

# Our new number

We have recently changed our telephone numbers to make it easy for all tenants to contact us.

Our 0845 number allows tenants to contact our 24-hour Customer Service Centre from anywhere in the country for the price of a local phone call. An alternative 0345 number may be cheaper for tenants with inclusive call packages or ringing from a mobile phone.



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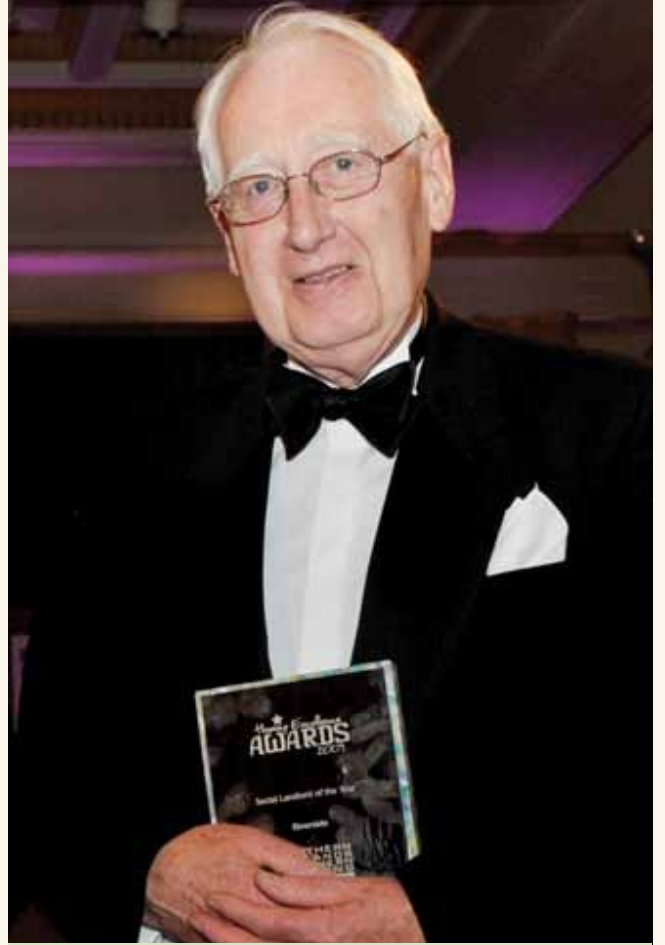
To contact us call on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.

# Simply the best

Riverside has been crowned Social Landlord of the Year for the second consecutive year and also scooped the Customer Service Award at the Housing Excellence Awards.

Riverside is the only company in the history of the Housing Excellence Awards to be the sole recipient of two awards on the same night. Chief executive Deborah Shackleton said: "The awards

are testament not only to all our hard-working and dedicated staff but also our tenants and residents who work with us to continuously help us improve our service."



Group Board Chairman Professor John Tarn picks up the Social Landlord of the Year award

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

अनुवाद माटे अमने झोन करे

ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਲਈ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Appelez-nous pour vos besoins en traductions

Ina soo wac sidii aan kuu turjimno

अनुवाद के लिए हमें फोन करें

ترجمہ 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。

اتصلوا بنا للحصول على الترجمة

We are happy and able to accept Typetalk calls.

 **Riverside**

 **business for neighbourhoods**

  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The Riverside Group Limited: Registered Office: 2 Estuary Boulevard, Estuary Commerce Park, Liverpool L24 8RF  
A charitable Industrial and Provident Society. Tenant Services Authority No. L4537

For Riverside tenants in the South East



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# We're improving – with your help

**Riverside relies on feedback from you – our tenants – to tell us what we do well and, more importantly where we need to improve.**

The last official tenant satisfaction survey was carried out in 2007, just as Riverside merged with ECHG. Once the Division had established itself, we carried out our own research during February and March 2009. A total of 30% of you responded – about average for surveys of this kind – and this is what you told us.

Of those who replied, 59% said they were very or fairly satisfied with the services provided by Riverside. This is an improvement from 2007, when only 47% said they were satisfied. More of you were satisfied with the overall quality of your home, and with your neighbourhood as a place to live.

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## Tenants' conference success



**Riverside residents from across the South East got the chance to find out what goes on at Riverside during our first divisional tenants' conference.**

During the day, delegates listened to talks and presentations from staff across the organisation and learned how they could get more involved. To read more, turn to pages 4 and 5.

Riverside has been awarded



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## We're improving – with your help

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Around one-third of respondents said they found it difficult to get hold of the right person when contacting us. This is a big concern for Riverside, and there will be a lot of work undertaken in the coming year to put this right.

Thanks to changes to our repairs service, 54% said they were satisfied with repairs and maintenance, an 11% improvement since 2007. There is still dissatisfaction with the time taken before work starts, and the speed work is completed.

Morrison, our new contractor, is aware of these results and has pledged to improve them, aiming for 87% customer satisfaction with its service.

We will be monitoring satisfaction levels throughout the year, with a full Riverside-wide survey planned for early next year. If you would like more information on the results of the survey, please contact us through the 24-hour Customer Service Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000.

## We're Better Together

**After months of planning, Riverside is finally Better Together – amalgamating seven housing associations that previously made up The Riverside Group.**

The process was completed on April 1 and since then, we have been known as Riverside, with a new logo and branding to go with our new organisation.

Tenants will continue to receive the same great service from us as we face the future in a strong position despite the current economic crisis.

# A change of Direction

**Riverside has said goodbye to Director Sasha Harrison who left the organisation in June to take on the role of Group Director at another housing association.**

Staff and tenants would like to wish Sasha all the best for the future and thank her for all her hard work and leadership here in Dartford.

While we look for a permanent replacement, Riverside's Anna Bishop has come down from Liverpool to look after operations in the South East. Anna started out working for Bath City Council, and joined Riverside in 2003 as Operations Manager at Community Seven, which is now a part of the Mersey North division. For the last two years Anna has been in post as Director of Lee Valley Housing Association.



New Director Anna Bishop

Anna said: "I am looking forward to working on behalf of tenants in the South East to deliver quality services and to improving the homes and lives of our tenants."

# How are we doing?

**It's been two years since we joined Riverside and, as we've now entered a new financial year, we thought we'd let you know how we're doing against our own targets.**

Many areas have seen improvement in performance. Rent arrears continue to fall, thanks to the hard work of our Income Management team. Our homes have also been empty for less time and for the first time, the Division has met Riverside's national targets for this.

Repairs response has improved slightly for routine repairs, but we did not do so well in the emergency repairs category this year. This is expected to improve with the appointment of new repairs contractor Morrison, who started work on 1 July 2009.

At the end of March, 1.7% – just over 50 – of our homes were without a valid gas safety certificate. This is a vast improvement on last year, and as of the end of June 2009 this has improved to 1% (34 homes). Please continue to



We are reducing the amount of time our homes are empty

allow our contractors access to perform this vital safety check.

As we strive for continuous improvement, our targets for the financial year 2009–2010 are ever more challenging. We look forward to working towards these targets, and to reporting further improvements this time next year!

Housing performance	Last year's performance	This year's performance	Target for 2009/10
Rent arrears as a percentage of total rent owed	12.6%	10.7%	9.5%
Homes overdue for a gas safety inspection	3%	1.7%	0%
Average number days our homes are vacant	60 days	41.9 days	43 days

Repairs response	Last year's performance	This year's performance	Target for 2009/10
Emergency repairs completed same day or next day	98%	94%	97%
Urgent repairs completed within five working days	89%	89%	94%
Routine repairs completed within 15 working days	90%	91%	94%

## We need you

As our new repairs contract rolls out across the South East, we are looking for tenants to get involved in monitoring the performance of our new contractors.

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Three scrutiny panels will meet four times a year to check up on how repairs and maintenance services are delivered. These groups will be critical in telling us where improvements need to be made, as well as letting us know when we're getting it right. We will be setting up scrutiny panels in:

- Kent
- London
- East Anglia.

If you are interested and can commit to these meetings in the long term, please contact Deborah Cruse, Tenant Liaison Officer on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000 or by post using the FREEPOST envelope included with this newsletter. You can also contact us on Email: [enquiries@riverside.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@riverside.org.uk)

# Overview fo at conferen

**Riverside residents from across the South East descended on the country's capital city for the Division's first tenants' conference.**

The day-long event, held at the Wellcome Collection Conference Centre near London's Euston station, gave attendees an insight into life at Riverside.

The day began with a performance report from Divisional Director Sasha Harrison. Barry Wood and Dawn Fairclough from Riverside's Customer Services Centre (CSC), gave tenants an insight into the workings of the 24-hour CSC, and John Barclay from Morrison outlined what to expect from the new repairs contract.

Mike Chapman, a tenant of a Southend housing association, gave examples of projects he has been involved in and advice on where to find funding for similar activities. Sharon Hutchinson and Eve Roberts from the Resident



John Wood, Managing



Former Divisional Director Sasha Harrison gave attendees an insight into life at Riverside

# or tenants ce



Director of Housing Services, addresses the conference

Involvement team explained how tenants can get involved with Riverside.

Eileen Gorman, Chair of the Tenant Advisory Panel, talked about the importance of good communication between Riverside and its tenants, before John Wood, Managing Director of Housing Services, closed the event.

The event was a success, with good feedback from those who attended. A survey was sent to those who did not wish to attend, and this feedback will be used in planning future activities to ensure we can support greater numbers of tenants to benefit from these events. We would like to thank all who responded to this survey, and to all who attended the conference.

## New contractor – one month in

**The repairs partnership between Morrison and Riverside has been in place for a month now and we are starting to get some good feedback from tenants and staff regarding the service.**

The handover period, in particular, of any new contract is always a difficult process but to the credit of Morrison this has gone extremely well.

The new contract includes some innovative procedures like texting ahead to alert and remind you of an appointment so when you report a repair please ensure that we have the correct information for you so this text goes to the right number. If an appointment is missed then the job will be cancelled.

When a contractor finishes their work in your home they will ask you to fill out a tenant satisfaction questionnaire. This is carried out on their handheld mobile devices and is completely confidential so please answer this as honestly as you can in order for us to gain useful feedback and respond to any issues you have.



We have received good feedback so far

Should you wish to bring anything more specific to our attention please contact the Customer Services Centre on Tel: 0845 111 0000 (local rate) or on Tel: 0345 111 0000 and we will be happy to investigate the matter for you.

We hope you are seeing an improvement in the service and look forward to delivering this to you in the future.

## Meet the staff

**Deborah Cruse is Tenant Liaison Officer at Riverside's Dartford office.**



**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

My role is interesting and I enjoy being in a position to resolve things if they go wrong.

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

Becoming the new Tenant Liaison Officer.

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

My partner because he's my best mate and he makes me laugh.

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

The Lord of the Rings trilogy, because it's so magical and good defeats evil in the end.

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

Susan Sarandon from Thelma and Louise - she appears very focused and down to earth.

## A new name in gas

**Gas Safe Register is the new name in gas safety, replacing CORGI as the country's official body from April this year.**



Now, only Gas Safe-registered engineers should carry out work on gas appliances or installations in your home.

Riverside is legally responsible for the safety of gas appliances in your home and we urge you to allow engineers access whenever a gas safety check or maintenance needs to be carried out.

If you smell gas turn off the gas supply, open windows and doors and call the gas emergency service on Tel: 0800 111 999.

All existing gas safety records are valid until their expiry date. A gas safety record issued after 1 April 2009 is only valid if the engineer is registered with Gas Safe Register.

All Gas Safe-registered engineers carry an ID card with their licence number and photograph.

## Rent rules

**Every tenant pays rent on their property – but did you know that different tenancies have different rules about when rents can be increased?**

If your initial tenancy began before 15 January 1989, you are a secure tenant and your rent is known as a "fair rent" registered by the rent officer. These will be re-registered every two years, and increased in accordance with guidance from the Tenant Services Authority. If your initial tenancy began after 15 January 1989, you will normally be on an assured or assured shorthold tenancy. Your rent will be re-registered every year, and will be increased in accordance with guidance from the Tenant Services Authority.

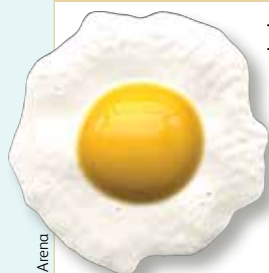
Communities and Local Government has

recently published a free information booklet on secure tenancies, sometimes called regulated tenancies, and also one regarding assured and assured shorthold tenancies. Copies can be obtained from:

- your rent officer – listed in the phone book under Rent Officer
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- a local housing aid centre
- online at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/regulatedtenancies](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/regulatedtenancies)
- your local authority offices.



## Handy hints



If you spill an egg on your work surface or hard floor, just sprinkle a good

amount of salt on it and it will be easy to clean up.

To clean the inside of your Thermos flask, scrub it out with a cloth at the end of a wooden spoon. Make sure it's completely dry before storing, and store it without the lid on.

If you are struggling to open a jar lid, slip on a pair of washing up gloves, which will increase your grip.

Give new life to your favourite handbag by rubbing the leather with bees wax. It will not only give it a new sheen but it will also revive the leather and help to keep it longer.

Cool down during the summer by placing a wide tub of water in front of your portable fan. Just be careful no one tips or trips over the water bowl.

Make your microwave easier to clean by placing damp paper towels inside, and turn on to high for 10 seconds.

To remove chewing gum from the bottom of your shoes, simply place them in a plastic bag in the freezer. The frozen gum will be easier to scrape off.

# Thinking of moving out?

**If you are moving out of your home and provide four weeks' notice of leaving so we can get the property ready for a new tenant you could be rewarded with a £100 cheque.**

If you help us reduce the time your home is empty, it avoids boarded-up properties and helps maintain a safer community. Do all of the following and £100 will be yours:

- give us at least four weeks' notice before you move
- make sure your rent account is clear on the day you move
- let us inspect your home as soon as we get your notice
- if we need to, let us carry out a viewing with a prospective tenant before you move out
- leave your home clean and tidy inside and out, taking all your belongings with you
- provide us with a forwarding address
- hand all keys, including window locks, etc., to the office.

You can also help us to improve our service by completing an exit survey. This will be sent to you with a pre-paid envelope or you can pick one up from your local office.

## Brainteaser

**The summer might have been a bit disappointing so far but here's a wordsearch to brighten your day. It's just for fun this time but look out for more prize competitions in future editions.**

Hidden in the grid are 10 words, but can you find them all? The words are:

sunshine    heat wave    ice cream    beach    picnics  
gardening    in bloom    blue skies    light nights    holidays

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