

SPEED INTERVIEW EVENT HELD FOR JOB SEEKERS

A recent 'speed dating' style interview event saw job seekers in the Caerphilly county borough practice their interview skills, whilst also aiming to secure a work placement opportunity.

The event, held at Tredomen Innovation Centre, was organised by the teams delivering the Welsh Government Communities for Work and Lift employment support programmes at Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Communities for Work programme is funded by the European Social Fund.

Our Housing Repair Operations team were one of the employers interviewing candidates at the event, along with a number of our suppliers and contractors. These included Robert Price Builders' Merchants (our single source supply partner) and Nuaire, one of their suppliers.

Vinci, one of the contractors helping to deliver internal works as part of our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme, were also there with their sub-contractor I & N Watts. The council received £7,340,000 from the Welsh Government Major Repairs Allowance for the 2016/17 financial year which has contributed to WHQS improvements.

E-On, our partner in delivering energy efficiency works in Lansbury Park, were also interviewing for work placement opportunities, along with their contractors Elite and SAM Drylining. Caerphilly-based training and employment pathway provider Train and Grow also attended the event.



Cllr Lisa Phipps, the council's Cabinet Member for Homes and Places, said "This event provided a wide range of opportunities for participants; as well as helping to develop skills at interview, it also helped build confidence and, rather than being mock interviews, there were real opportunities available with employers.



I'd like to thank the employers who attended on the day for their commitment to helping the council deliver hands-on work experience opportunities for local people. The experience that individuals will gain from these placements will be invaluable in helping them find employment."

For more information about Communities for Work or Lift employment support programmes in the Caerphilly county borough contact Andrew Griffiths, Senior Employment Mentor, on 01443 866392 or by emailing commfirst@caerphilly.gov.uk

Caerphilly Homes
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Using off-road vehicles safely & legally

Off-road vehicles, e.g. bikes and quads, can only legally be ridden on land where the land owner has given their permission or if the vehicle is road legal (has number plates) then it can be driven legally on the road, providing the rider has tax, insurance and a driving licence.

It is illegal to ride your off-road vehicle on any land, unless the land owner has given their permission.

This includes:

- **Common land** ■ **Moorland** ■ **Footpaths**
- **Bridleways** ■ **Restricted byways**
- **Canal tow paths** ■ **Disused railway lines**
- **Roads**, including Green Lanes that are classified as roads (if you haven't got a driving licence, insurance, tax, MOT and if the bike doesn't have number plates)
- **Roads used as public paths**



If you're caught riding your off-road bike, quad or other off-road vehicle illegally then you could face the following:

- **Your vehicle could be seized by the Police** ■ **You can be reported to appear in court**
- **Police Officers can issue Section 59 Notices.** If you are caught driving on land without the land owner's permission. If you receive two notices in 12 months then your vehicle will be seized and you will have to pay to have it returned. If you don't pay, then it will be crushed.

Information taken from Gwent Police website www.gwent.police.uk

Refurbishments begin on historic Oakdale Hotel

Work began in April on the site of the former Oakdale Hotel; located in the historical mining village of Oakdale.

An extensive refurbishment programme will see the three storey Grade II listed former public house transformed into 12 two and three bed homes. Works are being carried out by local contractors M & J Cosgrove and are expected to be completed in autumn 2018.

The programme is being delivered through partnership working between ourselves, Pobl Group and Welsh Government. The completed homes will be managed by registered social landlord Charter Housing who are part of the Pobl group. Oakdale and Penmaen Community Partnership have also been heavily involved in the design of the building.

Over £1.7 million will be invested into the project, which includes a contribution of just over £1 million from Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant fund.

Historically, Oakdale was designed as a model village by the owners of the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company.

The Oakdale Hotel was built so that the directors of the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company would have somewhere to stay near the colliery; the hotel was also used for entertaining visitors and holding Board meetings.

The building had been derelict for a number of years and we're very pleased to be working with Pobl to bring this historically important building back into use, whilst also creating much needed affordable housing for local people.



Officers from Caerphilly Homes and Pobl with members of the Oakdale and Penmaen Community Partnership

Transforming Lansbury Park

Ambitious plans are underway to transform Lansbury Park, Caerphilly and the lives of the people who live there.

In November we announced a £2 million investment into improving the energy efficiency of homes on the estate. This programme is now underway thanks to an innovative 'green' partnership between us and energy supplier E.ON. As well as making homes warmer, the external cladding being fitted to properties will also transform the appearance of the estate.

The works are being undertaken through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) initiative; a government funded energy efficiency scheme to help reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty. In March the demolition of an old footbridge in Lansbury Park also took place. The structure, which links Lansbury Park to Bedwas Road, will be replaced with new lengths of footpaths and dropped kerbs. The bridge was demolished following consultation with residents after a structural report found it was in need of considerable repair.

April also saw the unveiling of the 'Deep Place Plan' for Lansbury Park; an ambitious blueprint for the future of the estate. The plan was commissioned by the council and produced by Professor Dave Adamson and Dr Mark Lang. The plan has been developed with input from residents to ensure the community helps shape the future of Lansbury Park. The Plan sets out a range of recommendations to help tackle some of the key issues identified as part of the study.

Christina Harray, the council's Corporate Director for Communities said "The council has pledged to do all it can to transform the fortunes of Lansbury Park and this

comprehensive plan will provide a clear framework to deliver change and improvement. As part of this process we want to work closely with the community to shape a positive future for everyone living on the estate."

The estate will benefit from a total of almost £11m which will help to transform the physical appearance of the area:

£3.5m for EWI (External Wall Insulation) works to increase the fuel efficiency of homes and tackle fuel poverty.

£3.5m for EWI related works (including canopies etc).

£380,000 Contribution for EWI work to private homes included in phase 1 funded via Welsh Government Vibrant and Viable Places Programme.

£500,000 allocated for environmental improvements.

£2.9m previously invested for internal WHQS improvements i.e new kitchens, bathrooms etc.

£104,000 for the demolition of Lansbury Park footbridge funded via Welsh Government Vibrant and Viable Places Programme.

£87,000 for the demolition of Lansbury Park Community Centre funded via Welsh Government Vibrant & Viable Places Programme.

We are currently working with Welsh Government to identify further funding to support the delivery of phase 2 of the external wall insulation scheme for private homeowners and we are currently surveying homes with a view to undertaking further external improvements to homes, which are in addition to the above investment, to ensure homes meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.



Would you like to receive more news & updates?

If you'd like to be kept up to date with news from across Caerphilly Homes then sign up to receive our regular eBulletins.



Simply visit link below and click on **'Register for email alerts'** and select **'Housing'** along with any other topics you're interested in.

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/stayconnected

We also have a regular **'Homes ready to rent'** bulletin which gives details of council homes available to rent.

Gardening service survey

In the last edition of this newsletter we asked you to contact us if you would be interested in using a gardening service, if one was available.

We'd now like you to get in touch to give us your views on:

- *Would you use the service if one was available?*
- *How much would you be willing to pay for the service?*
- *What type of jobs would you use the service for?*

Call 01433 864262 with your views, or email: watkik1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Please note: *this service is not currently available, we would just like your views at this stage to see if there is a demand.*

Having repairs or improvements carried out at your home?

What you can expect from us and what we expect from you

We have developed a document called 'The Charter for Trust' which sets out our promise to you on what you can expect from us, or any contractors working on our behalf, and also what we expect from you whilst we are working in your home.

What you can expect from us

- When visiting your home workers should always introduce themselves, explain the reason for their visit and show their ID card.
- Workers are not allowed to smoke in your home.
- The workforce must not use your telephone.
- You can expect our staff or contractors to respect the privacy of your home, by not entering areas where work isn't being carried out.
- Floors should be protected with clean dustsheets or shoe covers should be worn by workers.
- Workers should never use language which may be considered inappropriate to others, e.g. racist, sexist, abusive, foul or disrespectful.
- The workforce should not use your property, e.g. chairs, tables, ladders, etc. Also, they should not use your kitchen or bathroom to clean tools or equipment or dispose of surplus materials.
- Workers should not use your toilet or bathroom. Tea & meal breaks also shouldn't be taken in any room of your home.
- Radios should not be played by the workforce, unless you have given your permission.
- The council operates a zero tolerance policy to alcohol or drugs in the workplace.



What we expect from you

- We ask that you show respect to our staff or contractors whilst they are working in your home.
- We would not expect staff to work in homes where tenants may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- We ask that you do not smoke in areas where people are working.
- Please show respect for staff whilst they are in your home by not using language which may be considered inappropriate to others, e.g. racist, sexist, foul or disrespectful.
- Do not leave children unsupervised when work is taking place. Our staff and contractors are not allowed to enter or continue working in properties where children under 16 are present, unless an adult is supervising at all times.

Graig y Rhacca residents get handy!

Residents in Graig y Rhacca, Caerphilly are being encouraged to 'get handy' with a new Community Tool Library which launched earlier this year.

The Community Tool Library provides residents with easy access to the tools needed to carry out small household jobs. The tools are available to hire for a small fee on a daily or weekly basis; helping to make home improvements more affordable for those on lower incomes.

The initiative has been launched by Graig y Rhacca Resource Centre; a social enterprise which reinvests any money it generates back into the local community. Hand tools were

donated by Robert Price Builders' Merchants; single source supply partner for to see if there is a demand. A grant from Viridor's Community Fund helped the Resource Centre buy power tools and lawn-mowing equipment for the library.

*For more information about the Community Tool Library simply call into Graig y Rhacca Resource Centre, 59 - 71 Grays Gardens; the centre is open 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday or telephone **Gareth Mitchell** on **02920 883039**.*



Another successful year for Caerphilly Churches Night Shelter

On 5th December 2016, churches across the Caerphilly county borough opened their doors to the homeless for the fifth year as part of the Caerphilly Churches Night Shelter project.

The churches operated on a nightly basis and the rough sleepers travelled between 10 different churches, throughout the county borough, until the project ended on 20th March this year. Each night churches provided up to 8 rough sleepers with a warm meal, safe place to rest and companionship, they were also given breakfast and a packed lunch before leaving the next morning.

Over the 4 month period, Caerphilly Churches Night Shelter was open for a total of 105 nights and provided 562 bed spaces, accommodating 19 different rough sleepers. As well as providing shelter and hot meals, those accessing the project were also provided with essential support and advice from our Homelessness Team and partner agency Cornerstone Support Services. From the 19 rough sleepers, 75% were successfully rehoused as a result of the project; 10 were housed in private rented tenancies, 2 in supported placements and 1 was housed by the council. The other rough sleepers either disengaged or had to be removed from the project.

Andrew Clarke from Cornerstone Support Services Ltd said "In addition to housing guests at the night shelter, we attended 43 health appointments, registered 8 for benefits and assisted

2 into full time employment. Another guest engaged in our family mediation and is now back living at home after being estranged from his family for a number of years.

There are always very difficult issues and situations to manage during this scheme and this year was no different, the Volunteers should receive a special mention for using their skill, patience and dedication to alleviate some testing issues, yet always maintain the warm welcome for their guests time and again.

Cornerstone Support Services are proud to be part of such an inspirational project and look forward to working with the council and churches again in coming years."

Caerphilly Churches Night Shelter is a volunteer led project, with volunteers being instrumental to its success. Each church had its own Co-ordinator responsible for overseeing the project, with at least 10 volunteers per shift. We'd like to thank all of the Church Co-ordinators and volunteers who dedicated their time to make a difference to the lives of vulnerable people during the most difficult months of the year; without them the project would not have been possible.

For advice and support for anyone who may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless contact our Housing Advice Centre on 01443 873552 or by emailing housingadvice@caerphilly.gov.uk



Cllr David Poole, Leader of the council, with volunteers at St Gwladys Church

Helping tenants downsize

Since the under occupancy charge or 'bedroom tax' was introduced in April 2013, we've been working with our housing association partners to develop new homes to help those tenants needing to downsize.

In 2013 and 2014, Welsh Government made an additional £40 million Social Housing Grant available through a scheme called the Smaller Properties Programme. This programme was aimed specifically at helping to alleviate the impact of UK Government's 'bedroom tax'. Our Housing Strategy team successfully bid for funding from this programme, which has resulted in a number of affordable housing developments in the county borough consisting of one and two bedroom properties.

One development which was recently completed, as part of this programme, is Cwrt yr Orsaf on the site of the former Bargoed Fire Station. There are 22 new homes on the site; consisting of 1 bed apartments and 2 bed houses.

A review undertaken by South Wales Fire and Rescue resulted in the decision to consolidate their service and to close a number of fire stations. As well as creating a new use for the site in Bargoed, we also worked with South Wales Fire and Rescue to release the land at the old Cefn Fforest Fire Station for affordable housing.

The Cefn Fforest site is being developed by another of our housing association partners Pobl Group. This site, which is almost complete, will provide 10 new homes including 1 bed flats, 2 and 3 bed houses.

A development is also underway on another site in central Caerphilly as part of the Smaller Properties Programme.

As well as creating much needed smaller homes to help tenants affected by the 'bedroom tax', the developments are also helping to deliver wider benefits in the county borough, including jobs and training opportunities for local people.



Cwrt yr Orsaf, Bargoed

Protect your home & belongings



Have you thought about what would happen if you lost any of your belongings in a fire, through theft or as a result of a burst pipe?

For total peace of mind we can provide tenants with home contents insurance that can be paid weekly with your rent, starting from just 80p per week (for tenants aged over 60).

With no excess to pay on a comprehensive standard policy can you afford not to take out cover?

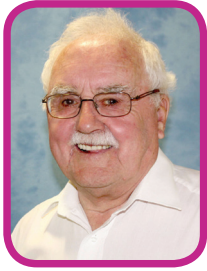
Full accidental damage cover is also available with just a £25 excess. The cost of insurance is payable weekly and premiums can be paid when you pay your rent.

To apply call our Insurance Department on 01443 863430 or pick up a form at your local housing office.

Results of Caerphilly Homes Task Group elections

Thank you to everyone who took the time to vote in the recent Task Group elections.
We're pleased to announce your tenant representatives:

Upper Rhymney Valley



Clive Davies



Melanie James

Lower Rhymney Valley



Sandra Jones



Yvonne Bryant

Eastern Valleys



Ruth Thompson

We are currently recruiting for 2 further representatives for Eastern Valleys – we'll keep you posted!

Focus on . . . Sheltered Housing

We recently started delivering our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) improvements in sheltered housing schemes. Works have now started at Ty Bedwellty, Gibbs Close and Palmer Place in Blackwood.

We're also due to begin works at Y Glyn in Maesycwmmmer and Horeb Court, Trinant very soon. We've also visited a number of other schemes talking to tenants about the improvements and started surveys to identify what improvements are needed at each scheme.

Did you know that there are currently a number of homes available to rent in sheltered schemes throughout the county borough? If you, or a relative, want to live independently but in a smaller, easier to manage home with support then sheltered housing might appeal to you. Sheltered housing aims to help people remain independent with support available where needed. Our sheltered housing schemes are made up of bungalows, flats or bedsits which are completely self contained with their own kitchens and bathrooms.



Tenants taking part in a 'Goldies' singing session arranged by the Sheltered Housing Activities Co-ordinator

Sheltered housing scheme tenants have also been taking part in a number of events and activities this year, organised by Liam Bouse, their Activities Co-ordinator. As well as gentle exercise sessions and IT classes, a number of sheltered housing schemes also hosted talks from Gwent Police. Easter also saw a number of local primary and junior school choirs perform at sheltered housing schemes throughout the county borough. Liam has also been busy planning other social activities and day trips for sheltered housing tenants to enjoy throughout the year.

Benefits of sheltered housing:

- A Sheltered Housing Officer who covers either a morning or afternoon from Monday to Friday
- Safe and secure buildings
- Regular tenant meetings to share ideas and views
- Social events and access to an Activities Co-ordinator
- Dedicated 24 hours a day/365 days a year monitoring alarm service
- Access to other agencies, such as support with financial assistance

People aged over 60, or with a disability, are eligible for sheltered housing.

To apply visit www.homesearchcaerphilly.org or contact our Common Housing Register Assessment Team on 01443 873521

Safety of external wall insulation

Following the tragic fire in West London recently, we would like to reassure tenants on the type of external wall insulation we use and which may have been fitted or is currently being fitted to your property.

Clearly investigations are ongoing into the incident at Grenfell Tower but, based on the information that has been made available to date, the external wall insulation systems we have fitted to our properties are significantly different to that fitted in London. We have not fitted any ventilated cladding systems, nor have we used any aluminium composite panels. The products we fit comply with current regulations and fire safety standards and have been awarded the British Board of Agrément (BBA) Certificate. The work has also been carried out by approved installers.

The systems have been categorised as being of low risk with a Class 0 spread of flame. Clearly there are different regulations that apply to high rise buildings, but Caerphilly Homes have no residential buildings that are classed as high rise. We have also taken additional precautions within our properties in relation to fire safety, by providing smoke alarms to all properties which will provide an early detection of a fire.

It is important that these are not tampered with in any way; apart from pressing the test button on the unit regularly to ensure it's operating correctly.

If you encounter any problems with your smoke alarm, please report this to your Central Repairs Team on 01443 864886.

Do you live in social rented housing?
Why not **swap** homes?



HomeSwapper is the **largest** national mutual exchange service for social housing tenants wanting to swap homes both **locally** and **nationally**.

- 9/10 get matched within 24 hours
- See all your matches in an instant
- Search for swaps locally or nationally
- 100+ matches per member on average
- Thousands of homes added every week
- Build your own multi-swaps with our unique tools



www.homeswapper.co.uk