

Caerphilly Homes

Spring Issue 13 2019

Transforming communities



Works begin in Nelson

Communities throughout the county borough are being transformed thanks to our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Environmental Improvements programme.



The WHQS Environmental Improvements programme will see over £10 million invested in enhancing the communities where our tenants live. Improvements for each area have been decided through engagement with the local community.

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Caerphilly Homes



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Young people enjoying the new skate park in Risca

February saw the launch of a new skate park in Risca. Around £90,000 has been invested into improving the park at Ty-sign, made possible through match funding from Caerphilly County Borough Council's Welsh Housing Quality Standard Environmental Improvements programme and the fundraising efforts of local community group Risca Play and Learn. Funding was also provided by the council's Parks Department, including money obtained through planning agreements with developers in the area.

Work has also begun on a new skate park in Penyrheol, Caerphilly alongside the installation of an outdoor gym and improvements to the children's play park. Around £260,000 will be invested into environmental improvements in

Penyrheol, including the additional car parking that's been provided for residents in Gellideg and Penybryn. Penyrheol, Trecenydd and Energlyn Community Council have also contributed £15,000 for improvements to the skate park, along with £2,225 from the Area Forum Budget. In March work also began on an improvement programme which will see £410,000 invested in the Nelson area. Improvements include the addition of pathways on Nelson's Maes Mabon estate to create safer access routes for pedestrians, improved disabled access and measures to prevent off road vehicles accessing the area near the park. The area will also benefit from a new multi-use games area and a community orchard.

Changes to Welsh Housing Quality Standard programme

On 13th March the council's Cabinet approved revisions to our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) improvement programme. These changes were made with the aim of ensuring the standard is fully met by the Welsh Government deadline of December 2020.

The revisions include an increase in the programme's total projected investment from £220 to £250 million. This decision is based on information gathered through up to date property surveys and reviewing costs from recent contracts.

Cabinet also approved a re-profile of the WHQS programme; this means that tenants in some areas will receive improvements later than originally expected. The changes come as a



result of a number of changing circumstances in the delivery of the programme, including the loss of two contractors and unforeseen additional work being encountered. We apologise to all affected tenants for these unforeseen delays.

The updated programme can be found enclosed with this newsletter, a copy can also be found on the council's website: caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Housing/Repairs,-adaptations-and-improvements



Risca tool library launched

A community tool library has been launched in Ty-Sign, Risca thanks to a partnership between Caerphilly Homes, the council's Community Regeneration team, Gofal and energy and regeneration specialist ENGIE.

Residents will now be able to easily access the tools they need to carry out small household jobs; helping to make home improvements more affordable for those on lower incomes.

Hand tools were donated by ENGIE; one of the contractors appointed by



The tool library launches at Holly Road, Risca

the council to help deliver our Welsh Housing Quality Standard improvement programme.

To borrow tools, residents can visit the community hub at 51 Holly Road, Ty-Sign between 10am and 4pm every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Residents can also access a range of support and advice from the Holly Road office, including assistance with benefits, help finding employment and housing advice.

Tenant Pulse

Tenant Pulse is a Wales-wide survey for people who rent. They want your opinions on the things that matter to you about your home.

Tenant Pulse is:

- Totally free and easy to complete
- Available online or via post
- Regular; with five surveys per year
- Anonymous

It is open to people who rent from councils, housing associations or who are in supported accommodation. They cover a wide variety of topics such as repairs, fire safety, affordable housing and value for money.



Results of all of their surveys go to Welsh Government or the Housing Regulatory Body for Wales, so they can change housing policy. You can join Tenant Pulse by following this link: www.tpas.cymru/about/tenant-pulse, alternatively, you can contact Lewis Greenaway on 02920 237303.

Joining Offer: Everyone who joins Tenant Pulse will be entered in a prize draw every month to win £20 of High Street vouchers.

Face lift for Cefn Hengoed Youth Centre



Cefn Hengoed Youth Centre

Cefn Hengoed Youth Centre has received £11,000 of improvements, including upgrading wifi / internet access, the installation of purpose built work benches for IT equipment and internal decoration thanks to the Employment Fund which forms part of our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme.

As well as enhancing the facility for the local community, the improvements have enabled the council teams responsible for delivering the Welsh Government funded programmes Communities for Work and Communities for Work Plus to offer weekly employment support sessions from the venue. The drop in sessions are held every Wednesday and offer one to one appointments, as well as support with job search, creating CVs, completing job applications, digital skills and wellbeing support. Citizens Advice Bureau also runs an outreach service at the same time.

The Youth Centre is managed by a committee of volunteers and as well as hosting a weekly youth club is also used by local community groups as a meeting place.

Popping up in a street near you!

Look out for our Tenant Participation and WHQS Environmental Officers who will be popping along to a street near you over the next few months. Our Officers will be carrying out short surveys to find out your views on the services we currently provide and to see how we can encourage you to get involved with shaping our services in the future.

Our Officers will be easily identifiable and will have plenty of information to share with you. Please come along to see us even if it is just to say hello!



How we use your information

Privacy notices provide an explanation of how we will use your information including:

- Why we need it
- Who we will share it with
- How long it will be kept

Caerphilly Homes summary privacy notice

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 visit the council's website:

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/My-Council/Data-protection-and-freedom-of-information

Rechargeable repairs

As landlord we have an obligation to keep our housing stock in good repair. We will do this when repairs are reported, with no cost to the tenant, providing the repair is a landlord responsibility and is required as a result of fair wear and tear. This normally means where the fixture or fitting has worn out or has come to the end of its natural life. The majority of tenants keep their homes in good condition but there are some who do cause damage deliberately or through neglect. Where such jobs are required, we call these rechargeable repairs.

Other things we will recharge tenants for include not being at home when we call for a pre-arranged appointment, criminal damage, misuse of the emergency out of hours service and repairs which are tenant's maintenance responsibility.

More information can be found in your tenant handbook, by searching 'Rechargeable repairs policy' at caerphilly.gov.uk or by contacting your local housing office.

Changes to kitchen colour choices

When tenants receive kitchen upgrades as part of Caerphilly Homes' Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme, they are offered the opportunity to choose from three kitchen unit colours and three worktop colours.

Recently, Caerphilly Homes' chosen kitchen manufacturer rationalised its range and, as a result, no longer offer the Beech kitchen and Aztec Granite worktop. This news has come at a crucial time in our WHQS programme, so is not ideal.

However, we want to assure tenants that we are still able to offer three colour choices for both units and worktops. Rosewood has now replaced Beech for units and Aticos Gold has replaced the Aztec Granite worktop. Both colours complement the existing flooring choices and border tiles; samples will be shown to you during the survey of your home.

Protecting your home



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

For total peace of mind we can provide council tenants with a home contents insurance that can be paid weekly with your rent.

With no excess to pay on a standard policy, and cover on a "new for old" basis on most items, can you afford not to take out cover?

How much does it cost?

This will depend on the amount you need to insure for. When considering the amount to insure you will need to work out how much it would cost to replace all of your contents.

Cover starts from just 40p per week for £5000 cover on the standard policy.

Full accidental damage cover is also available from as little as 63p per week with just a £25 excess, and for an optional additional premium you are also able to cover your belongings away from the home, your wheelchairs or mobility scooters and your hearing aids.

How to apply

To apply you can contact our Rents Section on 01443 811450 or by emailing rents@caerphilly.gov.uk. You can also pick up a form from your local housing office or print one from our website www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Housing/Current-council-tenants/Home-contents-insurance

Improvements unveiled at sheltered housing scheme



Mr Salmon is presented with the key for the newly improved communal lounge by Rob Taylor, WHQS Foreman

A celebration event was held to unveil improvements to the communal lounge at one of our sheltered housing schemes recently. Residents at Gwyddon Court and The Ranks in Abercarn held the event to mark the completion of extensive improvements carried out at the scheme as part of our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme. Improvements were carried out

in tenants' homes, as well as to the scheme's communal areas.

Mrs Joan Salmon, a tenant at Gwyddon Court, said "We were really happy with the WHQS works that took place here. We've had our kitchen and partial bathroom re-done, electrical re-wiring, new central heating and new fire doors. We were moved into a different flat in the building while the works took place and we were a little bit apprehensive at first but the staff were really helpful which made the transition easier."

Mrs Ann Mantle, who also lives at Gwyddon Court, added, "The workmen that came here for the WHQS work went above and beyond to help. I've had my kitchen and bathroom improved in addition to the communal lounge in the building also being upgraded. The improvements to the communal lounge were really beneficial as we hold many social functions there. I sent a letter to all the staff involved to say a massive thank you for all their work."



Gwyddon Court - before



Gwyddon Court - after

New Caerphilly housing initiative launched

A new housing initiative has launched in the Caerphilly county borough which aims to help private landlords find long term tenants for their properties, whilst also preventing homelessness.

The Caerphilly Keys project is being led by the Housing Solutions Team at Caerphilly Homes, who initially piloted the scheme in August 2018.

Through the scheme, the Caerphilly Keys team match people to suitable properties then work with both the tenant and landlord to sustain the tenancy. The service is provided free of charge, with viewings and quarterly monitoring visits arranged by the Caerphilly Keys team.

Derek Walsh, a private landlord who is currently renting a property through Caerphilly Keys, said "Before joining

Caerphilly Keys I had thought about selling my rental property because of problems I'd experienced with previous tenants.

Renting my property through Caerphilly Keys gives me peace of mind that my tenant is being supported by the council's team. I'm also glad to be giving a home to someone who would otherwise be homeless; after spending many years as a foster carer, giving a helping hand to others is really important to me."

Private landlords interested in renting their properties through the scheme should contact the council's Caerphilly Keys team on 01443 873564 or by emailing Keys@caerphilly.gov.uk



Derek Walsh

Be aware of doorstep callers

We'd like to warn tenants to be aware of doorstep callers.

The message comes after several Caerphilly Homes' tenants have been informed that they may find themselves incurring legal costs after signing agreements with doorstep callers. Please contact your local housing office or the council's Insurance Team for advice if you are in any doubt about callers to your home.

Cllr Lisa Phipps, the council's Cabinet Member for Homes and Places, said "We've seen a number of cases where tenants may find themselves with large legal bills to pay as a result of signing documents with doorstep callers who have claimed to be able to support them with issues around repairs. Callers may not always be what they seem and the council encourages tenants to seek advice from officers before signing any documents."

Tenants can also request 'no cold calling' stickers for their windows and doors by contacting their local housing office.



Moving home?



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

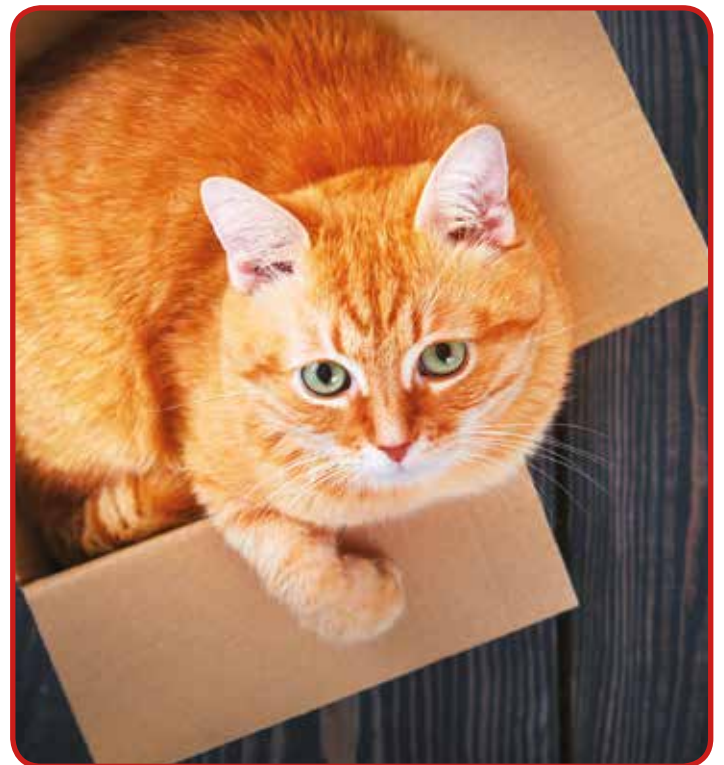
You may have decided to move home for a number of reasons and whether you're moving to another council property, to one owned by another landlord or buying your own home there are some things you need to do beforehand.

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 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.



Whilst we do our best to make sure that the information in this newsletter is accurate, we can sometimes get things wrong; please always check with us first!