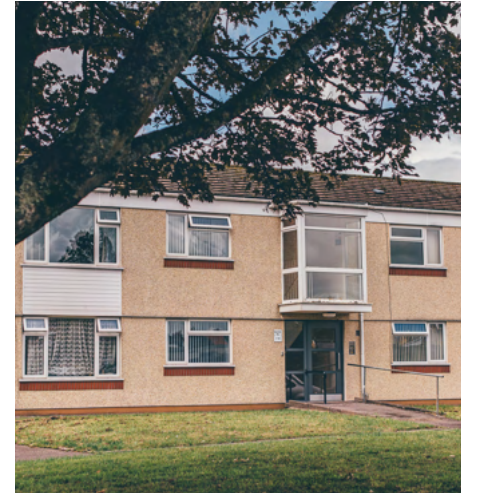




Cartref



All you need to know about rent

How we set it, where does your money go and who can help if you are worried?

More on **page 6**.



Meet the team that goes the extra mile

We caught up with Donna, our Intensive Housing Manager who told us all about the extra support her team gives tenants when they need it most. More on **page 4**.

Masterchef makes a difference

Cooking up a treat at Haven schemes in Pontardawe has become Alun's speciality over the last few years.

Sunday lunch, curry nights, cawl and even the odd BBQ over the summer months, it has all helped bring residents together to

create a community. In fact, anything social, Alun is instrumental in making it happen!

Read more on page 5.



Win £50 by going green

Go digital with Cartref and be entered into our prize draw to win a £50 shopping voucher.

More on the **back page**.

Spreading Christmas cheer



Festive donation to NPT Cancer Challenge

In the run up to Christmas, we were busy coordinating hundreds of festive donations thanks to the generosity of our contractors and colleagues.

Christmas Day dinners, gifts, hampers, afternoon teas, donations of food, plus

hundreds of selection boxes, biscuits, chocolates and mince pies all helped spread Christmas cheer at a difficult time for many.

Samara from our Economic and Social Regeneration team said: "We have some wonderful charities and community groups in Neath Port Talbot carrying out

vital work, so we were delighted to help 28 of them with gifts and monetary donations worth £7000.

"We have also worked closely with our own staff, partners and community leaders to be able to identify those in need and help as many people as possible

locally with some lovely donations. We hope this made a difference to them."

Could we support your community or a local good cause with a donation? Get in touch, email: community@tairarian.co.uk

Selection boxes aplenty at Croeserw Community Centre



Community Challenge returns

Our Community Challenge is back, and we are looking for three worthwhile local projects to transform in 2024.

So, what's it all about?

The Community Challenges involve our staff and contractors volunteering at a community facility for a day to give it a makeover. Painting, gardening, decorating, repairs or general maintenance are all things we can carry out. Schools, churches, community centres and childcare facilities have benefitted in the past.

Who could we help this year?

Please spread the word and encourage any local community facilities to apply. All we ask is that they must be based in Neath Port Talbot, not for profit and to complete our application form by 29th March, sharing details of what they would like us to help with.

You can find the form here:



Academy have their say

Our Academy have been involved in some important work recently, including conversations around rent setting and hearing from teams across the business about progress on sustainable planet. Their thoughts and feedback were fed into a storyboard which has just been shared with our Board.

You can have a read here:



The Academy is our tenant voice panel. As a member, you will evaluate how we are performing, hear what progress we've made and share ideas on how we can

improve. You'll regularly meet senior colleagues and get to the heart of what we do and why we do it.

Interested in having your say? Get in touch on 01639 506079, email governance@tairarian.co.uk or direct message us on social media.



Welcome from Linda



Happy New Year to you all.

The run up to Christmas was a busy time, supporting our tenants, communities, local groups and charities with festive donations.

Kindness from our contractors and colleagues meant over £7000 worth of dinners, hampers and donations were made. Now our focus turns to our Community Challenges. DIY SOS style

projects to benefit local facilities here in Neath Port Talbot. Find out more about how to apply on page 2.

In this edition we caught up with our Intensive Housing Management (IHM) team to hear about the role they play in supporting tenants, more on page 4.

Recently you will have received your rent booklet which sets out what rent (and where applicable) service charges you will pay from April. Following lots of conversations with tenants and a survey, we have set charges in line with Welsh Government guidelines, more about rent on page 6.

As I say in every edition of Cartref, we know that the cost-of-living crisis is still being felt by lots of our tenants so if you are struggling financially, please don't suffer in silence and get in touch with our team on **01639 315000**.

Linda
Chief Executive

Don't forget to scan the QR codes for more details.

If you see a QR code in Cartref, grab your smart phone, open your camera and hover over the code. This will bring up the website page you need. Just tap to open.

If you don't have a smart phone, you can visit our website and use the search bar to find info on the topic.

www.tairarian.co.uk

Funding sees hub transformed



Roxanne from our community team with member of Graig Chapel and contractors ASW

The Graig Community Hub and Garden in Trebanos was set up just over two years ago to transform the disused Graig Chapel Hall into a space where the community can come together.

Despite being popular with local residents, schools and groups, the hall itself had seen better days and needed a little TLC.

Using money from the Welsh Procurement Fund, we called on the help of our friends at ASW Property Services to set about bringing the centre up to date.

The team got to work, stripping out the old electrics and replacing it with more modern and safer circuits. With the electrics safely updated, new lights were fitted both inside

and outside the building. They also installed a new hot water system in the toilets as well as fencing around the community garden.

The biggest change was ripping out the old, out-dated kitchen and installing a brand-new one, ready to cater for the centre's ever-popular weekly coffee mornings, as well as other events.

Rory Castle, one of the volunteers who helps run the centre said:



New fencing

"We are extremely grateful to Tai Tarian's community team for securing the funding to carry out this work and, of course, to ASW Property Services for taking on the challenge. They were a pleasure to work with and went above and beyond for us.

"The building we use had become a bit run down, and whilst there is still lots more work to be done, Tai Tarian and ASW have given us a great start."



New kitchen



A catch up with the two Rowans

Two years ago, our Cartref cover stars were the two Rowans, forging careers in the building trade with Hale Construction thanks to our redevelopment of County Flats. Recently we had a catch up see how they were getting on:

Scan here to watch on TikTok



Be scam aware

Beware of messages that come out of the blue asking about your repairs with us, if you are wondering how someone got your details, if they are genuine or how they got your number then it's probably a scam.

If you get a message from someone pretending to be us or our contractors get in touch with us to check things out.

Going the extra mile for tenants



Donna out in the community

In the latest look at one of our teams, we turn the spotlight on our Intensive Housing Management (IHM) team to find out more about them and what they do. We spoke to Team Leader Donna:

As Donna arrives for our chat, she's on the phone to a member of the team, helping her to resolve a tricky situation and giving them advice on what they should do.

As she ends the call, Donna says that that pretty much sums up the work of IHM, always going from one challenge to another.

With that situation resolved, she goes about telling us what their role is:

"We're here to help tenants to sustain their tenancy and live happily and healthily in their homes.

"Sadly, we have many tenants who struggle to live independently and sometimes they need a little extra support, and that's where we come in.

"Concern might come from colleagues who have visited them and it's our job then to assess those concerns and, if needed, make contact to find out more and work with them to try and help them.

"This can be for all sorts of reasons, including vulnerability, domestic abuse, loneliness,

hoarding, substance misuse or someone who is suffering from a mental illness. Often the tenant can be dealing with illness or maybe a bereavement and just needs a little helping hand to get back on track.

"Depending on circumstances, we'll either make visits every week, fortnight or month. We'll work with them to understand their problem and offer to help. It's about motivating and encouraging the tenants to work with us to solve their problems and enable them to live independently. In some cases, more expert help is needed, and that's when we refer them on to specialist organisations such as Crisis, Age Cymru or domestic abuse charities.

"Our aim is to turn those weekly visits into two-week ones, and the two-week visits into monthly ones, until we get to a point where they no longer need our support. Depending on each case, this can take a matter of weeks, but it may also take years."

Donna explains that the tasks the teams might need to help with can vary enormously:

"If it's the tenant's first time living by themselves, we might need to help them set up payments for household bills, or, it might be encouraging them to stay on top of the household chores. In hoarding cases, it might be working with them to gradually reduce the amount of things they have in their homes.

"However, in every case, we are always looking for the root cause of the problem. If we don't identify and solve that then we're just going to keep finding ourselves back at square one."

The IHM team is 16-strong and is made up of people with a variety of backgrounds including housing, care, anti-social behaviour and independent living and Donna is justifiably proud of the work they do:

"They really do go above and beyond to help our tenants. Building trust is vital if we're going to help them. I had one of the team spending weeks sitting on a tenant's doorstep, talking through the letterbox, before they felt confident enough to let them in and start helping.

"Sadly, we are seeing more and more tenants that need our help. We get around half a dozen new referrals every week and are currently helping around 350 tenants."

With so many cases and the team dealing with challenging circumstances, Donna says supporting each other is vital:

"We have weekly team catch-ups where we talk about who we are supporting and share ideas and how to deal with things.

"I also have regular meetings with each team member, where they can talk openly to me about what they're dealing with. You have to be a strong and resilient person to do this job, but that

doesn't mean that support isn't there for them whenever they need it.

"What the team does has a direct impact on people's lives and that's quite a responsibility to carry. I'm very proud of the way they do that and how their actions can turn people's lives around."



Christmas dinners

For the past three years the team has worked with local businesses to deliver Christmas dinners to vulnerable tenants in the community.

Giving up their own time on Christmas Eve, the team pack their cars with over 100 dinners and take them to the tenants' homes.

A tenant who received a dinner last year said:

"I'm on my own at Christmas so the expense and time to cook a Christmas dinner means I haven't bothered for a long time. I was so touched when Tai Tarian knocked the door to give me a dinner, it was totally unexpected and absolutely lovely."

New homes round up



Things take shape

With homes being built across the borough, we were delighted to see the first new tenants moving into Pant Celydd, Margam just in time for Christmas.

At Meadow Road, Neath 52 homes are progressing well, a mixture of apartments, bungalows and family homes, with tenants expected to start moving in during the spring.

At County Flats, Sandfields another 24 homes are being redeveloped with an additional

15 new homes being built. Whilst in Port Talbot town centre, on the site of the old Eagle House, groundworks have continued ready for 18 new flats to be built.

Once ready for letting, these homes will be advertised on Homes by Choice.

If you have friends or family looking for a new home, ask them to apply for housing with us now, so they can bid once these homes become available.

Just go to the 'Find a Home' section of our website.

Masterchef makes a difference

Continued from page 1

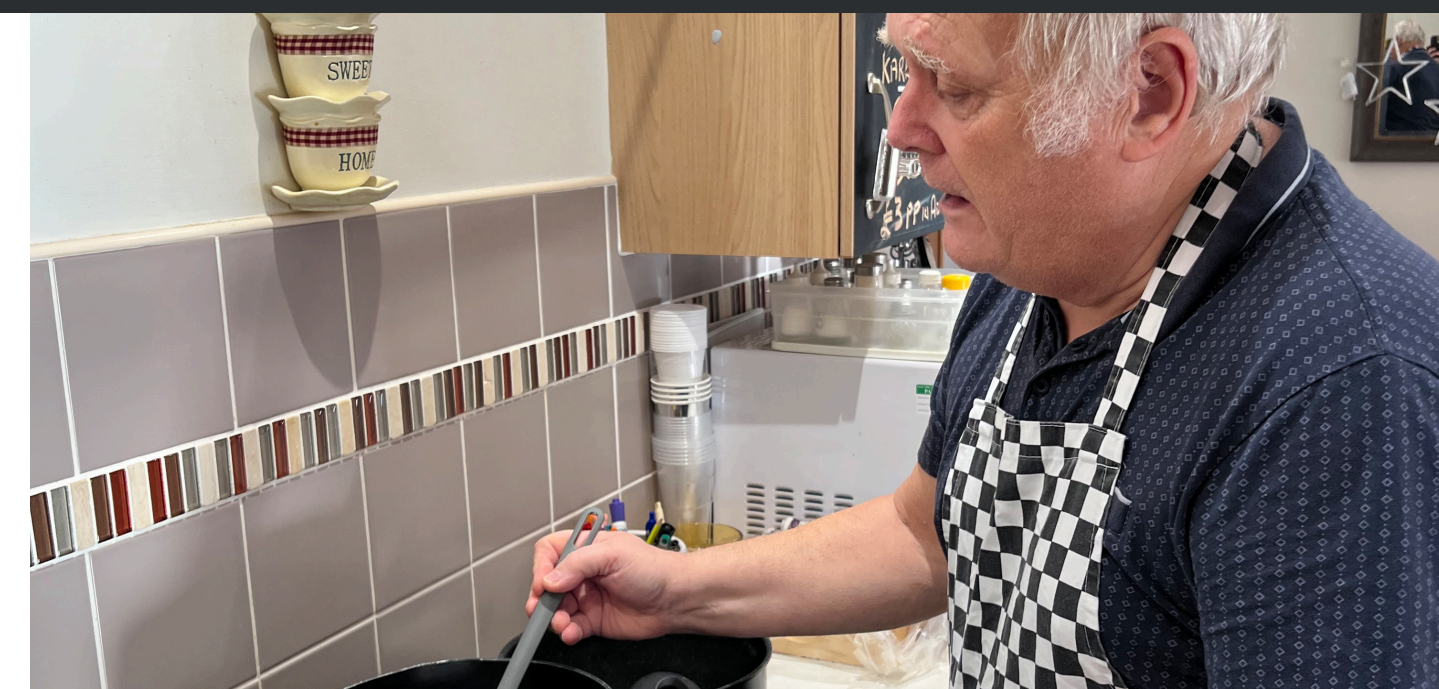
Alun Watkins moved to one of our Haven schemes in Pontardawe three years ago.

A sociable sort, he was never going to keep himself to himself and was keen to get to know his new neighbours.

Following Covid the social calendar at the scheme was bare, so Alun soon became instrumental in organising regular coffee mornings, quizzes, and karaoke nights, but when it came to cooking up a treat in the kitchen he really came into his own.

"We have a committee which runs the social side of stuff and things were really coming good. I love cooking, traditional Sunday dinners, your old school desserts, comfort food really. I've always cooked, taught by my mother and grandmother, it's just something I enjoy. So, I thought well, can we do it here?"

"The answer was a resounding no – we just didn't have the right equipment in the lounge



Alun in action

to cater for everyone. So, I put in some funding applications to get a freezer, extra fridge, extra microwave, plates, cutlery and bain-maries.

"With all that in place it meant I can now confidently cook for up to 30 people and boy do we enjoy. Everyone chips in to cover the cost of the food with anything left over put back into the committee, which can help with nice trips and afternoons out where I have a day off from cooking!

"In the summer, lunch is every other weekend with the odd BBQ if we get good weather. I do try to grow my own veg, so we had kidney beans galore last year, the carrots were all shapes and sizes, but they tasted great!

"In the winter Sunday lunch is the highlight of the week. We had beef last Sunday with rice pudding as a dessert, just the way my mam used to make it. In the main it's our residents, but people sometimes bring a

friend, or they might know someone in the community who is a little bit lonely, everyone has the best of welcomes."

Word is spreading, and Alun cooked up a treat in another Ponty scheme just before Christmas with a traditional turkey dinner.

"People were worrying they were going to poach me, but I love it here, I'm not going anywhere!"

Rent and service charges – Did you get your booklet?

Recently you will have received a booklet outlining the rent, and where applicable service charges you will need to pay from April onwards.

As a community landlord, we receive guidance from Welsh Government every year on how much we can charge you, while still ensuring we are able to spend on maintaining your home, providing services and improving our communities. We then calculate what this would mean in pounds and pence for all tenants to ensure what you pay is still affordable.

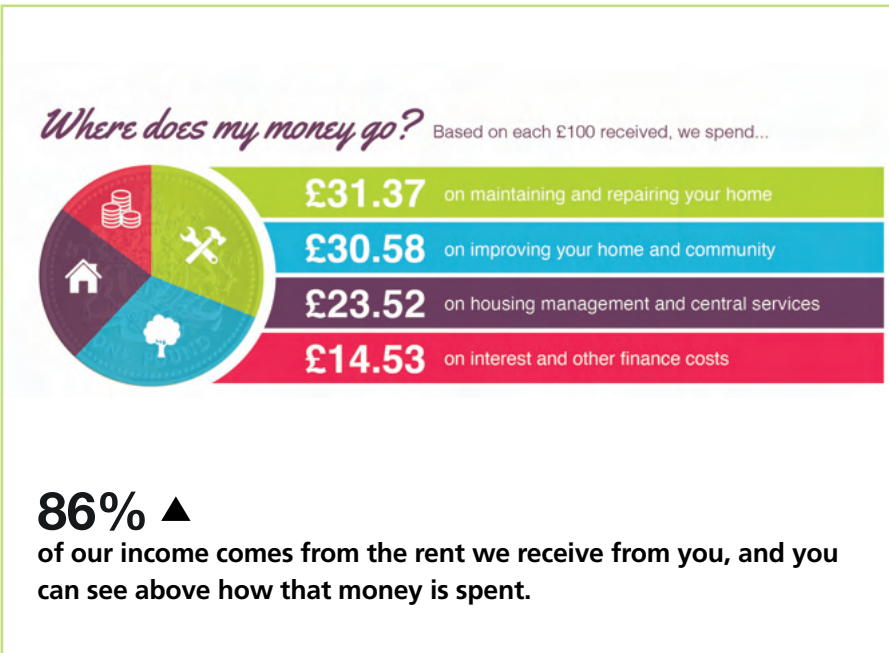
Speaking to tenants about this has been key, with a roadshow of summer workshops, face-to-face sessions and over 1000 responses from our survey on rent.

We have had important conversations with the people that matter.

A key part of this has been looking at our affordability principles which were developed with tenants.

These are:

- 1 We will compare our rents against market rents.
- 2 Our rents will be affordable, in-line with the Living Rent Model for households who earn a low wage.
- 3 Our rents will consider the number of bedrooms you have.
- 4 We will set out what you will receive for service charges, and will ensure the amount is fair, reasonable, and provides value for money.



Get in touch

If you're worried about paying your rent or your household budget being squeezed by higher bills and everyday costs, please get in touch with us as soon as possible. Whether you're in work or claiming benefits there may be help available. Contact details for your designated Rent Officer and Housing Officer are included on page 3 of your rent booklet or call us on 0300 777 0000 for further advice.

XL Bully advice

From 1st February 2024, it will be illegal to own an XL Bully, unless the dog has an exemption.

Owners can now apply for a certificate of exemption to legally keep their dog and information about how to do it and other rules that are in place is on this government website:



The certificate of exemption and insurance needs to be in place by 1st February. Dogs Trust offer a Companion Club membership of £25 which includes suitable insurance.

What should you do if you believe a dog is dangerous or banned?

Dangerous dogs are dealt with by the police under the Dangerous Dogs Act. In an emergency, contact the police directly on 999. Banned or stolen dogs should be reported directly to the police on 101.

What will we do?

If you believe a tenant of ours has a dangerous or banned dog, please contact us on 0300 777 0000 to advise us of your concerns after you have informed the police. We will then work with the police to establish if the animal is licenced and exempt, or if action needs to be taken.

If you live in one of our homes and own an XL Bully, please contact your Housing Officer.

We will fully expect you to comply with all requirements and will ask for proof of this. You will need to provide us with a copy of your Certificate of Exemption. If you fail to provide this, we will report this to the relevant authorities to enforce this.



Dealing with damp, mould or condensation this winter

The colder months mean we tend to see a rise in damp, mould or condensation in our homes.

If this is something you are worried about please get in touch with our contact centre on 0300 777 3000 or email dmc@tairarian.co.uk

If you do report damp or mould at your home, here is our commitment to you:

- ✓ We will listen and take your concerns seriously.
- ✓ We will arrange for your home to be inspected to find out what work may be needed.
- ✓ We will carry out any necessary repairs to fix any issues.
- ✓ We will make any necessary improvements to ventilation such as replacing extractor fans.
- ✓ We will carry out mould treatment where necessary.
- ✓ We will encourage you to keep in touch with us and will contact you again to ensure the issue hasn't come back.
- ✓ We will make sure your home is maintained to a high standard.

For advice on spotting the signs of damp, mould or condensation, visit our website:



Steph's top tips

Managed Migration confusion

From September last year, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) sent out leaflets to all Tax Credit claimants saying their "Tax Credits are ending" which caused panic and confusion with tenants thinking they have to claim Universal Credit (UC) earlier than they needed to. Remember, if nothing has changed, you only need to claim Universal Credit when you receive an actual Migration Notice letter.

Migration Notice letters will be issued from the DWP explaining what you need to do and how to get help if you need it.

The Migration Notice will tell you that you need to make a claim to UC within three months from the date of your

letter and that tax credits will end if you decide not to make a claim.

Anyone making a claim to UC after getting a Migration Notice letter will have their benefit entitlement protected through Transitional Protection. This means that people with no change in their circumstances will not have a reduced entitlement at the point they move to UC.

Those entitled to UC will receive their first payment approximately five weeks after submitting a claim and will receive payments once a month thereafter.

There is lots more information here but if you need help, please get in touch.



Benefit changes

The government released the 2023 Autumn Statement, here's some of the notable changes:

- Benefit rates will increase in line with inflation, meaning an increase of 6.7%. These increases will come into effect from April 2024.
- The state pension will be increased by 8.5% in April 2024, in line with average wage increase. The Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee will also increase by 8.5%.
- National living wage, also known as legal minimum wage, will increase from £10.42 to £11.44 an hour from April 2024. Also, the threshold will be lowered to include people aged 21 and over.
- The main 12% national insurance rate has also fallen to 10% from 6 January.

Don't forget if you are struggling, our Financial Inclusion and Universal Credit teams can help, whether you claim benefits or not. Get in touch on 01639 315000.

Be fire safe

Last year 27 homes were affected by fire or flood, with devastating consequences for tenants.

Before Christmas we started sharing tips on social media to help reduce the chances of fires starting at your home so here's a recap.

Did you know that more than half of accidental fires at home are started in the kitchen? Many kitchen fires happen when people are not paying attention, or they leave things unattended.

Make sure you keep your oven, hob and grill clean and in good working order. A build up of fat and grease can ignite a fire. Don't leave cooking unattended and keep tea towels, cloths or any other items away from the cooker and hob.

With so many devices needing charging in the home its tempting to stock up on cheap chargers and extension leads. Although it's cheaper to buy imported, unofficial chargers, fake mobile phone chargers are often made with poor



quality components that fail to meet UK safety regulations. This means they can cause injury, electric shocks and even fires. Using extension leads to charge devices is also risky as sockets become overloaded. Electric bikes and scooters are popular right now, but their batteries are the fastest growing fire risk.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions when charging, never cover your charger or battery pack, and always unplug your charger when done.

Finally don't wait for an emergency to find out if your

smoke alarm works. It only takes a minute and testing it regularly will keep you safe.



Housing calling!

We are committed to getting out and about in our communities more, visiting all our homes to build relationships with tenants and completing a property check at the same time.

With over 9000 homes this is a big task but we aim to have visited another 100 properties by the spring.

Homes are being picked throughout the borough and there is no need to worry about the visit.





Chilli and sticky rice

(Serves 4-6)

Ingredients come in at £2.08p for the entire meal, so for 4 people this costs 52p per person!

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 onion
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1/3rd packet of minced beef (166g)
- 1 beef stock cube
- 1 tin of chopped tomatoes
- 1/2 tin of water
- 2 tbsp tomato puree
- 1 can kidney beans
- 1/2 tin baked beans
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp – 2 tsp of chilli powder (depending on taste)
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- Salt and pepper – pinch
- 1.5 cups of rice and 3 cups of water

Method:

1. Chop and dice the onion and finely dice 1 clove of garlic. Heat 2 tbsp of oil in the pan. Add these to the frying pan and cook for around 5 minutes until softened.
2. Next add the minced beef to the pan and cook for a few minutes until the beef is browned.
3. Crumble a beef stock cube into the pan along with a tin of chopped tomatoes. Use the chopped tomato tin to measure 1/2 a tin of water and add this to the pan along with 2 tbsp of tomato puree.

4. Open and drain a tin of kidney beans and add to the pan. Next add half a tin of baked beans as well as 1/2 tsp of paprika, 1-2 tsp of chilli powder (depending on how spicy you'd like it), and 1/2 tsp of sugar. Add a pinch of salt and pepper to taste.
5. To make the rice, add 1.5 cups of rice to a saucepan and add 3 cups of boiling water. Bring the water to the boil and then reduce the heat so the water is gently simmering. Place a lid on the pan and set a timer for 15 minutes. Do not open the lid until the timer goes off! When 15 minutes is up, turn off the heat, remove the lid, use a fork to quickly fluff up the rice and then cover the pan with a clean tea towel. Leave for a few minutes.
6. Serve the rice together with the chilli.

For a tutorial on the recipe scan the QR code here.



Struggling with rising cost of food at the moment?



Our Financial Inclusion team can issue food bank vouchers. Get in touch with them on **01639 315000**.

Introducing the Fed Line project



With tenants starting a 4-week cookery programme with the Fed Line project recently, our winter Cartref recipe is provided by them. We caught up with Siobhan to find out more about the work they do.

Project is about supporting them through cookery and practical help, empowering people by focusing on long-term change over quick fixes. Our cookery classes focus on building confidence around cooking healthy, nutritious, family friendly meals on a budget.

“We support community food projects, organisations, individuals and families living in financial hardship. More people now than ever need to access emergency food through food banks and other support services and are facing daily challenges. The Fed Line

For more information about cooking sessions please contact siobhan@thefedlineproject.co.uk or visit www.thefedlineproject.co.uk

Tea break challenge

How to play?

Within the rows and columns are 9 “squares” (made up of 3 x 3 spaces). Each row, column and square needs to be filled out with the numbers 1-9, but these can only be used once. and columns are 9 “squares” (made up of 3 x 3 spaces).

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				5	3			8
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Give it a go!

Competition winners

Congratulations to Samantha from Cwmafan who won a £100 shopping voucher for giving us the correct answer of 17 for the number of times homes was mentioned in our autumn Cartref. Our Go Green winner was Rebecca from Ystalyfera.

Win £50 by going green

If you fancy receiving future editions of Cartref via e-mail instead of post, please let us know by emailing **media@tairarian.co.uk** All those who get in touch before 20th February will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 shopping voucher.

Masterchef makes a difference

Win a £50 VOUCHER

Need to get in touch?

- ☎ 0300 777 0000 (General enquiries 8.30am-5pm Monday to Friday)
- ☎ 0300 777 3000 (Report a repair) Emergency line available 24/7.



This document is available in alternative formats. Please phone 0300 777 0000 or email media@tairarian.co.uk to request a copy.

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