

Tenants' NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF



ISSUE 07 • SPRING 09



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A new beginning

Carlisle Housing Association is changing – but we will still offer our tenants the same service as before.

From the beginning of April, we will be known as Riverside Carlisle, but other than changes to our logo and name there will be very little difference to the way we operate.

Our staff will still be based at our office in English Gate Plaza and we will still have a local Board to have a say on the day-to-day running of the organisation.

The idea behind the re-organisation, called Better Together, is to make savings that will allow us to invest more money into improving our homes and the services we offer to tenants. It also means that we are in a strong financial position despite the credit crunch.

Last year, we wrote to you about our future vision for The Riverside Group and our plans to create one combined organisation. In the last newsletter we explained how only a very small number of residents were opposed to the plans.

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Safe as Houses



Carlisle Housing Association's Safe as Houses project has clocked up a double milestone – carrying out its 2,500th visit on its fourth birthday.

Tenant Donna Morris, pictured with her son Reece, was the lucky 2,500th customer of the initiative. Safe as

Houses offers crime, fire and accident prevention risk assessments and advice and safety products in partnership with Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and Cumbria Police. It has also helped out with emergencies like the 2005 floods.

PART OF

 **The Riverside Group**

The Riverside Group has been awarded



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A new beginning

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However, a number of you also made some comments and raised concerns, such as whether the service we offer would be affected and whether the association would lose its local identity. We do not expect there to be any changes to our overall service and can assure tenants that our local Board will continue to keep tenants best interests in mind.

Director Patrick Leonard said: "The idea behind Better Together is to improve the running of the organisation and ultimately the service we offer to tenants. "We understand the importance of keeping a local presence in the communities we serve and hope tenants will feel their views, opinions and concerns have been taken into account."

- Turn to page 7 to read all about our new phone number for all your needs.

Unwanted mail?

When you first move into a rented property, it's not unusual to get mail addressed to the previous tenant or even your landlord. Here's a guide on what to do.

- If the letter is addressed to a person who doesn't live at your property, probably the last tenant do not open it. Cross out the name and address, write 'RETURN TO SENDER' on the front of the envelope and put the envelope into a post box.
- If the letter is addressed to Carlisle Housing Association, do not open it. Just cross out the name and address, write 'SEND TO CARLISLE HOUSING ASSOCIATION' on the front of the envelope and put the envelope into a post box.
- If the letter is addressed to The Occupier, open the

letter, read what the letter says, and act on it.

If you receive a letter or bill and you have any concerns about it, contact our Customer Services Centre on Tel: 0800 169 3245.



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Your Tenants' Resource Centre

Carlisle Housing Association has its own Tenants' Resource Centre where you can access a range of free services.

At the centre you can:

- access the internet
- use our suite of computers
- get help with your CV
- get help finding a job
- find out information on the free courses we run
- hold a tenants' meetings
- come in and meet other tenants.

The centre is located at our office in English Gate Plaza and is open from 9.30am to 4pm on Tuesdays, 1pm to 4pm on Thursdays and 10am to 2pm on Fridays.

The centre is run by volunteers so if you would like to help out call Dave Miller, Resident Involvement Officer on Tel: 01228 882818. You can also let Dave know if you have any suggestions for facilities you'd like at the centre.

We can help you beat the recession blues

If you are struggling with money worries why not talk to us about what the Credit Union can offer you?

The Credit Union can offer low interest loans and savings accounts and Carlisle Housing Association even pay your £1 joining fee.

Call into the Tenants' Resource Centre on Tuesdays between 1pm and 3pm to can join or make a payment.

Boxing clever



Youngsters enjoy the Champs Camp

Carlisle Housing Association is helping youngsters get fighting fit after funding boxing-themed exercise sessions.

We have given more than £8,000 towards Champs Camp since August 2008, to help it deliver the project in the Dowbeck Road, Longtown and Petteiril Bank areas of Carlisle. Champs Camp is run by former boxers Charlie Shepherd and Barry Scougal and aims to help youngsters get fit and increase their self esteem through boxing and exercise. So far, more than 1,000 local young people

have taken part in Champs Camp. Neighbourhood Regeneration Officer Tracy Andrew said: "Recent consultation with our customers put activities for children and young people at the top of the list that Carlisle Housing Association should focus on in order to improve neighbourhoods. "We have been keen to address this during the course of the current financial year and have worked with a large number of local groups to help establish and fund new and existing provision for the young people of Carlisle."

Zero tolerance on abuse to staff

While the vast majority of our tenants are excellent customers, on occasions we have had to face some difficult situations.

We operate a policy of zero tolerance when it comes to customers being abusive to staff. We will not tolerate verbal or physical abuse towards any member of staff and we have the right to refuse to deal with anyone who is

considered abusive.

If customers are abusive they will be asked to leave our premises and where necessary we will involve the police.

Abusive behaviour is anything regarded as rude, including swearing; offensive or racist comments; aggressive behaviour; threatening comments or behaviour; or any use of physical strength.

Adaptations to your home

If a long-term illness or disability is making life around the home difficult for you or someone in your family, installing an aid or adaptation could improve your quality of life.

An adaptation is a piece of equipment, extra fitting or minor alteration in your home. Examples include grab rails/hand rails, walk-in shower/over-bath shower, door entry system, hoists/lifting equipment, vibrating smoke alarms and access ramps.

Who can apply?

If you are a Carlisle Housing Association tenant you can apply for an adaptation for anybody who lives in your home, provided there is a recognised need for the changes to be made.

If the adaptation is major, we may ask for a report from an occupational therapist to back up your request. And, if the work needed could change the structure or design of your home, it might be better for you and your family to move to a property more suited to your needs. If this is the case, we will try our hardest to find another home in which you are happy to live.

If you would like to learn more about aids and adaptations and find out how to apply, please contact the Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0800 169 3245.

Your chance to win

When we install aids and adaptations in your home, we need to know the service we provide is satisfactory.

We now ask all tenants who have an aid or adaptation in their home to fill in a customer satisfaction questionnaire.

Every tenant who returns a questionnaire will be entered into a quarterly draw for £50 of Marks and Spencer vouchers.

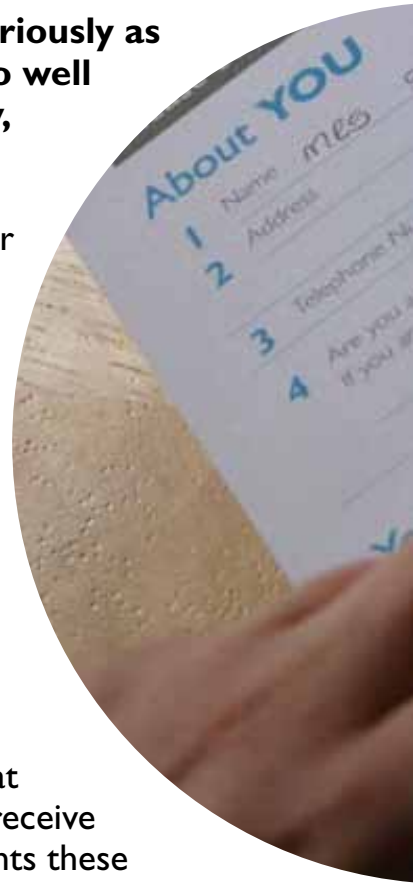
Complaints, comm

We take your views seriously as they tell us what we do well and, more importantly, where we need to improve.

As well as taking part in our surveys, you can also give us feedback by lodging a complaint, a comment or a compliment. You can register these in person to staff, by phone or fax, in writing, by email or via the website.

You can tell us your ideas for improving our services or you can compliment our services or staff to let us know that you are happy. When we receive compliments and comments these are fed back to the relevant department and will feed into our service improvement process if appropriate.

You can also make a formal complaint to us. We take complaints very seriously and will deal with them in an impartial and professional manner. Our complaints process has three stages and complaints remain open until they have been resolved to your satisfaction.



Your views matter

Carlisle Housing Association is on the hunt for volunteers to help us monitor the quality of services we offer and to help shape the way we develop in the future.

Following a pilot scheme, The Riverside Group is rolling out its tenant inspector project to all areas of the organisation so we can get opinions from the people who really matter – our tenants – on a wide range of issues.

A tenant inspector monitors and reviews the quality of services offered by Carlisle Housing Association and makes recommendations for

Complaints and compliments

Stage one

We always try to resolve complaints within 20 working days. At this stage a complaint is either upheld, where we agree that something went wrong; partly upheld, where we agree with part but not all of the complaint; or not upheld where we do not agree that anything went wrong.

Stage two

If your complaint is not resolved within 20 working days to your satisfaction it will be looked into by a manager. If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction within 20 working days then it can progress to stage three.

Stage three

You can appeal against a stage two decision by writing to our Managing Director. A Committee of the Board will usually hear the appeal within 28 days of the date of your letter and will write to you to tell you their decision. If you are still unhappy with our response then you can seek advice from external bodies including the Housing Ombudsman Service.

To make a comment, compliment or complaint call our Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0800 169 3245.

improvements. Tenant inspectors will be expected to carry out six inspections a year. These could include checking the quality of homes before they are let, inspecting communal areas in blocks of flats and carrying out checks of work carried out on estates.

We will be holding half day taster sessions where people can find out more about the role. After that, tenants can apply to become an inspector and, if their application is successful, they will then be given full training.

For more information on the project, call Tel: 0800 169 3245.

Kids learn to keep safe

Carlisle Housing Association is helping children in the city to stay safe after it funded information packs for use in the classroom.

The packs include lesson plans for teachers and parents, including topics such as building site safety, bullying, vandalism, car crime, drug, alcohol and solvent misuse and anti-social behaviour. Schools included on the programme are Petheril Bank School, Petheril Bank; Bishop Harvey Goodwin School, Currock; Caldew Lea Scholl, Wigton Road; Newlathes Junior School, Morton; and St Cuthbert's RC School, Botcherby.

The project aims to improve the health, well-being and safety of children arming them with the knowledge, understanding and information about the consequences of the decisions they make.

This year is the final year Carlisle Housing Association will sponsor this initiative, having supported it since September 2005 with funding totalling £11,833.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Officer Tracy Andrew said: "Our customers have told us they want us to focus on activities for children and young people and tackle anti-social behaviour. These resources will help to teach pupils at these schools about making informed decisions and how to keep themselves safe."

Meet the staff

Heather Conroy is Project Officer (Equality and Diversity) at Carlisle Housing Association



What do you most enjoy about your job?

The satisfaction of seeing staff awareness raised on diversity issues.

What is your biggest work-related achievement so far?

Being part of the team which is responsible for embedding equality and diversity issues throughout Carlisle Housing Association. We have a list of objectives and have achieved a lot in a very short period of time.

What would be your one desert island item and why?

Any Scissor Sisters CD, as I love to dance.

What is your favourite book and why?

Marley and Me by John Grogan. I love animals and the humour and sadness in this book had me laughing and crying simultaneously.

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

Judi Dench – she wins all the Oscars and she has a sense of humour as well as dignity.

Help us to help you

The Riverside Group has commissioned research by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) to gain a better understanding of the needs and situations of its tenants.

This will help us to understand what sort of support you may need and the best way to get that help. During spring 2009 researchers from the PSI will interview a small number of tenants on three of our estates across the country. Tenants will tell researchers about their work and family life, and their experience of living on the estate.

Researchers will contact a selection of tenants on those estates and ask if they would like to participate in the research. We hope those of you who are contacted will take part, as it will help us to help you.

If you have any questions about the research contact Riverside Research Manager Amy Redman on Tel: 0151 295 6031 or Rebecca Taylor at PSI on Tel: 0207 911 7533.

Free lunch and learn courses

If you are interested in learning more about word processing why not join our free course?

The 10-hour Lunch and Learn short training course is tutored in a relaxed and informal manner and is run in partnership with Cumbria Adult Education.

The course, which is suitable for people with fewer than five GCSEs, or those who are looking for work, runs for five weeks from Monday 20 April.

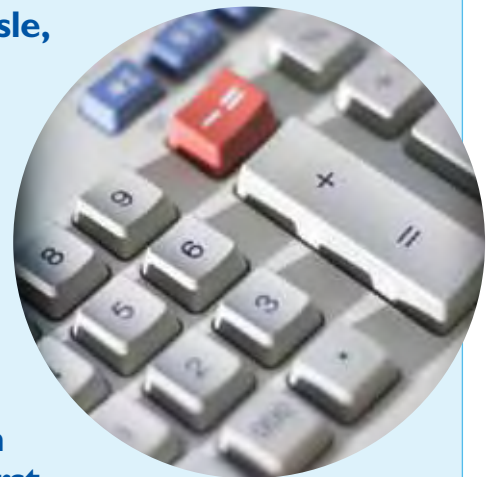
If you are interested, come along to our first session at Pennine Way Community Development Centre at Pennine Way Primary School, Silverdale Road,

Harraby, Carlisle, CA4 9QQ.

Free lunch is served from 12 noon until 1pm and the course runs from 1pm to 3pm.

Places are limited and on a first come first served basis.

For more information call on Tel: 01900 706104.



HANDY HINTS

Here are some steps you can take to deter burglars from targeting your home and minimise the risk to your property.



- Don't leave windows open or doors unlocked, even if you are in the garden or near your house. A thief can get through the smallest window and might often try to open a door if there seems to be no-one around.
- Never leave car or house keys within sight of the letterbox or a window.
- Never leave spare house keys under a plant pot or doormat – burglars know all the 'secret places'.
- Security mark all your home and garden equipment with full postcode using a UV marker pen or permanent marker.
- Use internal timer switches for lamps and radios. This gives the impression that someone is at home which is particularly important during the dark nights.

Thinking of improving your home?

If you are thinking of carrying out improvements or alterations to your home make sure you are not in breach of your tenancy agreement.

We always ask tenants to ask for our permission in writing before changing any aspect of their property. We do this for a number of reasons:

- we have to make sure that all work carried out in our properties is done to a high standard
- our properties need to conform to certain Health and Safety criteria, so we need to be aware of any changes to buildings to be certain they comply with the law
- there can be dangers from a wide range of substances in the home, including asbestos in older properties. Our contractors are specially trained in how to handle these.

If you are thinking of carrying out any alterations to your home, please contact our Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0800 169 3245.

BRAINTEASER

A few simple security tips can help to keep you safe in your home. Can you find the 10 words in the grid below? Have a go – it's just for fun this time, but we will be running prize competitions again soon.

The words are:

Security	Steering lock	Police	Break in
Fingerprint	Window locks	Safety	Beware
Thief	No doubt		

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

OUR NEW NUMBER

From April 1, there will be a new telephone number for all tenants to contact us on.

You can still get in touch with us on our usual freephone number, Tel: 0800 169 3245 but we now have an alternative for people using mobile phones which is Tel: 0345 155 9020.

New tenants' DVD

At the end of April we are launching a new DVD which will be given to all new tenants as a part of their sign-up process.

The DVD highlights the key elements of your tenancy agreement and lets you know what you can expect from us and what we expect from you. It has been made using tenants and staff and is a pilot project that may be rolled out across The Riverside Group. Copies are available for existing tenants from the reception at our Botchergate office.



Turning Carlisle green

Get your green fingers at the ready – Carlisle Housing Association is once again holding its annual gardening competition.

The competition is open to all residents and groups living or working in a Carlisle Housing Association neighbourhood. The categories are Best Garden; Best Low Maintenance; Most Improved Garden; Best Garden Ornaments; Best Communal Garden; Best Container/Hanging Basket; Best Wildlife Friendly Garden; and Best Community Venue.

There will be prizes given for first, second and third places in each category and a prize for the Best Overall Garden.

The closing date for entries is Friday 24 July. Call Tracy Andrew or Mark Gilbertson on Tel: 0800 169 3245 for an entry form and details of how to enter.



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If you require this magazine in another format e.g. large print or audio cassette or in another language, please telephone ☎ **0800 169 3245**

অনুবাদের জন্য আমাদের টেলিফোন করুন।

Jeżeli potrzebujesz tłumaczenia, zadzwoń do nas

Paskambinkite mums dėl vertimų

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Para tradução, telefone-nos

ترجمہ کے لئے ہمیں فون کریں

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Appelez-nous pour vos besoins en traductions

We are happy and able to accept Tynetalk calls.

