

Tenant Topics

Inside
this
issue



A great start
to the day!
Page 2



Caring for
our wildlife
Page 5



New homes
for new
arrivals
Page 9

“Thanks for saving my life”

“I just kept thinking how he had a son and, as a father myself, I had to keep going for his sake,”

“After about 15 minutes and the use of a defibrillator, he got his heartbeat back and was taken to hospital.”

A Two Rivers tenant did something amazing earlier this year when he stepped into a crisis and helped to save a man's life.

Despite no previous first aid experience, Paul Stevens didn't hesitate when his neighbour, Tiffany Prosser, raised the alarm and told him a man had collapsed at the wheel of his van outside their homes in Poppy Field, Coalway.

He ran over to check for breathing and a pulse and then, under the instruction of the paramedic who arrived soon after, he gave CPR until an ambulance arrived.

“I just kept thinking how he had a son and, as a father myself, I had to keep going for his sake,” said Paul. *“After about 15 minutes and the use of a defibrillator, he got his heartbeat back and was taken to hospital.”*

The paramedic who guided Paul was Paul Nicholls. He said: *“Paul did an excellent job of taking over the chest compressions from me, meaning I could carry out more advanced life support. There is no doubt that his role was instrumental in saving the patient's life.”*

Two months after the drama unfolded, Chris Burton returned to the scene to meet Paul, Tiffany and Paul to help piece together the story and to thank them for saving his life.

Last year Two Rivers installed 11 defibrillators at housing schemes throughout the Forest of Dean and ran community training courses. One of them is at Wynols Close, near to where the incident happened.

We were so impressed with Paul's actions that we have nominated him for a national St John Ambulance award and our own Good Neighbours Award.



Two Rivers tenants Paul Stevens (left) and Tiffany Prosser with Paramedic Paul Nicholls and grateful patient Chris Burton (right).

Shiver me timbers! Five-year-old Keelie Hewlett enjoys a morning of breakfast and play.



Breakfast is one of our most important meals, and families attending our holiday clubs couldn't agree more!

With free breakfast and entertainment for youngsters, we were onto a winner with two events held in Cinderford this year.

Karyn Fitzhugh took her children Paige (10) and six-year-old William to the club. She said: "There's nothing like this around here. It's always hard to find things for the children to do during the holidays and the

cost of activities can soon add-up. This is great! I'll definitely come again."

The events held during the Easter and Whitsun breaks gave the children a free morning of fun where parents knew their children would have a good meal to start the day and pick up some ideas of activities to try at home.

And there wasn't a dull moment as the children tucked into cereal, toast, fruit and yogurt, and enjoyed badge making, arts and crafts, a mini assault course and games.

We were also joined by local NHS representatives who gave oral health advice and handed out free toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Gwyn Yarlett, our Welfare, Benefit and Debt Advisor, said: "We understand there can be a lot of financial strain on parents during the holidays and we were keen to alleviate this. The children seemed to have a great time and we hope it was one of their holiday highlights!"

After two successful events, and with lots of positive feedback, the team is hoping to hold more at other locations across the Forest of Dean.

Pay to suit you

Direct Debit is a really easy way to pay your rent. And we've made it even more simple and convenient for you.

You can now choose when you pay your Direct Debit. This may be weekly, fortnightly or monthly and you can decide which day you'd like the money to leave your account. This means you can pay your rent at a time that suits you best.

Once you've set up your Direct Debit your rent will be paid automatically, provided you have the funds in your account. This means you don't have to think about paying your rent – it will all be done for you!

Please get in touch with us if you would like to set up a Direct Debit.



Improving life chances

Bringing up a child alone is a tough job for most people, but add reliance on public transport and a three-year degree course, and that job suddenly gets a whole lot harder.

Which makes Sophie Stefanowicz's determination to improve life for herself and eight-year-old Luke by studying for a degree even more inspiring, and we are pleased to be supporting her efforts through our new Two Rivers Housing David Garnett Bursary.

Sophie, who lives in one of our Gloucester homes, began her Accounting and Financial Management degree course at the University of Gloucestershire in September 2014.

Now she is waiting for the results of her end-of-year exams before returning for her final year at university.

The bursary – named after our former Chair – has covered some of Sophie's course materials and travel expenses to lectures in Cheltenham. Next year, she may also wish to take up our offer of help with CV preparation, interview techniques or perhaps even reviewing her dissertation.



Some of the mountain of books helping Sophie Stefanowicz on the journey towards her degree.

"I always wanted to go to university in Poland but couldn't afford it," explained Sophie. "It's difficult juggling course work with looking after my son, but I'm really enjoying it and I know it will improve my future prospects, which will be good for both of us."

We're still on the up!

Two Rivers Housing has broken through the magical 50 barrier this year to rank number 46 in the national list of best not-for-profit companies to work for.

We have also joined a separate listing of the top 25 housing associations in the country for the first time, coming in at number 18.

The 'Best Companies to Work For' acknowledges excellence in the workplace, and only those with the highest level of overall employee engagement make it onto the list.

Three of our staff – HR apprentice Maegan Willis and Neighbourhood Assistants, Ann Pugh and Gina Facchiano



Ann Pugh, Gina Facchiano and Maegan Willis proudly collect our Top 100 award

– went to the national Top 100 award ceremony in London to receive our award, and they had a fabulous evening.

"We have an excellent team of people here, all doing important work and, if we

look after them well, they will look after our tenants and other customers well," said Garry King, our Chief Executive. "I'm very proud of our improving performance in this prestigious list."

Speed selling

Speed is of the essence for most people wishing to sell their home, and our estate agency TwoCan has proved it's one of the fastest in the business.

On average, the team is finding buyers within just eight weeks – out-stripping its nearest local competition by between nine and 27 weeks, according

to data from January to March this year and published by Rightmove.

This – plus the fact TwoCan is, on average, achieving virtually 99% of the asking price for vendors (based on internal figures from June to December 2015) – could be why it has been rated 'Agent of the Year' by an independent review site, following feedback from satisfied customers.

The spring sunshine has generated more enquiries and instructions for TwoCan and it has been selling properties on behalf of other housing associations, too. All this is great news for the agency which celebrated its first birthday at the beginning of this month.

Remember, if you have friends or family thinking of selling or renting out a property, you can earn a £20 voucher when the sale or let completes, if you recommend TwoCan.

All profits earned by TwoCan will be invested in our services.



£20 voucher

Complete the form below and hand it to someone you know who is thinking about selling or letting their property or changing agent. When the sale or let completes with TwoCan, we will send you a £20 'Love to Shop' voucher*.

Name:

Address:

Phone/email:

Name and address of friend/family member:

www.twocan.estate

0800 294 2860

info@twocan.estate

*Terms and conditions apply. Please call TwoCan on 0800 294 2860 for further information.

The green grass of home

The grass-cutting season is now in full swing and you should regularly see the Centigen team out-and-about keeping our estates looking trim and tidy.

There are three different levels of service provided throughout the 15 week growing season between April and October, according to the type of homes in each particular area:

- 1** Most tenants live in a 'standard' cut area. This is where the cuttings are collected on the first seven visits of the season, the cuttings are left in place on the next seven visits, and then collected after the final cut of the year.
- 2** Our HomePlus residents pay extra for an 'enhanced cut' where the clippings are collected and taken away throughout the whole season.
- 3** Areas where our homes are outnumbered by many home-owners receive a 'reduced' cut four times a year.

Some of our tenants are grass-cutting 'monitors' and they check on the quality of service being provided, reporting any problems they find.



Look out for the Centigen team throughout the area over the summer

The schedule and estate maps can be found on the 'Your home' pages of our website. Any questions about the

grass-cutting service provided should be directed to your Neighbourhood Housing Advisor.

At-the-ready with
bee, bat and bird
boxes, ready to
attract wildlife to
the school.



Caring for our wildlife

Have you ever thought about what happened to the land where your house is built, even before a single brick was laid?

Our staff visited students at a Coleford school recently to talk about just that, and tell them how we reduce the impact on wildlife when new homes are built.

Angharad Hodge and Veronica Parker from our Development team were joined at Ellwood Primary School by experts from Focus Ecology to discuss their work and teach them about the animals that can be found in the British countryside.

The four to 11-year-olds learned about creatures such as slow worms, bats,

hedgehogs, dormice, frogs and newts, as well as finding out how ecologists discover if these animals live in a development area.

Angharad, said: *"It is crucial we fully understand the impact our new homes may have on local wildlife. We can then design it to reduce this impact, and may even be able to improve it by providing nesting boxes, wildlife areas, slow worm hibernacula or new ponds."*

The school may be welcoming some new creatures to its own garden in the near future, with bird, bat and bee boxes given to the school by Focus Ecology. Once the best location was found for the boxes, our operative James Bartlett was on hand to put them up.



James Bartlett
puts the bird box
firmly into place.

We'll wait to find out if they've inspired a new generation of budding ecologists!



Stay cool this summer!

for you -for your community - not for profit

It's tempting to yearn for a long, fine summer, but it can be uncomfortable and dangerous for many if the mercury rises too high.

So, if the forecasters get it right this year, you may find these tips will help you cope with the heat.

- Close windows, curtains and blinds when it's hot outside, and open them as the day cools.
- Stay out of the sun, and avoid 11am to 3pm if you're likely to be affected by the heat.
- Have cool baths or showers, or splash yourself with cool water.
- Identify the coolest room in the house and use it as the day heats up.

- Drink cold drinks regularly. Avoid tea, coffee and alcohol.
- Wear cool, loose clothing and a hat if you're going outside.
- Plan ahead to make sure you have enough food, drink and medication to last if you struggle to go out for a few days.
- Check on friends, relatives and neighbours who may be less able to look after themselves.

SAVING TIP

Christmas seems a long way off but, if you buy gifts throughout the year, taking advantage of sales, you'll spread the cost and ease the stress.





Check before you admit

We're stepping up efforts to protect our tenants' safety by launching a register of all our contractors and sub-contractors.

When someone comes to your door and says they represent Two Rivers Housing, you can call us to check they are who they say they are, and feel easier about letting them into your home.

It has always been possible to confirm the identity of our own staff, but it's been harder to achieve for those not directly employed by us - until now!

From now on, if someone claims they are working on our behalf and wants to get into your home, just ask for their identity badge and ring us on **0800 316 0897**.

Our Customer Service team will immediately be able to check our records for their name, ID badge number and describe the appearance of the person at your door. If that all matches and you feel confident in their authenticity, you

can let them in. If you have any doubts at all, simply turn them away.

It is important to trust strangers coming into your home. If someone is reluctant to show you their identification it may mean they're not genuine. If they have nothing to hide, they will be happy for you to check.

We will always try to let you know if we are going to visit and all Two Rivers Housing staff carry ID cards, so please ask to see them. We won't be offended and it's better to be safe than sorry.



Protect your belongings

An accident in the home can be costly, disruptive and stressful, but being insured can lift some the strain and make it easier to recover.

Two Rivers has buildings insurance for all its properties, but tenants need to insure their contents against fire, theft or vandalism.

We've negotiated a new low-cost scheme for our tenants which could give peace of mind for as little as 53p per week for tenants over 60 and 80p for everyone else.

If you're already insured through us, you have been automatically transferred to this scheme – which is cheaper than before – and we have recently written to you to explain.

If you don't have contents insurance, we recommend you take a look at 'My Home Contents Insurance' and see what's on offer.

This new scheme is run by the National Housing Federation in conjunction with Thistle Insurance Services and you will find more information on our website, or contact our Customer Service team via **customerservices@2rh.org.uk** or call **0800 316 0897**.



We thought you might like to see this group photograph of our staff. It's not easy to get everyone together on one day, and inevitably there are a few faces missing, but this is nearly all of us and it also includes our colleagues in Centigen and TwoCan.

Peter is keen to learn

For a man with so many interests, the internet has opened up a world of opportunities for one of our Yorkley tenants.

Peter Skidmore joined our internet project in the spring and, since then, he has been researching cars and holidays, looking up recipes and renewing his car tax online.

He is also really looking forward to using Skype to connect with his sister who he hasn't seen since she emigrated to Australia nearly half-a-century ago.

Mr Skidmore was really pleased to be selected as one of 10 tenants we have provided with a tablet, broadband connection and training for a year. He



Karen Champion helps Peter Skidmore to find his way around the internet.

was interested in what the internet could offer but didn't know how to get started, and now he loves searching for the topics that interest him.

"I've really enjoyed looking at gardens online," he said. "I've also looked at a few places I'd like to go on holiday and read some reviews, and hope I'll be able to book future holidays using the computer."

Julie Burlow, our Community Engagement Team Leader said: *"More services are going online and it's important for people to be able to join in. We want our tenants to see how they can save money by shopping from the comfort of their own home, as well as using the internet for fun activities and staying connected with others – particularly important for those who live in rural areas."*

Leading our future

After a long and rigorous selection process, we are excited by our choice of four new independent members to join our Board.

The leadership and direction given to our organisation by the Board is unseen by many, but it's a vital role and it was important for us to take our time in finding the right people to guide us into the future.

The four we chose bring a wealth and breadth of experience and knowledge, along with fresh ideas to carry us through a period when the housing sector is facing considerable change. Here's a brief introduction to them:

In the next issue, we will tell you about the tenant who is also joining our Board.



Patrick Harkness has extensive senior business and leadership experience, particularly working in housing and other not-for-profit organisations in the health, social care and community sectors.



Susan Holmes has gained a range of skills whilst working in housing and social care. She has strategic leadership knowledge as well as finance, risk management and governance experience.



Jonathan Richards has a broad business background which has given him extensive legal and commercial business management experience. He is also knowledgeable in operational risk management, finance and HR.



Neil Sutherland is a member of the Centigen Board and will now use his strategic leadership and commercial business experience of the public, private and third sector business markets to support Two Rivers Housing.

Top marks!



The organisation that regulates housing associations has given us top possible marks for the way we manage our finances and lead our organisation.

This follows an assessment by the Homes and Communities Agency, which was looking for evidence that services are properly run and they represent good value for money.



Two Rivers Housing would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of our new tenants whose homes have transferred from Cottsway Housing.

We have taken on 28 properties in Hartpury and Staunton, near Gloucester, from the Oxfordshire-based housing association, and look forward to a long and happy relationship with our new tenants.



Stay safe at home

More than 6,000 people die in accidents in the home every year, and 2.7 million report to A&E for treatment.

However, so many accidents in the home can be avoided, by following these simple steps:

- Eliminate trip and slip hazards by clearing up mess.
- Use guards on open fires, especially when there are young children around.
- Don't smoke or cook in your home when tired or under the influence of alcohol.
- Only use washing machines, dryers and dishwashers when you're in the house so you can keep an eye on them, as they can flood or catch fire.
- Use restrictors on open windows to prevent children from falling out. These can be found at most hardware shops.
- Keep chemicals and medicines out of reach of children and teach them about the dangers around the home.
- Don't attempt anything that puts you, or others, at a health and safety risk. Ask for help when you need it, with tasks such as heavy lifting.
- Use door chains and high level locks on garden gates to keep your child safe.



New homes for new arrivals

Casey Chandler, Scott Gillott and baby Maci-Jay settle into their brand new family home in Eastington.

Five of our nine new homes in Eastington near Stroud are complete, with the final four due to be finished any day.

The first residents were delighted to pick up the keys to their new homes at the Swallowcroft development and, for two of the families who recently welcomed new additions, the move couldn't come soon enough.

Casey Chandler and Scott Gillott have been desperately looking for a home together since the birth of their baby Maci-Jay at the beginning of the year. Casey said: "We've been living at my parents' house and have been trying to find a place together in this area for a while.

"We were over the moon when we found out we were getting this home. I'm from Leonard Stanley and Scott is from Ebley, so it's fantastic that we can stay in the area, close to our families."

Martyn James and Amy Chapman welcomed their daughter Scarlett into the world in March and have moved into a two-bedroom house at Swallowcroft. Amy said: "We are really excited to move into our first home together as a family. It's a lovely home, in a great location."

Four of our homes are available through shared ownership, and five are offered for affordable rent. Together they help to address the shortfall of affordable homes in the area.



Craning for a view!

The children from Come and Play Day Nursery with Matt Groves (left) and Wayne Rhee of Harpers Construction, and Tara Newman (far right) from our Development team.

Children at a nursery near to our building site in Lydney were invited to have a closer inspection of the new houses going up.

The six new homes on Orchard Road – one-bedroom flats and two-bedroom houses – are due to welcome their first residents in September.

Progress is being keenly watched by three and four-year-olds at the nearby

Come and Play Day Nursery as they regularly walk past the site, so we invited the children to take a proper look and watch the Harpers Construction team and a crane at work.

Lauren Brown, Deputy Manager at the nursery said: “We often walk past the site and have a look to see what’s going on. The children were so excited when they were invited to watch the crane

working. They haven’t stopped talking about it since!”

The children were tasked with drawing pictures of the event and we awarded four-year-old Finley Perry a book voucher as a prize for creating the artwork judged to be the best.

Keep your details up-to-date

Many businesses are increasingly using email to keep in touch with their customers because it’s quicker, more efficient and it saves valuable time and money.

We are starting to follow suit and have recently used email to contact tenants due for improvement works to their home this year, such as a new kitchen or bathroom.

If you were on this list and we had an email address recorded for you, we sent your letter by email. If you were on this list and we don’t hold an email address for you, we put the letter in the post.

This makes it important to tell us if your email address changes, and to check

your email account regularly if you have provided us with an email address. If not, you could be missing out on important information.

The continued roll-out of Universal Credit means that anyone claiming Housing Benefit will need an email address (and a bank account) to receive payments. This is one of the reasons for encouraging our tenants to get online, so that they are familiar with it and ready to claim when the project extends.

Our website has a special secure ‘My account’ area which all our tenants can access. Here, you can see when improvements are scheduled to your



home, view up-to-date rent statements and see recent and current repairs jobs.

Please contact our Customer Service team if you wish to register for ‘My account’.



Garden enjoys a spring clean

New life has been breathed into a local day centre garden thanks to a springtime makeover delivered by Two Rivers staff.

Armed with spades, secateurs, trowels and a bucketful of TLC, the team of five spent a day clearing winter debris and preparing the sensory garden at Sheppard House in Newent for summer.

"Most of the work was weeding, pruning and clearing the dead stems and leaves to make way for new growth," said Liz Reeson. "It looked like a major task at the start, but we worked really well together as a team and it was so rewarding to see the visible difference we had made by the end of the day."

More Two Rivers and Centigen staff will be involved with community projects throughout the summer.



The gardening team takes a break from its green-fingered endeavours. Left to right, Nia Rowland, Tim Watkins, Veronica Parker and Sue Barter.

Barry Thomas, Transport Manager for Newent Association for the Disabled at Sheppard House said:

"All the members and staff at Sheppard House would like say a very big thank you to the team from Two Rivers Housing. The transformation in the gardens and surrounding areas was amazing and will bring much joy and enjoyment to all that make use of the facility. A truly professional makeover."

SAVING TIP

Quitting smoking is better for your health and it'll make your pocket feel a whole lot better too. Get help at www.nhs.uk/smokefree



Pay less for energy

Would you like to cut your household energy bills? If so, My Home Energy could be the answer.

This service has been set up especially to help housing association tenants like you, with the average customer saving £271* on their annual energy bill.

Collect your latest bills and log on to **www.myhomeenergy.org.uk** for an instant quote. If it saves you money, just ask My Home Energy to make the arrangements and sit back and wait for the switch.

*Based on 3,100 kWh of electricity and 12,500 kWh of gas for a customer on a standard credit meter choosing Dual Fuel, Direct Debit and Online Billing.



It was with great sadness we learned of the death of Rose Peaty at the end of May.

Rose was an energetic supporter of her Blakeney community and a good friend of Two Rivers Housing.

We worked together on many projects aimed at improving amenities in the village and local area and were delighted when she was awarded the British Empire Medal in the recent New Year Honours, as featured in the last issue of Tenant Topics.

Happily, arrangements were made for Rose to receive her medal shortly before she passed away.

Rose will be missed by a great many people, but her legacy lives on in all that she achieved for her community, for the benefit of generations to come.



Summer tea break

Another bumper postbag from our eagle-eyed readers, keen to tell us how they spotted the six differences in our 'Tea break' competition in the last issue.

Our congratulations go to Myra Richards who is our lucky winner this time, and a £15 gift card is on its way to her in Broadwell.

This time we've got a Sudoku for you to try and, once again, there's a £15 prize to the first correct entry drawn.

If you've never tried Sudoku before, why not give it a go? The idea is to fill in the grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 boxes contains the digits from 1 to 9.

Send your completed entry to:

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

Before **1 September 2016**.

Have fun, and good luck!

	4			6		1		
	3	7					8	2
1			3		9		7	4
8		2	7		5			
	5	3	1				9	8
		9			8	7	6	
3	2			7			5	
6	7	4		8	3	9		1
			6	1	2			7

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel number/email: _____

Safety alert



Found on reverse of product.

A recall notice has been issued for a Wolsley Center electric fan heater which has been discovered to have a technical fault.

These heaters have occasionally been used by our heating contractors PH Jones, to provide temporary heating while a repair has been carried out. There is a possibility some of the



heaters may not have been collected after the work has been complete, and our tenants have kept, and perhaps continued to use, them.

More information about the fault and what to look for can be found at <http://www.plumbcenter.co.uk/product-recall/>.

Contact us:

Please tell us if you would like this in large print, on audio CD or in another language.

Freephone

0800 316 0897

Email

customerservices@2rh.org.uk

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