



Best kept garden, could it be you this year?

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Complaints in 2016/17

We try to provide excellent services to our residents but sometimes things can go wrong.

4,000

repairs completed



and £1.1 million spent on major improvements - 18 complaints

1,450

tenancies managed
and 126 homes re-let
- 4 complaints

How we compare to other landlords	Railway Housing Association	Other similar landlords
Complainants satisfied with how we dealt with their complaint	86%	58%
Complainants satisfied with the outcome of their complaint	71%	54%
Complaints resolved at earliest stage	95%	89%

Scrutiny Panel – Dealing with anti-social behaviour



A small group of residents meet regularly to look in detail at the services we provide.

In 2017 they looked at how we deal with anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes. The Scrutiny Panel concluded that when dealing with anti-social behaviour the Association –

- Complies with the law
- Complies with the requirements of the official regulator of housing associations

- Follows good practice
- Compares well to other similar landlords
- Has well trained staff.

The Panel made five recommendations for improvements. All of their recommendations have been accepted and implemented by the Association.

If you would like to find out how you could get involved in helping to improve the services we provide, please get in touch by calling Freephone 08000 287428 or email info@railwayha.co.uk



Best kept garden

Lynne Rennison's late father Ivor was a keen gardener, so he would have been extremely proud to know she had won our annual gardening competition.

What makes it even more special is that Lynne, along with her husband Ken, are looking after the same garden her dad, a former station master at Darlington railway station, used to tend before he passed away, aged 91, in 2016.

Lynne and Ken, who live in West Auckland Road, were the winners of our 2017 Best Kept Garden competition.

Lynne says: "We were too modest to enter the competition ourselves, but a member of staff at Railway Housing Association had mentioned our garden, so we were very surprised, but delighted, when we discovered we had won."

Lynne has lived in the same house for 50 years. She took over the tenancy from

her parents and has always maintained it the way they did.

She adds: "My dad was a very keen gardener and I learned a lot from him, so I have always ensured the garden looks great.

"We don't spend lots of money on it; it's just about putting the work in and Ken and I are out every day during the spring and summer making sure we keep on top of it.

"Once, a stranger even came to the door and said he had stopped his car when he went past because he wanted to compliment us on the garden, which was very nice."

Lynne and Ken were presented with their prize – a trophy and £50 worth of high street vouchers and a plant – by Andrea Abbott, Railway Housing Association's Director of Customer Services.

Andrea said: "The standard of entries for our gardening competition is always very high, so Lynne and Ken are deserving winners.

"It's particularly nice that they have carried on the work of Lynne's dad and the fact they are getting people stopping them on the street to compliment them on their garden demonstrates their love for their house and garden.

"It's pleasing to see so many people taking such pride in their homes and gardens and we would like to thank everyone who entered."

If you are interested in entering our 2018 Best Kept Garden competition, email or post one or two photographs to info@railwayha.co.uk or the address shown on the back page, together with your name and address, before 1 September 2018

Happy birthday to us

You may be aware that in 2019 Railway Housing Association will be 100 years old.

With less than a year now to go, we are now busy making plans to mark our centenary.

This will include the publication of a 100th anniversary brochure which will be sent to all residents, the production of a small batch of Railway-themed beer and a trip on the Wensleydale Railway, with afternoon tea being served on board.

The trip on the railway will be our signature event of the year, but we are limited to the number of people who can be on the train. It's therefore our intention to hold a prize draw of all interested residents, with those selected being invited to join us for what will be a memorable afternoon.

We will be contacting all residents later this year with full details on how to apply to be in the draw.

We will also help residents to hold a party at each of our sheltered housing schemes in 2019.

We are pleased to report that we have already secured sponsorship for many of these events and we will update you further in the next edition of RHA News.



Roll up roll up

We're looking forward to welcoming lots of new faces, as well as some familiar ones, at our annual event in York this summer.

Following the favourable feedback we received last year, we are once again holding our residents' day out at the Marriott Hotel in York.

Thank you to everyone who said they would like to join us. We will be confirming invitations soon and if you haven't been before, we are sure you will enjoy the day.

It will include a 5 star lunch, and a raffle with prizes including an overnight stay in the Marriott.

We also use the event to announce the winner of our good neighbour of the year award so thank you again to everyone who has returned their nomination forms. Presenting the award to one of our deserving residents is always a highlight of the day.

“If you haven't been before, we are sure you will enjoy the day.”



Rent update

From 2016 the government has required us to reduce most rents by 1% per year for four years, up to and including 2019/20.

If your tenancy started before 1989, your rent is set by the Fair Rent Officer every two years. If the rent set by the Fair Rent Officer is lower than the social rent for your home then we will charge you the rent set by the Fair Rent Officer and the 1% cut will not apply.

For the vast majority of our residents, the 1% cut does not apply to the charges that are made for specific services like garden maintenance or window cleaning.120

We will write to give you formal notice of any change to your rent, which for most residents will take place on 6 August 2018.

We have consulted with residents who are members of our focus groups about our budget for 2018/19, including the changes to rents.

Our main source of income is from rents and it is used to provide and maintain good quality homes and services for residents.



Available to rent or buy

If anyone you know is looking for a home, we have properties immediately available to rent or buy (via leasehold purchase).

The rented properties available are in Doncaster, (one bedroom homes for older people) and Darlington (one bedroom apartments, two and three bedroom houses, all for applicants aged over 18 years).

The leasehold property is in Leeds and is priced at £99,950 for a two-bedroom flat.

Full details are available from our website, under the 'Find a Home' section. You can also contact us on 0800 0287428.

Satisfaction survey

We would like to thank everyone who took part in our recent tenant satisfaction survey.

This is something we do every three years and it is very important as it enables us to gauge the satisfaction levels of our residents and, perhaps even more importantly, provides us with feedback on how could further improve the services we provide.

We are now busy analysing the results of the survey and will provide the feedback in the autumn edition of RHA News and on our website.



Top rated

We are pleased to report we remain among the best governed and financially managed providers of social housing in the UK.

This is the verdict of the national Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

The RSH awarded us a G1, V1 rating, which is the highest possible rating. To achieve this we had to provide evidence that we manage our affairs with an appropriate degree of skill, independence, diligence, effectiveness, prudence and foresight; are accountable to our residents; and have a strong financial profile with the capacity to deal with a wide range of adverse scenarios.

Railway Housing Association Chief Executive, Anne Rowlands, said: "We are delighted to have retained the highest rating from the RSH which, is a great achievement.

“We are delighted to have retained the highest rating from the RSH”

"It is a real testament to the hard work of our staff and trustees, and highlights the ways in which we are getting it right for our residents, partners and stakeholders.

"It means we can continue to plan with confidence for the future, ensuring we can continue to deliver high quality services to our customers and build new homes.

"This is especially important to us as we approach our centenary year in 2019."

Site visit

Members of Railway Housing Association's Board recently visited the site of our new housing development in Darlington.

They were given a personal tour of the Houghton Road site by Peter Elliott, Project Manager at Tolent, the contractor building the homes.

In total, we are building 73 new houses, bungalows and apartments opposite Darlington College, all of which will be let by October 2018 to applicants from Darlington Borough Council's and the Association's waiting lists.

The homes are being built close to the historic 1825 Darlington to Stockton Railway Line and the development incorporates an engine shed built in 1844. The shed, which has Listed

building status, is being converted into mews-type homes.

The whole development, including the engine shed, will have an industrial feel in keeping with the site's historic past but at the same time providing modern, energy efficient homes.

The Board members were very impressed with what they saw.

Board Chair Berni Whitaker said: "It's hard to believe that just over 12 months ago the site was overgrown, with the engine shed hidden from view and in a rundown state.

"Now the whole site has been cleared and you can already see the emergence of what will be an amazing place for people to live.

"Many of the houses and bungalows now only need to be fitted out inside and it was great to see grass, plants and trees already in place so by the time people move in this summer, they will be able to enjoy their surroundings.

"The engine shed is the last part of the project but we can already see the work that is being done to transform it. When completed, it will be full of character."



Peter Elliott with Railway staff and board members



Experience that matters

Students on construction and building courses have been getting hands-on experience at our new development in Darlington – and they have only had to cross the road to do it!

Young people studying NVQs at Darlington College have been making regular visits to see the professionals in action at our development off Houghton Road, which is directly opposite the College.

Brick-layers, plumbers, joiners and electricians are amongst those who have undertaken week-long work experience placements.

It is part of a partnership between Darlington College, Railway Housing Association and our contractor, Tolent.

Tolent's Project Manager on the scheme, Peter Elliott, said: "Because of its history and location, this is a very interesting development to work on and we wanted to ensure that the students who came to us felt fully involved and engaged.

"So, rather than just simply shadowing our staff, they have been getting hands-on experience and under our guidance the bricklayers have been laying bricks, the joiners have fitted wood inside the homes and the electricians have been installing cables.

"This means that when the development is complete they will be able to point out the things they were responsible for, which will be fantastic for their CVs as they seek permanent employment."

Claire Turner, Darlington College's Marketing and Employer Engagement Manager, said: "The feedback we have received from the students and their lecturers on the work experience has been excellent.

"The students have been able to bring what they have learnt on site back into the classroom and it will definitely stand them in good stead as they either continue their learning at the college or enter the workplace in the future."

Anne Rowlands, Chief Executive of Railway Housing Association, said: "This is one of the biggest and most exciting developments in our recent history, so we are delighted to have been able to share this with students studying at the College.

"It's great they have been getting meaningful, hands-on experience and who knows, they may even end up working on one of our schemes in the future."

“ This is one of the biggest and most exciting developments in our recent history, so we are delighted to have been able to share this with students studying at the College ”



Students inside the engine shed

Meet Clare

In our new series looking at the people who make Railway Housing Association tick we speak to Clare Richardson, one of our Tenancy Services Officers.

Clare Richardson is our own version of Kirstie Allsopp.

That's not just because she works in housing, but also because, like the television celebrity, she is renowned for making jams, jellies, chutneys and lots of other lovely treats.

When she is not working as one of our Tenancy Services Officers, Clare loves spending time in the kitchen

She says: "My cupboards at home are never empty because I love cooking and making things, whether it's jam, chutney, sloe gin or even raspberry vodka.

"When I told my colleagues that I was giving homemade presents for Christmas, as it was the same time as Kirstie's Handmade Christmas, they started calling me Kirstie, which I didn't mind at all!"

Clare has been with Railway Housing Association for nine years. She divides her time between three of our sheltered housing schemes, Tempest Anderson House in Darlington, Plevna Mews in Shildon and Hackworth Court in Stockton. She also has responsibility for helping people living in our self-contained flats in Dormanstown and Nunthorpe on Teesside.

Clare explains: "My role is to look after the interests of residents and the overall health and safety and maintenance of the schemes.

"This can involve helping people to settle into their new home or supporting those who are ending their tenancy, through to ensuring the cleaning and grounds are up to the correct standard.

"It's very much a people-focused role, which is what I like."

“ My role is to look after the interests of residents and the overall health and safety and maintenance of the schemes. ”

Clare, who lives in Barnard Castle and has four children and one grandchild, started her working life in a family-run travel agency. She then moved into care, including a stint for Barnardo's which

involved helping five young people with a return into the community (something she says she is very proud of) before going into housing.

Clare says: "I worked for one of the biggest housing associations in the UK, but having been at Railway for the last nine years I can definitely say that small is better.

"I am a people person so here you get to know your colleagues and residents much more than you do at a larger organisation and that's very important to me.

"When I was a travel agent I never tried to sell anyone a holiday I wouldn't have been happy going on myself and I have always tried to apply this approach in whatever job I have done since."



90 years young

They have been through a World War, the Depression, England winning the World Cup, and watching a man land on the moon and despite all the ups and downs, five friends living in one of our sheltered housing schemes are very much still going strong.

June Allinson, Muriel Barker, Winifred Callaghan, Teresa Walton and Muriel Applegarth all celebrate their 90th birthdays in 2018.

The quintet meet regularly to play dominoes and bingo in the communal area at Tempest Anderson House in Darlington, so it's fitting that each of them will celebrate becoming nonagenarians this year.

Teresa has already celebrated her birthday, on the 24th January, and was taken by her family to have afternoon tea in the Ritz Hotel in London.

She has lived at Tempest Anderson for seven years and has three children and six grandchildren.

The next of the friends to turn 90 will be Muriel Applegarth, who will celebrate her birthday on the 12th May.

Muriel, who has lived at Tempest for four years and has one daughter and three grandchildren, is playfully seen as the 'outsider' of the group, but that's only because she lives in one of the bungalows at Tempest, and not the flats!

June is a June baby and so will celebrate her birthday on the 15th. She has lived at Tempest for four years and has one daughter, two grandsons and one great-grandson. She doesn't know what she will be doing for her birthday yet, but hopes her family "don't make a fuss".

Muriel Barker will also celebrate her birthday in June, on the 29th. She has lived at Tempest for seven years and has a daughter. Her family have already planned her birthday party, which will be held at a pub close to Tempest.

And last, but certainly not least, is Winifred, who will celebrate her birthday on the 17th September. She has lived at Tempest for 19 years and has a daughter, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The five said: "We all get on very well together, so it's nice we are all celebrating our 90th birthdays this year; we are like a family to each other."



And Vera's 100!

Our latest centenarian has credited healthy living as the secret to her longevity.

Not drinking or smoking is one of the reasons Vera Buckle thinks has helped her reach the fantastic age of 100.

She celebrated her birthday in April by going out for a meal with her son, family and friends, and admits to breaking her no-alcohol rule on this occasion.

Vera says: "I had a snowball but I left half of it. I have never drunk or smoked. When I married my husband Henry he used to leave two cigarettes for me when he went to work, but they were always still there when he got back!"


Vera is originally from Bedford, but moved to live in one of our homes in Selby around 15 years ago.

She adds: "My son lives just down the road and I have lots of grandchildren and great-grandchildren who make a fuss of me."



Our Performance








We constantly monitor and measure our performance to make sure that we are keeping to our promise to offer high quality services to our customers.

 Green Performance on target	 Amber Performance below but close to target	 Red Action is needed to meet target
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How we have performed from: 1st July to 30th September 2017

<p>Income Management</p> <p>Amount of current arrears outstanding – 1.73% (target is 2%) </p>	<p>Repairs and Maintenance</p> <p>Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service – 98% (target is 97%) </p> <p>Percentage of repairs completed correctly first time – 88% (target is 87%) </p> <p>Percentage of repairs completed on time – 95% (target is 99%) </p> <p>Percentage of new residents satisfied with the condition of their home – 81% (target is 85%) </p>
<p>Lettings</p> <p>Percentage of properties re-let within target of 25 days – 55.9% (target 70%) </p>	<p>Value for Money</p> <p>Value for money savings achieved as a percentage of operating costs – 4.29% (target is 5%). <i>This is accumulative and 4.29% was achieved within the first 6 months of the financial year.</i> </p>
<p>Response to Letters</p> <p>Percentage of letters responded to within 10 working days – 97% (target is 98%) </p>	<p>Complaints</p> <p>Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage – 75% (target is 87%) </p>

How we have performed from: 1st October 2017 to 31st December 2017

<p>Income Management</p> <p>Amount of current arrears outstanding – 1.97% (target is 2%) </p>	<p>Repairs and Maintenance</p> <p>Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service – 98% (target is 97%) </p> <p>Percentage of repairs completed correctly first time – 87% (target is 87%) </p> <p>Percentage of repairs completed on time – 96% (target is 99%) </p> <p>Percentage of new residents satisfied with the condition of their home – 85% (target is 85%) </p>
<p>Lettings</p> <p>Percentage of properties re-let within target of 25 days – 57.7% (target 70%) </p>	<p>Value for Money</p> <p>Value for money savings achieved as a percentage of operating costs – 4.37% (target is 5%). <i>This is accumulative and 4.37% was achieved within 9 months of the financial year.</i> </p>
<p>Response to Letters</p> <p>Percentage of letters responded to within 10 working days – 94% (target is 98%) </p>	<p>Complaints</p> <p>Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage – 75% (target is 87%) </p>



Recipe: Spring Chicken in a Pot

Prep time: **20 mins**
 Cooking time: **45 mins**
 Difficulty level: **Easy**
 Serves: **4**



Ingredients

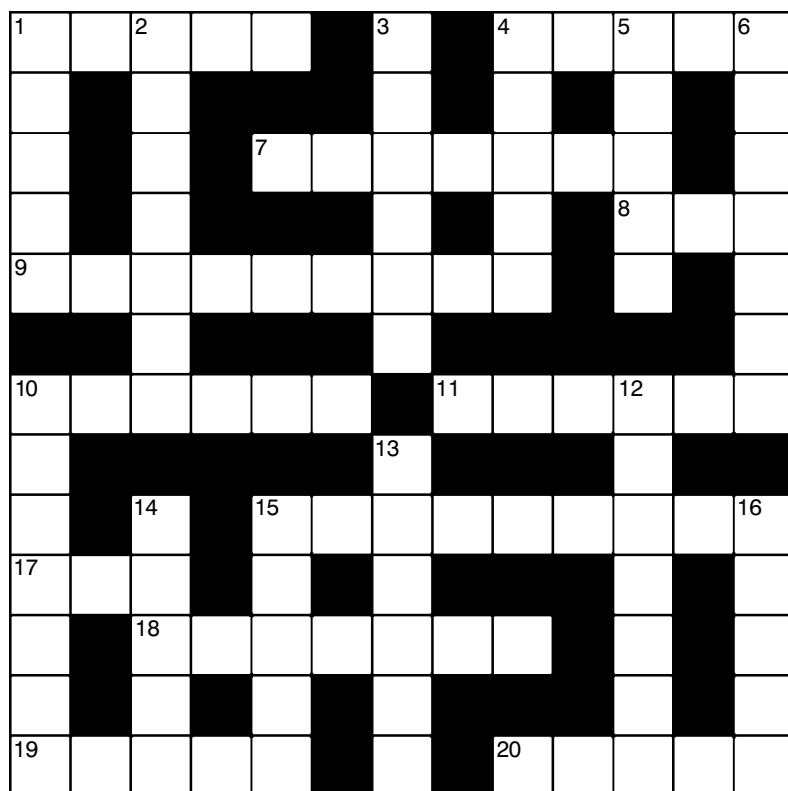
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 500g boneless, skinless chicken thigh
- 300g small new potato
- 425ml vegetable stock
- 350g broccoli, cut into small florets
- 350g spring green, shredded
- 140g petit pois
- bunch spring onion, sliced
- 2 tbsp pesto

Per serving: Kcal: 339, Fat: 10g, Saturate: 3g, Carbs: 27g, Sugars: 12g, Fibre: 8g, Protein: 36g, Salt: 0.5g

1. Heat the oil in a large, heavy pan. Add the onion, gently fry for 5 mins until softened, add the chicken, then fry until lightly coloured. Add the potatoes, stock and plenty of freshly ground black pepper, then bring to the boil. Cover, then simmer for 30 mins until the potatoes are tender and the chicken is cooked. Can be frozen at this point.
2. Add the broccoli, spring greens, petit pois and spring onions, stir well, then return to the boil. Cover, then cook for 5 mins more, stir in the pesto and heat through.

Spring Crossword

Please cut out and return your completed puzzle to the address at the bottom of this page, remembering to include your name, address and contact number.



ACROSS

1. Light meal (5)
4. Platter (5)
7. Sweetened red wine with orange or lemon juice with soda water (7)
8. Small vegetable (3)
9. Variety of peach with smooth skin (9)
10. Meat from a mature domestic sheep (6)
11. Cooks over a metal framework (6)
15. Soaked in various mixtures of spices and seasonings (9)
17. Consume (3)
18. Gourmet (7)
19. Fruit of genus Malus (5)
20. Plant with edible leaves and pungent taste (5)

DOWN

1. Eating utensil (5)
2. Downy fruit resembling a small peach (7)
3. Herb grown for its edible flattened seeds (6)
4. Food processed in a blender (5)
5. Religious meal (5)
6. Oblong cream puffs (7)
10. Amber dessert wine (7)
12. Salad green (7)
13. Game bird (6)
14. Infuse (5)
15. Cereal crop (5)
16. Cuts into cubes (5)

Survey winner

The winner of our quarterly lettable standard survey, and receiving £25, is Mr Lant, of North Eastern Court.

