

Caerphilly Homes

TENANT'S HANDBOOK



EICH CARTREFI, EICH DYFODOL
YOUR HOMES, YOUR FUTURE



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

Contents

Page

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Welcome to Caerphilly Homes | 2 |
| 2. Summary Privacy Notice | 3 |
| 3. Safeguarding | 3 |
| 4. You and your tenancy | 4 |
| 5. Your housing service | 6 |
| 6. Council house rents | 8 |
| 7. Home Contents Insurance | 10 |
| 8. Lettings standard | 11 |
| 9. Reporting a repair | 14 |
| 10. Looking after your home - tenant maintenance responsibilities | 18 |
| 11. Improvements and alterations | 21 |
| 12. Annual Servicing | 23 |
| 13. Keeping your home free from damp and condensation | 24 |
| 14. Compensation schemes for council tenants | 28 |
| 15. Asbestos in housing - tenants information sheet | 30 |
| 16. Caerphilly Homes Charter for Trust | 32 |
| 17. Tenants' Charter | 34 |
| 18. Tenant participation | 39 |
| 19. Good neighbour guidance | 40 |
| 20. Fire safety advice for tenants | 43 |
| 21. Moving house | 49 |
| 22. Ending your tenancy | 54 |
| 23. Compliments and Complaints | 56 |
| 24. Older persons housing | 57 |
| 25. Tenants guide to service charges in sheltered housing | 61 |
| 26. Floating Support | 64 |
| 27. Adapting your home - how to get help and advice | 67 |
| 28. Getting in touch | 68 |



Welcome to Caerphilly Homes

We hope you will enjoy living in your new home. As a Landlord we hope to give you help and assistance in settling down in your new home. This pack gives you some useful information about the services offered.

The Housing Office for your area is

.....

The name of your Estate Management Officer is

Contact Telephone Number

Office Email Address:

Office Opening Times

Your Tenants Association representative is

Contact Telephone Number

The above office is responsible for all matters relating to your home. Your rights and obligations, and that of Caerphilly Council are outlined in your Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy. A copy will be in your Information Pack.

If you wish to report a repair, please telephone

If you have any query relating to your tenancy, please contact your Estate Management Officer who will be happy to assist you.



Summary Privacy Notice

HOW WE WILL USE YOUR INFORMATION

Caerphilly Homes will collect and process information about you, in order to enable you to successfully manage your housing and/or garage tenancy and deal with the finances associated with that tenancy. We may also use this information to provide you with the opportunity to take part in tenant engagement/ involvement. We will also record and may process information on other people living with you; to ensure the property is not overcrowded and to assess other tenancy management issues involving others in your household. There may be occasions where we collect and process information about people who are not tenants, in order to manage a contact from them or in association with a legal obligation.

The legal basis for collecting and processing your information is public task, contractual obligation and legitimate interest. We will keep information relating to a tenancy for as long as the contract is active or where money is owed on a tenancy related account and for a minimum period of 7 years after termination of tenancy.

You have a number of rights in relation to the information including the right of access to information we hold about you and the right of complaint if you are unhappy with the way your information is being processed.

For further information on how we process your information and your rights please access the Council's website using the following link:

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/FOI/PrivacyNotices/Privacy-Notice-Tenancy-Agreement.aspx>

Safeguarding

Caerphilly Homes are committed to ensuring our tenants and those people living in our homes are safe and protected.

Our staff have a duty of care, this means that they must take action if they have knowledge, concerns or suspicions that a child or an adult is suffering, has suffered, or is likely to be at risk of harm.

There are a range of behaviours that can constitute abuse:

- physical
- sexual
- emotional / psychological
- neglect
- financial

Where we have concerns that abuse may be occurring, we will take some or all of the following steps:

- attempt to speak to you about our concerns
- record our concerns in our confidential records and any outcomes of our enquiries
- report our concerns to the appropriate professional services for investigation
- work in partnership with you, your family and support services on any action plans

If you have any concerns for yourself or members of your household, please contact us. We take safeguarding concerns seriously and deal with any reported concerns in a sensitive and confidential manner. Our staff receive safeguarding training.

You can also get an advocate or representative to speak to us on your behalf if you want to, or approach Social Services directly, contact details below.

Children's Information Advice and Assistance – 0808 100 1727, Email: intakeduty@caerphilly.gov.uk

Adult's Information Advice and Assistance – 0808 100 2500, Email: ASDIT@caerphilly.gov.uk

You and Your Tenancy

YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT

Your tenancy agreement is a legal contract between you and the Council. Every council tenant signs a tenancy agreement before they move into their home.

Your tenancy agreement describes:

- what the Council must do
- what the tenant must do
- your rights as a tenant given to you by the law
- any extra rights the Council may have given you

Once you have signed your tenancy agreement the law assumes you have read and understood it.

If there is anything in the agreement you don't understand please contact your local Housing Office.

YOUR PROMISES

The conditions of your tenancy. What you must and must not do.

When you sign your tenancy agreement you promise to keep to the rules it sets out otherwise you may put your tenancy at risk. This means that as the tenant:

YOU MUST

- Pay your rent and any other charges **regularly and on time.**
- Look after your home, carrying out internal decoration, and some household repairs yourself.
- Keep your garden, forecourt or any area attached to it such as paths or steps in good condition and free from rubbish.
- **Let us know quickly if you need any repairs and allow us in to inspect and complete the repair.**
- Be a good neighbour, try not to disturb your neighbours or cause them nuisance or annoyance. You must also make sure that members of your family and visitors to your home keep to this rule. **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR BEHAVIOUR WHILE THEY ARE IN OR AROUND YOUR HOME.**
- Examples of nuisance, annoyance or disturbance include but are not restricted to: loud music, arguing and door slamming, dog barking and fouling, offensive drunkenness, rubbish dumping and playing ball games close to someone else's home.
- Allow Council employees and our contractors access to your home if we need to carry out regular maintenance contracts, improvement schemes/repairs or tenancy inspections.
- Keep your local Housing Office informed of any changes that may occur such as, marriage, separation, divorce, births, deaths. If your income or your circumstances change any housing benefit you receive may be affected and it is important that this is sorted out quickly.
- Get permission from us if you want to carry out any alterations or improvements to your home. Contact your local Housing Office and they will give you advice BEFORE you carry out any changes in your home.

YOU MUST NOT

- Allow pets to cause a nuisance.
- Park any cars, vans, caravans, trailers, boats inside your property boundary unless you have permission.
- Carry out vehicle repairs on council car parks, open areas, or grass verges.
- Use your home as a place of business without permission.
Childminders should contact us for further advice.
- Use your property or any of the common areas surrounding it for any purpose that is illegal, and you must not allow anyone else to use it in that way.

PETS

Different rules regarding pet ownership apply to each property type. Before getting a pet, you should contact your local Housing Office to ensure that you are not breaching your tenancy agreement.

| Property Type | Pet Policy |
|--|---|
| House | You can keep ONE domestic pet, if you wish to keep more than one, please contact your Housing Office for consent. |
| Bungalow | |
| Flat which does not have a communal entrance | |
| Flat with a communal entrance | Pets are not permitted without specific written consent, please contact your Housing Officer for further information. |
| Sheltered Housing with communal entrances | |

YOUR RIGHTS

As a secure tenant you have rights given to you by the law:

- **The Right to a Permanent home** - We can only make you leave after going to court if you have broken your Tenancy Conditions.
- **The Right to Consultation** - You have the legal right to be asked about housing issues that directly affect you. This includes changes to your tenancy agreement and the way that the Council manages the area in which you live.
- **The Right to Information** - As a Council tenant you have a legal right to be given information about our performance. This information is available upon request.
- **The Right to Repair** - You have the legal right to have certain repairs completed within a set timescale.

FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST FROM YOUR AREA OR NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING OFFICE, OR ALTERNATIVELY YOU CAN ACCESS INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.CAERPHILLY.GOV.UK/SERVICES/HOUSING

Your Housing Service

HOW YOUR HOUSING SERVICE WORKS

Your Housing Service is provided through a network of 2 Area Housing Offices and 2 Neighbourhood Housing Offices.

Housing Offices deal with:

- Tenancy Management
- Transfers and Mutual Exchanges
- Repairs Enquiries
- Tenant Improvements
- Estate Management
- Empty Properties
- Nuisance and Anti Social Behaviour
- Basic Housing Advice

The housing staff will help you by dealing with your housing problems and by giving advice on matters to do with your tenancy. You don't normally need an appointment, but it is always best to check first that someone will be available to see you when you visit the office. We will visit you at home if you are unable to attend the office, in certain circumstances.

Each office also has a Building Surveyor and they can give you advice on matters concerning repairs, maintenance and tenant improvements or alterations.

WHO WORKS AT THE HOUSING OFFICE?

• AREA / NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING MANAGER

The Housing Manager has responsibility for all Housing Services in your area as well as all the staff who deliver the service at that location. If you have a problem that cannot be dealt with by the office staff, please ask for an appointment if you want to see the Housing Manager.

• ASSISTANT AREA HOUSING MANAGER

The Assistant Area Housing Manager assists the Housing Manager in delivering a quality housing service with specific responsibility for void property and repair related functions.

• ESTATE MANAGEMENT OFFICERS

Their job is to manage the homes in a particular area, dealing with tenants problems, complaints and letting empty properties. The area in which you now live will be allocated to a particular Estate Management Officer who will deal with any queries or problems you may have. Contact your local office to find out who deals with your specific area or neighbourhood.

• BUILDING SURVEYORS

Responsible for carrying out inspections of repairs at both empty and occupied properties, specifying the necessary repairs and ordering them, and dealing with requests for tenants improvements. The building surveyors are our technical experts.

- **CLERICAL OFFICERS**

The Clerical Officers provide a reception service, issue you with appropriate forms, give you help and advice on any of your housing queries, take your repairs enquiries and arrange appointments with other officers if they are unable to answer your query.

- **COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT WARDENS (CEWs)**

Some areas have CEWs as part of the council's strategy to reduce anti social behaviour. They provide extra help for street cleaning, arranging for bulky items to be removed, graffiti removal, minor repairs, patrolling the estate and reporting breaches of tenancy to the Estates Management Officer.

OTHER HOUSING SERVICES

Our Rents Section is situated in Tredomen, Business and Technology Centre and will respond to any enquiries you may have concerning your rent account.

We also have a Tenancy Enforcement Section which is a team of officers dedicated to providing a proactive and focused approach to complaints of anti social behaviour and other breaches of tenancy conditions.

For further contact details please see the "Getting in Touch" section.

In addition to the Area and Neighbourhood Office network the Housing Service can provide you with help and advice on Housing Policy and Procedures, Right to Buy, Leaseholder Services, Older Persons Housing, Adaptations, Complaints about the service you've received, Customer satisfaction surveys, Monitoring of the service we deliver, Environmental Improvements, Group Repair Schemes, Tenant Participation, Planned Maintenance, Major Works and Response Repairs.

COMPLAINTS SERVICE

Day to day requests and complaints will be dealt with by the Area and Neighbourhood Staff. If you want to complain about the way we have delivered services to you, or for that matter any other council service you may have had a problem with, that can't be sorted out by your Area or Neighbourhood Staff, the council has a Complaints Procedure you can use.

For further details please see the "Compliments and Complaints" section.

Council House Rents

GENERAL INFORMATION

OUR APPROACH TO RENT COLLECTION

We encourage prompt payment and provide as many payment methods as possible. If you are in arrears, our aim is to help you and also to reach an agreement about how you will re-pay these arrears.

Helpline 01443 811450 or text RENTHELP to 81400

HOW CAN I PAY MY RENT?

1. DIRECT DEBIT - Hassle free with a guarantee

The Council offers a £20.00 one off payment (credited to your rent account) to all tenants who **change** their method of payment to Direct Debit. The direct debit will be taken monthly in arrears on the **last working day** of each month.

Contact the rents section on 01443 811450 to arrange for a direct debit form to be sent out.

2. BY DEBIT/CREDIT CARD

To make a payment with an advisor please contact 01443 866570.

An automated payment line is available 24 hours a day seven days a week on 01443 863366.

3. ONLINE PAYMENTS

To make a payment online please visit the Caerphilly Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk/contact-us/Online-Services.

Please ensure you have your full rent account number.

4. STANDING ORDER/BANKERS ORDER

You can set up a Standing Order using online banking or by contacting your bank. You will need to **quote your rent account number**, our bank account number 83532550, sort code 20-10-42 and account name "Caerphilly County Borough Council".

5. POST OFFICE PAYMENT CARD

You can order a Post Office Payment Card by following the link below

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Make-a-payment/Post-office-cards

Or contact the rent section on 01443 811450 to arrange for one to be sent to you.

HOUSING BENEFIT / UNIVERSAL CREDIT

For tenants who are either on low income or unemployed, Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit is available to assist with the payment of rent.

You are responsible for the payment of your rent and you must pay any amount not met by Housing Benefit or universal credit housing costs. We will also expect you to make arrangements to pay any outstanding arrears. Arrears can arise very quickly, if you do not provide information asked for or do not re-apply when your circumstances change or your claim is reviewed.

For further Information please contact:

Housing Rents **01443 811450**

Council Tax **01443 863002**

Housing Benefit **01443 864099**

DIFFICULTIES IN PAYING RENT

What should I do if I cannot pay my rent?

You should contact an officer of the rent section IMMEDIATELY - Tel: 01443 811450.

If you need advice or support contact the **Tenancy Support Office** on 01443 866534.

What advice will you give me?

We can assist you in making a claim for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit. Information about debt advice such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). As well as this our officers can give you advice on discretionary housing payments, water reductions and DAF Fund (for emergency payments or household items). Please inform us if you have suffered a financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

What happens if I owe rent arrears?

The Council is always sympathetic to its tenants' problems and generally an agreement to clear the debt can be made. We will do all we can to assist you in maintaining your tenancy. You should contact us as soon as you experience a change in your circumstances so that we can offer advice to avoid further action.

Rents Helpline: 01443 811450

Tenancy Support Helpline: 01443 866534

Caerphilly County Borough Council Rent Section

Correspondence Address:

PO Box 129, Hengoed, CF82 9BQ

Visiting Address:

Tredomen Business and Technology Centre

Tredomen Park

Ystrad Mynach

Hengoed. CF82 7FN

E-mail: rents1@caerphilly.gov.uk

E-mail: tenancysupportoffice@caerphilly.gov.uk

Home Contents Insurance

If your home is damaged by fire or flood, or if you are burgled, do you have home contents insurance to cover the damage or loss?

The council operates a Household Contents Insurance Scheme with favourable rates which can be paid weekly along with your rent. However not only does it cover damage or loss to your personal belongings there are also added benefits for taking out the council's Household Contents Insurance Scheme. For example:

- Two different choices of cover to suit your needs – Standard Cover and Accidental Damage cover, and additional add-on covers available for Personal Belongings away from the home, Wheelchairs and Mobility Scooters and Hearing Aids.
- Unlike many private insurance schemes, where there is normally an excess payment on any claims you may need to make, with the council scheme there is **NO** payment on standard cover and only a £25 excess on accidental damage cover.
- If your property is extensively damaged, for example through fire or flood, and you are unable to reside in your property whilst the repairs are being undertaken, the council's policy will cover your rent payment, up to 15% of the amount insured.
- Items that as tenants you are legally responsible for, such as damage to landlords fixtures and fittings, to the maximum amount up to 20% of the amount insured.
- If you lose your house keys or have them stolen the scheme will pay for replacing your keys and for your locks to be changed.
- All your home contents are covered by the policy on a 'new for old' basis, with the exception of linen and clothing which will be replaced at their current cost, less an amount for wear and tear.

When you are working out the cost of your insurance, you will need to work out how much it will cost to replace the full contents. **If you under value your contents this may mean that if you claim you may not get the full value of your claim.** Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that the sum insured is sufficient to cover all your household items and personal effects. You should also review the level of benefit that you have chosen on a regular basis to make sure that it is sufficient to cover your needs.

The lowest amount that can be insured is: £5000.

To make sure that you are always covered you must keep up to date with your rent payments. If you go into arrears for more than 4 weeks your insurance will automatically be cancelled.

Like any other insurance scheme you have a duty to take reasonable precautions to prevent loss and the scheme will not cover loss or damage caused by any wilful act by you or your household.

To obtain full details or further information or an application form contact Caerphilly Insurance & Risk Management Department on 01443 863430. Or contact your local Rents Service Office on 01443 811450 - email rents@caerphilly.gov.uk

Where Caerphilly Homes feel it necessary to secure your home in order to protect its property, in the unusual event that your property is vacant during your tenancy, Caerphilly Homes cannot be held liable for any missing or damage to your belongings as a result.

Lettings Standard

Before we re-let any property we will undertake an inspection to identify any essential repairs. We will also provide you with a WHQS Certificate which identifies compliance of the property in relation to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard:

1. External Doors

We will check that all external doors (including patio/French doors) open and close correctly and that all fittings are intact and fully operational.

We will ensure that all doors are in a good condition, that each door is safe and secure and will repair/replace where appropriate. This will include the glazing incorporated within a door.

We will always change the front and back door locks (including patio/French doors) unless there is a suited lock at the property where special instructions will apply.

2. Ceilings & Walls

We will check and carry out any necessary repairs; however, please note minor damage or hair line cracks are considered as decoration and therefore the tenant's responsibility.

3. Windows

Where possible we will check that there is no broken glass, all windows open and close properly. All windows will have one key per room for any key operated window locks.

4. Floors/Stairs

We will check all concrete/slab/asphalt flooring, floorboards where visible, floor tiles and stairs, and repair or replace where necessary.

A former tenant's carpet or floor covering may be left in place subject to certain conditions.

We will check stairs for loose or broken treads, handrails and balustrades and replace/repair where required.

5. Internal Doors

We will check that all internal doors are not damaged, that they open and close correctly and that their fittings are fully operational.

We will check that all door frames and architraves are intact and in a good condition, and where appropriate, we will fit door stops to prevent doors from damaging walls/radiators.

6. Kitchen

We will ensure that the kitchen is fully fitted, functional and in good working order. Where possible there will be space for a washing machine, cooker and fridge freezer.

We will check all tiling for defects/damage, pipe-work for leaks and that all taps are operational.

We will aim to provide the following minimum provision subject to adequate space:

1. Sink-top plus double unit
2. Two double units (wall or base units)
3. Tiled splash-back and work-surface to base units
4. Washing machine taps

All kitchen units will be matching.

We will ensure that if an extractor fan is installed it is clean of dust, grease and in good working order.

Fuel Source - Cooking

In cases where both a gas and electric cooking source already exist, both will be tested and maintained by the Council.

Where only one fuel source for cooking exists, a second source will be fitted where practical. The exception to this will be when little or no work is required to the kitchen and the existing fuel source is suitable for the incoming tenant. Please note only an electric cooking source will be permitted and provided in an under one roof sheltered housing scheme.

Power Points

We will aim to provide 3 double sockets above work surfaces and 2 single poles under work surfaces for appliances in the kitchen as a minimum provision where practical.

7. Bathroom

We will ensure that bathroom suites are in good condition.

We will check:

- all pipe-work for leaks including overflows and ensure that all taps are operational.
- that all baths, shower trays and wash-hand basins are in good working order, undamaged, have plugs (not in showers) and that seals and wall tiles are intact.
- w/c's flush and that there are no leaks from cisterns or pans.
- extractor fans are clean of dust, grease and in good working order.

8. Services

Gas/Electric/Solid Fuel

Many of our empty properties are supplied by SSE for gas and electricity. If you wish we can supply SSE with your name and contact details, so that they can set up energy accounts for you to begin using as soon as you move in. However you do not have to stay with them and can switch straight away if you wish.

When you move in, you will need to contact SSE on 0345 076 0486 to register your new account and to provide the opening meter readings from the day that you took over. This will allow them to send an accurate first bill. You will still need to contact SSE even if you wish to change supplier or to discuss alternative tariff options. Please note it can take up to 15 days for the supplies to change. If you do decide to change suppliers SSE will not charge you an exit fee, you will only pay for the gas & electricity you have used.

When you move into your new council home the gas supply will be 'capped' – switched off for safety reasons – and any gas central heating system will also be switched off. After you have contacted your gas supplier you will need to contact us when you want the gas supply un-capped and the system tested (we need 24 hours notice to do this). We ensure that the gas and electricity systems in all our properties are tested for safety.

Meters are the responsibility of the suppliers. If you want to change the meter or have it moved you would need to arrange this directly with the suppliers.

N.B. Please note the fuel charges may be higher if you have a token meter and arranging to pay by direct debit may cost you less.

Smoke Alarms, Carbon Monoxide Detectors and Heat Sensors

We will check that all electrical wired smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and heat sensors where fitted, are in working order.

Water

Generally, all vacant properties will be drained down (Domestic and Heating) in the winter months from October to March. When the property is re-let arrangements will be made with the incoming tenant to refill the system.

9. Property Clearance and Cleaning

We will clear the property, outbuildings and roof space of all personal effects and furniture, including all floor coverings which have been left by the previous tenant, unless it is considered these are in a good condition. In this case we will give you the option of retaining these, however these will become your responsibility in the future.

A thorough clean will be carried out following completion of the works.

We will ensure that the loft insulation is adequate and laid evenly within the loft space.

10. Decoration

The internal decoration of a property is a tenants' responsibility. However, we may award a decoration allowance on a per room basis, subject to an assessment.

If following an assessment an allowance is payable you will have a number of options to choose from on how this is paid to you.

11. External

We will carry out a visual check of the brickwork or render/external coating, lintels, airbricks, vents, roof, rainwater goods and the external elevations of the property. Any repairs that are identified will be carried out as necessary.

We will check that gullies are clear of debris and that all gullies and inspection chambers have covers.

We will remove all rubbish and cut the grass in the garden. Consideration will be given to the removal or cutting back of overgrown trees or hedges in exceptional circumstances.

We will check the condition of all garden fencing/walls, paths, driveways, hardstandings, steps, patios, gates and handrails and repair/replace as appropriate.

Sky dishes and aerials will remain in situ however we will not test or guarantee they are in working order or take responsibility for their future maintenance or replacement.

Patios/decking and sheds can be left if they are in a good safe condition, however these will become your responsibility in the future.

12. Former Tenants Improvements or Alterations

If there have been any improvements or alterations made to the property by the previous tenant, they will be retained if they are in good working order. Any sub standard alterations or fittings carried out by the previous tenant will be removed.

Please Note: This re-let standard may be the subject of further amendments, as and when required and will also incorporate any changes to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).

Reporting a Repair

It's very important that you report any repairs as soon as possible so we are aware of any issues and can inspect and repair as soon as possible.

1. How do I report my repair?

You can report your repair by

- Telephoning your local Housing Office and pressing Option 1 to go through to the Centralised Repairs Team.
- Visiting your local Housing Office
- Writing to your local Housing Office
- E-mailing your local Housing Office
- Telephoning the Centralised Repair Team
- Telephoning the out of hours service – for emergency repairs only

Contact details are available:

- In the Getting in touch section
- On the Council website

2. When a repair is reported we:

- Check to see if it has already been reported, or if it is going to be carried out through the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) major works programme.
- Check to see if the repair is the responsibility of the tenant or leaseholder (in flats).
- Determine how quickly we should respond.
- When a repair or surveyor appointment is made a text alert is sent to a mobile device to confirm the appointment. A second text is also sent as a reminder the day before the appointment.

We will tell you:

- If we need to inspect the repair and the timescale for the inspection
- What priority will be given to the job
- The job number/reference number
- An appointment date and time, if appropriate
- If the repair is the tenant's maintenance responsibility
- If the repair will be done by the Council's workforce or a Contractor

An appointment system is in operation for most types of repair priorities and inspections.

3. Rechargeable Repairs

You may be recharged for repairs that are completed by the Council which are your responsibility as follows:

- Neglect - preventable damage caused by you for failing to take the appropriate action or through carelessness.
- Property Clearance - During a tenancy or when a tenancy ends for works identified as your responsibility, including clearance of any rubbish and personal belongings that have been left in the attic, garden, garage, out buildings and communal areas.

- Damage - caused by actions of you as the tenant, you as the former tenant, your family, invited guests or a contractor employed by you.
- Accidental Damage – where damage has occurred unexpectedly and without malice.
- Criminal Damage – Where you have reported damage to the property as a result of either criminal or anti-social behaviour.
- Domestic Abuse – Damage to the property where you have reported an incident to the Police, and where the perpetrator remains living at the property or you remain in the relationship and do not take action against that person.
- No Access – for the cost of a failed appointment when prior arrangements have been made to carryout a repair and no access is available at the agreed time.
- Abuse of the Out Of Hours Emergency Service – when it is clear that the repair could have waited until the following working day.
- Tenant Responsibility – if you use the Repairs Service including the Out Of Hours Emergency Service for reporting a repair that is later found to be your responsibility.
- Tenants Alterations – If you undertake unauthorised alterations to the property, which are not to the Council's required standards and you fail or refuse to undertake the required remedial works.

The following are examples of when you may be recharged but there may be other circumstances when a recharge could apply and you will be advised at the time of reporting the repair.

- Replacement of all door locks including those for garages and sheds, which are not due to fair wear and tear i.e. lost keys.
- Forced entry and associated damage by the Council due to loss of keys, emergency calls by the Police or other emergency services or if the Council has to force entry to undertake an annual service.
- Damaged internal and external glazing including boarding up.
- Broken or damaged sanitary fittings.
- Electrical works where the loss of power supply has been caused by your own appliance such as the cooker.
- Electrical safety checks following your own alterations including light fittings.
- Cost of contractors visit for inspection/repair of gas or electrical fittings due to lack of power supply caused by you not crediting your card/key.
- Blocked sinks, wash hand basins, baths, showers, toilets and gullies caused by inappropriate use or where it is deemed not to be attributed to fair wear and tear.
- Removal and making safe an unauthorised or substandard alteration.
- Make safe or any work carried out to fixtures, fittings or appliances installed by or belonging to you or to alterations you may have carried out during the tenancy.
- Damage caused to another property through your misuse or neglect such as bath overflowing into ground floor flat.
- Refixing radiators following redecoration.

The Council Housing Repairs Policy allows tenants to ask for a review of their recharge if they have good reason to disagree with a decision. This could be because: -

- The reason for the recharge is incorrect
- You think the cost is incorrect

- You think you have special circumstances, which have not been properly assessed or taken into consideration

You will be advised of the review process in writing if a recharge is being pursued.

4. When will my repair be completed?

Our target times are based on:

- Policy and procedures agreed by Council
- The Right to Repair legislation
- Accepted good practice
- Priorities decided by our Surveyors and Centralised Repairs Team

Current priorities are:-

| Priority Code | Category | Target Time for completion of repair |
|---------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 01 | Emergency - out of hours | 2 Hours |
| 02 | Emergency - working hours | Same day |
| 03 | Appointment | 20 Days |
| 05 | Appointment | 45 Days |
| 08 | Appointments following pre-inspection of work | 60 days |

5. Who will do the work?

- The majority of repairs are undertaken by the Council's Housing Repairs Operations Department
- We use other external contractors for some repairs including specialist work such as:
 - Gas repairs / services
 - Flat Roof works
 - Stair lifts and ceiling hoists
 - Damp proofing
 - Security screening
- All contractors have to abide by the Charter for Trust working arrangements while working in your home. A copy of the Charter can be obtained from your local Area/ Neighbourhood Housing Office and is available on the Council's website.

6. Joint Maintenance Responsibility

Some repairs may have a joint maintenance responsibility with your neighbour and in these cases we will have to consult with them before we can undertake a repair. Examples are:

- Chimneys and roofs
- Gutters and down pipes
- Electrical systems
- Water and drainage systems
- Footpaths and steps used jointly
- Common boundary, fences, walls or gates
- Common accesses

Unless the repair is considered to be an emergency or is dangerous this may result in a delay with the repair being completed, however we will let you know if this is the case.

7. Satisfaction Surveys

You may be contacted after a repair is completed to give your views.

Housing Repair Operations

We undertake telephone satisfaction surveys to approximately 20% of Response repairs and Heating servicing, we also attempt to complete 100% satisfaction surveys when work is post inspected for larger type repairs in order to provide us with a 'snap shot' of tenants' views of the repairs service the same day the repair is completed.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard

We attempt to complete 100% of telephone satisfaction surveys on the completion of Planned programmes of work, if we fail to obtain an answer on the telephone we will send out pre-paid satisfaction questionnaire to obtain feedback on the standard of our service delivery.

8. Gas Leaks

In the event of a gas escape you **MUST telephone the emergency service Wales & West Utilities on 0800 111 999.**

- They will give you certain emergency information, and also advise you that an engineer will call within one hour (generally it is in 30 minutes)
- The engineer will make safe by placing a cap on the outlet side of the gas meter if the leak is after the gas meter and let us know
- If the leak is on the gas meter or before it, they will carry out the work there and then

If you are unable to telephone for any reason then you should:

- Turn off the gas supply at the emergency control valve if possible (the valve is/should be located next to the gas meter, the valve should be off when turned down from vertical to the horizontal position)
- Do not operate any electrical switches or any electrical appliances or operate the door bell or any other door intercom system or electrical security devices
- Ventilate the rooms affected by the smell of gas, if need be all rooms, by opening the windows and front/back doors
- Do not use matches or naked flame
- Do not smoke
- Vacate the property and notify the Area Housing Office. Do not return until an engineer has given you permission to do so

If you require any further information about the repair service please contact your local housing office.

Looking after your home

TENANT MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR?

The Council has a duty to keep your home in a good state of repair. This includes repairs to essential services such as your heating, lighting and plumbing. You also have a responsibility to report repairs to the Council's Centralised Repair Team, your local Housing Office or at one of the Council's Customer First offices. If you are not sure about a repair they will let you know whose responsibility it is.

The repairs shown below are considered **YOUR** responsibility as part of the every day upkeep of your home. You do not require written permission to carry out these repairs but should follow any guidance indicated. If in doubt, please contact us.

1. REPLACING PLUGS AND CHAINS TO BATH, BASIN AND SINK.
2. REPLACING THE FUSES AND PLUGS TO ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES.
3. REPLACING ALL ELECTRIC LIGHT BULBS INSIDE YOUR HOME, EXCLUDING KITCHENS, BATHROOMS AND EXTERNAL SECURITY LIGHTING.
4. SUPPLYING AND FIXING CURTAIN RAILS, HAT OR COAT RAILS AND HOOKS. Take care before fixing any items to walls and ceilings. Check for artex, plumbing and electrics. If in doubt seek advice.
5. ALL INTERNAL DECORATION, INCLUDING FILLING HAIRLINE CRACKS IN PLASTER. Check it is safe to rub down surfaces before redecorating. If there is an artex finish or if in any doubt seek advice.
6. PLUMBING IN OF AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINE, DISHWASHER OR VENTILATION FOR TUMBLE DRYER.
7. EASING AND TRIMMING INTERNAL DOORS.
8. COPIES OF KEYS FOR FRONT AND BACK DOORS.
9. REPLACING TOILET SEATS AND COVERS.
10. REPLACING ROTARY DRYERS AND WASHING LINES.
11. REPAIRS TO ANY IMPROVEMENTS OR ALTERATIONS YOU HAVE MADE TO YOUR HOME. CENTRAL HEATING SYSTEMS INSTALLED BY THE TENANT AND APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ANNUAL SERVICE CONTRACT.
12. CLEANING SHOWERHEADS.
13. ALL GARDEN MAINTENANCE INCLUDING BOUNDARY HEDGES AND TREES.

14. KEEPING CLEAR ALL INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WASTE PIPES, INCLUDING SINKS, WASH HAND BASINS AND SHOWERS AND NOT ALLOW THE WC TO BECOME BLOCKED. KEEP EXTERNAL GULLIES FROM LEAVES AND OTHER MATERIALS TO PREVENT BLOCKAGES AND FLOODING.

The above jobs will not be carried out by the Council's response repairs team. However where a repair is misreported and inadvertently the Council undertake such work these are rechargeable to you.

However tenants who are elderly or have a disability will be eligible for certain works through the Handy Person Scheme for which there is a charge. For further details please contact your local Housing Office.

In all other cases tenants will be required to source the job themselves.

This approach is taken to distinguish between those repairs which the Council are responsible for, those which are rechargeable to the tenant and those which are the responsibility of the tenant.

HANDY PERSON SCHEME

Are you a council tenant aged 60 or over or registered disabled?

Do you have odd jobs that need doing and can't do them yourself?

Then the Handy Person Scheme could help.

Our Handy Person Scheme is excellent value for money and carried out by a member of the Council's maintenance team equipped with their own tools.

Although the Council is responsible for maintaining the structure of your home and undertaking repairs, we realise that there will be odd jobs that need doing which are your responsibility and this is where our Handy Person Scheme can help.

Who is the scheme for?

If you're a council tenant aged 60 and over or registered disabled and require extra assistance with tasks in your home to help you to carry on living there safely and independently.

What sort of work can be done?

Typical handy person jobs could be small jobs such as:

- Trimming of internal doors (following fitting of carpets)
- Fixing down and trimming of floor coverings
- Fitting curtain tracks or poles
- Curtain hanging
- Window cleaning
- Fixing shelving
- Replacing light bulbs e.g. fluorescent tubes
- Hanging pictures & mirrors
- Fitting door locks & bolts to sheds
- Fitting bathroom accessories
- Assembling flat pack furniture
- Clearing blockages

Are there any jobs that can't be carried out by this service?

The scheme will not carry out any works that would form part of our normal maintenance service provided by the Council. Such works would need to be reported to our Centralised Repairs Team as the costs are covered within your rent.

How much does it cost?

There is a fixed price of £20 per hour plus V.A.T which must be paid before the work can start. This charge will be reviewed annually. You can make a payment in cash only by going to any Council Cash Office, Customer First Office or making a debit/credit card payment via the telephone.

A lot can be achieved in 1 hour, so you could have a number of jobs done on the same appointment providing it does not exceed the hour, e.g. 2 curtain rails/poles put up, or fixing all those bathroom accessories such as cabinet, toilet roll holder, mirror and towel rail.

With the exception of nails, screws and mastic (which are free), all materials will need to be purchased and ready for the handy person when they call. If the materials are not available then the work cannot start, but you may still be charged.

When the work is finished all rubbish and material packaging will be removed and disposed of within the cost.

The handy person will be appropriately trained and employed directly by the Council, so you can avoid getting work done by bogus callers or becoming the victim of a trading scam.

Hours of work

This service is only available during normal working hours. It is **not** available during out of hours as part of our emergency service.

Normal working hours are:

8.00 am to 4.00 pm Monday to Thursday and
8.00 am to 3.30 pm Friday

When you call to request this service we will offer you the next available appointment but cannot guarantee that this will be the same day.

Improvements and Alterations

You have the right to make improvements to your home, but any work other than normal internal decoration must have our written permission before you start. We are likely to grant permission unless there is a very good reason for us not to, such as, the improvement would be unsafe, it would reduce the value of the property, or it would cost the council more to maintain. Any ongoing repairs and maintenance of the alteration or improvement will become your responsibility, once approved.

Please note that if the work is not done by a qualified tradesperson the work may cause damage to the property, where you could be recharged to make good.

Home improvements include minor works such as fitting laminate floors and replacing internal doors.

If you make an alteration or improvement without our permission or it does not comply with building and/or planning regulations, we may ask you to restore the property back to its original condition either during your tenancy or at the end of the tenancy, at your own cost. If we have to undertake any work as a result of your alteration or improvement we will recharge you for the costs involved. We can also take legal action against you for the breach of your Tenancy Agreement.

You MUST wait until you receive the conditions of the consent before you start the work.

IMPROVING OR ALTERING YOUR PROPERTY - GETTING PERMISSION

You may carry out your own improvements but you must obtain our permission first. To obtain our permission you should contact your local Housing Office, giving full details of what you plan to do.

This is called 'Landlord's Consent' and the rules guiding how we deal with such requests are set out in law. This is to make sure that the work you carry out is completed to the highest standard, is safe and where necessary, complies with Building and Planning Regulations.

WHAT TYPE OF WORK DO YOU NEED CONSENT FOR?

This list is an example of the type of work you need consent for, but it is not exhaustive, for further information please contact your Local Housing Office.

- Fitting laminate flooring or any form of fixed flooring such as ceramic tiles. Please be aware that if the flooring needs to be lifted so that we can make repairs, unless there are exceptional circumstances you will be expected to do this. However, where we are able to assist we will not be held liable for any damage that may occur to the floor during the repair.
- Installing a shower.
- Replacing any fixtures and fittings.
- Fitting a new kitchen or bathroom.
- Replacing internal doors, external doors and windows.
- Replacing light fittings or fitting external lights.
- Fitting a fire surround.
- Any addition or alteration connected with the provision of services including heating, lighting and water services.

- Decorative finishes such as artex or polystyrene products.
- Alterations to internal/external walls.
- Fitting satellite dishes and TV aerials.
- Outdoor work - such as building garden sheds, greenhouses, garages, decking, patios, paths, gates, fencing, steps hardstanding, driveways, porches, outside taps or external decoration.

COMMUNAL AREAS

Improvements and alterations to communal areas are considered on a case-by-case basis. Please seek further advice from your local Housing Office before undertaking any work or placing any items within these areas.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once we've received your request a visit may be required to discuss the proposal with you. If the work affects your neighbours you will have to contact them to make sure they have no objections. You will also be requested to follow any required guidance or conditions indicated as part of the landlord's consent.

If your improvements need Planning or Building Regulation approval you will have to apply for these yourself before you can proceed. There may be a cost this which is payable by you. When you've done this you will have to provide the Housing Office with copies before we can give permission for you to go ahead.

We will categorise the improvement in line with our current policy and procedure, ensure your plans comply with Building and/or Planning Regulations and inform you as quickly as possible if you can proceed.

WHY DO YOU NEED OUR PERMISSION?

We have to make sure that the alterations or improvements you carry out:

- Are safe
- Do not devalue the property
- Comply with building and/or planning regulations
- Do not cause problems or interfere with the services provided to other tenants
- Do not make your property more expensive to maintain

If you carry out improvements like installing a new kitchen you could be eligible for compensation if you later leave the property.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO D.I.Y YOU MUST BE ABLE TO REPAIR AND MAINTAIN THIS THROUGHOUT YOUR TENANCY. IF YOU FAIL TO DO SO YOU COULD BE ASKED TO REMOVE IT AND REINSTATE THE PROPERTY BACK TO IT'S ORIGINAL CONDITION. THE COUNCIL HAS NO OBLIGATION TO MAINTAIN WORK WHICH HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT WITHOUT PERMISSION.

ALWAYS ASK FOR LANDLORD'S CONSENT BEFORE YOU MAKE ANY ALTERATIONS OR IMPROVEMENTS.

Annual Servicing

The Council is legally bound to carry out annual servicing to certain components of the property, which include the heating and hot water system, smoke alarms and CO detectors where fitted, to ensure all equipment is safe.

Where there is a gas central heating system in your property we will carry out a landlord safety check, at intervals not exceeding 12 months and where there is a solid fuel heating system, at intervals not exceeding 6 months.

The service of all components will be carried out at the same time, in order to reduce inconvenience to you, but the service can only be undertaken if you have a supply of gas (for gas central heating) and electricity (for both gas and solid fuel heating) at your home. If you have credit meters, you will need to ensure there is credit on the meters before the service is carried out. It is important that if you have solid fuel you need to allow the fire to go out in advance of the appointment.

As a tenant you are obliged to provide access for our contractors to attend your home for the annual service to be undertaken. It is important for your safety that this is carried out. Repeated Failure to allow for pre-arranged access will result in the Council forcing entry in order to comply with our statutory obligations. If there is no gas or electricity supply we will cap off your gas and you will not be able to use your heating or hot water until you arrange for a full service to be completed. You may be recharged for any costs incurred as a result of your lack of co-operation, for example no access or damage to the property resulting from the forced entry.

All engineers will carry Gas Safe cards (yellow gas safe triangle) which is the official industry stamp for gas safety, to confirm their identity and their authorised registration on the Gas Safety Register.

Keeping your home free from damp and condensation

Is your home damp?

Damp is generally caused by a fault in the structure of the building. There are two basic types of damp:

Penetrating damp happens when water enters your home through an external defect. Examples are:

- A crack in a wall or a loose roof tile.
- Leaking waste pipes or overflows.
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames, leaking through a cracked pipe or from a leaking chimney.



This damp will often show as dark patches on walls and ceilings which get worse when it rains.



Rising damp occurs when there is no damp course or there is a problem with the damp course or membrane and water rises from the ground into the walls or floor.

Symptoms of rising damp are a tide mark usually up to 1 metre above the floor with peeling wallpaper and crumbling and salt stained plaster. Skirtings and other timbers may also show signs of rot.

These causes of damp rarely have black mould and often leave a 'tidemark'.

If you do not think the damp comes from any of these causes, it is probably condensation.

What is condensation?



Condensation occurs at any time but is most noticeable during cold weather; it does not matter if it is raining or dry. It starts as moisture in the air, usually produced by cooking, washing, or drying clothes indoors on radiators. When it hits cool surfaces such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles and windows it condenses and forms water droplets. The moist air rises when it is warm and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms which are cooler than the rest of the house. Condensation can be found in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

A typical family of four can produce 15 litres of this moisture every day. Persistent condensation can result in mould growth, which will show up as patches of black spots on walls and ceilings. Mould can also affect clothing, furniture and shoes where it will often turn them green.

First steps against condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with the condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple measures you can take right away.

- Open the windows a little to ventilate the room and let fresh air in every day.
- Wipe down the windows and sills every morning and wring out the cloth.
- Avoid drying clothes on the radiators in your home.
- Do not use an unvented tumble dryer.



First steps against mould

First treat the mould already in your home. If you deal with the basic problem, mould should not reappear. If you suffer with respiratory problems it may be best to get someone to do this for you.

To kill and remove mould:

- Wipe down walls and window frames with a good quality fungicidal wash, these can be obtained from most good DIY stores in the decorating aisle. If possible choose one that carries a Health and Safety approval number. Always follow the instructions carefully including the use of rubber gloves and face mask if required. Do not use bleach or bleach based products.
- Ensure all the mould is thoroughly cleaned and cleared before redecorating and walls are allowed to dry out for at least a week.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper. When wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.
- Should any mould reappear, wash it off immediately with warm soapy water.
- Mould may be a symptom of something more serious which requires specialist attention. If you suspect this to be the case then report it to your local Housing Office.

The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to reduce condensation as much as possible.

How to avoid condensation

These four steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home.

1. Produce less moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly.

- To reduce the amount of moisture when cooking, cover saucepans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Do not use paraffin and portable flueless bottled gas heaters as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air – one gallon of gas or paraffin produces about a gallon of water.



- Put washing outdoors to dry if you can. Or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.
- If you have a tumble dryer make sure you vent it to the outside; DIY kits are available for this. If it is a condensing dryer opening a window in the room it is in will allow for some extra ventilation when it is in use.

2. Ventilate to remove the moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts. Ventilation is necessary to get rid of moisture being produced all the time, including that from people's breath.

- Keep a small window ajar or the small plastic 'trickle' ventilator in the top of the window open when someone is in the room.
- Open the windows for a short while every day to 'turn the air over' and remove stale air.
- Ventilate the kitchen and bathroom when in use. This means opening the windows wider and using an extractor fan if you have one fitted. Leave the windows open, or the fan on for as long as possible after you have finished, or until the condensation has cleared.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use. Doing this will help stop the moisture reaching other rooms like bedrooms which are often cooler and more likely to get condensation.
- Allow space for the air to circulate in and around your furniture. Open doors to ventilate cupboards and wardrobes leave space between the backs of wardrobes and the wall. Position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls rather than against outside walls, wherever possible.
- Do not block permanent ventilators they are there for a purpose.
- Use the plastic 'trickle' ventilators in the top of your windows as much as possible.



3. Insulating your home and draught proofing of windows and outside doors

Insulation in the loft, cavity wall insulation and draught proofing of windows and outside doors will help keep your home warm and you will have lower fuel bills as well. When the whole home is warmer, condensation is less likely.

4. Heat your home a little more

In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm enough to avoid condensation is to keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no one at home. This is very important in flats and bungalows and other dwellings where the bedrooms are not above a warm living room. Remember to provide background ventilation at the same time.

The council is committed to improving the energy efficiency of tenants' homes as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme. This is being done via a mixture of measures such as insulation and heating upgrades, along with the provision of extractor fans. If you have not yet had this work done it will be programmed as part of the delivery to achieving WHQS.

Points to remember

Produce less moisture:

- Cover saucepans.
- Dry clothes outdoors.
- Ventilate your tumble dryer to the outside.
- Avoid using paraffin or flue-less bottled gas heaters.

Ventilate to remove moisture:

- Ventilate all the time, especially when someone is at home.
- Increase ventilation of the kitchen and bathroom when in use and shut the door.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes.
- Do not block permanent vents.
- Keep 'trickle' ventilators open as much as possible.

Heat your home a little more

- If possible, keep low background heat on all day, with background ventilation.
- Find out about benefits, rebates and help with fuel bills.

If you are having difficulty with heating bills contact your energy supplier about alternative tariffs or contact our Tenancy Support Officers, through your local Housing Office, who may be able to help.

Further information and help with costs

For further advice please contact our Energy Advisor on Free phone 0800 0854145 who will be able to advise you about your entitlement to grant aid for improving the energy efficiency of your home.

If you are a council tenant and are aware of a defect which is causing a damp problem you should report the matter to your local Housing Office without delay.

BEWARE OF ANY DOORSTEP CALLERS WHO MAY SAY THEY CAN ASSIST YOU WITH GETTING YOUR REPAIRS CARRIED OUT, OR WHO FIND ISSUES THAT YOU DID NOT KNOW YOU HAD. If you are contacted, please take advice from either your Local Housing Office or the Council's Insurance Team before signing anything, as these callers are not always what they seem, and you may be signing a legal document for which you may personally incur legal costs. If in doubt, decline and contact us straight away. "NO COLD CALLING" stickers for your doors and windows can be provided by your Local Housing Office to stop any unwanted callers knocking your door.

Compensation schemes for council tenants

WHEN DOES THE COUNCIL PAY COMPENSATION

Caerphilly County Borough Council offers a number of different compensation schemes for council tenants and as one of our tenants, you may need to make a claim at some time.

Providing you meet the rules for making a claim, then you may be eligible for a compensation payment.

We can tell you a little about each of the compensation schemes, but for further information on how each scheme works, and how you go about making a claim you would need to contact your Local Housing Office.

The compensation schemes which you may qualify for are:

DECORATION ALLOWANCE – NEW TENANCY

When you are offered a new tenancy you may be offered a decoration allowance. You are given a choice on how you wish to receive this payment which can be:

- by cheque,
- or
- you may wish to have your rent account credited for the amount of allowance.

It is important for you to know that the amount paid is to help you with the cost of redecorating your home, it is not intended to cover the full cost of decorating.

DECORATION ALLOWANCE – LANDLORD REPAIR

If we carry out essential repairs to the inside of your home and cause damage to your decoration, then you may be entitled to claim compensation. An officer will visit your home, assess the damage and advise you of the amount of compensation you can claim.

COMPENSATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS

If you want to make improvements to your home, then before you start any work you must obtain consent from us. If you don't get our permission you may not qualify for compensation later.

Claims for compensation for improvements can only be made when you end your tenancy, and not all improvements are covered. When the time comes for you to leave your home, we will visit you and assess the improvements you have made.

If you think you qualify then please make a claim, payments are based on a sliding scale, taking into account the age and the original cost of the improvement.

Our leaflet 'A Better Deal for Council Tenants - your right to compensation for improvements', explains this scheme in more detail. For a copy of this leaflet please contact your local housing office or visit our website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

COMPENSATION FOR HEAT LOSS

If we have to close down your heating system to carry out essential repairs to your appliance you will be offered temporary electric heaters by us whilst the work is being done. To help with the running cost of the heaters you may be able to make a claim for compensation. The amount you may be entitled to will vary between the winter and summer months.

DISTURBANCE PAYMENTS

If we have to carry out major repair works to your home which result in you being offered temporary accommodation whilst the work is being done, which you accept or decide to remain in your home during the period of the work, then you may be eligible to claim compensation for the disturbance. This will be subject to an assessment and the amount of compensation paid will reflect the disturbance.

RIGHT TO REPAIR

You can use the 'right to repair' scheme to claim compensation for certain repairs if we do not carry them out within a set timescale.

Claims for compensation may only be made if you report a certain repair which affects your health, safety or security and we fail on two occasions to complete the repair within the set timescale.

Please contact your local Housing Office for further information.

HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE

If your home was damaged by fire or flood, or if you were burgled, do you have home contents insurance to cover the damage or loss?

The council operates a **Household Contents Insurance Scheme** with favourable rates which can be paid weekly along with your rent.

To obtain further information or an application form contact

**Caerphilly Insurance & Risk Management Department on
01443 863430. Or contact your local Rents Service Office on 01443 811450
- email rents@caerphilly.gov.uk**

Where Caerphilly Homes feel it necessary, in the unusual event that your property is vacant during your tenancy, to secure your home in order to protect it's property, Caerphilly Homes cannot be held liable for any missing or damage to your belongings as a result.

COMPENSATION FOR OTHER DAMAGE:

Not all damage is the fault of the council.

- If damage has been caused to your property by our contractors then please contact your Local Housing Office, your nominated Tenant Liaison Officer or follow the complaints procedure listed in section 22. Please ensure that you take photographs of any damage caused, and please be aware that if any claim is made compensation payments are made on an indemnity basis, which means that you will be put back in the same position as you were at the time of the damage, where possible, without financial gain. IT IS NOT A NEW FOR OLD SETTLEMENT.
- If the damage was caused by something as simple as a burst pipe then you can claim from your home contents insurance, if you have taken this out.

Asbestos in Housing

- **What it is**
- **Where it may be found in your home**
- **How to avoid any risk to you or your family**

TENANT INFORMATION SHEET

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is the name given to a group of naturally occurring fibrous minerals. Asbestos is very strong, flexible and stable and this has led to it being used in a wide range of building materials and products for fireproofing and insulation between the 1930s and the mid 1980s and most extensively in the 1960s and 1970s. If your home was built or refurbished during this period, it may contain some asbestos material.

IS THERE A HEALTH RISK?

“Asbestos containing materials are not a risk if they are in good condition and are not disturbed.”

When asbestos materials age or become damaged, such as when drilled, sawn, scrubbed or sanded, they can release fibres into the air.

WHERE IS ASBESTOS LIKELY TO BE FOUND?

Here are just a few examples:

- Bath panels
- Wall Panels
- Lining beneath stairs
- Corrugated cement sheeting often used in sheds and garages
- Textured decorative coatings such as artex
- Soffits
- Soil pipes
- Casing and boxing to soil pipes and pipe work
- Plastic floor tiles
- Bitumen products and putty
- Rain water goods, such as guttering and down pipes
- Toilet cisterns

WHAT IS CAERPHILLY COUNCIL DOING ABOUT ASBESTOS IN COUNCIL HOUSING?

The Council has a Domestic Asbestos Management Plan which sets out how we will identify and manage asbestos in our council properties. The Council has undertaken asbestos surveys to some of its houses and flats, and these surveys include all shared entrances and corridors. The Council also undertakes asbestos surveys to all of its properties prior to any refurbishment works whether the property is void or as part of the WHQS Programme. This will identify the locations of materials suspected to contain asbestos. All asbestos containing material in good condition will remain in place. If the material is damaged or is a high risk due to its location the Council will take appropriate action to have it removed.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES IF I AM A TENANT?

You **MUST** obtain the Council's approval before you carry out **any** work on your home - this will include any decorating if artex is involved, in which case you should seek further advice.

Remember, alterations are not permitted under your tenancy agreement without prior approval in writing; please obtain our permission before carrying out any work on your home. This will give the Council the opportunity to ensure that asbestos containing materials are identified at an early stage. Contact details for your local Housing Office is provided at the end of this leaflet.

HOW WILL MY ENQUIRY BE DEALT WITH?

When you are making an enquiry it may be referred to qualified staff who will then consider your request and ensure proper controls are put in place to prevent exposure to you, your family and the person carrying out the work (if not yourself). If you carry out any work or permit others to carry out work without written approval you will be liable for all associated costs.

WHAT IF I THINK THERE IS ASBESTOS IN MY HOME?

If you are in doubt as to whether any material contains asbestos, or if you think your home contains damaged asbestos material, then please contact your local Housing Office, details of which are provided at the end of this handbook.

Please don't try to deal with it yourself!

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

You can obtain more information by visiting one of the following web sites:

- www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos
- www.aic.org.uk
- www.direct.gov.uk

or contact your local Housing Office.

Please refer to the 'Getting in Touch' section at the end of this handbook.

Caerphilly Homes - 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. It 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 local 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 County Borough 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 because you have concerns about your own safety contact the Tenant Liaison Officer immediately. The TLO will liaise with the local 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.

Tenants' Charter

INTRODUCTION

Caerphilly County Borough Council is committed to providing the highest quality and most cost effective service possible. This will be achieved by:-

- publishing standards for the services we provide.
- reviewing services with a view to enhancing standards and efficiency.
- developing customer care policies to meet changing needs.

The council has a legal obligation to provide its tenants with information about their services and this Charter forms part of a package of information that we are now giving to tenants.

This Tenants' Charter tells you what you can expect from our staff when you receive services from us. It is our public promise to you of the standards we intend to meet.

OUR STAFF

You can expect our staff to:-

- be polite and attentive.
- be sensitive to your needs and honest about how they can help.
- be well informed and trained in their duties.
- carry official identity cards displaying their names and photographs.
- carry out their work fairly and without discrimination for any reasons.

OUR OFFICES

You can expect our offices to have:-

- a clean, warm and friendly environment.
- a place where you can discuss your business in private whenever possible.
- general information about the work of the Council.

We will aim to:-

- provide an appointment for you to see a named member of staff on request.
- give you an estimate of how long you may need to wait to see a member of staff.
- treat information about you confidentially and in accordance with legal requirements.
- provide you with names, locations and telephone numbers of staff who are responsible for local housing issues where requested.
- provide you with advice, information and support in filling in forms.
- arrange home visits where appropriate.
- leave calling cards if you are out telling you how to get in touch with us.

A list of our local Housing Offices is included in this handbook.

CONTACTING US BY TELEPHONE

We will aim to:-

- answer your call in 8 rings (20 seconds). We will provide direct lines (where possible) for you to bypass the switchboard and go through directly to the person concerned.
- answer your call by a member of staff stating their name and their section.
- put your call through to an attended phone in the case of staff absence.
- call you back within a mutually agreed time limit, where a reply cannot be given at once - even if we are only able to give you a progress report.

CONTACTING US BY LETTER

We will aim to:-

- acknowledge all letters received from tenants within 5 working days and provide a full reply within 20 working days.
- write our reply in plain language.
- provide our response in the language and format of the original correspondence.

INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SERVICES

We will aim to:-

- Produce a half-yearly newsletter for all tenants.
- Produce an annual report to tenants which provides information on the performance of the Housing Services during the previous year, including:-
 - the rents we charge for different sizes of homes
 - how quickly repairs have been carried out
 - how successful we have been in collecting the rent that was due
 - the number of empty properties at a given time
 - how quickly homes have been let

Your right to information is a legal right - we will tell you about:-

- the terms of your tenancy.
- our legal obligations to do certain repairs.
- our procedures for allocating housing and for making transfers and exchanges.
- your right to take in lodgers or sub-let.
- your right of succession.
- your right to assignment.
- your right to exchange.
- your right to buy your own home.
- your right to repair.
- your right to carry out improvements to your home.
- your right to transfer to a new landlord.
- your right to be consulted.

Detailed information about the above rights can be obtained from your local Housing Office. However, general information on some of these rights is included in this booklet or in your tenancy agreement.

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

Caerphilly Homes recognises that, to provide a quality housing service, it must be effective in tackling the problems created by anti-social behaviour.

To this end:-

- every report of anti-social behaviour will be quickly and formally acknowledged.
- every report of anti-social behaviour will be investigated either by the Area/Neighbourhood Housing staff or the Tenancy Enforcement Section.
- investigations will start at the earliest possible time after receipt of the complaint and be conducted with all reasonable speed.
- investigators will adopt a positive attitude to all complaints.
- responses will, as necessary and as appropriate, move from advice, conciliation and support for tenants' own action to legal action by Caerphilly county borough council on behalf of victims of anti-social behaviour.
- action against perpetrators will include, as necessary and appropriate, proceedings for injunctions and powers of arrest, possession and eviction.

Caerphilly County Borough Council will demonstrate by its actions that it will not tolerate anti-social behaviour.

Caerphilly County Borough Council will make this absolutely clear to its tenants and to any person who is seeking a tenancy.

We will:-

- tell you how we tackle environmental nuisances such as graffiti, noisy parties and rubbish.
- consult with you and other tenants on options for improving your estate.

REPAIRS

Where possible Caerphilly Homes Housing Repair Operations Department will be used to repair and maintain the structure, exterior and certain fittings of your property. This includes, but is not limited to:-

- roof, walls and floors.
- external doors and windows.
- gutters, downpipes, wastepipes and drains.
- installations for the supply of water, (within the curtilage of the property)
- electrical wiring.
- sinks, basins, baths, showers and WC pans.
- paths, steps and certain fencing.
- installations for space heating and heating water.

The Council will not be responsible for maintenance or repair of any structure or fitting which you have installed or altered, unless it previously agreed to do so in writing. The Council will have the right to recharge you for repairs, renewals or replacements of items damaged by you, your family or your visitors. Where Caerphilly Homes Housing Repair Operations Department are unable to undertake the work to your home only approved contractors will be commissioned. All work on your home will be undertaken in compliance with our Charter for Trust.

We aim to:-

- complete emergency repairs that are reported within working hours on the day they are reported.
- complete or make safe emergency repairs that are reported out of hours within 2 hours of being reported. (Emergency repairs are works necessary to make safe buildings and installations and to avoid risk of injury).
- offer appointments to complete small urgent repairs within 25 days from when you report them.
- offer appointments to complete medium size routine repairs within 50 days from when you report them.
- offer appointments to complete large planned repair works within 66 days from when you reported them.

We shall advise you:-

- how to deal with emergencies when our office is closed.
- what repairs you will be expected to pay for and how you will be charged for these.
- on how to report your repair.

We also aim to:-

- plan for the maintenance work that will be necessary to your home in the long-term.
- have a clear timetable for bringing all our homes, as far as possible, up to the required standard.
- set a clear standard for the homes we let.
- set clear standards for repairs.
- set clear standards for how maintenance workers are expected to behave.
- arrange to ask our tenants regularly how satisfied they are with our maintenance service.
- consult you about major programmes of work or improvement.
- compensate you and other tenants directly for any legitimate damage caused to your possessions by contractors.
- guarantee a response to a written request from you for permission to carry out work to your home.
- offer you and other tenants as many realistic choices as possible.

IMPROVEMENTS**You can expect:-**

- contractors employed by us to be courteous and considerate towards you and other tenants.
- the Council to explain your rights to you if you and other tenants are being moved temporarily so that repairs can be carried out.
- the Council to pay you compensation for any legitimate loss and expenses associated with your transfer to alternative housing.

ADAPTATIONS

Caerphilly County Borough Council provides adaptations to the homes of those residents whose eligibility for this service has been determined following an assessment of need.

Further information can be obtained from your local Housing Office or you can contact the Adaptations Team within Private Sector Housing on 01443 811389.

The service aims to:-

- Provide you with accurate information about your application for these services, including details about any delays, reasons for the delays and the likely length of time involved.
- Advise you of the status of your application at any time during the process.
- Deal effectively and promptly with your enquiries.
- Liaise on your behalf with all professionals involved in the provision of this service.
- Ensure that any complaints which you have about the service are dealt with effectively through the complaints mechanism to ensure appropriate intervention and help if things go wrong.

DEALING WITH EMPTY PROPERTIES**We will aim to:-**

- re-let properties which need work as quickly as possible.
- ensure that vacant properties do not become a nuisance or eyesore while they are empty.

RIGHT TO BUY**Abolition of the Right to Buy**

The Right to Buy and Right to Acquire ended for all Council and Housing Association tenants on 26 January 2019.

Further information

The Welsh Government has published a document explaining the effect of the 'Abolition of the Right to Buy Act and Associated Rights (Wales) Act 2018' legislation, which is available on their website. If you require any further information please contact our Legal and Governance department on 01443 864221.

Tenant Participation

What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant Participation is about encouraging tenants to have a say in how their homes are managed. Caerphilly County Borough Council is dedicated to involving tenants in the running of its Housing service.

What does getting involved achieve?

Tenants play an important role for Caerphilly Homes to ensure that resources are used in the best way to meet tenants' needs. Tenant Participation assists the Council to ensure:

- Delivery of a responsive and accountable Housing service
- Quality decision making
- Tenants are placed at the heart of Housing Services

Without tenants' views and experiences of the service, it would be difficult to develop and improve the Housing service to meet the needs and aspirations of tenants.

How can you get involved?

There are several ways to become involved. Some examples are as follows:

- **Working Groups**
Tenants and Officers work together to improve services in specific areas e.g. repairs and improvements.
- **Caerphilly Homes Task Group**
Elected tenant representatives working with councillors to monitor the housing service.
- Join a **Tenant & Resident Association** – The Council supports and funds recognised Tenants & Residents Associations. This enables the group to be independent and provides Caerphilly Homes with a formal structure with which to consult on housing issues.
- **One-off Focus Groups** – Focus groups are held to discuss, for example, a particular aspect of the service or proposed changes. Groups of between 10-15 tenants can be randomly recruited and engaged in discussion on what their views are of a particular service or issue.
- **Estate Walkabouts**
Join a walkabout in your local area.
- **Armchair Editors**
Give us your views on our publications / websites.

If you would like more information please contact the Tenant & Community Involvement Team.

Good Neighbour Guidance

Most neighbours try their best to get on with each other but sometimes problems arise. If this happens as a **Good Neighbour** there are a few simple things that you can do to help sort out problems of nuisance behaviour.

If this is the first time you have experienced problems with your neighbour, it often helps if you try to sort things out with your neighbour first before involving a third party. They may not realise that they have caused you a problem. Most neighbour problems can be easily resolved at an early stage.

ALWAYS STAY CALM

It could be that the problem has a simple explanation and your neighbour did not realise it had caused you a problem. Below are some simple rules to follow if you intend to approach your neighbour to discuss the problem.

Do's

- ✓ Try to sort things out yourself first
- ✓ Remain calm at all times
- ✓ Work out what you want to say before you approach them
- ✓ Approach your neighbour when you know they will have time to talk to you (not when they are on their way to work)
- ✓ Speak to them face to face when they are on their own
- ✓ Speak to them politely and quietly
- ✓ Listen to their side of the story
- ✓ Be prepared to compromise
- ✓ Leave straightaway if people are aggressive or threatening when you approach them – if this happens you will probably need to consider help to sort the problem out

Don'ts

- ✗ Don't speak to your neighbour if you are angry or annoyed
- ✗ Don't dismiss their explanation for the problem
- ✗ Don't swear at or shout at your neighbour
- ✗ Don't lose your temper, become aggressive or use confrontational body language or discriminatory language

If you feel that you have tried to speak to your neighbour about their behaviour or actions that are causing a problem (such as noise nuisance) but it hasn't made any difference, then it may be time to ask for help from someone.

HOW TO REPORT A COMPLAINT

If you feel that your neighbour is causing you problems please contact the Tenancy Enforcement Section for advice and if necessary to formally report the problem.

If your neighbour is a tenant of the Council then you should contact the Tenancy Enforcement Section to report your complaint. See the Getting in Touch section for contact details at the back of this handbook.

However you can report the problem in the following ways:-

- to your local Housing Office in person, in writing or by telephone – see the Getting in Touch section for contact details
- register your complaint via the www.caerphilly.gov.uk website
- by visiting one of the Council's Customer First Centres

All complaints of nuisance or anti-social behaviour are referred to the Tenancy Enforcement Section. They will assess and grade the complaint and decide who will investigate your complaint. Less serious complaints will be investigated by your Estate Management Officer but more serious issues such as assault, threatening behaviour or racist abuse will be investigated by the Tenancy Enforcement Section.

It is always helpful if you keep a record of any incidents (e.g. date/time) and you may be asked to complete diary record sheets to help with any enquiries.

The Council will not take sides during an investigation but it will try to find out the facts of the complaint and how best to resolve the problem if there is a proven breach of tenancy/ leasehold agreement.

We may also be able to help if the neighbour causing problems owns their own home. Sometimes in order to find out all the facts the Council will need to speak to other agencies to gather information. These other agencies can include:

- The Police
- Social Services
- Mental Health Service
- Education Department
- Youth Offending Service
- Community Safety Section

For support needs we may contact:

- Social Services
- Drug and Alcohol Support Services
- Shelter Cymru
- Supporting People

ACTION THAT CAN BE TAKEN

You are entitled to live in quiet enjoyment in your own home and you should feel safe and secure. There are various types of action that the Council can take to help resolve neighbour problems during the course of their investigation. They include:

- Writing to or interviewing the person causing problems
- Providing support to help stop the problems
- Making a referral to a mediation service
- Making a referral to a support service
- Taking out an injunction against the person
- Making an application to the court for possession of their home

ACTION THAT CANNOT BE TAKEN

- Tenants who are in breach of their tenancy conditions cannot be evicted without going to Court
- Mediation services will not be considered unless all parties are willing to take part to resolve the problem
- Action cannot be taken if a problem is not serious enough, or if the law has not been broken, or if there is not enough evidence

Office contact details are available in the 'Getting in Touch' section in this handbook.

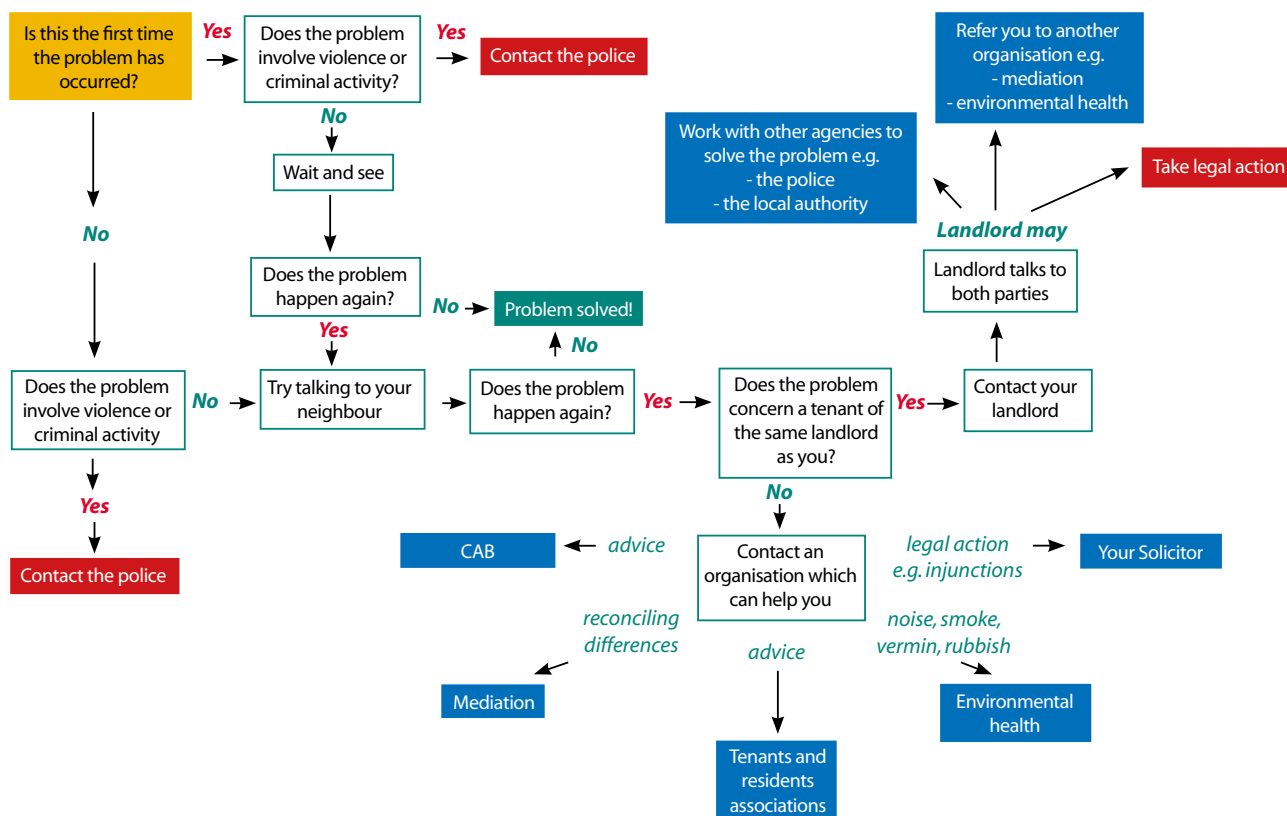
The flowchart in this handbook is also there to help you decide what to do next if you are experiencing problems.

Remember.....

**Considerate & caring
Caerphilly Tenants
Benefit their
Communities!!**

What should you do?

Start Here



Fire Safety Advice for Tenants in Flats (Non-Sheltered)

If you are living in a sheltered housing scheme please seek advice from your Sheltered Housing Officer.

Fire kills!

Get out & stay out!

Call 999!

Your home has been fitted with hard wired electric smoke alarms. However, as a tenant there are a number of important measures you can take to prevent the risk of fire.

Make sure you don't leave any objects or combustible items (including furniture, wheelie bins, carpets, curtains or door mats) or any other items on landings or shared stairs which could obstruct the exit route, or promote fire spread within common escape routes; putting your life, your family members and your neighbours lives at risk.

If you live in a block of flats, don't use your balcony as an extra storage space, balconies packed with flammable items can cause a fire to spread much more quickly.

Please inform your local Housing Office if you are using medical oxygen cylinders in the home. As with other services in the home, for example, domestic gas and electricity, you need to observe a few simple precautions. There are a number of hazards associated with oxygen and due caution should be given to these during use and storage.

- Make sure your oxygen equipment is stored safely out of direct sunlight, well ventilated, always dry and away from heat sources.
- Don't use oxygen near naked flames, including gas and electric cookers – 3 metres is a safe distance.
- Never smoke or use electrical equipment, such as hairdryers, whilst using oxygen.

Your local Community Environmental Warden will carry out regular checks of communal areas. Please don't be offended if you are asked to move any items – any request will be for your own safety and for those sharing the communal areas. We reserve the right to remove and dispose of any items left in the communal areas without giving you prior notification.

If your flat block has a security door, make sure you close it behind you at all times. Don't open the door to anyone you have not invited and report any anti social activities in your block to your local Housing Office and the Police.

It is important to plan an escape route and be prepared in the event of a fire.


STEPS TO SAFETY – PLANNING AN ESCAPE ROUTE





- 1 Make sure you and your household members are familiar with the fire escape plan, what to do in a fire & all the escape routes. The best escape is down the shared stairs and out of the back or front entrance doors. NEVER use lifts or balconies in the event of any fire.
- 2 Put details of what to do in a fire somewhere prominent in your home to remind your household members of what to do in the event of a fire. Make sure everyone knows where the fire exits are situated.
- 3 Keep all exits & communal areas clear at all times.





- 4 Keep fire doors closed to help prevent the spread of fire and to give you more time to get out. Never tamper with fire doors or remove door closures as these have been fitted to improve your safety.
- 5 Find a room in your home where you can safely go to in the event of a fire, if possible where there is a window and a telephone.
- 6 Keep your property address near your telephone as this will help your children and relatives call for help and provide emergency services with accurate information.
- 7 Keep a good quality torch in your home and within easy reach. Make sure all your household members know where to find it. This will help you leave the building safely during the night if the electricity or lighting fails.
- 8 If any member of your household has a disability which prevents them moving around easily (e.g. sight or hearing problem), make sure you keep any aids that they rely on in a place where they can easily get to them (e.g. walking aids). When you call the emergency services make sure you tell them if anyone has a disability which may affect them moving around easily.
- 9 Count how many doors you need to go through when taking your escape route – it is easy to get confused in smoke or in the dark.
- 10 KEEP CALM AND ACT QUICKLY
- 11 If the fire is **in your flat** and you cannot control it:
 - Before opening any door use the back of your hand to touch it. Don't open it if it feels warm as the fire could be on the other side. If it is not safe for you to leave follow the advice in point 12 below
 - If it is safe to do so, leave immediately and, if possible, close all internal and external doors
 - Do not waste time collecting any valuable items or possessions
 - If possible warn your neighbours
 - Telephone the emergency services
 - Leave the building using the safest escape route
 - If safe to do so, remain on site, outside and a safe distance from the fire and wait for the emergency services to advise them if possible of what caused the fire and where it is located. This will save valuable time, help to save lives and limit the damage.
- 12 If the fire is **in a shared area**:
 - If you know your exit is clear, leave quickly and where possible alert your neighbours
 - Do not waste time collecting any valuable items or possessions
 - If it is not safe for you to leave, take everyone to the safest room in your home
 - Close all external and internal doors where possible
 - Block the bottom of the doors in your safe room with wet clothing to stop smoke getting in
 - If there is a lot of smoke crawl along the floor where the air will be cleaner
 - Open the window and call for help – if you cannot open the window break it as safely as possible
 - Phone the emergency services and tell them what is happening as clearly as possible


- 13 If your clothes catch fire, lie down and roll around or smother the flames with a heavy material. REMEMBER, STOP, DROP AND ROLL!
- 14 If you are on ground floor then it will be easier to get out. If you need to break a window, do so safely and cover any sharp broken glass edges to enable you to climb out safely.
- 15 If you need to get out of a room that is higher than ground floor, then throw some bedding or soft items onto the ground to break your fall. Only attempt this if it is practical to do so and you are within a reasonable height (up to 2 storeys). Never jump from a window! Lower yourself down and then drop at arms length.
- 16 When the emergency services arrive, they will tell you what to do next.
- 17 DO NOT GO BACK INTO THE BUILDING!

The following table lists the most common causes of fire and how you can help to prevent a fire in your home:

| The most common causes of fire | What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home |
|--|--|
| Electrical sockets & appliances  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't overload sockets • Try to only have one plug in each socket • Use extension leads safely • Switch off and unplug electrical items when not in use & before you go to bed (unless they are designed to be left on e.g. your freezer) • Don't try and fix faulty electrics yourself • Report any required repairs as soon as possible |
| Cigarette  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stub out cigarettes properly and throw them away carefully • Put them out! Right out! • If possible, wet them and dispose of them in a bin outside your home • NEVER smoke in bed • Keep matches & lighters away from children |
| Candles  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure they are fully extinguished after use • Don't leave them unattended • Make sure they are put on a safe surface • Put them in a fireproof holder • Keep them away from curtains, fabrics, pets & children |

| The most common causes of fire | What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home |
|---|---|
| <p>Kitchens</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn off cookers & ovens when not in use • Don't leave children alone in the kitchen when cooking • Make sure saucepan handles are out of reach from children and free from any interference • Take care when cooking with hot oil • Keep tea towels, cloths & kitchen roll away from the cooking area • Take care if you are wearing loose clothing, they can easily catch fire • Keep the cooking appliances clean and in good working order as a build up of fat and grease can ignite a fire • Don't put anything metal in a microwave |
| <p>Smoke Alarms</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you test your smoke alarms regularly and tell us about any problems • NEVER cover up your smoke alarms • Report any damage immediately |
| <p>Gas Appliances</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you give us access to carry out the yearly checks on your gas central heating system & appliance • Always use a Gas Safe registered engineer if you install your own appliances • Keep clothing, furniture and other inflammable items away from heating appliances • Don't use heaters to dry clothing • Ensure heaters are turned off properly when not in use • Use a guard if necessary to ensure the safety of children, pets, etc. |
| <p>Litter, cardboard, bulky furniture, rubbish, etc.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always dispose of any items in the appropriate bins provided • Store any bulky items in a safe location until they are removed for disposal • When a bulky items collection is booked, the items need to be placed out for collection by 6am on the morning of the advised collection date. They must be kept dry and should be placed safely outside your home to avoid any tripping hazards, entrances and steps. |

| The most common causes of fire | What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home |
|--|---|
| <p>Alcohol/Medication</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink safely – take special care when you have been drinking • Don't attempt to cook if you are under the influence of alcohol • Be extra careful if you are taking medication which can make you drowsy |
| <p>Fireworks</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be safe • Never play with fireworks • If possible go to an organised display • Set off any fireworks in a safe location and a safe distance from your home • Wear gloves when using sparklers • Keep children well away from harm or injury • Keep pets indoors • Dispose of used fireworks safely • If possible, wet them and dispose of them in a bin outside your home |
| <p>Bonfires</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise your neighbours if you have to light a bonfire • Only burn dry materials • Never burn household rubbish, rubber, or anything containing plastic, foam or paint • Never use petrol, oil or any other similar fuel to ignite a fire • Avoid lighting fires in unsuitable weather conditions e.g. a windy climate can change the direction of the fire and smoke • Keep pets and children safely away from any risk of danger |
| <p>Household items</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always ensure your furniture has the fire-resistant label • Don't leave electric blankets folded as this damages the internal wiring – roll them up • Unplug electric blankets before going to bed • Secure portable heaters up against a wall to prevent them falling over • Keep portable heaters away from curtains & furniture and safely away from children & pets • Keep door and window keys in easy reach and where everyone can find them • Close inside doors at night to stop fire spreading |

| The most common causes of fire | What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home |
|--|--|
| <p>Action Plan & Escape Route</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an action plan so that everyone in your home knows how to escape safely in the event of a fire • Make sure everyone is clear about what to do • Have a clear escape route • Practice the plan and escape route regularly |

BEDTIME CHECK LIST

Some simple fire safety checks can save your life. Here's what to keep an eye out for:

- ✓ Close inside doors at night to stop a fire from spreading
- ✓ Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on
- ✓ Check your cooker is turned off
- ✓ Don't leave the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher on overnight and unattended
- ✓ Don't leave mobile phones, tablets or e-cigarettes charging overnight
- ✓ Turn heaters off and put up fireguards
- ✓ Put candles, incense sticks and oil burners out and never leave them burning when you are asleep
- ✓ Make sure cigarettes are completely out – wet them to be sure
- ✓ Never smoke in bed
- ✓ Make sure exits are kept clear
- ✓ Keep doors & window keys where everyone can find them
- ✓ If you or anyone else in the home has mobility issues, ensure mobility aids and methods of calling for help (like emergency pendants) are close to hand in case help is needed to assist with an escape

If you have any questions relating to your safety, please contact your local fire service for free advice.

Moving House

You may find that you want to move from your existing Council house for a number of reasons:

- there may not be enough bedrooms for your family
- your present home may be too large now that your family has left home
- there may be medical reasons why you need a different type of property
- you may need to move for a job or for social reasons

We can help you in a number of ways:

APPLYING FOR A COUNCIL HOUSE TRANSFER

If you wish to transfer your tenancy to another council property or move to housing owned by another social landlord in the borough, first you will need to complete a common housing register application form, which is available on-line at the Council's website or by telephoning (01443 873521). Your application will be assessed against the Common Allocation Policy. If eligible to join the Housing register your application will be placed in one of three bands, depending on your current situation. For more information on the Common Housing Register please contact (01443 873521) or visit the Council's website - <http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Housing/Find-a-home/Common-Housing-Register>

PLEASE NOTE: YOU WILL NOT NORMALLY BE OFFERED ANOTHER HOME UNLESS:

- ALL RENT ARREARS AND HOUSING RELATED DEBTS ARE CLEARED, OR YOU ARE COMPLYING WITH AN AGREED PAYMENT PLAN
- YOUR PROPERTY HAS BEEN KEPT TO THE STANDARDS REQUIRED BY YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT
- THERE IS NO LEGAL ACTION PENDING AGAINST YOU BECAUSE OF A BREACH OF YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT

MUTUAL EXCHANGES

An exchange is where you "swap" your Council house or flat for another property. You can "swap" homes with another tenant of this Council, a Housing Association tenant or a tenant of another Council. **BUT YOU MUST GET OUR WRITTEN AGREEMENT FIRST.**

Caerphilly County Borough Council is a member of the online exchange service provided by Homeswapper. If you wish to register your details, apply on line at **www.homeswapper.co.uk**. If you do not have access to the Internet, call into your local Housing Office for further advice and assistance. The Homeswapper service will hold details of mutual exchanges within the local area as well as details of those wishing to move here from outside the area. The four main Housing Associations operating in the borough (United Welsh, Linc, Wales & West and Charter) are also included in this scheme.

Any Caerphilly County Borough Council or Housing Association tenant can register FREE of charge via the internet or by downloading the free HomeSwapper App. If you don't have access to the Internet you can complete an application form, which is available on request from your local Housing Office.

Once you have registered, you will be able to go on line and view your matches. Homeswapper will also email you at regular intervals with details of suitable exchange partners. If you do not have access to the Internet, Homeswapper will send you details of suitable exchange partners via your mobile phone.

When you find a match, you will need to contact your local Housing Office to complete a mutual exchange application form in order to obtain written permission from us **BEFORE** you move.

There are only a few reasons why the Council can refuse a request to exchange properties and if your request is rejected you will be advised of the reasons.

DON'T FORGET – YOU MUST NOT EXCHANGE PROPERTIES WITH ANYONE WITHOUT FIRST OBTAINING WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM YOUR RESPECTIVE LANDLORDS.

BOTH APPLICATIONS WILL BE CHECKED TO MAKE SURE:

- THERE ARE NO RENT ARREARS*
- NO CURRENT BREACHES OF TENANCY
- THERE WILL BE NO SIGNIFICANT OVERCROWDING OR UNDER-OCCUPANCY AS A RESULT OF THE MOVE
- THERE IS NO DAMAGE TO THE PROPERTY YOU ARE LEAVING*
- THERE ARE NO RECHARGEABLE DEBTS OUTSTANDING

* Conditional permission to exchange may be given if all rent arrears are cleared or any damage to the property is properly repaired **BEFORE** the exchange takes place.

An exchange will only go ahead when you have **WRITTEN** permission from the landlords of **BOTH** tenants.

MOVING TO ANOTHER PART OF THE UK

Finding rented accommodation in other parts of the country can be difficult. You can use the Homeswapper Scheme mentioned above to find another tenant to exchange tenancies with or you can contact your local Housing Office for further advice and housing option guidance.

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR MOVING OUT

As a Caerphilly Homes tenant you have a responsibility to keep the property, including any garages and outbuildings, in a good state of interior decoration, repair and cleanliness, and keep any garden, yard or forecourt, including hedges which form of the property, in a cultivated and tidy condition. This includes reporting any necessary repairs promptly, and also not making any alterations without first obtaining Landlord's Consent.

If you are moving out of your home you should read your tenancy agreement to remind yourself of your rights and responsibilities, otherwise you could find yourself charged for something that we consider is your responsibility and which Caerphilly Homes have to put right when you move out.

Arrange a home inspection

It is important that a property inspection, including the garden, is undertaken by the Estate Management Officer before your tenancy ends so that we can identify any possible recharges to you before you return the keys to us. A check list has been provided below to assist you when checking the property so that you can put right anything before we visit. If you are unsure about anything please do not hesitate to contact your local housing office.

Caerphilly Homes transfer

If you are moving to another Caerphilly Homes property, your property will have already been inspected and considered acceptable in order for you to move, but this does not mean that you will not be held responsible for issues that could not have been identified on the first inspection or that you have failed to do before you move. Therefore the check list below will assist you to ensure you leave the property without incurring any recharges.

During this inspection we will also complete the paperwork to end your tenancy and arrange a convenient time to carry out any repairs **we need** to do.

| YOUR HOME AND GARDEN CHECKLIST | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Remove all your personal items. You must not leave any of your belongings in your home, garden, shed or garage. Don't forget to check hidden areas such as the attic and cupboard under the stairs. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Remove all your floor coverings; such as laminate; carpet; lino or tiles unless you have already agreed with us for it to be given to the new tenant. This is subject to conditions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Your home must be free from fleas; mice; rats; cockroaches and animal faeces. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Remove personal medication from your home. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Remove all shelving; picture hooks; nails; screws; hooks from walls, ceilings and doors and make good. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The decoration inside your home is your choice and responsibility. You must ensure your home is free from graffiti, heavy nicotine staining and excessive damage to walls and ceilings. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Remove all white goods and appliances from your home. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kitchen units must be intact and in good working order. Worktops must be clean and free from damage such a cracks, burns and splits. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| All internal doors must be in place and fitted correctly with working handles and free from damage (including holes and splits). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| All window lock keys must be left in the home. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clean your home. | |
| Keys / tokens for gas and electrical services must be left in the home and any debt cleared. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Remove all your personal possessions and rubbish from your garden / communal area, including; children's play equipment, sheds, greenhouses, garages, rotten or damaged decking and non-permanent structures. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gardens – any hedges, trees and grass needs to be left manageable, free from rubbish and in an acceptable condition as set out in our standards. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If you have carried out any DIY projects inside or outside your home and have not obtained permission from Caerphilly Homes, please contact us immediately. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

MOVING HOME HANDY INFORMATION

What you need to do and how to avoid any nasty surprises.

You may have decided to move home for a number of reasons and whether you're moving to another council property, to one owned by another landlord or buying your own home there are some things you need to do beforehand.

Remember – if you're exchanging properties with someone else you must get permission first from your respective landlords.

Top tips before you move:

- You must **give us at least 4 weeks notice** – this needs to be in writing to your local housing office. If you leave your home before the tenancy end date, you will normally be charged for all the rent and remain responsible for the property until the 4 week period ends.
- **Let us know your forwarding address** – this is so that we can contact you in the future, if we need to. For example, if we need to return any overpayment.
- **Make sure that your rent account is up to date** – if you leave any debt at the end of your tenancy we will actively seek to recover this from you.
- **Ensure your home is left clean and tidy and in a good state of repair** – if we have to clean, remove rubbish you have left behind or repair any damage to the property you will probably have to pay for any work we do.
- **When you leave, everyone who lived in the property with you (including pets!) must move out.**
- If you carried out any improvements yourself, you must either leave the property as it is, or restore it to its original condition. Some improvements, such as central heating must be left. Please contact your housing office for more advice

| This guide shows the typical charge for common work | |
|---|---------|
| Clearing a home of a tenant's belongings and disposing of them. | £367.60 |
| Renewal of an internal door due to damage (per item). | £114.67 |
| Retiling of a kitchen floor. | £463.32 |
| Renewal of a damaged electric socket. | £19.51 |
| Renewal of a damaged toilet tank. | £103.04 |

Ending your Tenancy

THIS INFORMATION HELPS EXPLAIN THE RULES THAT APPLY TO YOUR TENANCY

THE RIGHT TO A PERMANENT HOME

You are now a secure tenant, this means that except in very special circumstances, you can live in your home for as long as you wish. While you are a tenant of the Council you are expected to keep to the rules set out in your tenancy agreement.

We would only be able to make you leave your home by taking you to court, and to do so we must prove to a judge that we have “grounds for possession”, because you have broken the rules you agreed to when you signed your tenancy agreement.

ENDING YOUR TENANCY

If you want to end your tenancy you must give at least 4 weeks notice **in writing** from a Monday to your local Housing Office. A property inspection will be arranged before you are due to leave your home.

When you leave, everyone who occupied the property with you must move out and you should leave the property clean and tidy. If the council has to clean, remove belongings or rubbish you have left behind or repair any damage to the property after you leave you will probably have to pay for the work that we do.

When you leave your rent account must be up to date.

If you carried out any improvements yourself you must either leave the property as it is, or restore it to its original condition. If you wish to take out the improvement, please contact your local Housing Office for further advice. Some improvements such as central heating must be left in, but you may be entitled to some compensation.

If you leave your home before the end of tenancy date, you will normally be charged for the rent until the 4 week period ends. When you leave, you must ensure you return ALL keys for your home to your local Housing Office or Customer First Office, where you will be requested to sign a key receipt and disclaimer form.

If you are the next of kin for the tenant you will be asked to confirm your relationship and details for future contact.

CHANGING YOUR TENANCY

SUCCESSION

Sometimes council tenancies can be transferred to other people if the tenant dies. This is called “the right to succession”.

Succession generally applies when the secure tenant dies and depending on the circumstances, the tenancy may be transferred to:

- the husband, wife or civil partner, providing they are living with the tenant at the time of their death; **or**
- a partner or close relative, providing they have been living at the property for at least **12 months** before the tenant’s death.

In some cases the property you live in may not be suitable for the needs of the surviving partner or relative. It may be adapted for a disabled person or it may be bigger than is needed. If this is the case the Council will assess the situation and may offer an alternative property. The right to succession to the tenancy does not always mean that it is possible to stay in a particular property.

All cases are judged on their merits and sympathetic consideration will be given in all circumstances and you will need to contact your local Housing Office for further advice and guidance.

ASSIGNMENT - GIVING YOUR TENANCY TO SOMEONE ELSE

If you want to put your tenancy into someone else's name you may only do so if that person would be entitled to take it over under the rules of succession or if an Order has been made granting the transfer of the tenancy to a person as part of court proceedings.

The other way of assigning your tenancy is if you wish to exchange tenancies with another tenant. In this case the rules applying to mutual exchange will be applied. Please see our **Moving House** section for further details.

JOINT TENANCIES

If you have a joint tenancy with another person **both** of you are fully responsible for the tenancy. You are **both** bound by the conditions of tenancy set out in the Tenancy Agreement.

- If you are joint tenants, either one of you can end the tenancy by giving the council four weeks' notice. The Council does not legally have to allow the other joint tenant(s) to stay in the home - it depends on your circumstances and whether the property would be more suitable for another type of household (like a family for instance).

CARE HOME ADMISSIONS

GUIDANCE NOTES ON TERMINATION OF TENANCY AND RENT PAYMENTS

If you are a Council tenant and you are considering a move to a Care Home then the following notes will help explain how your tenancy will be brought to an end:

1. Council tenancies start and finish on a Monday (up to 12 noon) and you are normally required to give 4 weeks notice in writing where possible to your local Housing Office, so please ensure that you do this at the earliest opportunity.
2. Please inform us immediately of the Care Home address where you will be staying.
3. When you move into a Care Home, you will still be required to give 4 weeks notice of termination of your tenancy. If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit this will cease from the time your permanent move takes place and you will be charged full rent on your home for the notice period.
4. You will need to inform Social Services if you cannot afford to pay your rent whilst staying in the Care Home and they may consider assisting you towards your costs.
5. Housing Benefit may continue to be paid for as long as your stay in the Care Home remains temporary.
6. You will continue to be liable for rent for each week until the keys are returned and you will be charged up to the next Monday of the rent week.
7. Housing Benefit will cease to be paid once the Care Home becomes your permanent home.
8. If you decide to stay at the Care Home on a permanent basis you must inform your local Housing Office and return the keys to the property as soon as possible once it has been emptied of all your personal belongings.

If you have any concerns, please contact your local Housing Office or the Housing Benefit Section.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU TELL US IF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE IN ANY WAY.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS/QUERIES ABOUT YOUR TENANCY CALL INTO YOUR LOCAL HOUSING OFFICE. THEY WILL OFFER YOU HELP AND ADVICE.

SHOULD YOU WISH TO DO SO YOU CAN SEEK INDEPENDENT HOUSING/LEGAL ADVICE FROM A SOLICITOR OR THE CAB.

Compliments & Complaints

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

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.

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
- Email us at 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 also request a form from the person you are already in contact with. Tell them that you want us to deal with your complaint formally

Older Persons Housing

SHELTERED HOUSING

The council manages 33 sheltered housing schemes, located throughout the county borough.

WHO CAN APPLY

- **Sheltered Housing**

Generally sheltered housing is available to single people and couples usually 60 years of age and over, who wish to remain independent but who would also benefit from the additional services and support at the schemes. People with disabilities who are under 60 years of age may also be eligible subject to further assessment.

WHAT TYPE OF HOUSING DO WE HAVE

- **Sheltered Housing**

Sheltered Housing comprises groups of unfurnished units of 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation (bungalows, flats and bedsits) designed to meet the needs of older people. Each scheme has a communal area where residents can enjoy the communal facilities available. The aim of sheltered housing is to enable older people to live as independently as possible with the added security of support from dedicated Sheltered Housing staff. It also gives residents the opportunity to make friends and to socialise through the use of communal facilities and activities.

WHAT BENEFITS DO SHELTERED SCHEMES OFFER

- **Sheltered Housing**

Sheltered housing provides a setting which enables its residents to live independent lives in their own home; it also gives them the opportunity to make friends and to share a social life through use of the communal lounge and other facilities, some of which are listed below:

- Furnished lounges where residents can socialise
- Laundry rooms with washing and drying facilities
- Guest bedrooms for visiting family and friends
- Door entry systems to ensure safety and security
- Communal TV facilities
- Luncheon clubs and day centre opportunities
- Visiting hairdressers
- Sheltered Housing Officer support
- Monitoring Response Alarm Centre (Careline) 24 hour service, 365 days a year

The additional services provided over and above what is normally covered by the rental payments are service charged to residents at the schemes. Utility payments for some schemes are also charged separately. Each year residents are provided with a breakdown of the service charge relevant to the scheme they live in and any utility charges (for gas, electric or water) that may apply. These charges are collected the same time as the rental payment and will be detailed on your rent card.

Each individual property is connected to the Monitoring Response Alarm Service (Careline) facility which can be used at any time to contact the Sheltered Housing Officer when on site, or to call through to the Careline Operators for assistance at any other time.

Our schemes do not have facilities for electric wheelchair or mobility scooter use or charging. These are not generally permitted within our sheltered housing schemes. Please seek further advice and assistance from your local housing office or Sheltered Housing Officer if you have any queries about these items.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE PETS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN SOME OF OUR SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES AND YOU MAY WISH TO CHECK THIS BEFORE ACCEPTING ANY OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION AND MOVING IN.

- Communal lounge and dining room serving a mid-day meal and where residents can socialise and pursue social activities
- Laundry
- Health and Beauty Salon
- Guest suite for visiting friends and relatives
- Communal bathrooms in some schemes
- Large landscape gardens and car park
- Lift serving all floors
- Door entry system to ensure your safety and security
- CCTV in some schemes
- Sheltered Housing Officer support
- Monitoring Response Alarm Centre (Careline) 24 hour service, 365 days a year

THE ROLE OF THE SHELTERED HOUSING OFFICER

When on duty the Sheltered Housing Officers will provide close but unobtrusive support to residents and it should be noted that their main role is to provide Housing related support, be alert to the needs of the residents and to ensure as far as possible that the necessary services are delivered.

The role of the Sheltered Housing Officers can be summarised as follows:-

- to monitor the general welfare of residents.
- to provide housing related support.
- to help residents live independent lives.
- to provide close but unobtrusive support to residents.
- to be alert to the wellbeing of residents and to summon help when required.
- to welcome new residents to the scheme.
- to encourage and help promote social activities in the scheme.
- to help establish links with the local community.
- to co-ordinate the support needed from social services, doctors, etc.
- to be responsible for the administration and security of the scheme.

It is important that residents and their relatives fully understand the role of the Sheltered Housing Officer.

The Sheltered Housing Officer will provide housing related support but is not expected to provide personal care or assist the residents with tasks that they should be able to do for themselves or with support from other agencies, for example personal care, cleaning, laundry, shopping or collecting prescriptions or pensions.

When a new resident moves into sheltered housing, the Sheltered Housing Officer will complete a support plan with the resident to establish what housing related support is needed. If additional support is needed, the Sheltered Housing Officer will refer or signpost the resident for any further support that may be required.

The Sheltered Housing Officers are on duty normally between the hours of:

8.45am – 5.00pm Monday to Thursday

8.45am – 4.30pm on Fridays

They cover a minimum of two schemes a day. Their expected attendance and length of time at scheme is displayed daily in advance on the scheme office door to enable residents to know when they are available at the scheme.

When the Sheltered Housing Officer is not on site, emergency cover is provided by the Monitoring Response Alarm Centre (Careline).

Sheltered Housing Team Leaders also offer advice and support to Sheltered Housing Officers and residents within the schemes.

General enquiries and advice can also be provided by the Older Persons Housing Team tel: 01443 811431 during office hours or you can email: olderpersonshousing@caerphilly.gov.uk.

ACTIVITIES CO-ORDINATOR

All our schemes benefit from the support of an Activities Co-Ordinator who will meet with tenants and promote engagement, well being and social activities within the schemes. Day trips, exercise classes, awareness sessions, charity events and other resident functions such as Luncheon Club outings are also a regular activity.

FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE

If you live in one of our sheltered housing schemes you will receive a housing related floating support service through your Sheltered Housing Officer.

The plan will be regularly reviewed and the support may be increased or reduced as your needs change.

Tenant's Guide to Service Charges in Sheltered Housing

Service charges are for the cost of services provided to tenants which are over and above the services normally covered by rental charges. They are identified separately in a yearly breakdown and show an actual cost for the service provided at a particular scheme. The actual charges will be based on costs for the previous financial year and may vary from year to year depending on what services are received.

Service charges will be different depending on which sheltered housing scheme you live in. The charges will only recover the cost of the service. The Council does not make a profit.

What is a Service Charge?

A service charge reflects the costs associated with carrying out communal repairs or work to keep your sheltered housing scheme in good condition, managing it and providing any other additional services for you. It is an amount paid by a tenant for the additional services received which are not covered by rental payments.

The amount we will charge will depend on what services are provided, for example:

- Lighting of communal areas
- Laundry facilities
- Communal CCTV
- Digital TV Aerials
- Repairs to communal areas
- Door entry systems
- Communal furniture, fixtures and fittings
- Lifts
- Servicing and maintenance

You will not be able to opt out of a service charge for a service which is available at your scheme just because you do not use it.

Sometimes larger items such as washing machines will need to be replaced which can be expensive. To ensure the high cost does not have to be met all at once, the charges are spread across a number of 'life years'.

For lifts, the charge is based on the average charge for a replacement together with associated servicing and maintenance charges.

How much will I have to pay?

Your service charges are calculated by taking into account the actual costs for providing the service for the previous year. There is also a small charge to cover our administrative costs (10%).

The total cost of providing services at a particular sheltered housing scheme will be evenly shared between all the residents living there.

How will we work out your service charge for the year?

Each year we will assess how much we expect to spend on providing services to your scheme. These charges will be based on actual costs of the service for the sheltered housing scheme for the previous year, divided by the number of properties in the scheme to find out the cost for each household.

Example: To calculate a service charge for a laundry service for 2017/18 we would take:

The actual costs for the laundry service for 2016/17 e.g. £500, divide this by 48 weeks (non collection rent weeks are not included) = £10.41

Then divide this figure by the number of units in scheme e.g. 49 units

= Charge per tenant – 21p per week

Will Housing Benefit help me meet the cost of service charges?

Some service charges may be met by Housing Benefit if you qualify for assistance.

The table below gives you more details:

| Service Charge raised | Eligible for Housing Benefit |
|---|------------------------------|
| Grounds maintenance | Yes |
| Landlord's heating & lighting costs for Communal area | Yes |
| Fixture and fitting improvements within communal areas | Yes |
| Cost of maintaining monitoring equipment (such as Careline) | Yes |
| Minor Repairs in Communal areas | Yes |
| Laundry facilities- cost of appliances and maintenance | Yes |
| Installation, monitoring and servicing of CCTV cameras | Yes |
| Monitoring and servicing door entry system | Yes |
| Monitoring of safety equipment within communal areas | Yes |
| Servicing communal facilities such as fire safety equipment | Yes |
| Cleaning of communal areas including the cost of materials | Yes |
| Decoration of communal areas | Yes |
| Window cleaning in Sheltered accommodation | Yes |
| Lift servicing | Yes |

Please note this list is not exhaustive and can be subject to change.

What will my service charges cover and how will I know what to pay?

You will be charged for the costs of the services you receive.

Around September every year we will send you a breakdown of your service charges and your utility costs to let you know how much you will pay for the coming year.

How do I pay Service Charges?

Service charges are payable alongside your rent and water rates and follow the same payment arrangement.

We will collect rent and service charges over a 48 week period, allowing for four annual non collection weeks.

Every year, we have four non collection weeks (2 weeks in August and 2 weeks in December) when we will not collect rent or service charges from you.

If you are up to date with your rent and service charges you will not need to make any payments during the non collection weeks. However, if you are behind then you must continue with your normal payments to reduce or clear what you owe us.

You will be advised of your weekly rent, utility charges and service charge payments when you sign your tenancy and you will also receive a yearly letter with a breakdown of your service charge.

Consultation

Consultation will be undertaken with tenants when necessary and required. Consultation can be undertaken with tenants for providing increased, reduced or modified services. The provision of services can be reviewed to reduce service charges to tenants where reasonable and possible.

A majority of 60% of households casting a return vote must be in favour of a new service being provided or for a service to be removed, reduced or modified. This will ensure that costs are applied in a fair and reasonable manner. Therefore, if you are consulted it is important that you reply with your view.

What if I am not happy with the amount of Service Charge I am asked to pay?

Firstly you will have the opportunity to discuss your concerns with your Sheltered Housing Officer or Team Leader. However if you are not happy you can request a review by contacting the Older Persons Housing Team for further investigations to be undertaken to make sure that you have been fairly charged.

You cannot request a review against a charge that you have received because you don't want it or because you do not use a service that is available.

There are some services which we are legally required to provide for example fire detection, and we will have to charge you for these as statutory services.

For further information please contact your Sheltered Housing Officer at your scheme.

Additional advice and assistance can also be obtained from the Older Persons Housing Team:

Tel: 01443 811431 or Email: olderpersonshousing@caerphilly.gov.uk.

Floating Support

What is Floating Support?

Floating support is a flexible support service that helps you manage your affairs and live as independently as possible.

The main principles are to:

- Support people to access, maintain and manage their own accommodation.
- Assist in developing or maintaining the necessary skills to live as independently as possible.
- Prevent the need to move to more dependent forms of accommodation.
- Prevent homelessness.

This is a flexible person centred service helping people to exercise choice and independence. It is a fully funded government service and free to those who are assessed as requiring assistance with the required government guidelines.

About the Caerphilly Homes floating support team

Our Floating Support Officers are specially trained to provide help and advice to people in their own homes. They provide short term housing related support but this support can be longer if needed.

Our Floating Support Officer would discuss this with you and, if you are eligible for support, the Officer will agree a support plan with you to meet your needs.

The support plan will identify the actions agreed and the length of time the support is required. An action plan will detail the progress and outcomes. The support plan will be regularly reviewed and the support may be increased or reduced depending on your needs.

Our team receive referrals from Supporting People and will contact you as soon as a referral has been received and an initial desk top assessment has been completed.

We will:

- ✓ Assess your referral as soon as we receive it.
- ✓ Make an appointment to visit you within 7 working days.
- ✓ Listen to what you tell us.
- ✓ Agree a support plan and action plan with you to enable your support to be effectively delivered.
- ✓ Respect your confidentiality.
- ✓ Provide housing related support to meet your needs.

What support will I get?

Your support needs will be discussed and agreed with you during our first visit.

Support could be given to provide assistance with:

- Income maximisation and welfare benefit advice.
- Applying for grant funding.
- Reporting repairs, resolving rent and other tenancy issues.
- Guidance on keeping your home warm, safe and comfortable; energy advice.
- Threat of homelessness.
- Managing or resolving debt issues.
- Managing your income, bills and budgeting.
- Help with daily living skills.
- Responding to correspondence, filling in forms and writing letters.
- Signposting you to other services which may be of benefit to you.
- Signposting you to services for help in reducing loneliness and isolation.
- Connecting you with the local community.

We will NOT be able to assist you personally with:

- Transporting you to appointments.
- Decorating, cleaning or gardening.
- Handyperson services or repairs.
- Counselling or befriending services.
- Personal care or administering medication.
- Shopping, money handling or banking services.

The above lists are not exhaustive and we will advise you when we meet with you as to what we can and cannot do to support you.

Can I apply for this service?

The service is available for any person over the age of 16 and across any tenure requiring housing related support.

You must be willing to agree and accept a support plan with a related action plan to assist you in receiving support. You must also engage with and accept visits from a Floating Support Officer to develop and progress your support plan.

How do I access the support?

You can self refer directly through our Supporting People gateway or someone can refer you for help by visiting the Supporting People website at **www.caerphilly.gov.uk/supportingpeople**, or by email at **SupportingPeople@caerphilly.gov.uk** or you can call the Supporting People team directly on **01443 864548**.

There are various agencies accessible through Supporting People including our Caerphilly Homes Floating Support Team and you will be referred to the most suitable agency to meet your needs.

How to contact us

You can contact the Caerphilly Homes Floating Support Team during normal office hours by telephone or email as follows:

Tel: 01443 811425

Email: floatingsupport@caerphilly.gov.uk

Adapting your home - how to get help and advice

If you or someone living with you in your property has a disability and you are a Caerphilly Homes tenant, an adaptation may help you to live more comfortably in your home. Disabled adaptations approved for Caerphilly Homes tenants are fully funded and maintained by the Council.

Being able to access all areas of our home is something we often take for granted, but if you are unable to do this, the effect can be very distressing. Housing adaptations could help you to live independently and safely in your home and can transform your quality of life.

Your needs may be something simple and easy to provide, such as a handrail or grabrail, or you may need something larger or more complex.

Sometimes the simplest of adaptations, like handrails or a key safe, can help enable someone to be discharged from hospital to live at home. Similarly, handrails and ramps can also help reduce the risk of trips and falls which may result in hospital admission in the first place.

Who should I contact if I think I need an adaptation?

If you, or someone in your household, are struggling to access any basic facilities in your home, or feel unsafe getting around your property, you may benefit from an adaptation to your home.

To apply contact the Information, Advice and Assistance Service (IAA) on 0808 100 2500 (or 0808 100 1727 if applying on behalf of a child), they will arrange for you to have an assessment carried out by a member of the Occupational Therapy team from Social Services.

After the assessment, the Occupational Therapist will decide if works are (needed) and appropriate. They will also take into account the age, condition and location of your home and may consult with specialist technical officers within Caerphilly Homes' Adaptations Team. In some cases, the Occupational Therapist may recommend moving to a more suitable home that meets your needs and promotes independence and well-being.

Adaptations could include:

- Giving easier access to and inside your home, e.g. ramps and stairlifts
- Making your home safer
- Providing or improving bathroom facilities
- Improving heating systems if you are unable to access the controls of your current system.
- Providing adaptations for people with visual or hearing impairments

Once a need has been assessed and adaptations identified, Caerphilly Homes Adaptations Team will assist in providing the adaptation in a quick and efficient manner.

Getting in Touch

SERVICES PROVIDED AT YOUR LOCAL HOUSING OFFICES

All of our Area and Neighbourhood Housing Offices offer the following services:

RECEPTION SERVICES

- general enquiries
- repairs reporting
- making appointments for interview

We are also able to advise you on the other services the Council provides.

HOUSING SERVICES

- applications for housing
- transfer or mutual exchange
- consent for alterations or improvements
- tenancy conditions
- general housing advice
- garage lettings

PAYMENT FACILITIES

Rent payments can be made to the Council:

BY POST - Payment can be made by crossed cheque or postal order made payable to "CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL"

Please make sure you include your payment card/tear off slip with the payment.

AT COUNCIL CASH OFFICES - Payments made in person by cash or cheque will be accepted at any of the Council's Cash Offices.

- Penallta House Customer Services, Ystrad Mynach
- Blackwood Library and Customer Services
- Bargoed Customer Services, Hanbury Chapel
- Pontlottyn Customer Services, Merchant Street
- Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre
- Newbridge Library and Cash Office, Newbridge Memo
- Risca Customer Services, Risca Palace

PAYMENT AT POST OFFICE - If you wish to pay at your local Post Office please contact 01443 866583.

BY DEBIT CARD - Payment can be made at any of our Cash Offices in person or by telephone on 01443 863366 (24hr) or 01443 866570 during office hours.

BY DIRECT DEBIT - Please contact 01443 811450 for rent payments or 01443 863002 for Council Tax payments.

ONLINE - Payments can be made online via our website www.caerphilly.gov.uk by selecting the link "Pay Online" and following the instructions on the screen.

RENT COLLECTION SERVICE - the Council offers a fortnightly door step rent Collection service for tenants who:

- reside at a sheltered housing complex.
- are in receipt of DLA Care or Mobility, or Attendance Allowance or PIP.

If you fall within the above category, you can arrange for the collector to call by ringing the Rents Section on 01443 811450.

USEFUL CONTACTS

| | |
|--|--|
| Centralised repair team | 01443 864886 / DLOPBE@caerphilly.gov.uk |
| Out of hours emergency | 01443 875500 |
| Dog warden | 01443 866544 |
| Abandoned vehicles | 01443 866544 |
| Noise complaints | 01443 866544 |
| Refuse collection | 01443 866533 |
| Highways - gritting, potholes | 01443 866511 |
| Pest control | 01443 866544 |
| Planning | 01443 866416 |
| Street lighting | 01443 866511 |
| Council tax | 01443 863002 / counciltax@caerphilly.gov.uk |
| Rents | 01443 811450 |
| Insurance claims | 01443 863259/863253 |
| Housing Benefits | 01443 864099 / benefits@caerphilly.gov.uk |
| Citizens Advice – Adviceline | 0344 477 2020 |
| Shelter Cymru – Housing Advice Helpline | 0345 075 5005 |
| Dog Warden | 01443 866544 |
| Planning | 01443 866416 |
| Street Lighting | 01443 866511 |
| Rents | 01443 811450 |

HOUSING OFFICES

UPPER RHYMNEY VALLEY AREA HOUSING OFFICE

- GILFACH HOUSE,
WILLIAM STREET, GILFACH, BARGOED, CF81 8ND
TEL: 01443 873535
EMAIL: urvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

GRAIG Y RHACCA NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING OFFICE

- GRAYS GARDENS,
GRAIG Y RHACCA, MACHEN, CF83 8TW,
TEL: 01443 873535
EMAIL: graigyrhaccanho@caerphilly.gov.uk

LANSBURY PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING OFFICE

- 45 ATTLEE COURT,
LANSBURY PARK, CAERPHILLY, CF83 1QU
TEL: 01443 873535
EMAIL: lansburyparknho@caerphilly.gov.uk

HOUSING SOLUTIONS

- GILFACH HOUSE,
WILLIAM STREET, GILFACH, BARGOED, CF81 8ND
TEL: 01443 873552 / 873553
EMAIL: chr@caerphilly.gov.uk

TENANCY ENFORCEMENT SECTION

- CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:
PO BOX 129, HENGOED, CF82 9BQ

VISITING ADDRESS:
TREDOMEN BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE
TREDOMEN PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH, HENGOED, CF82 7FN.
TEL: 01443 811440
EMAIL: tenancyenforcement@caerphilly.gov.uk

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

- DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNITIES,
CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:
PO BOX 129, HENGOED, CF82 9BQ

VISITING ADDRESS:
TREDOMEN BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE
TREDOMEN PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH, HENGOED, CF82 7FN
TEL: 01443 811447

RENTS SECTION

- CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:
PO BOX 129, HENGOED, CF82 9BQ
VISITING ADDRESS:
TREDOMEN BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE
TREDOMEN PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH, HENGOED, CF82 7FN.
TEL: 01443 811450
EMAIL: rents@caerphilly.gov.uk

OLDER PERSON'S
HOUSING SERVICE

- CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:
PO BOX 129, HENGOED, CF82 9BQ
VISITING ADDRESS:
TREDOMEN BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE
TREDOMEN PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH,
HENGOED, CF82 7FN.
TEL: 01443 811431
EMAIL: olderpersonshousing@caerphilly.gov.uk

TENANT &
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:
PO BOX 129, HENGOED, CF82 9BQ
VISITING ADDRESS:
TREDOMEN BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE
TREDOMEN PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH, HENGOED, CF82 7FN.
TEL: 01443 811438 (Tenant Participation)
01443 811437 (Complaints)
01443 811439 (Leaseholder Service)
EMAIL: tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk

HOUSING WEBSITE:

- www.caerphillyhousing.co.uk

CCBC WEBSITE:

- www.caerphilly.gov.uk

This publication is available in Welsh. It is available in other languages and formats on request.





