

Torringtontalk



How are WE Doing?

Here's an idea of what's been happening at your housing office for the period April 2010 to June 2010:

- Callers to reception 2097
- Telephone calls dealt with 8313
- Home visits by Estate Officers and Rents Services Officer 1476
- Let 131 properties
- Graffiti removed 520 lots

Summer Success

This year Whitefriars set aside £10,000 from its Pride in Your Street, grant award scheme, to fund small projects within communities. The customer panel, who decided on the successful bids, wished they had far more money, given the exciting range of really great projects submitted.

Each project had to describe the benefits that it would bring to Whitefriars customers, their families or communities.

And it just proves how much is going on in our communities with 29 projects funded, across the city.

In this area two projects based in Canley can now go ahead with a grant from the scheme. Canley Green spaces will use it

to purchase equipment for a community clean up, and the Canley Activities Group will bring families and the local community together through activities, including street events to break down social isolation in the area.

The Community Action Group in Spon End have taken over the running of an ex youth centre on the estate. The grant from Whitefriars will contribute to the

opening of the newly named Rose Community Centre, enabling young people to benefit from a place to go, and family support.

Our Sudanese customers will benefit from the development of a support network group, reduce social isolation, skill development, and confidence building as part of a project run by the Sudanese Family Support Group.

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Improving Your Health



Do you suffer from a long term health condition?

We are working in partnership with Health Exchange who are linked to the NHS. They are offering a free course for anyone who has

a long term or chronic health condition. The course is designed to help build your confidence and to show you how to manage your health better.

The course is suitable for anyone over the age of 18, lasts approximately 6 weeks and is run locally.

Refreshments are provided on all sessions. If you are interested or know anyone who may benefit from this course, please contact the Customer Service Team at Torrington Avenue for further information or contact the Health Exchange direct on Freephone 0800 158 35 35

Supporting New Customers

At Whitefriars we have identified the need to support new customers when they sign up and move into their new home. As a direct response to this we have implemented the 'Supporting New Customers' Project.

The project allows us to get to know our new customers and to identify what level of support they require in their tenancies.

For some customers this is their first home and first time that they have been responsible for paying bills, being a good neighbour and looking after a home. This can be difficult at the best of times, and some people need a little bit more help to enable them to succeed.

Our aim is to provide high quality advice, assistance and where necessary utilise our links with other local services which can provide support to our new customers. We are also providing customers who need the most support with a starter pack which will help them in the first stages of their tenancy.

One of our customer who received a starter pack was very happy he said 'Whitefriars are really doing a lot to help their customers and this will really help me out, they are great'.

The project has been running for 3 months in Torrington and has proven to be successful. The feedback we have received has been positive and new tenants are moving into their new home with the relevant support and guidance they require to give them the best chance at living independently in their homes.



What's going on

Our Office

We would like to welcome **Will Reilly** and **Anne McDowall** our new Customer Services Assistants and **Jasmin Masih** our new Customer Services Officer.

We would also like to say goodbye to **Rae-anne Strong** our Customer Services Assistant, who has moved onto another office within Whitefriars and also **Rebekah Anderson** our Modern Apprentice who has been successful in obtaining a full-time post within Whitefriars.

Kits for kids

The Kits for Kids campaign was running city wide from 1st July to 23rd July 2010.

It was designed to help ease the financial burden of kitting kids out for school. Uniform and stationary costs can be expensive for families. It was open to families with children aged 4 – 15, they had to complete a short questionnaire, if they have rent debt, speak to an officer at the housing office. The officer then did a financial check and made agreements if they did not already have one. The name was then put in a prize drawn. We will report on the outcome in the next talk magazine.

MoneyTalk

Housing benefit - how can you get your claim paid more quickly?

Claim in a day

Did you know that if you are entitled to housing benefit you could get your claim processed and in payment within 24 hours.

You will have to complete a housing benefit form and take it and everything they need to process the claim (there is a check list in part 18, page 17, of the housing benefit form) to Housing Benefit Section, Spire House, New Union Street, Coventry.

You will need to speak to an officer to ask for the rapid claim to be done, if they check the form and if some of the information is missing then it cannot be processed as a rapid claim, but inline with there normal procedure.

Housing benefit will also process a change of circumstances within a day too, all you need to do is complete the change of circumstances form and take it and the evidence that relates to the

change with you to Housing Benefit Section, Spire House, New Union Street, Coventry.

If you change your bank details, have a baby, have someone moving in or out of your home all you need to do is phone the Housing Benefit Section on 02476831800, they will make the change immediately and tell you if you then need to provide the proof or evidence with in the next 4 weeks.

Remember, if you do not tell housing benefit of a change in circumstances you could lose out on benefit you are entitled to or create an overpayment of benefit that you will then have to pay back to them.

Money Aid Help

One of our tenants found it a struggle to pay her rent, she is on benefits but housing benefit did not cover all of her rent. The debt she had was increasing every week. She was interviewed by her rent officer

and told that she could make a claim for Discretionary Housing Benefit to top up what she was receiving already. Although there was not guarantee that she would received this extra benefit, it may help her get out of the current situation, were she could not pay the rent or reduce the rent debt.

We also suggested that she if she was making payment to reduce the debt then she could make a claim for a Money Aid Award. She did make the claim for the Money Aid. The tenant got the discretionary housing benefit a payment, which meant she started to reduce the rent debt with her payments and because she was also awarded a Money Aid payment the debt she had was cleared. She said 'it has made a big difference, it is easy to get into debt but much harder to get out of it and the Money Aid Award helped me so much'.

Champions choose New Street Names

Young residents have been making their mark in the area after naming the first new streets of the Spirit Quarters scheme.

Local residents, including a group of 20 Junior Street Champions, were invited by Whitefriars Housing Group and the residents' Regeneration Action Team to choose names and themes for the first five streets that will be built in the Deedmore area around the former Deedmore School and Monkswood Crescent.

Four of the street names will reflect a wildlife theme and have been carefully selected by the Junior Street Champions aged between 9 and 12.

The fifth name, Tipton Way, was chosen by the Regeneration Action Team as a tribute to former community champion and Chair of the NDC Partnership Board, Roger Tipton who sadly died last year after serving 10 years as Chair.

The Junior Street Champions got

involved in the street naming after carrying out a number of projects to help improve their community such as working with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust on a project to clean up the Sowe Valley river and planting 100 trees in Bell Green Park.

Junior Street Champion Lorraine Sietambi, age nine, said:

"It is really exciting that we got the chance to name the streets. We had been doing some creative exercises with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust which gave us the ideas for the names of the streets."

"We liked the activities we did at the river and looking at nature so that helped us to think of the names."

Vicky Scott, Chair of the Deedmore Residents' Association and member of the Regeneration Action Team, added:

"We're especially pleased to have young people involved as it reflects our hope that the regeneration will result in a community that people are happy to live in for many years to come."

Lynn Wassell, Project Director at Whitefriars

Housing Group, who is leading the housing redevelopment work on behalf of Whitefriars, Coventry City Council and Coventry New Deal for Communities (NDC), said:

"Working closely with residents has been the key to the success of the regeneration of this area – right from the planning stage. Now we're seeing the plans come to life it made perfect sense to get residents involved in the naming, as it's their area and we want them to feel proud of it."

Spirit Quarters
new street names:

- Tipton Way
- Dragonfly Drive
- Butterfly Walk
- Kingfisher Close
- Crayfish Close



Members of the Junior Street Champions and Regeneration Action Team with representatives from the Council, Whitefriars and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Wow! what a difference

Who would have thought that a block of flats could look this good? Extensive works to windows and panelling have produced a sleek modern look for Alpha House. The transformation started late last year bringing draft free warmer living to its 97 flats.

A unique history

Standing on Barras Heath, this block has been a city landmark since its construction in 1962. When built it was the first example of 'Jackblock' construction, where each floor was raised using a hydraulic jack. This meant work could be completed under cover, and without scaffolding, during poor or cold weather. Starting with the roof, each storey took around a week to jack up once completed, and the entire building process took about 18 months.

Present Day

Experienced contractors Frank Haslam Milan, (FHM), carried out this unique project, and in just 7 months installed double-glazing; fixed insulation panels and then attached modern aluminium cladding all the way around to create its fresh modern look.

The project took a long time to plan, as lots of structural issues had to be looked at. It is hardly a simple job to replace the sides of a 17 storey block.

Residents were informed of progress through meetings and newsletters, and also visited a similar tower block in Wolverhampton, where improvement works had recently been carried out, to get a feel for what Alpha could look like.

Similar to its construction in 1962, scaffolding was not used. Instead mast climbers allowed the contractors to move easily up and down the building, whilst minimising disruption to residents. FHM provided an on site resident liaison officer, who was there to deal with residents' concerns.

Other improvements have already taken place to the block. These include installing new kitchens and bathrooms and decorating communal stairways and corridors. A satellite television system was also installed, so no need for satellite dishes to spoil the new clean look.

Improving the entrance to the block provided the final changes.



We expect high demand for any vacancies, for what is now the best-looking block in the city!

Contact Centre **Extends Hours**

It is not always easy for all our customers to report a repair between 8am and 6pm so we have extended our opening hours so you can **report any repair between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday.**

Call **0845 850 6090** or use the repairs reporting tool on our website at **www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk/repairs**

Coventry Early Years & Childcare Service

Your child deserves the best start in life

Research shows that high quality early years provision significantly improves children's life chances. Through play, children learn and grow, develop social and language skills and increase in confidence.

All children are entitled to 15 hours a week of free nursery education from the term after their third birthday which is 570 hours over a year. This can be taken over a minimum of 38 weeks a year though some early years providers may be able to offer a more flexible arrangement, such as being able to take fewer hours per week and spreading the 570 hours over more weeks.

Is your child eligible for a free nursery education place?

If your child's 3rd birthday is between:

1st April - 31st August - Summer Term

1st Sept - 31st December - Autumn Term

1st January - 31st March - Spring Term

They will be entitled to a free nursery place:

Following September - Autumn Term

Following January - Spring Term

Following April - Summer Term

You can choose from the following early years settings, provided they are registered with Ofsted:

- ◆ Pre School / Playgroups
- ◆ Private Day Nurseries
- ◆ Independent Schools
- ◆ Maintained nursery classes (September admissions only)

The setting is paid directly by the local authority and you should not be charged by the nursery unless you buy other services such as lunch or extra hours.

To find out more about early years settings in your area contact:

Coventry Family Information Service
Main Floor Central Library
02476 834773



Keeping up **Appearances**

During our most recent estate inspections the Better Estates Group noted a small number of areas that were not being maintained properly. To help keep up the appearances of these areas we would like to highlight the following points:

If you are maintaining a communal area of land which you are no longer able to do please contact Whitefriars to make them aware.

If you live in a flat and want to look after the area nearest to your home please contact your Local Housing Office so they can advise you of the steps that you need to take.

If you are taking on a new tenancy that includes a garden, Whitefriars staff should talk to you about your responsibilities for maintaining the garden.

Group feedback

On our recent estates inspection we found the majority of the work has been completed to an acceptable standard.

In-depth inspections carried out during June showed us a range of results. The grass was a mixture of good and fair quality. It was also noted that the hardsurfaces required improvement on both estates.

All these results help us to maintain our services and keep us informed of necessary improvements.

The Better Estates group will be inspecting again during September.

Would you like to join us?

We still require representatives from Stoke Aldermoor, Holbrooks, Radford and Henley Green. If you are interested in how the grounds and trees are looked after, we would welcome you.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone that replied to the survey sent out by the Better Estates Group. Your response to what is happening in your area tells us where we need to look for improvements and see where we are doing well. We will announce the winner of the prize draw shortly.

Who finds a home with us?

Between April 2009 until March 2010, we successfully advertised and let 1889 properties through the Coventry Homefinder Scheme. Here are some facts about who we housed:

By Property Size and Type

- 976** properties let were either bedsits or 1 bed properties.
- 627** properties were 2 bed.
- 273** properties were 3 bed.
- 12** properties let were 4 bed.
- 1** property let was 5 bed.
- 1444** properties let were flats or maisonettes.
- 346** properties let were houses.
- 99** properties let were bungalows.

By Age Group

- More of our properties went to younger groups of people - younger people setting up home for the first time or growing families moving to larger homes.
- 1179** properties were let to applicants aged 18 to 35
- 519** properties were let to applicants aged 36 to 55
- 191** properties were let to applicants aged 56 and over

By Priority Band

Under the Coventry Homefinder Banding Scheme we housed 270 applicants in Band 1 (very urgent housing need), 736 applicants in Band 2 (urgent housing need) and 883 applicants were in Band 3.

By Area

The areas where we let the most properties were in Willenhall Wood, Tile Hill North, Willenhall, Bell Green and Hillfields.

The areas where we let the least properties were in Whitley, Aldermans Green, Cannon Park, Longford and Foleshill.

Your Views Matter

We are always trying to improve the services we deliver to you, but to do this we need your help. You may have been asked to complete a survey which asks for your thoughts and views on how we are delivering our service. The information you give is invaluable and helps us shape the services we provide for you.

We have many ways of capturing your views and the information you give us does make a difference, at times you have shown us that we need to make changes to the way we do our job.

For example one customer told us that he was not happy when he used his decoration voucher. The paperwork that we issued indicated that he could choose any wallpaper in the Dulux store. However when he visited the store he found that this was not the case, as there are only certain wall papers available for Whitefriars customers.

Following on from this feedback we realised that we had got it wrong, and the wording on the paperwork was incorrect so we have now changed it.

If you have visited our office recently you may have been asked to complete a feedback form, asking how you were dealt with by our Customer Service Team. For the next 6 months we will be completing a monthly prize draw for all feedback cards that we receive.

Every month a £20 gift voucher for Argos will be given. So please let us know how we are doing and you may be the lucky winner.

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 پئویستت به یارمه تی به زمانی خۆت ههیه.

Urdu

اپنی زبان میں مدد کی ضرورت ہے۔

t: 024 7676 7000

Contact corner

Our office is based at 192 Torrington Avenue, Tile Hill, Coventry. We are open from 9am - 4:30pm every day except Thursday, when we open later, at 11am.

Call: 024 7649 6700 Email: info@whitefriarshousing.co.uk www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk

