

up close

ISSUE 21: December 2018

West Edition

www.riverclydehomes.org.uk

This Christmas we're
here when you need us.

Call us at any time of the day or
night on 0800 013 2196



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Unlocking the future

Rent consultation

Safe at home

Building stronger communities

 **river clyde
homes**
Improving lives and places

Remember our Roxburgh House office is now closed to the public

HOW TO CONTACT US

FIRST:

Call us for free to report any issue or repair, or call into one of our offices. If we can, we will deal with your issue there and then.

SECOND:

If you need more detailed advice and support we will try to resolve your enquiry that day and will keep you up to date with the progress. If you need advice about a complex issue, we may need to seek the assistance of an officer from one of our specialist teams. We will give them your contact details and have them call you back.

THIRD:

We can, if you wish, pass your details to one of our specialist team members and ask them to arrange to visit you in your home at a time that suits you.

BY PHONE:

 **0800 013 2196** (free from a landline or mobile)
For out-of-hours emergency repairs use this number only

ONLINE:

 customerexperience@riverclydehomes.org.uk

 www.riverclydehomes.org.uk

 [@rivclydehomes](https://twitter.com/rivclydehomes)

 [@river.c.homes](https://www.facebook.com/river.c.homes)

IN WRITING:

River Clyde Homes: Roxburgh House,
102 - 112 Roxburgh Street, Greenock PA15 4JT

SERVICE LOCATIONS:

We have offices close to you, where you can:

- Apply for a new home
- Bid on properties
- Receive financial advice
- Access factoring services
- Discuss housing options & support services
- Report repairs
- Report antisocial behaviour.

Clyde Square, Greenock

Mon 9:00am - 5:00pm
Tue 9:00am - 5:00pm
Wed 9:00am - 5:00pm*
Thu 9:00am - 5:00pm
Fri 9:00am - 4:00pm

**We are closed on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 1pm for staff training*

Broomhill Way, Greenock

Mon 8:45 am – 12:30pm
Tue 8:45 am – 12:30pm
Wed 8:45 am – 12:30pm
Thu 8:45 am – 12:30pm
Fri 8:45 am – 12:30pm

Up Close is available in other formats, on request.

Please contact: Keith Moore
 **01475 788800**

 communications@riverclydehomes.org.uk



Welcome

Welcome to the end-of-year edition of Up Close magazine.

Welcome, It's been another a year of change at River Clyde Homes, with the launch of new services in direct response to feedback from customers. You can read about our CCTV system to improve safety in communities in this magazine.

The world of housing never stands still and further changes to the way we deliver improved services are being planned. We should be able to tell you about them in the spring edition of Up Close.

In this magazine, you can read about how we are supporting communities through employment, training



Jillian Moffat, Chair of the Board

and benefits advice, how you can save money on your energy bills and you can read more about our ambitious plans to build up to 750 new homes over the next five years.

Importantly, you can tell us what you think about our proposals to increase rents for 2019/20. Please take a moment to fill in and return the enclosed Freepost card or use the online facility.

All that's left to say is that on behalf of all the staff and the Board of River Clyde Homes, have yourselves a Merry Christmas and a very happy 2019.

Telling us about changes to your household

By now you should have received a letter and information booklet letting you know about the changes to your Tenancy Agreements due to the implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

We are updating the household information for everyone who took the opportunity to confirm their details and would encourage all tenants to keep us up to date with this information. A huge thank you to those who have already responded.

Remember, to ensure that your tenancy rights are protected it is very important to ensure that you advise us of any changes to your household. Failing to do this will affect any future changes you might want to make to the tenancy.

Changes you must tell us about include:

- telling us about anyone who has previously moved in with you, who you haven't already told us about
- when anyone moves into or out of your home in the future, at the time they do so

If you are unsure about whether you have told us about anyone who has moved into your home, let us know now. This is particularly important if someone has given up their home to move in and care for you.

If you need to tell us about any changes please contact our Customer Experience Team, in the first instance, for free on 0800 013 2196 at any time.

Up Close is produced by River Clyde Homes and delivered to 5,600 customers. Designed by: Solo Creative.

River Clyde Homes is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (SC329031) and a Scottish Charity (SC038584). Property Factor Registration Number: PF000152.



Unlocking the future

Our ambitious programme to build up to 750 new homes is gathering a head of steam as we head towards the new year.



Slaemuir, Lodge



St Stephens, Port Glasgow

In 2018 we have handed over new homes at Bay Street (41 units) and Slaemuir in Port Glasgow (28 units) and another 20 homes are due soon in the Mallard Bowl area.

Next year we will start work on two major schemes at James Watt Dock in Greenock and in Port Glasgow on the site of the former St Stephen's

High School. Further phases of the Slaemuir regeneration project will also begin following the demolition of three 1960s-built low-rise blocks.

Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning visited Slaemuir in Port Glasgow in November to hand over the final house of the £5m, 28 home

development to its new resident, Anne Deighan.

Two years ago, River Clyde Homes completed a consultation exercise to gather residents' views on the future of the 13 maisonette blocks in Slaemuir. They were given the option of continued maintenance and repair or their homes. The outcome showed a clear indication that the majority of owners and tenants expressed the opinion that these blocks should be demolished and replaced with new homes.

The new 28 homes are just the first phase and once the next two phases are built the overall Slaemuir development will comprise 96 new homes, built in partnership with The Scottish Government and Cruden Building and Renewals.





James Watt Dock Site, Greenock



Slaemuir, Port Glasgow



Bay Street Lodge

Mr Stewart said: "I was delighted to visit the Slaemuir development, which was supported by over £2 million of Scottish Government funding. They provide affordable, wheelchair adaptable and good quality social rented housing in the Port Glasgow area. I was particularly impressed by the extensive involvement of the local community in developing proposals for the regeneration of the area. This development is testament of the powerful impact of partnership working."

Jillian Moffat, Chair of the River Clyde Homes Board, said: "These are magnificent homes. We are committed to building new homes that are accessible and adaptable to suit the changing needs of our customers over time. The homes are the most energy efficient we have built to date. We will continue to develop our design standards to improve sustainability and energy efficiency as we develop our plans to build up to 750 new homes in the next five years."

Anne Deighan, who was involved in the steering group from the beginning, said of her new home: "It's great! I lived in one of the low-rise blocks and am looking forward to not having to climb four flights of stairs. My son Daniel (14) is looking forward to taking charge of the garden in the summer. The place is really warm compared to where we were and we're excited about spending our first Christmas in our new home."



Have your say: Rent consultation

Paving the way for future transition to CPI linked rent increases

This year it is proposed that the measure used for rent increases be more closely aligned with CPI (Consumer Price Index) rather than RPI (Retail Price Index). CPI is commonly used by many companies for annual salary increases and is the measure used to increase welfare benefits. Over the last three years, CPI has on average been approximately 1 percentage point lower than RPI.

This year's proposed increase of 3.4% is equivalent to CPI +1% and it is hoped that, subject to achieving planned operational efficiencies, future rent increases will gravitate to 'CPI only' increases.

This transition is consistent with our ongoing commitment to keeping rents affordable while enabling us to deliver the range of service improvements that many customers have requested. This includes, continual enhancement to our customer services (including 24/7 access) and ongoing reinvestment in existing housing stock, and our new build development programme.

Update of rent and charges review

As you know we are currently undergoing a full review of our rent and charges structure. The purpose of this review is to ensure rent and charges are fair and affordable for tenants. We would like to thank all tenants who took the time to share their views on the questionnaires which were sent out in the summer and also those who took part in the subsequent focus groups. The main themes which came through from the above were that tenants wanted a consistent approach to setting rents across all properties. Overwhelmingly the factors which tenants believe should influence the rent levels were, in order of importance:-

1. property size
2. property type, and
3. how energy efficient the property was.

In November the RCH board agreed the above principles and that a new rent policy should be written based on the above criteria. Thereafter communications will commence to inform all tenants of these changes and how they will affect them individually. Once approved, this new rent policy will be shared with you in Spring 19 and at that point we will publish a communication plan to taking us up to full implementation of this new rent and charges model.

Here's an example of how a 3.4% increase would affect a typical tenement property:

Property size	Current weekly rent	Proposed new weekly rent	Weekly increase
1 bedroom	£76.95	£79.57	£2.62
2 bedroom	£80.30	£83.03	£2.73
3 bedroom	£83.65	£86.49	£2.84
4 bedroom	£87.00	£89.96	£2.96

Each response will be entered into a prize draw with one customer having the chance of winning a £200 shopping voucher of their choice.

Please complete the postcard or use the online questionnaire at www.riverclydehomes.org.uk

The deadline for responses is Friday 4 January. Consultation over charges for wardens, caretaking services and factoring will take place separately.

Monthly rent charging

This year we are also proposing to change the frequency of your rent charge to be monthly instead of weekly. This will not prevent you from continuing to pay weekly, if this is your preference, however with the increasing numbers of our customers who receive their income monthly this will align the charge for rent with payments made to customers' accounts.

Please let us know your views on the enclosed postcard or use the online questionnaire.

New CCTV system launched



In November we launched a new 24-hour CCTV monitoring service, the latest phase of our ambitious Safe at Home Strategy.

Covering over 500 homes, the CCTV service is monitored 24 hours a day by our accredited Customer Experience Team. The new service adds a further element to River Clyde Homes' focus to ensure all customers feel safe. It includes:

- Smaller Housing Officer patches with an increased focus on addressing antisocial behaviour;
- Financial support to Inverclyde Council for Community Wardens to target antisocial behaviour hotspots on River Clyde Homes' estates;
- Review of our antisocial behaviour policy in consultation with customers;
- Zero tolerance approach to drug dealing resulting in an increase in evictions.
- Increased provision of secure door-entry systems.
- New homes all built to "Secure by Design" standards.



“

Customers told us that feeling safe at home was a top priority in our recent customer satisfaction survey and at consultation events over the last two years. We now have over nine out of ten customers reporting that they do feel safe and the new CCTV service will build on this excellent progress. I'd like to thank the team and all of our customers who got involved in helping to develop the services. Jillian Moffat, Chair of the River Clyde Homes Board

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The Beat Patrol

This year, River Clyde Homes has provided additional funding to the Community Safety Team at Inverclyde Council for an enhanced community warden service for our tenants and residents.

The Community Wardens are on foot patrols between the hours of 11pm and 2am on selected days within the community and we hope that this higher profile and dedicated service will give a clear message that antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated in our areas.

Activ8OurPlace Project Launches

Activ8OurPlace is a newly set up project that focuses on community activity in the South West of Greenock. The overall aim of the project is to encourage and support people to identify what would make a real difference in their community and ways in which they can play an active part in making this happen. The neighbourhoods covered are Bowfarm, Grieve Rd & Fancy Farm, Mallard, Pennyfern, Larkfield, Braeside and Branchton.

Project Workers have already been out introducing themselves to known groups in the area and are keen to contact individuals who have suggestions and ideas about what they know would make a difference.



Potential activities could include community food and health projects, community gardens and food growing, development of informal learning opportunities, expansion of community social enterprise activity and creation of a Compassionate Community, BUT ultimately it will be the community who determines what these projects will be.





Bringing People Together

A brand new Community Room in Gourock's only high rise, Eastern View, was officially opened in August.

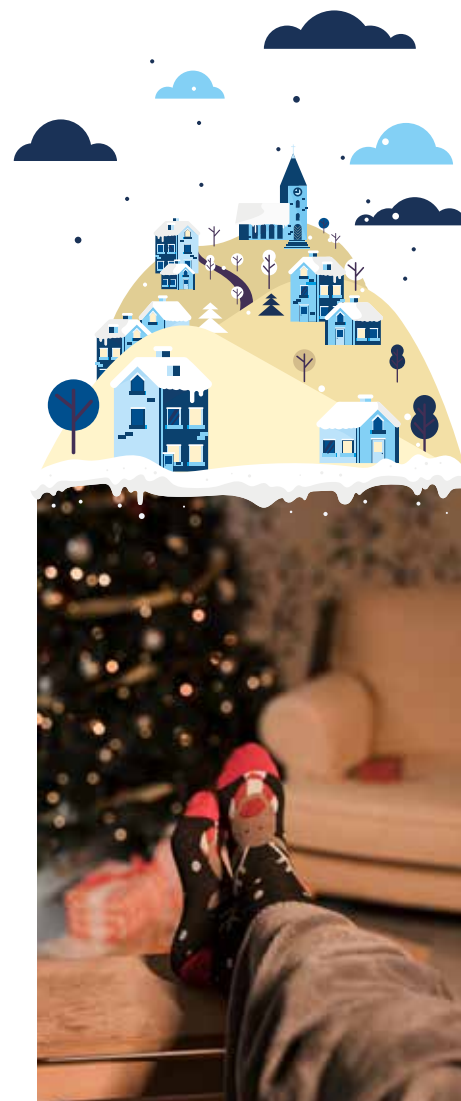
After the successful completion of the bio-mass heating project, contractors, The McDermott Group, turned their hand to a completely different installation, and created a community room as part of the community benefit element of the heating contract, for residents of the block.

The empty room on the ground floor was previously an unused space but there was recognition that it could be transformed into an area that could be enjoyed by all residents. Fast forward a couple of months and the space is now unrecognisable.

Eastern View Resident's Association (EVRA), were successful in their application for a River Clyde Homes tenant's association project grant which they used to purchase chairs, crockery and an urn, and with a community library set up, the room has already been hailed a success by residents.

Hamish MacLeod, Secretary of EVRA, said of the room: "Already it has made a big difference. It's the ideal facility for a lot of people. We have issued letters to residents asking them if they would be in support of a games night and other activities and we have already started a book lending facility."

Victor Delussey, Chairman of EVRA, said: "I think the room is tremendous and a miracle change. Previously there was stone slab flooring and old chairs and abandoned furniture. It's now a place where people can meet and get to know each other where previously they may just have passed each other in the corridor."



A new home for Christmas?

Over 20 new homes in the Mallard area of Greenock have been completed and it is anticipated that over half of these will be allocated to families in time for a move before Christmas.

The mix of both two and three bedrooms homes generated huge interest and viewing began in November. The homes in Mallard are part of River Clyde Homes' ambitious plans to build 750 new homes in Inverclyde over the next five years.

Need to Contact Your Housing Officer?



Did you know you can find out which Housing Officer covers your street? Head to the **"My Community"** section of our website and put in your postcode www.riverclydehomes.org.uk

Need some benefits advice?

Last year we helped over 600 customers to gain a share of **£2million** in additional benefits.

0800 013 2196

Sanctioned?
If your money has stopped or you have been sanctioned we can help get your payments restarted and protect your tenancy.



We can help with advice from calculating entitlement to appealing.



Financial Wellbeing Support
We can help you with all aspects of Welfare Benefits.
Contact us today for an appointment.
We can visit you at home or in the office at a time that is convenient for you.



Universal Credit

Housing Benefit

Pension Credit

Scottish Welfare Fund

And many more...

We will liaise with other organisations on your behalf...

- Inverclyde Council
- Department for Work & Pensions
- HMRC

Call us anytime on **0800 013 2196**
or email us at welfare.benefits@riverclydehomes.org.uk



river clyde homes

Riverside Gardens Halloween Fun!

Residents at Riverside Gardens in Gourock had a fantastic afternoon at their recent Halloween party.

They were delighted to be entertained by children from a local nursery and kids, (both big and small), were in full Halloween gear and entertained all with their party games including "dooking for apples." Craig Russell, Service Improvement Manager (West) said: *"It was a fantastic day for both residents and the children. Lorraine and Emma have been busy doing a power of work with the residents of Riverside Gardens and are already making plans on how they can further build on this relationship. Special thanks also to Lamb Coaches who saved the day when they provided a coach for the children at short notice and for free!"*

Over **£220** was raised at the Halloween party for the complex with the funds going towards new garden furniture.



Macmillan Cancer Coffee Morning at Riverside Gardens

Sheltered Housing Complex, Riverside Gardens in Gourock, took part in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning this September in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support and raised over a whopping £700.

Residents from the complex were entertained by children from Binnie Street Nursery in Gourock who sang songs and played games much to the delight of residents. Also on hand to help out were volunteers from Clydeview Academy/2nd Boys Brigade in Gourock and Housing Officer, Lorraine Mulholland, who served the residents teas and coffee and helped out with the raffle. The event was organised by Riverside Gardens Sheltered Warden, Emma Molloy, who said of the day: *"Our residents and their families had a great day and were thrilled to bits by the entertainment from the children. Special thanks to the nursery and boys from Clydeview Academy/2nd Boys Brigade, for taking the time out of their day to help us with this worthy cause. Macmillan Cancer Support do an incredible job and the money we raised will go some way to helping those with cancer to live life as fully as they can."*



Building stronger communities



Digital Inclusion

Future Skills Inverclyde supports customers with digital skills both on a one-to-one basis or in a group. The support is based on helping customers with no skills to learn the basics of what they want to do for example social media, video calling, emailing or selfie-taking! We also support customers who are claiming Universal Credit to ensure that they can make a claim and manage their online account.

Tech-I Tea Parties are a staple event for Future Skills throughout the year. The aim of these parties is to introduce sheltered housing residents to the wonders of the internet. The theme is different each time and the team aim to engage customers with anything that interests them that can be found online. This photo shows our residents at our Halloween Party using the internet for inspiration to make masks.



Tackling Social Isolation

Having an ageing population in Inverclyde, tackling social isolation and loneliness is a target area for River Clyde Homes. There are many initiatives held throughout the year which encourages older residents to get involved.

River Clyde Homes' annual winter initiative takes place in the form of a party where over 300 customers over the age of 75 or living in Sheltered Housing joined staff for a Christmas celebration.



Our wardens play a key role in tackling social isolation across our eight sheltered housing complexes. The 'Grand Cruise' on the SS John Gault held during the summer is just one example of how our staff go above and beyond to support those who most need help.



Employability



River Clyde Homes' aim to support customers with more than just housing sees support being provided to help customers move to employment.

A partnership with Morton in the Community has given an opportunity for customers to sign up to a 12 week programme to help learn the skills needed to move back into work.

For 2018/19 River Clyde Homes has signed up again to support 36 customers move through the programme with an opportunity for work placement at the end.

In 2017/18 a programme of Jobs Fairs was rolled out across Inverclyde in conjunction with The Trust. Each of River Clyde Homes' locality areas were targeted with a fair being held in East, Central and West Inverclyde. Hundreds of residents attended to speak to employers about live vacancies and apply for those that suited.

Health & Wellbeing

River Clyde Homes is committed to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for our customers including the children who live in our homes. Part of this improvement saw a week long football camp held by Morton in the Community and funded by Radio Clyde Cash for Kids and River Clyde Homes. A meal was also provided to every child who attended

A total of 62 children attended the camp and the feedback was so great that River Clyde Homes are now working with Morton in the Community to extend this programme.

The kids at Easter were also treated to a visit from Hugh Keevens from Clyde One SuperScoreBoard.

Broomhill residents were encouraged this year to take part in the Big Bike Revival. This project funded by Cycle UK encouraged Broomhill residents to take up cycling to improve physical and mental wellbeing. Group led rides and Dr Bike maintenance workshops were facilitated by local company, Clyde Activity Bikes in May 2017.

Financial Inclusion

Helping customers to be financially better off is important to River Clyde Homes, especially during a time of welfare reforms. River Clyde Homes' Financial Wellbeing Team are on hand to help customers with all welfare benefit related matters and during 2017/18 supported over 600 customers. In total, these customers were supported to achieve over £2million in additional income.

Alongside offering one-to-one support, the team provide advice and information via Money Talks, a financial inclusion magazine aimed to give customers the tools they need to manage their finances.



The latest edition of the magazine (which you can read at www.riverclydehomes.org.uk) also marked the launch of a partnership with PCU to provide jam-jar style accounts for Universal Credit claimants. This partnership will help customers claiming the new benefit to manage their monthly payment and ensure their rent charge is paid on time each month and therefore protecting their tenancy.

River Clyde Homes have also achieved funding for the third year running from Scottish Government to fund the Extra Care Plus Service which supports new tenants to settle into new homes. The funding has seen over 200 new customers per year settle into their new home including help with securing financial support with rent.



Inverclyde's volunteers recognised

Once again, River Clyde Homes, sponsored the Young Volunteer of the Year category at the Reach For The Stars Awards.

The award went to Kyle Watters, of Enterprise Childcare Autism Service, (Pictured with our Vice-Chair Marilyn Beveridge and television presenter Jean Johansson).

One of our current Board members, Jenny Speck, the former Chair of Broomhill Tenants and Residents Association, received Volunteer Leader of the Year sponsored by Inverclyde Council;



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Sandra McLeod attended the event and said: The Reach for the Stars awards are a celebration of Inverclyde's vibrant voluntary sector and volunteer community. Our congratulations go to Kyle who exemplifies the good work being done by many young, unsung heroes across Inverclyde.

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Have you got it covered?

Every year, River Clyde Homes hears stories of customers who suffer loss or damage to their belongings as a result of theft, fire or flooding. Many of them have been without home contents insurance, mostly because they think the 'worst will never happen to them'. However, when most of us add up the value of what we own, the chances are we couldn't afford to replace everything – or, in some cases, even some of it.

We've teamed up with insurers Arthur J Gallagher to provide customers with low-cost insurance packages that are tailor made to suit individual needs and circumstances.

This home contents insurance is designed specifically for tenants and the good news is that it covers all their possessions giving them peace of mind. One great benefit is that in the event of something happening, customers will have no excess to pay. The plan also offers convenient payment methods and a fast, efficient, claims service.

Elizabeth Grant, a tenant board member with the housing association, said: "I would encourage any customer who is without contents insurance currently to seriously consider this low-cost package. We hear of so many cases where customers lose all their possessions and can't afford to replace them."

She added: "If your contents are not insured, please take a moment to contact us and give yourself some peace of mind that in the event of that 'bad thing' happening you know you've got it covered."



Further information is available on our website or customers can call our 0800 013 2196 to be sent one of our leaflets, which are also available at office receptions.

Our Power Energy

River Clyde Homes is a partner in a new energy supply company that aims to cut millions of pounds from bills in some of Scotland's most disadvantaged communities. So far over 270 River Clyde Homes customers have switched over to Our Power and are enjoying cheaper energy.

Our Power Energy, was set up by social housing providers, community organisations and local authorities to help tackle fuel poverty and is the first in the UK to operate on a non-profit distribution basis. The consortium expects to save its members up to 10% on their household utility bills, compared with standard commercial tariffs.

In recent years River Clyde Homes has been working on a number of initiatives to minimise fuel poverty through higher standards of energy efficiency of customers' homes with the introduction of bio mass heating. In addition hundreds of homes have been converted from expensive and inefficient electric storage heating to more economical gas central heating.

However, those most affected by fuel poverty have been at the mercy of rising fuel costs for years and Our Power aims to reduce the impact.



Elaine Cannon, Service Improvement Manager (Central) at River Clyde Homes said: "We entered into this partnership for the benefit of our customers as Our Power is a socially-minded organisation committed, like us, to reducing fuel poverty. The evidence from customers shows that people found the switch-over process to be easy and are enjoying a reduction in costs."

A campaign is underway in Inverclyde to encourage customers to switch to Our Power in an effort to improve their quality of life and household budgets. Anyone interested in receiving more information should contact the Customer Experience Team on 0800 013 2196.

Do your finances need a makeover?

Future skills Inverclyde are please to introduce their brand new budgeting service to the residents of Inverclyde.

Total Money Makeover, aims to look at the practical ways to save money, with advice tailored to each individual's needs. Whether you struggle to manage money or not, everyone can learn from a Total Money Makeover.



Since 2014 Future Skills has been helping residents of Inverclyde to gain computer training, either within the community or via home visits. Their specialist one-to-one Future Skills team can offer training either within your own home or at a local venue, such as a community centre or in one of Inverclyde's Libraries.

Whether you are subscribing to a newsletter, applying for housing or universal credit, anything's easy once you know how, and Future Skills are here to help! Check out their website for further information at www.futureskillsinverclyde.com or call them on 01475 788915

Inverclyde Council

Christmas, New Year bin collections

If refuse collections are delayed due to adverse weather conditions, please put your bins out by 7am every day to allow collection at the earliest opportunity.

Large cardboard packaging and additional recyclates can be placed beside your blue bin for collection.



Regular day of collection	Revised day of collection
Mon 24 Dec	Normal collection
Tue 25 Dec	Thu 27 Dec
Wed 26 Dec	Fri 28 Dec
Thu 27 Dec	Sat 29 Dec
Fri 28 Dec	Sun 30 Dec
Mon 31 Dec	Normal collection
Tue 1 Jan	Thu 3 Jan
Wed 2 Jan	Fri 4 Jan
Thu 3 Jan	Sat 5 Jan
Fri 4 Jan	Sun 6 Jan

Recycling Helpline 01475 715901
www.inverclyde.gov.uk/recycling

Inverclyde council



**BEFORE
IT'S SPENT,
PAY YOUR
RENT**

**DON'T
WORRY ALONE**

Talk to us today on

0800 013 2196

if you are having problems
paying your rent.

Your rent is the
most important bill
you need to pay.