voting."

"Was concerned, but 100% yes."

"I have lived on the estate all my life and it's time for change for the better – invest in us and we will invest in you."

"After looking around everything looks just as I would like. Very impressed. My vote is definitely leaning towards a yes."

# Kickstart to development



Representatives from Riverside meet Housing Minister John Healey on site

## Housing Minister John Healey met Riverside bosses and workers on site where 80 new homes are being built in Bowburn, County Durham.

Mr Healey was at The Grange development in Bowburn, where builders have been getting back to work, thanks to the Government's Kickstart programme. The development had been mothballed due to market conditions and would likely have remained so without government and investor help.

Thanks to almost £3.3 million, a total of 80 new homes will be built, 39 of which will be

family homes for affordable rent through Riverside, and a further 10 will be available through Homebuy Direct.

Riverside has invested £2.3million into the project – one of its many new developments planned for the North East.

Mr Healey said: "The power of government investment has meant construction workers back on site building much needed homes. This Kickstart cash will mean the safeguarding, or creation of 50 local jobs and will also give young people the opportunity of a career, thanks to the apprenticeship schemes on offer."

## Know your responsibility

### As part of your tenancy agreement, you are responsible for any damage to your property resulting from a deliberate act, negligence, misuse or accident.

If you ask Riverside to carry out a repair like this at your home, you will be asked to pay for it in advance. For example, if we have to replace a broken window you will have to pay up to £140 and if you ask us to unblock your drain, this will cost you £18.

If the repair is as a result of a crime being committed, you will not be charged but we

will want you to provide us with a police crime reference number.

You should report your repair in the normal way and you will be advised how much the repair will cost and if it is non-urgent, you will be given the chance to repair it yourself. However, in emergency situations, we will ensure that we immediately remove the source of any danger and bill you for the work carried out.

**For more information contact the 24-hour Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.**

# Tenants' top 10

**At Riverside, we have many different ways of checking and reporting how well we deliver services to you.**

For example, we may contact you to ask about the quality of a repair or we may measure how long it takes us to reply to letters and phone calls. We set targets to measure these things and help us improve.

We want to make sure that these targets focus on the services that you – our tenants - think are the most important. Following discussions with Riverside's Tenants' Federation Service Quality Group we recently wrote to you, asking you what matters most. In total, 700 tenants responded and, from the replies we have drawn up a Tenants' Top 10 of the things you have said you want us to measure and report on.

They are:

- keeping repairs appointments
- keeping properties safe through gas safety checks
- satisfaction with overall service
- satisfaction with repairs
- satisfaction with our handling of anti-social behaviour
- satisfaction with most recent contact or service
- value for money of service charges
- responding to your letter within 10 days
- repairs completed right first time
- aids and adaptations completed when agreed.

We are now looking at the best ways to feed back the results of the Tenants' Top 10, so look out for updates in future editions of News & Views.

Paul Lynchy, tenant chair of the Service Quality Group, said: "This consultation has allowed Riverside to find out exactly what services you think are important and, armed with this information, they can now report on, and ultimately improve, the things that really matter to us."

# Spotlight on supporte



**Paul Sanger has lived in Chester-le-Street for the last two years and loves living in his own home.**

He enjoys going to the pub for meals and games of darts and going to the cinema. Paul also likes bowling, going for walks in the area, feeding

the ducks in the park and going to as many as three discos a week!

Paul's support worker explained that he has more choice now – he decides for himself what activities he wants to do and where to go.

# Out and about with R

**Riverside will be holding a number of estate and nei**

This is your opportunity to get involved on the ground dealt with, and standards are being achieved and ma

**If you are interested in taking part in the inspecti 0845 111 0000 or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.**

AREA	HOUSI
<b>Doncaster</b> (North Swaithe/Braithwell)	Anita L
<b>Benwell</b> (Terraces)	Gillian
<b>York</b> (Coggan Close)	Anita L
<b>Hollybank House</b>	Anita L
<b>Walker</b> (Church Walk & Ellesmere)	Lynne F
<b>Jesmond</b> (Osborne, Ave, Osborne Rd, Grosvenor Place, Sanderson Rd, St Georges Tce)	Jo Prin
<b>Durham</b> (Ramsey/Turnbull/Alington & Harvey Avenue)	Lynne F
<b>Seaton Delaval</b> (Wheatridge Park)	Gillian
<b>Haydon Bridge</b> (The Showfields)	Jo Prin
<b>Heaton Zone One</b> (Addycombe Tce, Simonside Tce, Warton Tce, Whitefield Tce)	Gillian
<b>Byker</b> (Bicknell House)	Jo Prin
<b>Walker</b> (St Anthony's Crt)	Maure
<b>Bensham</b> (Kelvin, Rayleigh, Rawling)	Jo Prin

## ed living



**Veronica Murray from Gateshead has been a Riverside tenant for three years, but has lived in Supported Housing for the past 13 years.**

Veronica loves her home in Whickham, and thanks to staff there she is able

to enjoy an active social life. Her favourite activities are going to the pub once a week and baking cakes with the staff. She also loves going shopping for shoes and clothes. Veronica likes to relax by watching TV and also enjoys going on holiday – she has recently come back from a holiday in Turkey with her sister.

## iverside

### ighbourhood inspections between March and June.

, to look at your area and ensure problems are being maintained.

on please contact your Housing Officer on Tel:

NG OFFICER	MONTH
aw	March
Hamilton/Joanne Scott	March, May
aw	March
aw	(Now done annually - will take place in July 2010)
Fiddes	April
gle	April
Fiddes	May
Hamilton/Joanne Scott	May
gle	May
Hamilton/Joanne Scott	May
gle	May
en Potts	May
gle	Once per month jointly with NMI

## Life on the green

**Three residents from Temple Green, Gateshead, shared their memories with us during a visit to our office recently.**



Alma and Doreen during their visit to our office

Doreen Herring, Alma Dobson and Christina Speight have lived at Temple Green for a combined 127 years. Alma has lived there since it was built in 1937 and her family have lived in the same property for three generations. The trio recall that in 1972 coalhouses were removed and new kitchens and bathrooms were installed. Metal-framed windows were replaced with wooden ones and a new gas heating system installed downstairs. During the improvements, tenants were required to move into four eight-berth caravans located on the Green. Doreen Herring has fond memories of bringing up seven children and adopting another – and now her 14 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren are regular visitors. Riverside's Head of Community Engagement Julie Riseborough, said: "Temple Green is a model community – there is a fairly low turnover of properties and very little evidence of anti-social behaviour, which demonstrates the stability of the neighbourhood."

## Meet the staff



### Steve Ward, Managing Director What do you enjoy most about your job and why?

The variety and daily challenges – there is never a dull moment being the Managing Director of this Division.

### What is your biggest work-related achievement so far?

The Division, of course. Since we joined Riverside, it's gone from strength to strength and the future is looking bright

### What would be your one desert island item and why?

My guitar, in fact I'd try to smuggle all of them in with me – I'd be lost without them.

### What is your favourite book or film and why?

The Complete Works of Shakespeare. It's got the lot, pearls of wisdom on the human condition, humour, tragedy, fantastic speeches... what more could anyone want?

### Who would play you in a film about your life and why?

Nicholas Cage – I've really enjoyed everything he's been in. He can do any type of role superbly.

## New homes for Wallsend

### Riverside launched its first new development in collaboration with North Tyneside Council on the site of St Luke's Church, Frank Street, Wallsend.

Developers completed 11 new apartments at the end of last year, let to people nominated by the council who were on the housing waiting list.

Riverside ploughed £785,000 into the development with £649,000 provided by the Housing Corporation's National Affordable Housing Programme. We also managed the renovation of church amenity buildings for use by community groups.

Riverside Divisional Director Steve Ward said: "It's great to see people settling in to their new homes. Our work with North Tyneside Council is contributing towards the regeneration of Wallsend town centre, and we are set to provide yet more affordable housing in the area."

Riverside is investing around £30 million over the next four years to provide 500 more homes for the North East region.

## News in brief

- Riverside has joined House Exchange, an online tool which gives tenants access to homes managed by other social landlords across the country. Tenants can register on the website at [www.riverside.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.riverside.houseexchange.org.uk) for free, and can search for suitable homes. Tenants without internet access can contact the Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 or on Tel: 0345 111 0000 and an advisor will register for them.
- Riverside is helping tenants get on the first rung of the property ladder, with a grant of up to £9,000 to buy their home outright. The scheme, called Social HomeBuy, can help you to buy the property outright or to buy a 75, 50 or 25% share while paying rent on the remainder. For more information contact on Tel: 0845 111 0000 or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.
- Riverside has joined forces with 18 other housing associations to promote shared ownership, which this year celebrated 30 years of helping people become first-time buyers. The group will lobby key politicians and decision-makers to make sure they are fully aware of the successes of shared ownership and the great value that it adds.
- Riverside Home Ownership has launched a new website to make it even easier for first-time buyers to get onto the property ladder. Would-be buyers can search available properties, and set up email alerts if they can't find what they are looking for on their first visit. To find out more visit [www.riversidehomeownership.org.uk](http://www.riversidehomeownership.org.uk)

## Handy hints

**A versatile store cupboard ingredient, here are just a few things you can do with a bottle of vinegar.**

To clean a microwave oven all you need to do is put a couple of tablespoons of vinegar in a bowl. Microwave on 'high' setting for 45 seconds to one minute (time depends on your particular model). Carefully remove the hot bowl and wipe out the oven. Vinegar is great at killing weeds, and pet and child friendly too. Just be careful not to spray it on any greenery you do not intend to kill.

Lime deposits in kettles can sometimes be removed by filling with equal parts vinegar and water. Bring to boil then leave to stand overnight. Empty out vinegar solution, refill with clean water, boil and empty out again then use in the usual way.

Clean your windows with a solution of two tablespoons of vinegar to two pints warm water. Wash from top to bottom on the inside of windows and from side to side on the outside. This way you will be able to tell on which side any smears are.

Remove cooking smells from hands by rinsing them with vinegar, and then wash thoroughly with soap and water.

# Safety first

**Riverside is responsible for carrying out an annual service and safety check in all our properties that have a gas supply.**

This service is free and is designed to keep you safe, but we still have some tenants who refuse to allow us access to carry out this important work.

We are updating our gas servicing procedure and would like to know what you think we could do to improve it.

- How can we encourage tenants to allow us access?
- Why we don't get access to some properties?
- Do our gas servicing letters and leaflets give you enough information? If no, what's missing?
- Did you know that you must allow us access as part of your tenancy agreement?
- Are the dangers and legal responsibilities highlighted enough?
- Is it clear when your appointment is?

All you need to do is write down your thoughts and ideas on improving gas servicing on a piece of paper and return it to us at: Freepost Plus RLUC-ASXE-BKUB, Riverside, Policy and Information, 2 Estuary Boulevard, Liverpool, L24 8RF. No stamp needed.

## Brainteaser

**Fancy cooking up a tasty treat this weekend? Try our food-related wordsearch to get your tastebuds tingling. Hidden within the grid are 10 words but can you find them all? The words are:**

Baking                  Oven                  Chocolate                  Roast dinner                  Vegetables  
Dessert                  Fridge                  Fresh food                  Cookery                  Apron

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

For your chance to win £25 high street vouchers send your completed form to Carolyn Hewitt, Community Engagement Officer, 6 Staithes, Gateshead, NE11 9SN by Friday April 30. The winner of the last competition was from Parade Close, Walker.

# Coming together

**Young and old came together when youngsters from two primary schools visited residents at St Anthony's Court sheltered scheme.**

Year 6 children from nearby St Albans primary school in Walker visited the scheme to interview some of the residents about their time at Walker RC School, which stood on the spot where St Anthony's Court is built.

The children asked lots of questions and were fascinated at how different life was when the residents attended school. The children are going to write up their stories to make a book, and a copy will be given to St Anthony's Court.

Pupils from Byker Primary School also spent



Learning from each other

time with the residents, performing an array of songs.

## We need you!

**Riverside is looking for tenants to join its Tenants' and Residents' Federation as members and observers to represent the North East division.**

If you would like to express an interest or

would like more information please contact Carolyn Hewitt, Community Engagement Officer, on Tel: 0845 111 0000 or on Tel: 0345 111 0000 by Wednesday 31 March.

If you require this magazine in another format e.g. large print or audio cassette or in another language, please telephone ☎ **0845 111 0000** or **0345 111 0000**

अनुवाद भाटे अमने झोन करे

अनुवाद लएी सानुं फोन करे।

برای ترجمه به ما تلفون کنيد

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ترجمه کے لئے ہمیں فون کریں

欢迎电话查询翻译服务事宜。

若需翻譯服務，請致電我們。

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