

# Caerphilly Homes

Issue 3

## Welcome to your Caerphilly Homes Newsletter

Welcome to this, the third edition, of your Caerphilly Homes newsletter. Lots of work has been taking place over the last six months, with the programme well underway to bring homes up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and the review of Sheltered Housing services completed. In this newsletter, you'll find useful information about the WHQS programme, including details on when work will be done in your area. There is also lots of other interesting information, including what support has been given to tenants to help with benefit changes and how you can get involved in shaping Caerphilly Homes' services.

## Housing Minister gets tenants' views on improvements

The Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Carl Sargeant, recently paid a visit to the county borough to see first hand the improvements being made to tenants' homes.

Mr Sargeant met with the Caerphilly Homes Task Group who updated him on the programme's progress and told him about exciting plans to use the investment to transform homes, lives and communities.

Tenants in Panside, Newbridge also received a visit from Mr Sargeant, who called to ask them about their experience of having work carried out and to see their new kitchens and bathrooms. The Minister was also shown a property where work was taking place and met the site team responsible for delivering the work.

Mrs Howliston was more than happy to show the Minister her new kitchen and bathroom. She spoke of how the Caerphilly Homes team had fully involved her in planning the improvements in her home. Mrs Howliston was



L-R Mrs Howliston, Carl Sargeant - Minister for Housing & Regeneration, Cllr Gerald Jones - Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing and Steve Greedy - WHQS Implementation Project Manager.

offered a range of colour choices by her Tenant Liaison Officer and worked with a Surveyor to design a new layout for her kitchen.

Mr Sargeant said: "The Welsh Housing Quality Standards programme is further evidence of how the Welsh Government is committed to making a real difference to the lives of tenants across Wales. I'd like to commend Caerphilly Council for the good work being done to improve the living standards of those in the area."



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Caerphilly Homes  
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# Community Improvement Fund

Are you looking for funding to help make a difference in your community?

If you're a community group based in the Caerphilly county borough, whose work benefits local residents, then you may be eligible for funding.



The Community Improvement Fund offers capital grants of up to £5,000 for projects which aim to transform homes, lives and communities; such as:

- **Improving the appearance of estates**
- **Community gardening projects**
- **Play areas**
- **Projects that bring communities together**

The Community Improvement Fund has been set up, as part of the WHQS investment programme, to support local community development projects in the Caerphilly county borough.

For more information or to find out whether your project could be eligible for funding please go to [www.caerphilly.gov.uk/housing](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/housing) or call Owain Morgan on 01443 866493.

# Response Repairs How are we doing?

There have been several changes to the Housing Response Repairs Service over the last few years, including a new IT system which enables tenants to make appointments for repairs and allows 'mobile working' for the workforce.

Since this new IT system was put in place, in 2009, the average number of days to complete 'routine repairs' has reduced dramatically from 69.5 to 36 days. Those repairs classed as 'emergency' are completed within 1 day and tenants are able to select an appointment that's convenient for them for all other repairs.

The team also started carrying out satisfaction surveys with tenants this year. Tenants are contacted soon after a repair is completed and asked a set number of questions which cover timeliness of service, standard of workmanship and whether the repair was completed 'right first time'. Of all repairs completed each day, 20% of tenants are randomly selected to complete a satisfaction survey.



## Tenant satisfaction results so far for this financial year:

- 94.7% with quality of service
- 96.3% with communication and co-operation of staff
- 96.3% satisfaction overall with the service

# Getting Involved

We are committed to making sure that tenants have a say in the decisions that affect them. We want to encourage you, as a tenant, to be involved at a level that suits you. We do this by offering a range of tenant involvement opportunities.

**The table below shows some of the ways that you can get involved.**

<b>Activity / Group</b>	<b>What it does?</b>
<b>Tenant Information Exchange (TIE)</b>	<p>An informal, relaxed event where tenants can 'drop in' and find out how the Council and tenants are working together to improve housing services.</p> <p>Sessions are held at a variety of venues and transport can be provided. The next TIE is being held in November. Please call us if you'd like to attend.</p>
<b>Caerphilly Service Improvement Monitors (CSIMS)</b>	<p>A group of tenants who have been trained to carry out surveys with other tenants. They will be completing satisfaction surveys with tenants who have recently had WHQS improvements carried out.</p>
<b>Tenants &amp; Residents Associations</b>	<p>An association is a group of volunteers living in the same area, with its own constitution (rules). Associations often work, for example, to improve the area in which they live, address community concerns, as well as fund raising for numerous activities.</p> <p>We can work with recognised associations to provide advice, support and grant funding where required and can assist with advice and help to develop a new association.</p>
<b>Older Persons Working Group</b>	<p>This is a working group of tenants and officers. This group has played a key role in reviewing services for sheltered housing tenants and producing the final report which was presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group. Group members were involved in overseeing the consultation process, including a survey to tenants and two rounds of consultation meetings in all sheltered schemes.</p>
<b>Repairs &amp; Improvements Group</b>	<p>A working group of tenants and officers which has been focusing on the WHQS improvement programme and has also recently started to look at the response repairs service. Members of the group have also been involved with procurement of the Council's newly appointed single supplier</p>

We are developing a variety of different ways for tenants to get involved with the housing service, so if none of the above suits you, please tell us what does!

If you would like more information about any of our current or future activities, please contact:

**Tenant & Community Involvement Team, Pontllanfraith House, Pontllanfraith, Blackwood NP12 2YW**

**Tel: 01495 235011/235557**

**Email: [housing@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:housing@caerphilly.gov.uk)**



# The future of sheltered housing

The Older Persons Working Group was set up in March 2012 to work with officers to review services for tenants living in sheltered housing.

The group has been very busy over the past year, overseeing lots of consultation with tenants in sheltered and older persons housing to make sure that everyone concerned had the opportunity to have their voice heard. Two rounds of meetings were held in all sheltered schemes and surveys sent to tenants. Meetings were also held with tenants living in older persons housing.

Timescales for the review were met and a final report presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group in September, with recommendations agreed on what can be done to improve sheltered housing services.

A plan is currently being developed to look at how these improvements can be brought about. All sheltered housing tenants will be informed of the plans and given opportunities to be involved in shaping the service.

If you have any queries or would like further information about this, please contact Val Parsons, Sheltered Housing Manager, on 01495 235267.

## Caerphilly Homes Task Group

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group was set up in September 2012 and considers reports relating to the housing service and Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme. It is made up of 7 tenants and 7 Councillors.



Anna Lewis

### Tenant Chair appointed

Anna Lewis took over as Chair of the Task Group in September. Anna is a tenant in Penllwyn, Blackwood and has spent the past year as Vice Chair.

Anna is also a member of the Repairs and Improvement Group and is former Secretary of the previous Tenant Forum.

We'd like to thank Cllr Ray Davies for all of his hard work over the past year, as Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group.

Cllr Dianne Price, ward member for Bargoed, has been elected as the new Vice Chair for the Task Group.

The Task Group is responsible for monitoring all the promises made to tenants during the ballot process, receiving information on the operation of the day to day housing service and making recommendations to change or improve services.

The 7 tenant representatives are drawn from different areas to ensure representation from all parts of the County Borough and were elected by other tenants.



Geraldine Henderson

### New representative for Upper Rhymney area

The recent vacancy for a representative for Upper Rhymney Valley has now been filled by Geraldine Henderson of Heol Uchaf. Geraldine is already involved with her local Ael Y Bryn Community Centre, the Penydre Tenants and Residents Association and the local school. Geraldine attended her first meeting in September.



L-R Cllr Gerald Jones - Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Huw Lewis AM & Mrs Stevens

# Compliments & Complaints

We always aim to deliver excellent services, which meet the needs of our tenants. If you feel we've done a great job, or if you think a member of staff has gone the extra mile then please tell us. You could do this by sending a letter or an e-mail directly to the person who has delivered the service, such as your local housing office.

We also understand, however, that things can sometimes go wrong. If you are not happy with a service you have received you should contact the person who has provided the service, for example, your local housing officer.

However, if you are still unhappy and feel you need to make a complaint then please report it to us. Complaints are very important as they can help us to see when there are faults in the way we do things and what we can do to improve.

You can make a complaint in the following ways:-

- Fill out the form on our website at: **[www.caerphilly.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/complaints)**
- Email us at **[complaints@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@caerphilly.gov.uk)**
- Write to the Corporate Complaints Officer: Mrs A Jones, Legal Department, Caerphilly CBC, Penallta House, Ystrad Mynach, CF82 7PG
- Telephone us on **01443 864221**
- You can request a form from the person you are already in contact with. Tell them that you want us to deal with your complaint formally.

## Huw Lewis AM pays visit to Rhymney tenants

Earlier this year, tenants in Rhymney received a visit from Huw Lewis, Assembly Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

The purpose of the visit was to learn more about Caerphilly Homes' ambitious plans to transform homes, lives and communities through the WHQS programme.

During the visit, Mr Lewis visited a number of tenants who have had WHQS improvement works completed in their homes. One of the tenants he met, Mrs Stevens, spoke of how happy she was with the quality of work carried out in her home and the difference her new kitchen has made.

Mr Lewis also learned more about Caerphilly Homes' innovative approach to tackling the issue of its vacant properties, including a 'showhome' for prospective tenants, and future regeneration plans for the area.

Huw Lewis AM said: "The Welsh Housing Quality Standard is all about ensuring that over 220,000 households in Wales have a home that is safe and secure. This level of work represents huge expenditure in some of our poorest communities through jobs, training contracts and supply chains.

"That's why I was pleased to join Cllr. Gerald Jones in meeting some of the tenants who have already benefited from this work and are now enjoying warmer and more comfortable homes."

"I pay tribute to Caerphilly Council's ambitious plans to use this investment as a catalyst for wider community regeneration and I know that the benefits will be very welcome in Rhymney and other communities."



Tenancy Support Officers: Evan Hillier, Deb Holley, Sherell McLaughlan & Jo Thomas

## Benefit Changes - What we're doing to help tenants

There are lots of changes being made to benefits, such as the reduction in housing benefit for "under occupying". We understand that these changes will have a serious impact on the lives of many of our tenants and we are working hard to provide support to those people affected.

Earlier this year, a Tenancy Support team was appointed to offer one to one advice and support to people who may be experiencing difficulties. The team carry out home visits, where a personal support plan is put together with tenants. This plan will look at what support tenants need; including financial/budgeting advice, energy saving advice, employment support or help with digital skills.

The Tenancy Support team has already visited and assisted over 1000 tenants.

The key outcomes of the visits so far have included:

- Promotion of Welsh Water Assist during the visits resulted in £77,000 reduction in water costs for tenants (overall the saving generated for all tenants in 2012/2013 equates to £210K).
- 690 have received expert energy saving advice.
- 400 tenants successfully assisted to claim discretionary housing payments.
- Assisted 280 tenants to complete applications for water meters (average savings of £150.00 per year).

If you have any questions about the benefit changes, or if you are experiencing difficulties paying your rent you can call the Rents Section on 01495 235600 for advice and support.

## Have you got what it takes to be an Armchair Reviewer?

Would you be interested in receiving a draft of the newsletter and giving feedback on it before it is finally published - all from the comfort of your own home?

We are looking for a number of tenants to be 'reviewers' of the Caerphilly Homes newsletter that is sent out to all tenants twice a year. Each time you send in your feedback, you will be entered into a prize draw to win a £25 High Street voucher.

To find out more contact the Tenant & Community Involvement Team on **01495 235011/235557** or by email at **housing@caerphilly.gov.uk**



# Working in partnership

Earlier this year, businesses were invited to tender to supply materials to Caerphilly Homes, for the WHQS improvement programme.

A 10 year partnership agreement was awarded to Robert Price Builders' Merchants, a family run local business with a long history of supplying materials for WHQS contracts.

This means that Robert Price Builders' Merchants will be supplying all of the materials for our in-house workforce who are delivering the WHQS programme in tenants' homes, along with components, such as kitchens and bathrooms, to contractors who are awarded elements of the programme.

This long term arrangement marks a change of approach by having one company to manage the supply chain for lots of the products needed to carry out improvements; meaning an improved, more efficient service for tenants. This partnership also offers wider benefits to the Caerphilly county borough, through community investment initiatives and job opportunities for local people.



Representatives from Robert Price with Cllr Ray Davies signing the partnership agreement

# Cherry Tree House Open Day

The Caerphilly Homes team hosted an Open Day for the county borough's Councillors, earlier this year, at its base - Cherry Tree House.

The purpose of the event was to provide information on the WHQS programme taking place in tenants' homes. The day included an 'Introduction to WHQS', progress updates and information about energy efficiency schemes taking place in the county borough.

During the event, Councillors were given the opportunity to meet with staff delivering the programme, tenants who have been involved in the process and representatives from Robert Price Builders' Merchants.

Samples of the materials being used were on display, along with 'before' and 'after' photos of properties where improvements have been carried out. Tenant Liaison Officers were also on hand to talk about their role.

Cllr Gerald Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing, said "It is important our local members are fully informed of the ambitious WHQS programme that is being rolled out in the homes of council tenants in their area. This day forms part of a wider communication that aims to ensure everyone involved in Caerphilly Homes and the WHQS programme, from tenants to staff and councillors, are kept abreast of progress."



Presentation from Robert Price at the Open Day

# WHQS Improvement Programme

## Where and When?

The chart shows the year when the work will take place and in which area. Internal works could include new kitchens, bathrooms, heating and electrical rewiring in some homes. External works could include, for example, new doors, windows, guttering/downpipes and reroofing to some homes.

The work will vary from property to property - with some properties needing more work than others to bring them up to WHQS. A full survey will be carried out at your home to assess what work is needed.

The programme is very complex and things can sometimes change. We will give you plenty of notice before work is due to start in your area.

Area	Internal Year(s)	External Year(s)
Aberbargoed Lower	2016/17	2015/16
Aberbargoed Middle	2018/19	2015/16
Aberbargoed Upper	2017/18	2016/17
Abercarn	2017/18	2015/16
Abertridwr	2016/17	2014/15
Abertysswg	2017/18	2015/16
Argoed	2015/16	2014/15
Bargoed	2018/19	2015/16
Bedwas	2018/20	2013/15
Blackwood	2018/20	2014/15
Britannia	2015/16	2017/18
Brithdir	2016/17	2014/15
Bryncenydd	2014/15	2015/16
Caerbragdy	2017/18	2018/19
Cascade	2015/16	2017/18
Cefn Fforest	2014/15	2018/19
Cefn Hengoed	2015/16	2017/18
Churchill Park	2017/18	2016/17
Claude Road	2019/20	2016/17
Croespenmaen	2017/18	2015/16
Crosskeys	2018/19	2017/18
Cwmcarn	2018/19	2017/18
Deri	2016/17	2015/16
Fairview	2015/16	2017/18
Fleur-De-Lys	2015/16	2017/18
Fochriw	2018/19	2015/16
Gelligaer	2016/18	2014/15
Gelligroes	2016/17	2015/16
Gilfach Lower	2019/20	2015/16
Gilfach Phase 1	2018/19	2017/18
Gilfach Phase 2	2016/17	2017/18
Gilfach Phase 3	2018/19	2017/18
Graig Y Rhacca	2015/17	2018/19
Hengoed	2013/15	2016/19
Heol Trecastell	2017/18	2014/15
Highmeadow	2014/15	2015/16

Lansbury Park	2014/16	2017/18
Llanbradach	2016/17	2017/18
Llanfach	2015/16	2016/17
Machen	2017/18	2014/15
Maes Mabon	2016/17	2018/19
Maesycwmmwr	2019/20	2016/17
Markham-Hollybush	2015/16	2014/15
Morrisville	2015/16	2014/15
Nantddu	2019/20	2014/15
Nelson	2015/16	2018/19
New Tredegar	2019/20	2014/15
Newbridge	2017/18	2014/15
Oakdale	2015/16	2014/15
Pantside Lower	2013/15	2017/18
Pantside Upper	2013/15	2015/16
Pengam	2015/16	2017/18
Penllwyn Lower	2016/17	2018/19
Penllwyn Upper	2017/19	2015/16
Penpedairheol	2019/20	2017/18
Pentwynmawr	2016/17	2015/16
Penybryn	2019/20	2017/18
Penyrheol Lower	2018/19	2015/16
Penyrheol Upper	2018/20	2015/16
Persondy	2015/16	2014/15
Phillipstown	2019/20	2014/15
Pontlottyn	2015/16	2014/15
Pontymister	2019/20	2016/17
Pontywaun	2019/20	2016/17
Porset Park	2017/18	2018/19
Pwllypant	2013/14	2015/16
Rhymney North	2013/15	2016/17
Rhymney South	2014/15	2018/19
Risca	2018/19	2016/17
Rudry	2019/20	2014/15
Senghenydd	2013/14	2016/17
Springfield	2016/17	2015/16
Thomasville	2013/14	2015/16
Tirphil	2016/17	2014/15
Tiryberth	2015/16	2017/18
Trapwell	2019/20	2014/15
Trecenydd	2013/15	2016/17
Trelyn Upper	2014/15	2017/18
Treowen	2017/18	2014/15
Trethomas	2015/16	2018/19
Trinant	2017/18	2016/17
Twyn Gardens	2015/16	2018/19
Tŷ Isaf	2014/15	2015/16
Tŷ Nant	2013/14	2015/16
Tŷ-Sign Lower	2019/20	2016/17
Tŷ-Sign Upper	2015/17	2018/19
Wattsville	2015/16	2014/15
Waunfach	2019/20	2016/17
Westend	2015/16	2014/15
Ynysddu-Cwmfelinfach	2018/19	2014/15
Ystrad Mynach	2014/15	2017/18