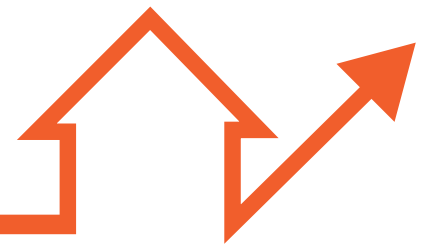


Caerphilly Homes



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Delivering our Promises – A year on



Members of the WHQS Project Board recently visited some of the newly transformed homes. Alun Edmunds, Project Manager, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr Gerald Jones, Nigel Barnett, Acting Chief Executive with Mrs Eirwen Evans in her new kitchen

- Caerphilly Homes Task Group - A new task group set up consisting of 7 tenants and 7 councillors to perform the scrutiny role together and oversee the implementation of the programme.
 - Sheltered/Older Persons Group and Repairs and Improvements Group set up for tenants to be fully involved in the decision-making and ensure that we keep our promises
 - Both the council and tenants have signed up to the Tenant Empowerment Grant application that will “focus on delivery” of WHQS and the services provided by the council to its tenants
 - The Older Persons Group have been reviewing the services for sheltered housing tenants and the Repairs and Improvements group have been focussing on design and specifications of kitchens and bathrooms.
- Caerphilly Homes has spent nearly £18m in 2012/13 on the WHQS programme with £5m on energy efficiency, £3m on central heating, £2m on rewiring and £3m on kitchens and bathrooms, £2m on roofing, £1m on adaptations, £1m on external improvements to Cornish homes and £1/2m on windows

Welcome to Caerphilly Homes Newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of the Caerphilly Homes Newsletter. It is the second edition since the ballot and the council and tenant groups have been working very hard over the last year to make a positive difference to the lives of people living in the county borough.

The council has developed a plan to deliver the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) and is going to be doing different things and going to be doing things differently. We are about transforming homes, lives and communities.

We want to involve tenants in what we are doing and we want tenants to have a voice. We have changed the name of the service to Caerphilly Homes.

There are other changes that we are telling you about in this newsletter.

We would like to involve tenants in shaping the newsletter and also naming it. Tenants have suggested running a competition. If you would like to get involved go to page 4.



Find us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/yourcaerphillyhomes



Caerphilly Homes says – *We're listening to you*

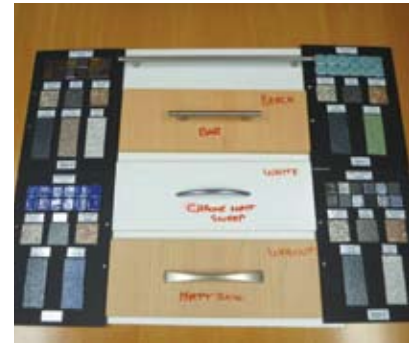
Throughout the year we have listened to your tenant representatives and have agreed to give tenants more choice.

Home improvements - Corncicing has been added to your kitchens and extra choices of colour schemes, tiling & flooring options, painting & plastering.

Sheltered Housing review – The review of the Sheltered Housing Service has been concluded. Caerphilly Homes sent out 5000 surveys to all sheltered housing tenants, general needs tenants and tenants in older persons housing, people on waiting lists and all wardens. We received a fantastic response and the next process is to consult further with our tenants and staff on the findings and proposals which will help to inform the final report.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group has received a presentation on proposals for the future of the Sheltered Housing service, including the support provided to our tenants on the schemes, but no decisions will be made until there has been full consultation on the proposals with all those affected.

The aim of this review is to provide improved quality services for our older tenants and ensure that these are provided fairly and consistently to all. A copy of the consultants



report will be available on the internet and feedback sessions will take place at all sheltered complexes. Once all the feedback has been collated a report will be presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group with recommendations on the changes to be made.

Delivering more Energy Efficient Homes

Caerphilly Homes aims to make sure your homes are adequately heated, efficient and insulated and hope to benefit through the new energy company obligation scheme, which will help fund a mixture of energy measures including insulation, ventilation, installation of gas condensing boilers and possibly voltage optimisers, which will help reduce carbon emissions and cut fuel costs.



Caerphilly Homes will be identifying properties this year that would benefit from these energy efficient features and will be writing to you over the coming months to inform and guide you through the process.

The energy efficiency work is part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard that Caerphilly council has committed to delivering to transform homes, lives and communities. This is part of a bigger programme of work being delivered over the next seven years to upgrade your homes.

In 2012, more than £5m was spent on energy efficiency with a total of 724 council owned properties and 479 privately owned properties benefiting from these energy efficiency measures.

Energy Saving tips can be found at <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/wales/Take-action/Start-saving-money>

Communities set to benefit from Community Improvement Fund (CIF).

Caerphilly council has set up a grant fund specifically to foster community development. Grants of up to £5000 will be awarded throughout the year to support local initiatives and projects.

Due to be launched in April 2013, the Community Improvement Fund is part of the wider £200m WHQS programme of transforming homes, lives and communities.

£50,000 a year will be set aside each year over a period of 5 years to contribute towards individual community based projects that help to improve the social and environmental fabric of communities.

For more information go to www.caerphilly.gov.uk/housing or call Owain Morgan on 01443 866493.

Caerphilly Homes - Transforming homes, lives & communities



Mrs Carys-Ann Williams with her son and the council workforce – Mrs Williams was delighted with her new kitchen and bathroom – she said, “The workmen were brilliant. I am really pleased with the results – it’s marvellous.”

Where and What Next?

The programme of works for the current year 2013/14 is detailed opposite.

Over the next few months your home will be evaluated to ensure it meets the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) even if you have had improvement work undertaken.

Your Tenant Liaison Officer (TLO) will be sending you a letter arranging an appointment in your home to carry out a survey. They will attend with the council Surveyor who will be able to tell you what work is required.

This could include one or all of the following: replacement kitchen, bathroom, upgrade of the electrical and heating installations. At the appointment you can discuss your options and choices of refurbishment with your Tenant Liaison Officer

The Surveyor will design a kitchen to suit the space available, adding in the base and wall units, worktop, flooring and tiling choices and take account of your appliances. A photographic image will then be generated to show what your kitchen will look like.

Eastern Valleys

Claremont Road\Hazelwood Road
Coronation Crescent\Hilary Road
Ellesmere Court\Old Pant Road
Greenlands
Hilltop Crescent - Sunnycrest
Newlyn Road - Stonerwood View
Pant View - Queens Road
St Peters Close -Tir y Pwll Terrace

Lower Rhymney Valley

Alexander Terrace - Cenydd Terrace - Commercial Street - High Street
Castle View - Central Street - Mountain View - New Street
Parc Cottages - Station Terrace
Plas Cwm Parc
Tan y Bryn terrace
Thomasville
Ty Nant

Upper Rhymney Valley

Aneurin Terrace - Isfryn
Glanynant
Heolytwyn
Heol uchaf - Lower Row - Phillips Walk
Penydre
Rowan Place

Tenant Participation

Tenant Information Exchange

The Tenant Information Exchange (TIE) is an informal session where tenants can 'drop-in' to find out more information on how the council and tenants are working together to improve housing services. It is also a good opportunity to meet and chat with other tenants. Tenants can choose to invite guest speakers for the event. Future guests will include Groundwork Caerphilly.

If you would like to attend please contact the Tenant Participation Officers on the numbers below.

Tenant Participation Officers

If you would like to find out more about getting involved or would like to have your say then contact your tenant participation officers.

Gail Taylor Tel: 01495 235557

Liz Bayliss Tel: 01495 235011

Email: housing@caerphilly.gov.uk

Pontllanfraith House, Pontllanfraith, NP12 2YP

Competition

Win a Luxury Food Hamper or a £50 High Street Voucher.

Name the tenant newsletter. We are making changes and want to ensure we get tenants involved. If you want to be in with a chance of winning a food hamper or high street voucher then help us name our newsletter. Send in your suggestions and we will put them to a vote at the next Tenant Information Exchange day in June.

You can send in your suggestions by phone, email, and post to your Tenant Participation Officers or pop them into your local housing office. Please include your name address and contact details. Entries must be received by Friday 7th June.

Tenant Facebook Page

A group of tenants have set up their own facebook page which is independent of Caerphilly Homes. Find them on www.facebook.com/TenantsOfCaerphillyHomes



What's it like being a tenant representative?

As a tenants' representative and Vice Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group I have been lucky enough to meet a diverse range of people from different areas within the Caerphilly county borough. It has been very enjoyable and I have made many friends. Being able to represent the other tenants has been something I have been proud to do. It is important to me that the wider body of tenants are represented as a whole and that it is my duty to ensure that services and homes are improved for Caerphilly Homes tenants.

There are many challenges for the Task Group members to deal with such as scrutinising the council's decisions and services to its tenants and at the same time ensuring that all tenants views are considered. It is the responsibility of the tenant representatives to ensure that the promises made in the addendum to the offer document are adhered to, such as ensuring that the review of services for older people and sheltered housing is completed to time and with the involvements of its tenants.

There have also been other groups set up consisting of tenants from throughout the Caerphilly county borough that come together to represent the wider body of tenants. The groups

Caerphilly Homes Task Group

The Task Group has been meeting since September 2012 and considers reports relating to the housing service and WHQS programme. This includes monitoring all the promises made to tenants during the ballot process, receiving information about the operation of the day-to-day housing service and making recommendations to change or improve services.

The Task Group has places for seven tenant members and the places are allocated to different areas to ensure representation from all parts of the county borough. There are two members for the Upper Rhymney Valley, two from the lower Rhymney Valley and three from the Eastern Valleys.

Recently one of the members from the Upper Rhymney Valley area, Leslie Lewis, has decided to

Tenants Representatives on the Caerphilly Homes Task Group

Eastern Valley



Brain Hoskins – Pontywaun
Tel: 07747465277



Anna Lewis – Penllwyn
Tel: 07711016045



John Moore – Argoed
Tel: 07826916367

Upper Rhymney Valley



Clive Davies
Tel: 07711016048
Rhymney



Vacant
New Tredegar

Lower Rhymney Valley



Sandra Jones
Tel: 07900570386
Penyrheol



Amanda McConnell
Tel: 07879693903
Machen

work hard and are all volunteers committed to working together with the council to ensure that services are improved and tenants live in better quality homes that are in communities where people want to live.

The tenant representatives will continue to work in partnership with Caerphilly council and will continue to work to improve the services for all tenants.

Anna Lewis

Vice Chair of Caerphilly Homes Task Group

step down for personal reasons. We will miss Les (particularly his sense of humour) and would like to thank him for his contribution to the Task Group and to the Older Persons' Working Group.

There is now a vacancy on the Task Group for a tenant from the Upper Rhymney Area. The area covers Rhymney, Pontlottyn, Fochriw, Deri, Tirphil, New Tredegar, Brithdir, Gilfach, Bargoed, Aberbargoed, Hengoed, Cefn Hengoed, Phillipstown, Abertysswg, Ystrad Mynach, Gelligaer, Tiryberth, Nelson, Maesycwmmmer, Gilfach, Penpedairheol, Cascade. If you are interested in becoming a Task Group member for this area and would like more information, please contact Mandy Betts, Tenant and Community Involvement Team on 01495 235025 or email housing@caerphilly.gov.uk

Charter for Trust

This Charter for Trust has been developed following consultation with tenants and staff and has been agreed by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group. The Charter will be given to all contractors and the council workforce carrying out work on tenants' homes and sets out the standards that tenants can expect from the workforce and how tenants should treat the workforce.

Respect

1. Treat all tenants, leaseholders and their visitors with respect. Be calm, polite, and professional at all times.
2. Tenants should show respect to trade operatives carrying out work in their home. Trade operatives will not be expected to work in homes where the tenant may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
3. Be aware of the needs, concerns and circumstances of all occupiers. If in doubt consult the tenant, leaseholder and/or the Tenant Liaison Officer (TLO). The TLO will liaise with the Area or Neighbourhood Housing Office.
4. Always remember the property is someone's home and must be treated appropriately. **No smoking** is allowed in the home or during working hours. Tenants would be expected to refrain from smoking within the working areas. Radios should not be played unless by agreement with the tenant or leaseholder.

In the Home

5. Carry out work with due consideration for the home and environment. Consider occupiers in neighbouring properties and their pets.
6. Respect the privacy of the home and **do not** go into any part of the property where work is not being carried out. Only employees contracted to undertake work should be in the home.
7. Take all reasonable precautions to protect tenants', leaseholders' and the council's property while carrying out work, including access routes. Floors should be protected with clean dustsheets or similar and shoe covers should be worn. Externally protect trees and shrubs that might be damaged and avoid walking on planting beds unless absolutely necessary. Rectify any damage that arises.
8. **Never use** language, which may be considered inappropriate to others e.g. racist, sexist, abusive, foul or disrespectful.
9. **Do not** offer personal opinions on the quality of work carried out by others or on the council's policies or procedures.

10. **Do not** use the tenants' or leaseholders' property (e.g. chairs, tables, ladders etc)
11. **Do not** use the tenants' or leaseholders' kitchen or bathroom to clean tools or equipment or to dispose of surplus materials.
12. **Do not** use the tenants' or leaseholders' toilet or bathroom without their permission.
13. **Do not** use any room in the property for tea or meal breaks. Breaks should be outside the home in designated welfare facilities.
14. **Do not** use the tenants' or leaseholders' electricity without agreement and provide standard cash reimbursement as soon as practical.
15. **Do not** use a tenants' or leaseholders' telephone unless the call is absolutely necessary and connected with the work and prior permission has been obtained. Use of mobile phones in the home should be for business purposes only or in the case of an emergency.

Access

16. When arriving at a property, even if you are expected, always explain to the tenant or leaseholder why you are visiting. Explain to the tenant, or leaseholder what the work involves, where you will be working and how long the work is likely to take. Apologise if you are late and if possible call ahead to advise when to expect you.
17. If you need access to a property and are unable to wait to arrange an appointment, check with the tenant or leaseholder if it is convenient.

Safety

18. **Carry your ID** and take time to introduce yourself and any colleagues by name. Trade operatives should wear appropriate identifiable uniform or appropriate work clothes.
19. Tenants **should not** leave unsupervised children when work is being undertaken in their home. **Do not** go in or continue to work in properties where children under 16 are present, unless an adult is directly supervising them at all times.
20. **Do not** allow any person under the influence of alcohol or drugs to work on the contract. Caerphilly council operates a zero tolerance policy to alcohol or drugs in the workplace.
21. **Do not** put yourself at risk. If you have to leave the job where you have concerns about your own safety contact the Tenant Liaison Officer immediately. The TLO will liaise with the Area or Neighbourhood Housing Office.

Information

22. Ensure the tenant or leaseholder has the contact numbers for the contractor and the council's Tenant Liaison Officer including emergency out of hours details.



Housing benefit

The UK government is reducing the amount of housing benefit some people can claim based on the size of the rented property and the people who live there.

These new rules will only apply to social landlord tenants of working age (working age is where a person has not yet reached pension credit age) & will be effective **from the 1st April 2013.**

If you have more bedrooms than this new rule allows this is called "under occupying". If you are **under-occupying by 1 bedroom** your housing benefit will be **reduced by 14% of the rent amount** and if you are **under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms** your housing benefit will be **reduced by 25% of the rent amount.**

You may have already received a letter from the housing benefit section indicating that you will be affected by these changes. We understand that this will be an uncertain and worrying time for some tenants. If you think you are going to be affected and would like advice you may want to contact the rents section on the number below.

Here to help YOU - Who to contact

Call: **01495 235600**

e-mail: rents@caerphilly.gov.uk

Further useful information can be found on the council website:

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/underoccupation

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/benefitschanges

Benefit changes on way

As from 1st April 2013, as a result of UK legislation, council tax benefit is being abolished and the responsibility for council tax support has passed to the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government has introduced a national scheme which the council has adopted. Although the funding from the UK Government has been reduced, the Welsh Government has met the shortfall of £22 million for 2013/14. This will ensure that those eligible will continue to receive up to 100% of the agreed entitlement for 2013/14. The Welsh Government will be reviewing both the scheme and the levels of funding for 2014/15.

Further details are available on our website - www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Many of our Caerphilly Homes services are delivered via local housing offices –

For any enquiries or to report a repair during office hours contact your local housing office:

Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office

Tel: 01443 873535

urvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm. Closed bank holidays

Eastern Valleys Area Housing Office

Tel: 01495 235229

eastvalleyaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm. Closed bank holidays

Lower Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office

Tel: 02920 849838/849839

Irvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm. Closed bank holidays



Lansbury Park Neighbourhood Housing Office

Tel: 02920 860917

lansburyparknho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Monday - Friday mornings 10.00am - 12.00pm

afternoons 2.00pm - 4.00pm (closed Wednesday afternoon and bank holidays)

Graig-y-Rhacca Neighbourhood Housing Office

Tel: 02920 853050

graiyrhaccanho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Office hours for Graig-y-Rhacca

Monday - Friday mornings 9.00am - 12.30pm

afternoons 2.00pm - 4.00pm (closed Wednesday afternoons and bank holidays)

For emergency repairs when the housing offices are closed call 01443 875500.

I am interested in receiving my newsletter via email rather than through the post.

Please send newsletters via email in future:

Name _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Email _____

Return to the Communications and Tenant Engagement Officer, Cherry Tree House, Carlton Drive, Pen-y-Fan Industrial Estate, Crumlin NP11 4EA Or email: Morgao@caerphilly.gov.uk or call 01443 866493