



Cartref



Life savers in our community

After installing lifesaving defibrillators in nine parts of the borough, Haven tenants have recently taken part in Heartbeat Trust awareness training to give them confidence to use the devices should they ever need to.

Residents are now keen to raise awareness of where these can be found and first aid help by downloading free apps.

More on page 2.



Christmas cheer

Community donations aplenty in the run up to Christmas.

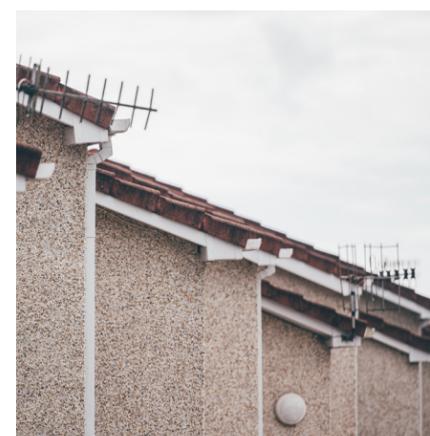
More on page 3.



Meet the team

We caught up with our Tenant Liaison Officers to find out the role they play when improvements happen at your home.

More on page 4.



All you need to know about rent

How we set it, where your money goes and who can help if you are worried.

More on page 6.

Raising awareness of lifesaving defibrillators in our communities



Andy, a resident at Llys Nant Fer, in Gwaun Cae Gurwen took part in a session:

“The visit from the Heartbeat Trust was fantastic, hands on and thorough, nothing was a silly question. Now I feel confident that I could use a defibrillator to help someone in need. Knowing we have one here on site makes me feel safer and I would encourage everyone to find out where their nearest is in their local community, you never know when you might need it.”

Our Independent Living Officer, Katherine has been raising awareness of defibs in the Cwmgors and Gwaun Cae Gurwen areas.

“When I lost a friend last year, we realised afterwards that there was a defib close by, which may have saved him. It’s wonderful that Tai Tarian have nine defibs across the borough, but it’s really important that we raise awareness of where these, and others are located, and how they work.

“The thought of responding to a cardiac emergency can

feel daunting, but defibrillators are designed to make it as straightforward as possible. Once accessed, they talk you through every step, so even if you’ve never used one before, you’ll know exactly what to do.

“By downloading the Maps AED app or visiting www.defibfinder.uk you will be able to find devices near you. Sharing this knowledge with friends and family could save a life.”

In 2021, we installed nine defibrillators across the borough, thanks to our community benefits fund and collaboration with local councillors. These lifesaving devices, supplied and maintained by the Heartbeat Trust, are accessible in key locations to provide vital support in emergencies.

More and more defibs are popping up in our communities. A real positive, as using them promptly when someone has a cardiac arrest can increase survival rates by up to 75%.

To raise awareness of how they work, Heartbeat Trust have held training sessions at three of our Haven schemes, giving residents the confidence to act quickly in an emergency.

Did you know?

Technology is transforming the way we respond to medical emergencies. If you have an Alexa device, you can access lifesaving guidance by simply saying, “**Alexa, start emergency CPR.**” This feature provides step-by-step CPR instructions while waiting for emergency help to arrive.

The British Heart Foundation app is also a valuable tool for managing heart health and learning essential skills such as CPR.

Digital boost for local groups

150 iPads which have been donated to community groups and schools have been making a difference to people’s lives and to the work of volunteers in our area.

From helping old friends to communicate after illness, allowing children to do their

homework, or helping a charity sort orders more easily, the devices have been making an impact.

The gadgets were donated by our technology team, while our community engagement team arranged their delivery.

Five devices are being used by NPT Mind to support courses for stroke and brain injury survivors.

Rachel Diplock is project lead for the NPT Wellbeing After Stroke Project. She said the devices were invaluable as using pen and paper can be impossible for people following stroke:

“We have a number of exercises helping people deal with things like health anxiety, with frustration or helping adapt to life after a stroke which can now be done using software and graphics on the iPads”.

Four schools also took delivery

of some of the iPads, helping ensure pupils can access tech if they need it to support their learning.

It’s fantastic to see our equipment being reused within the community where it can make a real difference.



Ysgol Bro Dur receiving an iPad donation

Watching out for DMC this winter

Winter is when we tend to see a rise in damp, mould or condensation (DMC) 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 repairs@taitarian.co.uk.

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



Welcome from Linda



Happy New Year to you all.

The lead up to Christmas was a busy time with us donating a whole host of festive treats and over 150 ipads to schools and community groups. It was wonderful to be able to make a difference locally at what can be a tough time for many.

We also prioritised visiting all our tenants over the age of 90. Checking on their wellbeing and talking to them about the advice we can offer, seeing if they needed any adaptations

to their home or support with repairs. The team are now focusing on continuing this work with more tenants.

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**.

In this edition of Cartref we caught up with our tenant

liaison team, the people you see regularly when you have any major work carried out at your home. You can read more on **page 4**.

As in all editions we have money advice from Steph, especially useful after we recover from the expense of Christmas, all the details on **page 7**.

Linda

Chief Executive



Christmas gifts being donated

Christmas cheer returns

In the run up to Christmas, we were busy co-ordinating 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, mince pies and gift vouchers all helped spread Christmas cheer at a difficult time for many.

Our Christmas dinner drop was again warmly received by tenants. Staff were out in force on Christmas Eve, delivering over 100 dinners allowing those that would have ordinarily missed out on the festivities, to tuck in on Christmas Day.

Carys from our Customer and Community team said:

“Our community benefit donations happen through the year but at Christmas we really ramp things up and work closely with our own staff, partners and community leaders to identify those in need and help as many people as possible with worthwhile donations.

“Over 20 different groups benefited with gifts and monetary donations worth over £4,500, and our Christmas dinner drop was as popular as ever. We are thrilled these small gestures have made such a difference again this year.”

Community challenge

– could you benefit?

Our Community Challenge is back, and we are looking for three worthwhile local projects to transform in 2025.

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 Friday 28th March, sharing details of what they would like us to help with. You can find the form by scanning the QR code below.



Community Challenge in action

Trade apprentice opportunities for 16+ coming later this year. More in the next Cartref.



Meet our TLOs

With lots of work going on in our communities, it's a busy time for our Tenant Liaison Officers (TLOs)

These are the people you see regularly whenever you have some major work undertaken in your home. There are 12 officers in the team, and we caught up with two of them, Siôn and Rhian, plus manager Nadine to find out more about their job:

"The role of the TLO is to support tenants throughout any work taking place in their home" explains Nadine.

"Normally, a tenant will first meet their TLO during an initial survey before the work starts. The survey is often carried out with the contractor who'll be carrying out the work, and the TLO will

explain what work is planned, how we will carry it out and how long it is expected to last. They'll also answer any questions the tenant has.

"They'll visit again just before the work starts to go over everything again, making sure the tenant knows what exactly is going to happen, we call this the pre-start visit. They'll also then make regular visits whilst the work is on-going before calling again once complete so we can hear the tenant's feedback about what went well and where we could improve."

The team are currently working on a range of major improvements to homes, including external wall insulations, re-wiring, roof renewals and something relatively new - solar panels, on which Siôn is one of the TLOs:

"Working with tenants having solar panels installed is great as they are quite often excited to have them and using the technology to reduce their regular electricity consumption.

"Whilst there is excitement, there will inevitably be a bit of disruption whilst the work is carried out, but by me being in regular contact with them, we can hopefully keep that to a minimum. It's important to build trust with the tenant. We want them to be comfortable enough to call us whenever they need to and to be honest with us about how the work is going.

"We see ourselves as the middle person between the tenant and the contractor carrying out the work. They tell us if any date or time for work to be carried out is not convenient, if they're on the school run or they're going on holidays. They also tell us if they have any special circumstances, such as medical conditions that we need to be aware of so that we can be mindful of that whilst we carry out the work.

"With some work, things get worse before they get better, so we have to be with the tenant and reassure them along the way."

As well as supporting the tenants through the work, the TLOs are also on the lookout at how else they can help tenants, as Rhian explains:

"Sometimes us going to a tenant can be the first contact they've had with Tai Tarian in years,

so it's important that we see if there's anything else we can help them with, whether that's helping them to report some repairs or referring them to one of our specialist teams like financial inclusion. It's important that we support them in every way."

Siôn explains what makes a good TLO:

"First and foremost, you have to be a people person. You are going into people's homes day in, day out, so you have to be at ease doing that. You also need to be a good communicator, friendly, approachable, empathetic and a good listener. If these things come naturally to you, then you can learn the technical side of the job.

"You also have to be organised as you can be dealing with many different tenants at different stages of having work completed, and so you have many plates to keep spinning."

Rhian adds:

"You also have to be respectful, both of the tenant and the property. We don't go into homes and dictate what is going to happen. You have to remember that whilst it is our property, it's the tenant's home."

For Nadine, her role as the senior TLO is slightly different:

"I have to oversee the work and make sure everyone knows what they're doing. I can also step in and support any of the TLOs if they need some extra



Rhian explains things to a tenant



help with any aspect of the role. Although I love my current job, I do miss being an actual TLO sometimes. I love a chat and getting to know a tenant and all about their families or where they've been on holidays, and I don't get so much of that interaction these days."

We finish our chat by asking each one what their favourite part of the job is. For Siôn, it's about building relationships:

"It's about the engagement. It's knowing that people feel comfortable enough to give me a ring, whether that's to report a problem or to say thank you for what we've done."

Rhian agrees, saying:

"It's really a big deal for some tenants to welcome us into their homes, so it is really satisfying and humbling to know that they trust us enough to let us in."

Nadine concludes by saying:

"We are dealing with people, and you are having an impact on their lives. Carrying out improvement work comes with a lot of satisfaction, but also a lot of responsibility for us to get things right. It's then very touching when they thank us for the difference we've made to their homes, and in some cases their lives."

What's WHQS 2023?

Welsh Government have set a standard for social housing landlords to reach by 2034, this is called WHQS 2023. WHQS stands for Welsh Housing Quality Standard but what does it mean for you?

It aims to provide affordable housing of good quality, suitable for the needs of tenants, not just now but in the future.

Your home must:

- Be in good condition
- Be safe and secure
- Not cost too much to heat
- Have an up-to-date kitchen
- Have an up-to-date bathroom
- Be comfortable
- Have a garden if possible
- Have nice outside space if possible

All homes are different, as are the needs of our tenants so home surveys and conversations will help decide what we need to do.

What are the deadlines?

By 31st March 2025 we will:

- Assess the condition of your home to find out what improvements may be needed. This will involve reviewing the existing information we have on your home and visiting some others to undertake surveys. We call this a 'Stock Condition Survey'. We will get in touch if we need to visit your home.
- Giving us access is important to help us plan any future work to ensure your home remains safe and comfortable. Without this up-to-date information, you may miss out on necessary replacements in the future.
- Develop a comprehensive plan and budget to upgrade homes to meet the standards.
- Talk with you about the standards, sharing our plans, and gathering your feedback.

- Update our business plan to include the improvements needed to comply with the standards.
- Report back to Welsh Government.

By 31st March 2034 we will:

- Achieve full compliance with the WHQS 2023 standards.



To find out more an easy read version of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard can be found by scanning the QR code.

Tenant talks

We held tenant talk sessions in our communities back in October and it was great to meet so many of you who were keen to share your views.

We have learnt a lot from the sessions and here is some of the feedback:

1. You want it to be easier to communicate with us, with critical information you've shared with us shared between teams, so you don't have to tell us the same thing again.
2. While you're happy with our repairs service, you would appreciate more clear timeframes on when to expect work so you can plan for it.
3. You want to see us in your communities more often, and you want us to provide you with more opportunities for face-to-face sessions.

We're reviewing everything you told us and will use this information to change how we work. We're planning more events in the coming months so keep an eye on our social media for all the details. Don't forget you can get in touch with Katie, our tenant engagement officer to share your views: tenantvoice@tairarian.co.uk



Rent and service charges.

Did you get your booklet?



Where does my money go?

Based on each £100 received, we spend...



£31.15 on maintaining and repairing your home

£29.85 on improving your home and community

£25.93 on housing management and central services

£13.07 on interest and other finance costs

86% of our income comes from the rent we receive.

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 making sure 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 almost 800 responses from our survey on rent.

We have had important conversations with the people that matter and thank everyone for having their say.

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

Get in touch:

If you're worried about paying your rent, 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 three of your rent booklet or call us on **0300 777 0000** for further advice.

Remember, if you claim Universal Credit you will need to update your journal on the 1st April with your new rent amount. Failure to do so could mean you are underpaid.



Latest on our new homes



County Flats, Sandfields

With so many people in desperate need of a home, we continue to work with the local council to support those most in need, whilst also making homes available on our Homes by Choice bidding system.

At County Flats, Sandfields work on Flint and Morgannwg House is continuing with completion of the entire site expected by autumn 2025. At Eagle House in Port Talbot town centre work continues with 18 apartments expected to be ready for let by late summer 2025.

Tenants have continued to move into Clos Castan, a mix of apartments, bungalows and family homes in Neath. With the site almost full, we welcomed pupils from Melin Primary School who named to site, to bury a time capsule containing artefacts found at build stage.



Scan the QR code to watch the video on TikTok

Work is continuing in Cwmavon at Heol Crwys where we should see the 1st stage of the new development being completed in summer 2025, with more to follow early 2026.

In Cimla, local residents have been informed of a proposal to build 22 new homes on the former Tudor Inn site. This is known as pre-application consultation and gives people the opportunity to make comments on the proposals. The next stage will be full planning.

Contract talk

The passing of someone close to us can be one of the hardest things we ever have to go through.

In this edition of Cartref, we cover how you make changes to your contract including adding or removing someone, terminating your contract with us and what happens to your home if you die.

Making your contract joint

As a tenant, you can add another person to your contract, giving them joint responsibility of your home. You need to speak to us to make this happen but if you claim any benefits it's important to mention this so we can check if making the change will affect your payments.

If after checking your benefits you still want to go ahead, you will need to write to us to say you want to make your contract joint. We'll respond with information about what we

need from you and to arrange a home visit. Once this has taken place, you'll be notified of our decision in writing.

If consent is granted, we will arrange for you and the other person to sign the required documentation.

The person becomes entitled to all the rights of your contract and is subject to all its obligations. This includes any existing or new breaches to the contract.

Removing someone from your contract

There are times when this process needs to be reversed if people's circumstances change. The person wishing to withdraw from the contract needs to give us a four week signed withdrawal notice, specifying when they want the contract to end. The withdrawing joint tenant will also need to give a written warning/copy of the notice to the remaining tenant.

If you do not provide us with a signed withdrawal notice, even if you have left the property, you will remain a joint tenant and be subject to all the contract obligations.

Ending your contract and survivorship

If all tenants wish to bring their contract to an end at the same time, we require a four week signed notice from all.

If a joint tenant dies, the contract continues for the remaining joint tenant/s and this is known as survivorship.

We know this is a difficult

time but it is important that you provide us with a copy of the death certificate so we can update our records.

If you are a sole tenant living with your spouse/partner and/or family members (aged 18 or over) as part of your household; after your death we will consider if one or more persons are qualified to succeed you.

For further information about succession, scan the QR code below and refer to **page 6** of the **summer edition of Cartref**. Template notices are available to help, please email: MyContract@tairarian.co.uk



Steph's top tips



Are you one of the 48% of people who have made a new year's resolution to save money this year? Here are my top tips to help you achieve your goal.

1. Refresh your budget

The cost of living is still high, so it's important you update your budget to reflect rising costs and keep you in control. This can give you a more accurate idea of what disposable income you have each month to stay on track.

2. Audit your outgoings

Small savings can make a big difference. Have a look at where you can make little spending cuts and ask yourself 'could you ditch that extra streaming service? It's all too easy to sign up and forget about recurring fees, memberships or subscriptions so it's a good idea to look at which you could do without, or whether you could make savings by shopping around.

3. De-clutter... but don't throw away!

We all end up with things we don't want or need hidden away at the back of wardrobes. A new year is a new start, so set aside an afternoon to de-clutter your home. Before you reach for the bin bags, consider selling your unwanted items to earn a bit of extra cash. Online platforms such as Vinted or Facebook Marketplace are a great place to start or check out your local car boot sales.

4. Set yourself a saving challenge

Christmas might only just be over, but it's time to start saving for next year! If you're looking for a New Year savings challenge, the 'penny a day' challenge could be right up your street. Simply save 1p on day one, 2p the next, 3p the day after and so on. By the end of the year, you'll have saved over £650 without really thinking about it.



Taken from BBC Good Food

Veg soup winter warmer

Try a basic soup recipe that can be adapted for whatever veg you've got in the fridge. It's super speedy and the perfect winter warmer.

Serves: **2**
 Prep: **10 mins**
 Cook: **15 mins**

Ingredients

- 200g chopped vegetables that you have at home such as onions, celery and carrots
- 300g potatoes, cubed
- 1 tbsp oil
- 700ml stock
- Crusty bread to serve

Method

Step 1:
Fry the vegetables and potatoes in a pan with the oil for a few minutes until beginning to soften.

Step 2:
Cover with the stock and simmer for 10-15 mins until the veg is tender. Blend until smooth, then season. Serve with some crusty bread.

Will freeze for up to one month.

Struggling with the cost of food?

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



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).

8	6			1	7			
					6		3	
5		2		9		1		
6	9		2		4	3	5	1
4	7	5	9		1	8		6
			8		5		7	
7		6					9	3
					9	6		2
	2			5				

Give it a go!

Go Green

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

Congratulations to Mr John who won a £100 shopping voucher for giving us the correct answer of 21 for the number of times team was mentioned in our autumn Cartref.



Need to get in touch?

0300 777 0000 (General enquiries)
0300 777 3000 (Report a repair – only emergency repairs can be dealt with outside of office hours.)

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