

Caerphilly Homes

Winter Issue 7

Winners of Transforming Lives and Communities Awards 2015



Winners & runners up with Cllr Keith Reynolds, Jeff Cuthbert AM & Gwyn Price AM

We held our second annual Transforming Lives and Communities Awards on 28th September. The awards, which recognise the unsung heroes making a difference to tenants and local communities, were presented as part of a celebration event at Penallta House, Ystrad Mynach which was hosted by Cllr Keith Reynolds, Leader of the council.

Award winners on the evening were: -

Transforming Communities Award – Group

Winner – Tarragan

Runner up – Argoed Residents for a Safer Community

Transforming Communities Award – Individual

Winner – Geraint Lewis

Transforming Lives Award – Group

Winner – Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent Citizens Advice Bureau

Runner up – Sensory Loss Project Group



Transforming Lives Award – Individual

Winner – Lisa Evans

Runner up – Michael Legg

'The Extra Mile' Employee Award

Winner – Dave Bowen

Runners up – Mandy Betts, Jo Thomas, Sarah Parry

A Special Achievement Award was also presented to June Thomas, an Estate Management Officer with the Caerphilly Homes team. Since the sudden death of her 15 year old son, Jack, in 2012, June has worked tirelessly fundraising and campaigning for defibrillators to be fitted in all public buildings.

Karen James, Manager at Lansbury Park Housing Office, also presented June with a cheque for £1,580.00. The money was raised for Jack's Appeal through the sale of 'book hedgehogs' made by Karen and her daughter.

The awards were sponsored by our single source supply partner, Robert Price Builders' Merchants, along with their suppliers Seren Electrical, Nuairé, Quinn Radiators, Rixonway Kitchens and 3D flooring.



Karen James, June Thomas & Cllr Reynolds

Caerphilly Homes
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Is your child entitled to free school meals?

If you're eligible for free school meals it means that your child can enjoy delicious, healthy meals without the bills and the fuss of making packed lunches.

If you pay for your child to have school meals currently you could save around £580 per year if they qualify for free school meals.

Your child may be entitled to receive free school meals if you receive one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income does not exceed £16,190
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit 'run-on' - the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit.



Accessing free school meals also allows them to receive a one-off clothing grant of £105 when the child is moving from primary school to their first year of secondary school.

In addition schools receive £1050 additional funding for every child registered for Free School Meals. This funding must be directly targeted at Free School Meal pupils. Claim online at www.caerphilly.gov.uk or get further advice by contacting Catering Services on 01443 864055 or email catering@caerphilly.gov.uk

Improving the social housing allocation process

We previously told you about work we're doing, with housing associations in the county borough, to simplify the way people apply for social housing. To do this a single point of application (a common housing register) will be introduced along with a new set of rules to decide how people are selected for properties (a common allocation policy).

We'll be using a new IT system for the common housing register, provided by Abritas – a UK web-based housing solutions company. This system will allow people to apply

and manage their housing applications on line; this will also make the service more efficient. Support will be available for people who do not have access or are unable to use the internet.

The new system is expected to be implemented by summer 2016. For more information visit the common housing register page on the council's website, email privatesectorhousing@caerphilly.gov.uk or telephone 01495 235216.

Mascot competition

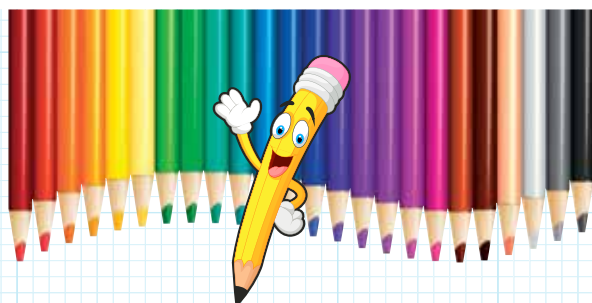
We're looking for young people to design a character mascot for Caerphilly Homes.

Thank you to those people who have already entered – we have extended the competition, but your entries will still be included.

PRIZES INCLUDE: £50 Maxim Cinema voucher for winner; arts & crafts gifts for runners up

To be eligible: young people must be 16 or under and live in a Caerphilly Homes property.

- Use your imagination – it can be any type of animal, character or creature, you can do a drawing, painting or collage
- Add notes to your design to explain your ideas in as much detail as possible



- Your character should represent what Caerphilly Homes means to you
- Give your mascot a name

Send your completed design with your name, address and contact telephone number clearly shown to:

Either your Area or Neighbourhood Housing Office or Tenant & Community Involvement Team, Business & Technology Centre, Tredomen, CF82 7FN.

Closing date for entries is Friday 18th December.

What does the Repairs & Improvements Group do?

By Dianne Moore, the group's Deputy Lead Tenant



The Repairs & Improvements Group was set up following the stock transfer ballot. There are 13 tenants who sit on the group from across the county borough and, since the group has been set up, they have been working hard on your behalf. Together we have achieved the following:

- We have been involved in the selection process for the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS); choosing the colour choices for kitchen worktops, units, flooring and tiles.
- We also worked with managers to get cornicing added and for extra plastering to be done as standard to enhance the kitchens.
- We were also involved in the colour choices for bathrooms and helped ensure pipework is boxed in.
- We worked to ensure that when gas fires are taken out the whole chimney breast is plastered.

As well as working on WHQS, we have also done a lot to improve the services of response repairs. Our group's achievements so far are:

- Revised re-let standard for void properties
- New recharge policy introduced
- Tenant maintenance responsibilities revised and updated
- Communications for centralised repairs improved
- Handy Person service developed
- Damp & condensation leaflet and video
- Appointment system for repair inspections
- Safety notification on use of portable heating appliances
- Tenant handbook revised
- Gardening service

We will continue to work closely with management to get the best possible outcomes for tenants.



Do you have odd jobs that need doing to get your home ready for Christmas?

Are you aged 60 or over, or have a disability?

Our Handy Person Scheme could be just what you need!



The service is excellent value for money and carried out by a member of our maintenance team equipped with their own tools. You could use the service for things like:

- Fitting curtain tracks or poles
- Hanging curtains
- Trimming internal doors
- Fixing shelving
- Assembling flat-pack furniture
- Hanging pictures and mirrors

PLUS – We're still running our special offer of 50% off for first time users!

Introductory rate of just £10 per hour!

Don't forget the price is per hour, not per job, so you could get more than one thing done!

For more information please contact your local housing office.

Some tips to help keep you and your family safe this Christmas



Cooking

- Never cook with oil / fat if you've been drinking alcohol.
- If an oil or fat pan catches fire.....
- If it's safe to do so, turn off the heat, close the kitchen door and call 999.
- NEVER throw water onto the fire.

Christmas Decorations

- Don't attach decorations to lights or heaters, as they can burn easily.

- Don't overload electrical sockets. Always switch Christmas lights off and unplug them before you go to bed.
- Check your Christmas tree lights carry the British Safety Standard.
- Don't place candles near your Christmas tree or materials that can catch alight easily.

Smoking

- Make sure smoking materials are never left to burn attended.
- Never smoke in bed or in an armchair when feeling drowsy or when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Never smoke near someone who is on oxygen.

If you live in flats with communal areas:

- Don't obstruct the communal areas.
- Don't prop open fire doors in communal areas.
- Don't clutter stairs, corridors and landings with personal items or things that can set fire easily.
- Don't store flammable materials in cupboards that have electrical circuits.

Rent Smart Wales

– A new law for landlords and letting agents

New laws came into place, from 23rd November this year, as part of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 which affect all private landlords and letting agents in Wales.

If you own or manage a house in Wales, occupied by someone other than yourself in return for a rent, this new law will almost certainly apply to you.

The new law means:

- All private landlords will be required to register with Rent Smart Wales. They will also have to register their properties.
- If a landlord wants to manage the property themselves, they must demonstrate they are 'fit and proper' to hold a licence, and undertake training.
- Alternatively, they will be able to appoint a licensed agent to manage the property on their behalf.

Landlords who need to register, and landlords and agents who need to become licensed, will be able to register and apply for a licence from this date. They will have 12 months



from 23 November 2015 in which to comply with the new legislation.

Rent Smart Wales will improve the image of the private rented sector, benefit people who rent their home in the sector and improve the practices of landlords and agents; helping to tackle the bad practice amongst some private landlords.

Further information is available at www.rentsmart.gov.wales / www.rhentudoeth.llyw.cymru where you are also able to subscribe to receive updates.

Recharge policy

We've recently introduced a Recharge Policy for repairs within the home, which complements the procedure which has been in place for many years. The purpose of the policy is to inform tenants of when they would be liable for a recharge, the cost of repairs and how tenants can request a review of a recharge if they believe the recharge is incorrect. The full Recharge Policy can be found on the council's website, or you could ask your local housing office.

The policy aims to provide tenants with the following information:

Rechargeable Repairs Definitions – why you could be recharged:

- **Neglect** – Preventable damage caused by the tenant failing to take the appropriate action or through carelessness
- **Property clearance** – During a tenancy or when a tenancy ends
- **Damage** – Caused by actions of the tenant, former tenant, tenants family, invited guests or a contractor employed by the tenant
- **Accidental damage**
- **Criminal damage** – Where the tenant has reported that the damage to the property occurred as a result of either criminal or anti-social behaviour, and fails to take appropriate action

- **No access** – The tenant is recharged for the cost of a failed appointment when prior arrangements have been made
- **Abuse of the emergency service** – Where it is clear that the repair could have waited until the following working day
- **Tenant responsibility** – Repairs that the tenant is required to carry out or as a result of alterations they have made to their home
- **Tenants alterations** – That are not considered up to standard

Please be aware – the cost of some recharges can be reclaimed through an insurance policy for which the council offer a suitable scheme. If you wish to consider this please contact our Insurance Section on 01443 863523 for more information.

Review Process:

The policy allows tenants to request a review of their recharge if they have good reason to disagree with a decision. This could be because: -

- The tenant thinks the cost is incorrect
- The tenant thinks there are special circumstances, which have not been properly assessed or taken into consideration

Are you looking for pre-used furniture? Or would you like to donate your furniture to someone in need? Then perhaps The Furniture Revival could help...

The Furniture Revival is a social enterprise based in Rhymney. It aims to reduce the carbon footprint of the Caerphilly county borough by carrying out free collections of good quality, unwanted furniture and electrical goods from households, whilst working towards of its social aim of alleviating poverty by redistributing these items to those in need.

The Furniture Revival team, collect, repair, re-clean and reuse items where they are fit for purpose and make them available for reuse. At its warehouse it offers items from three piece suites, to wardrobes, beds and other bedroom furniture to kitchen furniture and household appliances such as cookers, washing machines and fridge-freezers.

It has recently expanded its reuse services to include a Community Repaint scheme focusing on reusing paint in the local community, with paint available to individuals in store at £1 per litre along with free paint donations to community groups and charities to aid the local community as a whole. The Furniture Revival works with local partners to offer other reuse services such as carpet tiles, and ICT equipment for customers.



The Furniture Revival is open to everyone whether you are working, on a low income or benefits. If you are in receipt of benefits there may be a substantial discount via membership scheme.

If you are wish to find out more about arranging a collection or about items or services on offer please call The Furniture Revival on 01685 846830 or check out its website www.thefurniturerevival.co.uk

Meet your Estate Management Officers (EMOs)

Upper Rhydney Valley



June Thomas, Huw Jordan & Kate Isaacs

	Areas covered:
Elizabeth Hurley Tel: 01443 873531 Email: hurlee@caerphilly.gov.uk	Upper, Middle & Lower Aberbargoed; Maesycwmmmer; Phillipstown; Tiryberth; Ystrad Mynach
Ian Jones Tel: 01443 873543 Email: jonesi@caerphilly.gov.uk	Abertysswg; Brithdir; Deri; Fochriw; New Tredegar; Pontlottyn; Tirphil
June Thomas Tel: 01443 873530 Email: thomaj1@caerphilly.gov.uk	Bargoed; Cascade; Gelligaer; Maes Mabon; Nelson; Penpedairheol; Penybryn
Jayne Newman-Lomax Tel: 01443 873539 Email: newmaj@caerphilly.gov.uk	Cefn Hengoed; Gilfach Lower; Gilfach – Phase 1, 2 & 3; Hengoed
Huw Jordan Tel: 01443 873526 Email: jordah@caerphilly.gov.uk	Llanbradach; Upper & Lower Penryheol; Pwllypant; Thomasville; Ty Isaf; Ty Nant
Kate Isaacs Tel: 01443 873527 Email: isaack@caerphilly.gov.uk	Rhydney North & Rhydney South

Lansbury Park



Elizabeth Price and Debra Smythe

	Areas covered:
Debra Smythe Tel: 02920 860917 Email: smythd@caerphilly.gov.uk	Abertridwr; Brynccenydd; Caerbragdy; Churchill Park; Claude Road; Trecastell; Nantddu; Senghenydd; Waunfach
Elizabeth Price Tel: 02920 860917 Email: pricee@caerphilly.gov.uk	Lansbury Park; Porset Park

Eastern Valleys



Michelle Long, Mike Constance, Karen Rees, Mike Spencer-Jenkins, Anne Moseley

	Areas covered:
Mike Constance Tel: 01495 235446 Email: constm@caerphilly.gov.uk	Argoed; Britannia; Fleur-de-lys; Markham – Hollybush; Pengam; Upper Trelyn; Cefn Fforest; Fairview; Twyn Gardens
Karen Rees Tel: 01495 235226 Email: reesk1@caerphilly.gov.uk	Lower & Upper Penllwyn; Springfield; Blackwood
Mike Spencer-Jenkins Tel: 01495 235434 Email: spencm@caerphilly.gov.uk	Lower & Upper Ty-Sign; Risca
Michelle Long Tel: 01495 235001 Email: longm@caerphilly.gov.uk	Pontymister; Crospenmaen; Oakdale; Gelligroes; Morrisville; Pontywaun; Treowen; Trinant; Wattsville; Ynysddu – Cwmfelinfach
Anne Moseley Tel: 01495 235256 Email: mosela@caerphilly.gov.uk	Pentwynmawr; Abercarn; Crosskeys; Cwmcarn; Highmeadow; Llanfach; Newbridge; Lower & Upper Pantside; Persondy; Westend

Graig y Rhacca



Justine Rees and Amanda Redman

	Areas covered:
Amanda Redman Tel: 02920 853053 Email: redmaa@caerphilly.gov.uk	Bedwas; Machen; Rudry; Trapwell; Trecenydd; Trethomas
Justine Rees Tel: 02920 853052 Email: reesj6@caerphilly.gov.uk	Graig y Rhacca

New homes in the county borough to help with issue of 'bedroom tax'

The rules linking housing benefit to household size were introduced on the 1st April 2013. Since this time, the council has identified a need for additional one and two-bedroom affordable homes in some areas.

In 2013 and 2014, Welsh Government made available £40 million additional Social Housing Grant under a scheme called the Smaller Properties Programme. This programme was aimed specifically at helping to alleviate the impact of the UK Government's "Bedroom Tax". The Housing Strategy team submitted bids for funding under this programme.

In phase 1, funding of £1,583,095 was approved for the delivery of 28, 1 and 2 bed homes on two sites in Trethomas and Cefn Fforest. In Phase 2, further funding of £1,565,828 was secured for the delivery of a further 26, 1 and 2 bedroom homes in central Caerphilly and Bargoed.

The developments have been delivered by our partner Housing Associations, United Welsh and the Seren Group. The allocation of the homes are prioritised by the council's Housing Allocations and Advice team.

As well as providing much needed affordable housing in the area, the developments are providing employment opportunities, including apprenticeships, with the opportunity to gain valuable "hands-on" learning.



The council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr David Poole said "Caerphilly County Borough Council is committed to working in partnership with local housing associations to develop affordable, good quality housing for people within the county borough. I am particularly pleased to see the Associations commitment to local employment and training that is helping to create jobs for local people". If you're affected by under occupation (Bedroom Tax), please register your interest in the Bargoed and Caerphilly developments with our Housing Allocations and Advice Section on 01443 873610.

Support your local food bank this Christmas



Every day people in the Caerphilly county borough go hungry for a number of reasons, from redundancy to receiving an unexpected bill on a low income.

Foodbanks provide a minimum of 3 days emergency food and support to people experiencing crisis.

All food is donated by the public and sorted by volunteers.

Foodbanks in the Caerphilly county borough:

- **Blackwood & District Foodbank** Oasis Christian Centre, Bryn Road, Cefn Fforest, Blackwood; Tel: 07817 238608
- **Rhymney Valley Foodbank** St Dingat's Church, Church Terrace, New Tredegar; Tel: 07432 322906
- **Risca Foodbank** Salvation Army, 66a Commercial Street, Risca; Tel: 07599 9733112
- **Bridging the Gap (Caerphilly Foodbank)** Elim Church, Caerphilly; Tel: 02920 868593

Foodbanks rely on the support of local communities, so please donate to your foodbank this Christmas.