

# Riley Squaretalk



## How are WE Doing?

Here's an idea of what's been happening at your housing office for the period July-Sept 2010:

- Callers to reception 2736
- Telephone calls dealt with 7279
- Home visits by Estate Officers and Rents Services Officer 1538
- Bulk rubbish removal 117
- Graffiti removed 25

## Happy 10 years!

We at the Riley Square office celebrated our 10th Birthday by having an open day for our customers.

We had a selection of refreshments laid on as well as a Huge birthday cake. Our customers were able to meet the staff and help celebrate. The celebrations were not just about Whitefriars but also about thanking our customers for the support and help they have given us over the years to help improve our service.

We also had a guest appearance from the Lord Mayor and other senior figures to help celebrate.

## Tis the season

Christmas lights switch on 2010 at Riley Square. The Christmas lights were switched on the 4th December 2010.

The Riley Square Office opened the doors on Saturday to help celebrate the turning on of the lights. The day was a huge success and our customers enjoyed the event. We had mince pies, cakes, sweets, and biscuits along with hot and cold drinks. There was a kids colouring competition with some great prizes and a free raffle draw for all customers who filled in our service improvement questionnaires. The winning prize was pantomime tickets for 4 people at the Belgrade Theatre.

### Inside this issue...

|                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| <b>Local events</b>        | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>Pride in our street</b> | <b>3</b>   |
| <b>City wide news</b>      | <b>4-7</b> |
| <b>Kits for kids</b>       | <b>8</b>   |

# Local Events

## Monthly surgeries

Starting on December 13th the first of a regular monthly surgery was held at Falkener House from 2-3 pm. This will now run on the 2nd Thursday of every month.

The surgery was an opportunity for residents to meet their Estate Officer, and their neighbours. It also gave residents a chance to discuss and get advice individually and confidentially on topics such as ASB, Repairs, Rents and any other issues.

Residents will be welcome to discuss any issues they are having that they feel they need individual support with and information will also be available with regards to other support agencies.

## Dog awareness

The purpose of this event was to encourage dog owners to take responsibility for their dog whilst in public places.

On the day, there were free name tags given out to members of the public to encourage the reduction of stray dogs. There were bags given out to enable residents to clean up after their dogs, and general information about dog fouling.

Feedback on the day was quite positive, with people being very forthcoming with their views on Riley Square.

This information was taken away as part of the event with a view of looking into some of the suggestions made on the day.

## Getting Digital

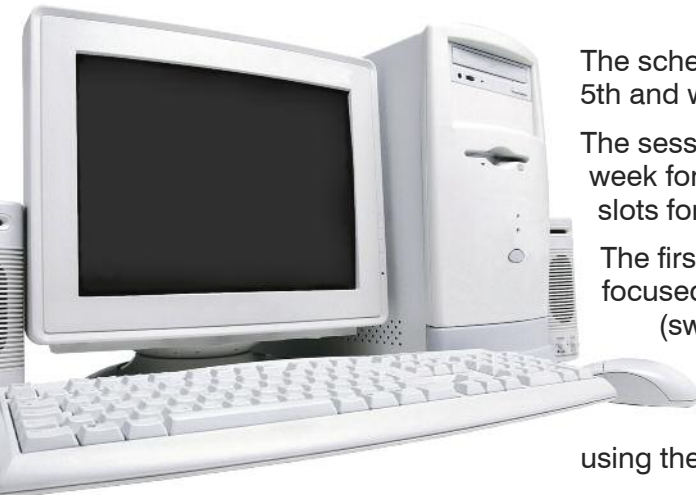
Residents of Harry Stanley House in Armfield Street have just been awarded funding to "Get Digital".

### What's new online

Each housing office of Whitefriars now has its own section on the website.

Check out what is happening in your area office us at:

[www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk/rileysquare](http://www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk/rileysquare)



The scheme started on January 5th and will run for 12 weeks.

The sessions will be held once a week for 7 hours with 1 hour slots for 2 persons at a time.

The first 7 weeks will be focused training on the basics (switching on and what a mouse is etc) and will also include how to send an e-mail and using the internet.

The final 5 weeks will be a series of digital skills workshops covering things like transferring photo's from camera to computer, photo shop and making greetings cards.

Provisions will be made to adapt the training such as voice control and enlarged key boards for those who may have sight/hearing issues.

Future aims are to integrate external agencies and use existing links with external agencies to try and get them involved.

Although the scheme is based at Harry Stanley at the moment, in the future, funding permitting, it will be rolled out to more schemes. In the meantime, a "do it yourself pack" is being developed which other schemes can use to get the ball rolling.

For the time being other schemes can go to Harry Stanley and Customer Involvement have agreed to pay for transport to Harry Stanley and other local schemes such as Coundon Court School and Caludon Castle school who are also running the scheme.

The bid also covers Broadband and line rental costs.

The funding came from the NIACE, [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk), to support digital inclusion for older people. This will provide a PC with assistive technology and a desk, printer and chair.

Get digital will also provide a trainer for 6 sessions to help the residents of the block to get online and get digital.

# Pride in our Street

For the second year running Whitefriars have run the “pride in your street” scheme. This is aimed at getting customers involved in submitting bids for funding, for the improvements that they would like to see completed in the area.

In October the Riley Square Pride In Our Street Panel met to evaluate 12 bids that had been submitted by residents and Whitefriars Staff. The panel enjoyed a visit to all the locations to view the prospective bids, followed by a presentation on each of the bids. The presentations examined how the bids would benefit the community, and also the support showed by the community. Many of the bids received were also supported by the local Police, Councillors, and external agencies.

Following this 6 bids were approved by the panel totalling £8,700. Work will be carried out in the Wyken area, where fencing in the Sowe Valley will be replaced. There will also be the installation of new wooden hand rails in Harry Rose Road.

In the Foleshill and Longford areas, new lighting schemes have been approved along

with gating to deter youths from gathering around disabled bungalows. In the Bell Green area gating to garage sites and a low rise block have also been approved.

We hope to bring you further information over the coming months, as the work starts to take shape.



Fencing along the Sowe Valley, which will be renewed as part of the scheme

## Wildlife renewed

Whitefriars Housing has been working closely throughout the year with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and the Bell

Green Junior Street Champions to clear the land and the river by the new park. Following completion of the work, we are now seeing an increase in Wildlife in the river and surrounding areas.



The unveiling of the sandstone mural at the Bell Green play area.

The local Residents Association (BATRA), Whitefriars Housing and the Bell Green Partnership Group thought it would be a nice idea to commemorate the hard work undertaken, by funding and commissioning a sandstone mural in recognition of their hard work.

The sandstone was designed by the Junior Street Champions. The unveiling took place on Tuesday 16 October 2010 and was warmly received by the local Councillors and residents.

# Fit for Fun day

The Ricoh Arena has seen many high profile events over the past few years, but step aside Take That, watch out Oasis because on 23rd November Fit for Fun rocked the arena.

Working with our Business in the Community partners, a tireless team of Whitefriars volunteers challenged 120 local children aged between 11 – 12 to get fit and have fun at the same time.

This unique opportunity to get to know some of our young customers saw staff members help teams to plant carrots, leeks and lettuces and discuss how growing your own fruit and vegetables is not only environmentally

friendly but reduces packaging and litter too.

The more energetic volunteers Zumba'd throughout the day. Led by Donna Edwards, a qualified instructor, we discussed with the children how just 30 minutes exercise every day can help keep your heart healthy, before leading them into a dance-based exercise to Latin and international music.

Working within the corporate responsibility agenda, this project is part of our ongoing engagement with the communities in which we work and we are excited about building on these foundations.



# What a Bazaar!

Christmas came a little early for older Coventry residents last November. Over 150 people from across the city flocked to St Peter's Centre in Hillfields for the Whitefriars Christmas Bazaar.

Staff and agencies alike really got into the spirit of the day with information about sheltered housing, the digital switchover, tenants insurance scheme as well as support services as diverse as CRASAC, Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, Health Trainers, Neighbourhood Management and the Fire Service.

Traditional stalls included cakes from William Sheridan House, Kath and Muriel from Stretton Lodge brought books. Una, Mick, Maggie and Veronica came from Everdon Road with bric a brac, tombola and plants. Jayne and Terry from Sackville House cleaned up on their tombola and bottle stall. Not forgetting Glynis and Alex's amazing raffle and bric a brac stall. All of

the money raised by each of the sheltered schemes will be put back into social activities for residents there.

Neil Evans, Specialist Housing Manager said, "It was heart warming to see so many people having the opportunity to socialise with each other, especially some of our elderly customers, and it was great to see the networking opportunities with other organisations being positively delivered."

It really was a great day and the resident feedback has been very positive. A 94 year old resident called to sum up the general feeling, "It was absolutely fantastic to get so many people from all over all talking to each other, we could do with a few more like that!"



# The results **are in**

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete this years customer survey. This years lucky winner of the £50 prize draw was Mr Rafferty of Spon End. Should you receive a survey next year this could be you!

## Results

Overall satisfaction with the Grounds maintenance service remained consistent at 73%.

The quality of the grass cutting across the City increased 5% to 82%.

Keeping communal gardens to a reasonable standard has remained consistent at 69%.

It has been noticed by the BEG group that a number of residents look after communal areas. Should you decide you would like to adopt a section of communal land please contact Whitefriars at the earliest opportunity.

## Parking on Grassed areas

We've also noticed that cars are being driven across grassed areas and being parked. We would like to point out the problems caused by this namely: Damage to the surrounding grass and pavements, safety concerns for the other members of the general public and finally the risk of damage to the vehicle.

## Greenery within your garden

We would like to remind residents that should you have trees / shrubs within your garden close to public

walkways, could you ensure these are cutback to ensure the safety of the general public. Should you be unable to manage this please contact Whitefriars.

## Tell us your thoughts!

We are always looking for volunteers of all ages to ensure the good work of the group continues. Membership of BEG can happen in a number of different ways. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please get in touch with Whitefriars who can tell you all about the work we do.

## Working together to make a difference ...

The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on Local Authorities to conduct a childcare sufficiency assessment every three years.

This gives the Early Years and Childcare Service the opportunity to secure sufficient childcare for parents and carers in Coventry.

The Service is currently consulting with parents, carers and key stakeholders on the draft report and we would like to invite you to take part in the consultation, which runs from Monday 24th January until Friday 18th February.

To view the latest online draft report and to get involved in the consultation process visit Childcare Sufficiency Audit at [www.coventry.gov.uk/childcaresa](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/childcaresa)

or contact: Coventry Early Years and Childcare Service on 024 7678 5901  
E-mail: [eyccs.citywide@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:eyccs.citywide@coventry.gov.uk)

To view a paper copy visit the Family Information Service in the Central Library, Smithford Way, Coventry CV1 1FY, Mon, Tues & Thurs 9.00am - 5.00pm, Wed 9.00am - 6.00pm & Fri 9.00am - 4.30pm



Coventry City Council



[www.coventry.gov.uk/earlyyears](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/earlyyears)

# Need a Garage?



Garages are available to rent for parking or storage of small domestic goods

Rent from  
**£7.25**  
per week

**4 rent free**  
weeks per year

**Interested?**

Telephone Sarah

**024 7676 7182**

for more details

## A furniture Find

If you are looking for furniture for your property, there are a number of organisations where you can find affordable furniture.

These organisations sell a wide range of good quality second hand items at great prices. From sofas to fridges, chairs to washing machines, you never know what you might find. For more information, see our Moving In and Furnishing your New Home Booklet from your housing office.

If you are updating your home then **why not donate** your unwanted items to one of the organisations detailed below.

### **British Heart Foundation**

25-35 Market Way, Coventry CV1 1DF

Telephone: 0844 248 9164

### **Coventry Community Transport**

269 Sovereign Road, Earlsdon, Coventry, CV5 6LT

Telephone: 024 7669 1433

### **Emmaus**

70 Red Lane, Coventry, CV6 5EQ

Telephone: 024 7666 1466

## Does every child matter to you?

**Would you like to become a registered childminder in Coventry and offer a child a caring, home from home experience?**

One of the most rewarding things about being a childminder is watching children's excitement as they achieve something new for the very first time and being involved in supporting their development.

Childminding is a dynamic and evolving career, and there are a variety of training opportunities available.

**To find out more contact:-**

The Childminding Development Team on 024 7678 5897



\*Photo supplied by NCMA

# Focusing on: Neighbourhood and the Community

We have promised to update you on the progress of our Plans for Improvement against the National Standards set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the regulator for social housing.

In the first in a series of feedback reports we have put the **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** under the spotlight. Our Plans for Improvement for the standard said we would:

- continue to roll-out the low-rise cleaning project
- improve the number of residents attending estate inspections

The low-rise cleaning project is almost complete with residents of approximately 340 blocks choosing to pay a service charge for a cleaning service provided by Whitefriars. We have completed a customer satisfaction survey for this service and begun a series of estate walkabouts involving residents.

Our latest flat dwellers survey received 448 responses and showed:

- 78% satisfied with internal cleaning of blocks;
- 67% satisfied with areas around blocks;
- 41.3% said, "the service had got better";
- 20% dissatisfied with grounds maintenance service; and
- 13.6% dissatisfied with our services overall.

## Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard also incorporates our plans to tackle anti social behaviour.

Our Plans for Improvement include:

- carry out an office survey in October/November 2010 looking at service delivery/ satisfaction from our housing offices
- extend the schools project into primary schools

The survey has been sent to approximately 3000 homes and we will report the outcomes in a future issue.

## Working with Primary Schools

The Schools project has been extended within Coventry, and Whitefriars has sponsored two booklets, *Play safe, stay safe* and *Will powers*, which will go into five Primary Schools – Grangehurst, Hill Farm, Joseph Cash, Spon Gate and Aldermans Green.

In addition, our Customer Involvement Team will be leading an assembly in each school, explaining what we do and the impact we have on estates where our customers live. We hope to form lasting relationships with the schools and to set up a group of interested young people to work with us.

We have given some of the schools disposable cameras for pupils to record their journey to and from school and to photograph the things that concern them. We will work with those young people to deliver a presentation to the local Ward Forum.

## Working with Secondary Schools

Thanks to RESPECT training delivered over the last two years, we have an ongoing relationship with Caludon Castle School. We frequently meet their Positive Contributions group which has been to some of our sheltered blocks to talk to elderly residents about a whole host of issues and to help out. We have now been asked to deliver class sessions as part of the Citizenship curriculum.

We also have strong links with Coundon Court School. An extended Learning Centre for pupils who would benefit from more one-to-one sessions will be established at our old Wyken Housing Office in Vincent Wyles House, next to our own training and development facility in William Malcolm House.

## Working with other agencies

We continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders, including Fire and Police Services on projects to understand ASB hotspots and trends, on Community Cohesion Days and on Safer Neighbourhood Groups, and we provide staff with specialist training, for example, dealing with Hate Crime and Domestic Violence.

If you would like to become more involved in Neighbourhood and Community issues go to [www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk](http://www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk) or contact the Customer Involvement Team on 024 7676 7018.

# Help is at Hand

During difficult financial times we are always looking for ways to help our customers. This summer the Kits for Kids campaign not only helped families buy uniforms for their children but also raised awareness of two other services we offer: an Employment & Training Advisor and a Money Advisor.

We have an Employment & Training Advisor, Emma Jones who has now been working for us for nearly a year, supporting some of our customers to get back into employment .

We also have a Money Advisor, Peter Burcher who helps customers maximise their income and make affordable agreements to clear debt, as well as budgeting advice.

We decided to try to help raise awareness of services as well as helping some customers with the cost of school uniforms through a competition called 'Kits for Kids'. Together with Coventry businesses, Charles Ager Shoes, Mrs T's, Andy Blair Sports & School Wear, and WH Smiths, we donated prizes in the form of vouchers to put towards school uniforms, shoes and equipment.

To enter the competition we asked all of our customers with children between the age of 4 and 15 to complete a questionnaire which would then be entered into the prize draw.

The questionnaires were sent out to over 3,000 customers City wide. We had 217 questionnaires returned and from these we picked 35 lucky winners who won various prizes including Vouchers ranging from £20 - £100 as well as goody bags.

We were able to contact 104 people about money advice and 161 about Employment and Training. We were also able to offer more information about our contents insurance scheme which can cost less than

the cost of a change of lock if you lose your keys.

Our Customer Involvement team were passed the details of 96 customers who wanted to be involved in developing the future services Whitefriars can offer.

*Whitefriars would like to say a big thank you to all Customers who took part in the questionnaire and hope they have been able to get a little help through financially difficult times.*



Customer Services Improvement Group member Jillian Hogg draws the prize winners

## Need help in your own language?

If you would like this leaflet in large print or audio format, please contact the Communications Team on **024 7676 7029**.

### French

Vous avez besoin d'aide dans votre propre langue

### Arabic

هل تحتاج إلى مساعدة بلغتك

### Farsi

آیا به زبان خودتان به کمک نیاز دارید؟

### Polish

Wymagają Państwo pomocy w swoim języku?

### Kurdish

تایا پنیوستت به یارمهتی به زمانی خۆت ههیه.

### Urdu

اپنی زبان میں مدد کی ضرورت ہے۔

t: 024 7676 7000

## Contact corner

Our office is based at 29-31 Riley Square, Bell Green.

We are open from 9am - 4.30pm every day except Thursday, when we open later, at 11am.

Call: 024 7670 8400 Email: [info@whitefriarshousing.co.uk](mailto:info@whitefriarshousing.co.uk) [www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk](http://www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk)

  
**whitefriars**  
HOUSING