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**Working for you**

Annual report to tenants 2011

Carlisle

Transforming lives

Revitalising neighbourhoods

## Contact us

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📞 **Customer Service Team**  
24 hours a day, 365 days a year  
**0800 169 3245**

From a mobile phone it may be cheaper  
to call **0345 155 9020**

🏠 You can also visit the office at  
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Monday–Thursday 9am–5pm; Friday 9am–4.30pm  
Please note that the office will open at 10.30am  
on the first Wednesday of every month

📞 We are happy to accept **Typetalk** calls  
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### The Riverside Group Limited

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# Welcome to your annual report

I am delighted to welcome you to our second annual report to tenants. Our report is based on the standards set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and we have worked closely with many of you during the last six months to make sure the report is a fair and honest reflection of our services.

In the last four years, we have invested over £65 million into improving our homes in Carlisle and improving our services.

Our tenants living in Carlisle report the highest satisfaction with the services they are receiving across the whole of Riverside.

We will continue to work to deliver a consistent service to all that is as good as the best.

I hope you enjoy reading this report.

*Mike Little*

**Mike Little**  
Chair Carlisle Divisional Board

October 2011



## About this report

We are delighted that so many tenants have helped us to produce this year's report. Across the whole of Riverside, over 900 of you completed a short questionnaire about last year's report and we have used this to help design and write this year's report.

We also invited more than 50 tenants to a workshop where they told us what was important in an Annual Report and compared ours to those of other associations.

Using this feedback we then started to work with our Tenants' and Residents' Federation to refine our ideas and hopefully you will agree we have a brighter and more colourful report as a result. The content was tested by our readers' panel and was endorsed by the Tenants' and Residents' Federation in September.

Please use the questionnaire in this year's report to let us know if you think we got it right and how you would like us to improve it further for next year.

# Our performance measures

In each section there are a number of tables which relate to parts of our service, for example how quickly we reply to letters or how satisfied you are with our repairs service.

We call these our performance measures. This information comes from customer surveys or our own records.

## What do the tables mean?

Example performance measure

10

Local target	83%	
Riverside national average	82%	
Local result 2011	81%	+1%
Local result 2010	80%	

**What's important to you**  
This is the 'Top Ten' symbol, which represents the things that you have told us are most important to you.

**Local target**  
This was our target for the year ending March 2011.

**Riverside national average 2011**  
This is the national average for Riverside.

**Change since last year**  
This figure shows how much our performance has increased or decreased since the previous year.

**2011/2010 results**  
This is the actual performance for your division each year.

How we compare to others

Best	94%
Average	78.9%
Worst	64.8%

**How we compare to others**  
To help us compare how we are doing, we share information about our performance with a group of other housing associations of a similar type and size. Where the information is available we compare how we are doing alongside the best, average and worst performers.

## What do the colours mean?



We have reached or exceeded the target.



We have equalled or performed better than last year but still not met our target.



Our performance has worsened from last year and not met our target.

For more information on this please visit our website [www.riverside.org.uk/annualreport](http://www.riverside.org.uk/annualreport)

# Working with you

In this section we talk about how we deliver services that meet the needs of all our tenants, how we make sure we do it fairly and how we involve you in decision making so that your views really do make a difference.

We are committed to continuously improving our service to you. So we are delighted that 94% of tenants in Carlisle would recommend us as a landlord.

Last year we promised to keep those of you waiting for adaptations better informed on the progress of work and to speed up the whole process. We have worked hard to improve our service delivery this year. We now write to tenants to keep them up to date, we have reduced the average waiting time for adaptations by 20 weeks and have improved our target times by 29%.

We have exceeded local targets for satisfaction with contact with us and taking your views into account, though we know you are not quite as happy with these areas as you were.

To find more about our plans to improve in this and other areas, please see page 15.

Satisfaction with your most recent contact with us <span style="float: right;">10</span>			
Local target	65%		
Riverside national average	65%		
Local result 2011	70%	👍	-1%
Local result 2010	71%		

Completing aids and adaptations within target time <span style="float: right;">10</span>			
Local target	90%		
Riverside national average	90%		
Local result 2011	88%		+29%
Local result 2010	59%		

Would recommend Riverside as a landlord			
Local target	90%		
Riverside national average	90%		
Local result 2011	94%	👍	

Responding to your letters within five working days <span style="float: right;">10</span>			
Local target	90%		
Riverside national average	79%		
Local result 2011	80%		
Local result 2010	80%		

Taking your views into account			
Local target	67%		
Riverside national average	67%		
Local result 2011	69%	👍	-4%
Local result 2010	73%		

How we compare to others	
Best	75%
Average	64.9%
Worst	46.7%

Cost per home of providing our Resident Involvement service	
Riverside national cost 2010*	£38.64
Local cost 2010	£25.67
How we compare to others	
Lowest	£20.68
Average	£42.55
Highest	£79.01

\* For cost comparisons, 2010 is the most up to date information available.



We have improved our website to help you easily find information on what we do and how to get involved.

We have introduced 'You said, we did' to newsletters and the website to let you know how your feedback is improving services.



In Carlisle, 90 tenants have told us they want to get involved as tenant inspectors, in consultations and on other groups.



Our Tenants' and Residents' Federation is now planning its national conference, to be held in March 2012.

# Your home

In this section we explain how we make sure that our homes are of good quality and are well maintained.

The Government told us that by the end of 2010 all our homes should meet their Decent Homes Standard. At Riverside, we work to a higher standard than the minimum and all our homes have reached this standard.

Customer service is at the heart of all our work and we are proud to be the best performing division for repairs satisfaction.

Our Service Pledge sets clear standards for our repairs service, and last year we set ourselves the target of making sure we kept 95% of all appointments. We have exceeded this.

We know we still have more work to do to increase the number of repairs we can complete in one visit.

To find more about our plans to improve in this and other areas, please see page 15.

Repairs service satisfaction		10
Local target	75%	🎯
Riverside national average	75%	
Local result 2011	83%	👍
Local result 2010	83%	
How we compare to others		
Best	86.7%	
Average	74.6%	
Worst	29.5%	

Repairs appointments kept		10
Local target	95%	🎯
Riverside national average	95%	
Local result 2011	96%	👍
Local result 2010	96%	
How we compare to others		
Best	99.9%	
Average	96.9%	
Worst	66.5%	

Gas safety certificates		10
Local target	100%	🎯
Riverside national average	99.8%	
Local result 2011	99.9%	
Local result 2010	99.9%	
How we compare to others		
Best	100%	
Average	99.7%	
Worst	98%	

Repairs completed in one visit		10
Local target	85%	🎯
Riverside national average	62%	
Local result 2011	74%	👎 -2%
Local result 2010	76%	
How we compare to others		
Best	94.3%	
Average	87%	
Worst	61.3%	

Cost per home of providing our repairs service	
Riverside national cost 2010*	£814.06
Local cost 2010	£634.21
How we compare to others	
Lowest	£477.30
Average	£675.01
Highest	£916.10

\* For cost comparisons, 2010 is the most up to date information available.



Last year we invested £7.5m on improving homes in Carlisle. We also completed energy efficiency improvements to 500 homes.



In Carlisle, we have an in-house repairs team who deliver the most cost-effective repairs in Riverside.



A repair can be reported at any time of the day or night through our Customer Service Centre or website.



We have built 125 more affordable homes in Carlisle and the surrounding area.

# Your tenancy

In this section we talk about the way we let our homes and how we set rents. We also explain how we make sure we make the best use of our homes and how we make sure new tenants are settling in.

We make sure we let our properties fairly and make best use of our housing. By working with partners, we ensure all our empty properties are back up to a standard where they can be re-let, as quickly as possible.

We said we would improve our re-let times to 35 days. We exceeded that target and our teams are looking to find even better ways of working to reduce the time it takes to let an empty property.

We have greatly improved the number of new tenants we have visited within our target time of four weeks.

To find more about our plans to improve in this and other areas, please see page 15.

## Overall satisfaction

10

Local target	82%	🎯
Riverside national average	82%	
Local result 2011	85%	👍 -2%
Local result 2010	87%	

### How we compare to others

Best	91%
Average	81.2%
Worst	58%

## Rent arrears as a percentage of total rent due

Local target	4.0%	🎯
Riverside national average	5.9%	
Local result 2011	3.1%	👍
Local result 2010	3.1%	

### How we compare to others

Best	0.8%
Average	4.6%
Worst	10.8%

## Time taken to re-let our empty properties (in days)

Local target	35	🎯
Riverside national average	38	
Local result 2011	34	👍 -2
Local result 2010	36	

### How we compare to others

Best	12.2
Average	34.6
Worst	65

## Visiting new tenants

Local target	80%	🎯
Riverside national average	71%	
Local result 2011	84%	👍

## Cost per home of providing Housing Management Services\*

Riverside national cost 2010**	£242.34
Local cost 2010	£186.27
<b>How we compare to others</b>	
Lowest	£179.40
Average	£257.40
Highest	£360.80

\* Includes things like collecting rents, managing ASB and letting properties.  
\*\* For cost comparisons, 2010 is the most up to date information available.



Every new tenant is given a Welcome Booklet with essential information about our services.



We offer a cash reward to encourage people to give notice so we can re-let their home quickly.



We support Carlisle and District Credit Union who offer low cost alternatives to loan sharks. 519 of you have joined this scheme.



We have invested £1.8m in remodelling Freshfield Court sheltered housing scheme.

# Your neighbourhood and community

In this section we explain how we work in partnership with tenants and other agencies to keep communal areas and neighbourhoods greener, cleaner and safer.

Tenants in Carlisle report the highest satisfaction in their area as a place to live, across Riverside nationally.

We introduced the Your Place initiative in Carlisle, with wardens and clean up teams working in Botcherby and supporting the estate management teams in other neighbourhoods.

We have also improved our website so you can report any instances of anti-social behaviour (ASB) conveniently and confidentially.

To find more about our plans to improve in this and other areas, please see page 15.

## Neighbourhood satisfaction

Local target	83%	
Riverside national average	81%	
Local result 2011	86%	+5%
Local result 2010	81%	
<b>How we compare to others</b>		
Best	94%	
Average	78.9%	
Worst	64.8%	

Satisfaction with handling anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases		10
Local target	50%	
Riverside national average	43%	
Local result 2011	55%	+1%
Local result 2010	54%	

## Cost per home of providing Estate Management Services\*

Riverside national cost 2010**	£115.38
Local cost 2010	£155.08
<b>How we compare to others</b>	
Lowest	£39.60
Average	£146.20
Highest	£429.50

## Cost per home of managing ASB

Riverside national cost 2010**	£29.31
Local cost 2010	£28.90
<b>How we compare to others</b>	
Lowest	£3.67
Average	£41.55
Highest	£76.53

\* Includes things like caretaking and cleaning.

\*\* For cost comparisons, 2010 is the most up to date information available.



11% of tenants reported anti-social behaviour in Carlisle, this is below the 13% national figure for Riverside.

Our Your Place team removed 24 tonnes of fly tipped rubbish from streets, gardens and parks.

We organise skip days on our estates to help local residents keep their neighbourhoods tidy.

We have trained 12 members of staff across the Group in mediation and conflict resolution.

# Value for money

In this section we talk about how we use your rent and how we achieve value for money.

By comparing ourselves with other housing associations of a similar size we know we spend less than most on things like Information Technology (IT) and office costs.

Across the whole of Riverside we saved £800,000 on purchasing goods and services last year through our central purchasing team, and we are continuing to look for even more savings.

We have also saved £1 million by changing how we manage our supported housing.

We know we still need to find new ways for tenants to be involved in setting priorities for spending and saving money.

To find more about our plans to improve in this and other areas, please see page 15.

## Satisfaction that rent provides overall value for money

Target	78%	
Riverside national average	78%	
Local result 2011	78%	+3%
Local result 2010	75%	

## Satisfaction that service charges are value for money

Target	62%	
Riverside national average	63%	
Local result 2011	67%	-1%
Local result 2010	68%	

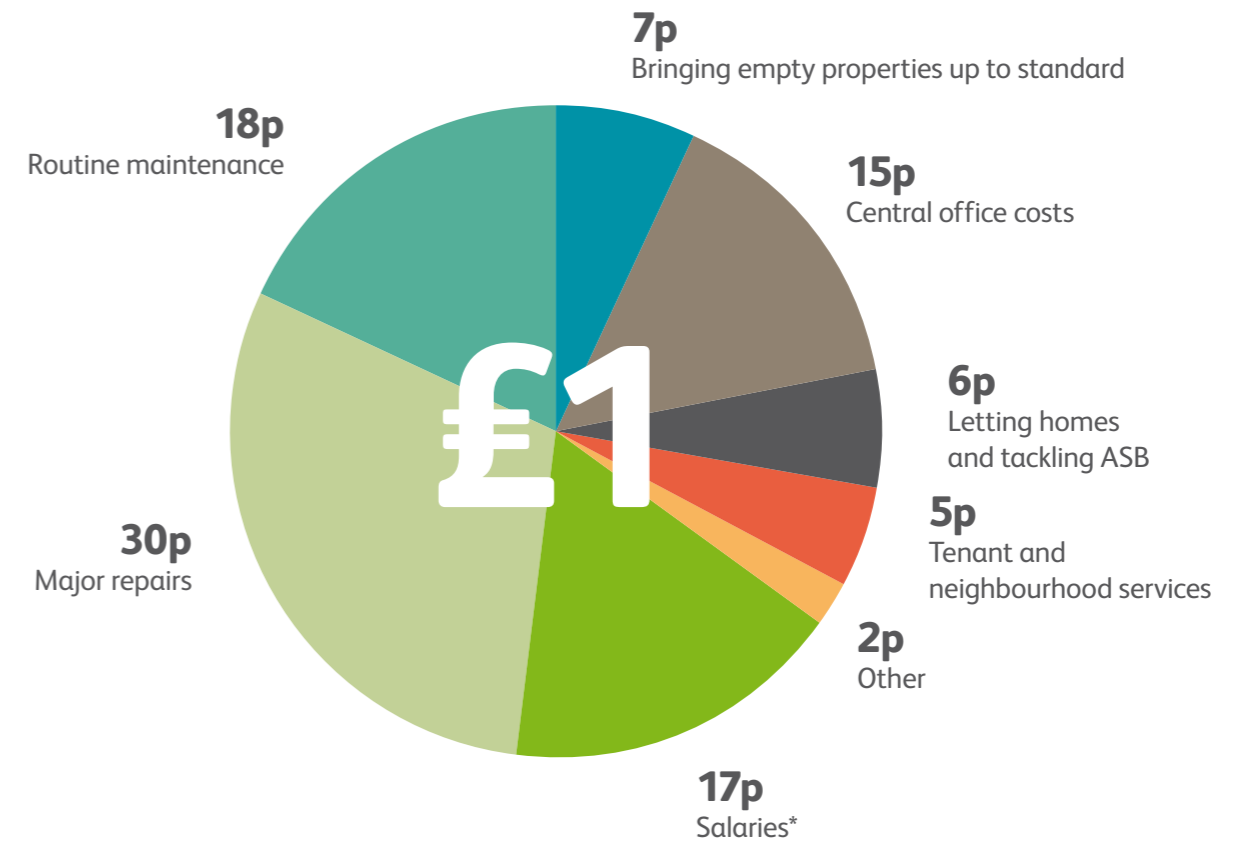
## Average rent

Riverside national average	£76.02
Local rent 2011	£71.50
Local rent 2010	£69.37

## How we compare to others

Lowest rent	£60.19
Average rent	£73.93
Highest rent	£110.25

## How every £1 is spent across Riverside



\* Includes salary costs linked to functions such as repairs and tackling ASB.



Our welfare benefit advice has increased the total income of 129 tenants in Carlisle, by £191,000.

We use an organisation called Housemark to compare our costs, services and performance against other landlords.



We make sure our major repairs programme including new central heating systems, delivers excellent value for money.



We have met our target or improved our performance in nine of the tenants' top ten measures.

# Meeting your local needs

Because we provide homes all over the country to a wide variety of households we know that a standard service will not meet everyone's needs.

We are working with tenants to identify specific needs and services for neighbourhoods and groups of people in your area. We will consult before a local offer is introduced. To find out more information about initiatives in your area visit our website, call us or contact your local office or scheme manager.

## Want to have your say?

If you would like more information about getting involved as a Riverside tenant, please visit [www.riverside.org.uk/getinvolved](http://www.riverside.org.uk/getinvolved)

If you would like more information on this report, including the full national version, please visit [www.riverside.org.uk/annualreport](http://www.riverside.org.uk/annualreport)

## Tell us what you think

We consulted with many tenants and residents to make sure that this report is clearly written, easy to follow and provides information that is important to you.

## Did we get it right?

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire to tell us what you think.



# Improvements for 2011/12

## Working with you

We will:

- continue to work on our website so you can view your rent statements online
- put a new process in place to make sure we visit all tenants every three years – just to make sure everything is ok
- carry out at least three tenant service inspections to make sure we are delivering the quality of services you need
- launch a Group-led resident involvement scrutiny panel to review our service delivery across the company.

## Your home

We will:

- make sure we publish our improvement plans so you know how we plan to maintain your home
- improve the number of repairs we complete in one visit
- recover a higher proportion of the cost of damage caused by tenants
- investigate suggestions from tenants that we should improve our quality control on our repairs service.

## Your tenancy

We will:

- reduce our re-let times and lower the number of empty properties
- improve our rent collection services so we can reduce our rent arrears
- get a better understanding of how many of our properties are not fully occupied and recommend measures to help us make better use of them
- set affordable new rents for tenants, which will help us build new homes whilst making sure rents stay affordable to people on low incomes.

## Your neighbourhood and community

We will:

- improve satisfaction levels with how we handle ASB complaints
- improve the way we publicise our neighbourhood plans
- extend our Your Place local offer to Currock
- invest in our IT systems, so we can record all our activities and tenant contact.

## Value for money

We will:

- get a better understanding of our costs and how they compare to other housing associations
- work with you to find even more ways for you to help us set our priorities
- continue our work with Housemark, an organisation that helps housing associations to compare their performance with others.