



# Cartref



## Meet FIT

With an incredible £5.6m in additional benefits secured for tenants last year, meet our financial inclusion team that made it happen.

This dedicated team works tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure you get the support your entitled to.

**Hear about the difference they make every day on page 6.**



### New homes, new chapters

New energy smart homes are transforming lives and communities.

**More on pages 7&8.**



### Tai Tarian turns 15!

Since 2011, we've supported thousands of tenants, invested millions to modernise homes, strengthened communities and created job opportunities across Neath Port Talbot.

**More on page 7.**



### Fire safety: tenant stories

Hear about recent community fires and get advice on how to keep.

**More on page 10.**

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# Digital connections: making a real difference to tenants

Over the past few months, our digital connections team – who we featured in the last edition of Cartref – have been busy helping tenants build confidence with technology and get more out of being online.

We've helped tenants reconnect with family as far away as Australia, supported people to set up weekly food shops when mobility makes it difficult to get out, and delivered community-based digital support to get tenants connected.

Mr M, reached out to the team following our article in Cartref. Living alone, he told us how much he relied on his tablet for company and to keep his mind active, but it had become too slow to use. After a home visit, it was clear that a new

device would really help him. So, the next day, we delivered a new tablet and within minutes he was back online, enjoying his favourite music and apps with a smile on his face.

If you, or a tenant you know, need a bit of extra help to get online, we're here.

Call Hannah or Emma on **01639 506694 / 01639 506026**.



# Haven darts league takes on 12-hour marathon for Macmillan

Players from the Haven darts league have completed an incredible 12-hour marathon game of darts, raising £1,137.05 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

They were cheered on by neighbours, family and friends, who kept spirits high with plenty of coffee, cakes and treats.

The Haven darts league has grown in popularity since it launched last year, so combining the friendly competition with a charity fundraiser was always going to be a great success.

Liz Cockings the captain of the Gwyn Court Dinosaurs said:

*"I loved every minute of it. We were tired by the end, but knowing we were doing it for Macmillan kept us going. The best part was seeing everyone come together and family and friends popping in to cheer us on. We're*

*really proud of the money we raised for such a worthwhile cause."*

Charity fundraisers aside, the Haven darts league is now in full swing with Ty Gnoll Newydd in Neath joining the seasoned pros from Port Talbot for a lively season of friendly competition between schemes.

With regular fixtures running right through to September, residents can look forward to more light-hearted rivalry and community spirit that has made the league such a hit.



# Community Challenge returns

Our Community Challenge is back and we're searching for three amazing local projects to transform this summer.

The annual project involves our staff and contractors volunteering at three community facilities for a day to give them a makeover. Painting, gardening, decorating, repairs or general maintenance are all things we can carry out with schools, churches, community centres and childcare facilities benefitting in the past. So, who could we help this year?

All we ask is that they must be based in Neath Port Talbot, not for profit and to complete our application form by 6th June, sharing details of what they would like us to help with.

Complete the form online by scanning the QR code here:

Please spread the word and encourage any local community facilities to apply.

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# AGM date

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) takes place on Tuesday 28th July and is an opportunity for our members to find out more about our progress and vote on key decisions.

Attendance at the AGM is only open to Tai Tarian members. Being a member offers a variety of opportunities to have your say and shape services, and it costs just £1.

To sign up please ring 01639 506050 or email corporate.governance@taitarian.co.uk

# Welcome from Linda

This spring marks a major milestone for Tai Tarian – our 15th birthday.

Having been here since day one, I'm incredibly proud of how far we've come, investing millions to modernise homes and build new ones, supported thousands of tenants, helped communities grow, and created new job opportunities.

One of the first new teams created back in 2011 was our financial inclusion team. Fifteen years on, their impact speaks for itself: more than £55 million in unclaimed benefits secured for tenants, alongside practical support and kindness when it's needed most. Read more about them on page 6.

We've also been catching up with tenants moving into new

homes or taking their first look at places they'll soon be proud to call home again. Feedback has been incredibly positive, better sleep, lower bills, and the feeling of having a "forever home." More on page 7&8.

Fifteen years in, our story is still all about tenants and our communities. Here's to the next 15 years.

*L Whitaker*



# Time to Thrive off to a great start

Our Time to Thrive grants programme has only just launched, but it's already making a difference across our communities. Local groups have wasted no time applying, putting funding to good use and bringing people together.

The first round of funding has already reached a range of community organisations. Ysgol Bae Baglan received £1,000 to support a breakfast club for secondary-age pupils, a service that previously didn't exist for this age group. Two local hubs, Cwmafan

Community Engagement Centre and Vernon Place Community Hub in Briton Ferry, have been awarded £1,000 each to run free activity sessions over the school holidays, giving families and young people a safe, fun space during the breaks.

We've also helped groups strengthen local facilities and grassroots activities. Tata Steel Cricket Club will use their £1,000 grant to upgrade toilet facilities, helping them provide a more accessible and welcoming environment. Tonmawr Minis received £250 to buy new equipment, ensuring future rugby stars have what they need to excel.

In Glynneath, Cakey's Creations Café received £300 to run free holiday sessions such as pizza making, cupcake decorating and craft activities giving children a creative place to learn new skills and socialise.

Elsewhere, Melin Community Trust has used its £900 grant to launch a new "hobby hub", offering a friendly space with free refreshments where local people can meet, relax and take up new interests.

A major community upgrade is also on the way, with refurbishment work at the Dyfed Road bowls pavilion due for completion next month. The improvements to the toilets and outdoor areas will make a real difference to the 1,500 players who use the site each season.

You can read more about the project in our next Cartref.



# About the Time to Thrive fund

Time to Thrive is designed to support projects that bring people together, improve wellbeing, and create opportunities for everyone. The programme offers grants of up to £10,000 and is open to constituted groups, charities, community interest companies, voluntary or not-for-profit groups and social enterprises.

Funding is focused on initiatives that make a long-term difference. Things like community growing and food sustainability, mental health and emotional wellbeing projects, creative and cultural activities, social inclusion initiatives, sports and active participation, and improvements to shared spaces.

If a good cause springs to mind, or you're part of a group with a great idea, apply today:





## Celebrating skills for life with our apprentices

We're proud to celebrate the fantastic contribution our apprentices make to our repairs service, and the difference they make to tenants and communities.

We currently have 15 apprentices developing their skills across a wide range of trades including bricklaying, carpentry, roofing, electrical, plastering, plumbing and multi-trade. Each apprentice is earning while they learn, gaining practical experience and setting the foundations for long-term careers.

Recently, we caught up with some of our newest additions to hear how they're getting on:

**Brandon Jones, plastering apprentice**

"My plastering apprenticeship is going really well. I love learning on the job and seeing a job through from start to finish – that clean, smooth finish is something to be proud of."

*I'm learning how to prepare surfaces, apply different finishes and work well as part of a team. Everyone here is so supportive. If you like hands-on work, definitely go for it."*

**Kyan Martin, plastering apprentice**

"I'm really enjoying my apprenticeship and I'm so glad I joined Tai Tarian. It means a lot when tenants compliment our work, it's a great feeling. The support and training here is brilliant, and you get to experience different parts of the company."

**Jack Jones, carpentry apprentice**

"I'm learning so much, the team is really supportive and always encourages you to improve. My advice to those thinking of an apprenticeship? Go for it. You earn, you learn, and you set yourself up for a solid future."

And the good news? There are new opportunities to come.

We'll soon be launching a new trades-focused apprenticeship programme, a pathway to a lifelong career and the chance to make a difference in your local community.

All jobs will be listed here:



## Supporting future trades

Over the past few months, students from the Green Skills Work Experience Programme have spent time with our teams, gaining valuable insight into what a career in housing construction could look like.

In February, we were delighted to welcome a further six students from the programme, which we deliver in partnership with Cyfle Building Skills. All the learners are currently studying electrical and plumbing qualifications at NPTC Group of Colleges and took part in a five-day shadowing placement with key teams who look after and make improvements to your homes.

This opportunity helps bring their classroom learning to life and gives them a real insight into the skills needed within housing and construction.

It was great to hear from learners that the shadowing experience increased their confidence and helped raise their profile when applying for apprenticeships.

## Let it grow, let it grow

Over the last few years we have adopted a new way of managing land to encourage biodiversity. By cutting our grass less often we have seen native wildflower and plants thrive, creating a better habitat for bees, butterflies, invertebrates, birds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles.

Some people embraced the new approach, but it's taken time to grow on others.

Over the winter months our grounds and biodiversity team have again been busy preparing land and planting flowers and shrubs ready for the grass cutting season which started in March.

**Our approach to cutting**

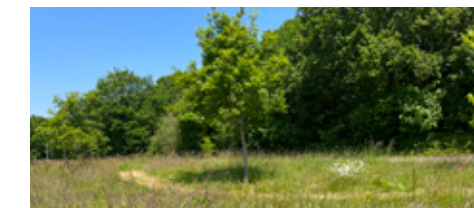
Our land has been placed into three broad categories

1. Grassed areas that are enjoyed by the community for recreation or socialising, or that can potentially restrict visibility if left uncut, will be cut regularly during spring and summer.
2. Other areas will be partly maintained with border cuts and made accessible with walkways, but with parts still being left for nature.
3. Several areas will continue to be maintained as wildflower meadows.

Thinking differently about wildflowers

As we've already been doing this for a couple of years, in some areas we are starting to see lots of beautiful flowers, long grass, and trees. We expect to see even more year-on-year, but it can take up to five years for native wildflower meadows to really take hold, so things might not look neat straight away.

With many hectares of land throughout Neath Port Talbot, changing our approach will make a big difference to nature.



## New swift boxes to support local wildlife

We've recently installed a series of new swift nesting boxes on one of our housing sites to help protect one of the UK's most iconic summer visitors.

Every year, swifts fly thousands of miles from Africa to raise their young here in Britain. But their numbers have dropped because modern buildings don't offer many suitable places for them to nest. By putting up special nesting boxes, we're creating safe new spaces for these incredible birds to return to year after year.

The new boxes are set high on the building to give the swifts the conditions they naturally look for when they arrive in late spring.

One of our managers Chris, has swift boxes at his own home and explains why they matter:

"Swifts are amazing birds, but they struggle to find places

*to nest now. I've seen at home how quickly they'll use new boxes once they find them so it's lovely seeing them return every summer. These new boxes will give them a real chance and hopefully tenants will soon spot them flying overhead and hear their calls."*

This work is part of our ongoing commitment to supporting wildlife and boosting biodiversity across our communities. As well as helping a threatened species, the boxes also bring a bit of joy to residents who often look forward to seeing the swifts arrive, a real sign that summer is on its way.

We'll be keeping an eye on the boxes during nesting season and hope the birds find them quickly. If all goes well, we'll look at putting up more boxes in other suitable areas in the future.

## Tenant Voice: A brilliant response!



Following our Tenant Voice feature in the last Cartref, we've had a fantastic response from tenants right across our communities. People have asked questions, signed up and it's been great to see so many people wanting to get involved and share their experiences.

**A quick reminder: what can you get involved in?**

Our groups are where tenants join together and get involved in areas which interest them. Whether you care about repairs, the environment, or how we communicate, there's a group for you.

**Communications and Digital**

Help us shape new and existing tenant communications from Cartref to new technology like a tenant portal

**Communities and Homes**

From having your say on building new homes and improving existing ones to how we can support our communities.

Your views will help us support and sustain thriving communities.

**Environment and Sustainability**

Helping us get greener with involvement in our approach to things like sustainability, making homes energy efficient and biodiversity.

**Value for Money**

Ensure we spend smart. Making sure our services are efficient and charged fairly, with standards in place.

**Repairs**

Improving our repairs service together, making sure it works for you.

**Scrutiny**

Taking a wider look at how we're doing, focusing on a range of different topics and service areas. How can we do better?

**Get involved with Tenant Voice**

**How much time do you need to give?**

Not much at all. You only need to attend two community-based meetings a year,

held at times that suit you.

**Why join?**

By getting involved, you can:

- Share your views in a friendly, supportive setting
- Help shape decisions that affect your home and community
- Be part of positive change across Tai Tarian

To thank you for your time, you'll also receive:

- £20 shopping voucher for every session you attend
- Free training and development with partners like TPAS Cymru
- Travel and childcare costs covered\*
- A thank you card as a token of our appreciation

**What skills do you need?**

Just a passion for your community and a willingness to share your views.

You don't need experience, specialist knowledge or confidence and we'll provide all the support and training you need.

Before you decide, why not hear from people who've already given it a try? This short video features tenants sharing honest experiences of joining Tenant Voice and what they've gained from it.

Watch here:



**Ready to join?**

Sign up using our quick online survey here:



**Prefer to chat first or want help choosing the right group?**

Email [tenantvoice@taitarian.co.uk](mailto:tenantvoice@taitarian.co.uk) or call 0300 777 0000.

\*Childcare support is available through registered providers only.

## Customer experience workshops

We recently held a series of customer experience sessions, giving some tenants their first taste of Tenant Voice and the chance to tell us directly what's working well and where we can improve.

Over three weeks, we heard views on customer experience – understanding what good service looks like for tenants, where we're getting things right, and where we can make things better.

Together, we explored things like:

- What does easy access to our services look like?
- How can we make it simple for you to contact us in a way that suits you?
- What would make getting in touch feel straightforward and stress-free?
- What matters most to you?

Lots of tenants said they've had great customer service from us, but there was also frustration around things like:

- how long it can take to get through to the contact centre, and

- wanting clearer updates, like appointment times or how long repairs and major works are likely to take.

Tenants also shared some excellent ideas we're now looking into, including:

- letting you know your position in the phone queue, so you can choose whether to wait or call back later
- sharing regular updates about how busy the phone lines are, using social media or our website

We will keep you updated on progress in future editions of Cartref.





## FIT check: The team that helps you make the most of your money

In every edition of Cartref, we have a column from Ana bringing you the latest information on finances, changes to benefits and tips on how to manage your money.

As well as Ana, there's a whole team who exist to help you navigate the world of benefits and to help you keep on top of your finances.

We had a chat to two of the team, Jodie and Adrienne, to find out a bit more about the work of FIT, our financial inclusion team, and what they can do to help you.

It's no secret that the cost-of-living crisis has been affecting more and more people over the past few years. Energy prices, food costs and the struggle to pay the bills is a real problem for too many people, and is something Jodie sees on a daily basis:

**"We've seen a huge increase in the number of people who need our help. It's really difficult for people to keep afloat in these times."**

"What the team and I try to do is support tenants to maximise their income. This can include benefits checks to make sure they're claiming everything that they qualify for, providing things like food bank vouchers or referring them

on to other agencies if they need more specialist help."

It's a busy team. In the last year alone, they helped almost 3,000 tenants make claims. This resulted in over £5.6 million worth of benefits being paid out that were otherwise going unclaimed. As Adrienne says, it's important that tenants apply for what they're entitled to:

**"We don't want tenants missing out. We know claiming benefits can be daunting and time-consuming, so we're here from the very beginning to guide them through it. Whether that's ordering forms, gathering documents or submitting the claim, we're there every step of the way."**

The team are also trained to support tenants with appeals:

**"If someone has been wrongly denied a benefit, we can help challenge it. Appeals can be complicated, but last year 81% of our appeals were successful. If your claim is turned down, please come to us - we can help."**

The benefits system can be confusing, with many different types of support available and varying eligibility criteria. It's common for tenants not to realise what they can claim. FIT works through everything with them to

make sure nothing is missed. This can include Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Child Disability Living Allowance, Bereavement Support, Carer's Allowance, and many other benefits.

**"I also work on the Universal Credit (UC) side of things, making sure tenants receive the right amount of benefit. I help them to update their online UC Journal whenever there's a change in their circumstances."**

For Jodie, it's all about helping people before they get into serious difficulties:

**"Unfortunately, we see a lot of debt amongst our tenants. Whilst we're not licensed to give debt advice, we can, with their permission, pass their details on to specialist organisations and charities who can help and advise them. We just make sure we make them aware of their options. If we can't support a tenant, we'll try and find someone who can."**

**"It is important for tenants to know we are here. Whatever help they need they just have to get in touch with us. We're always happy to meet them in their home or have a conversation over the phone, whatever suits them. Once tenants know we are there to support them, then it can be a**

great weight off their mind."

Building trust with tenants is key to ensuring that Tai Tarian is best placed to help them, as Adrienne explains:

**"We understand that tenants might be worried about telling us, their landlord, that they're falling behind with their rent, but we are genuinely here to help if that happens."**

**"Asking for our help is easy. Just speak to a member of staff, whether that's someone in the contact centre when you phone up, our social media team when you drop us a message or a trade who comes to carry out a repair at your home. Just tell them you need a bit of support, and they will pass your details on to our team and we will arrange help."**

**"We appreciate some people find it tough to talk about money worries, but the worst thing anyone can do is to bury their heads in the sand and hope everything will take care of itself. We're here without judgement, just friendly faces offering practical help and advice."**

If you need the help and support of our financial inclusion team, then call **01639 506623** or e-mail **financialinclusion@taitarian.co.uk** in confidence.

## Celebrating 15 Years of Tai Tarian

March marked a special milestone for Tai Tarian as we celebrated 15 years since the organisation was formed, then known as NPT Homes. So much has changed in that time, but one thing has remained constant, our commitment to our tenants and the communities of Neath and Port Talbot.

For 15 years, colleagues across the organisation have lived our values, showing kindness, fairness and bold thinking in everything they do. From creating warmer, modern homes to supporting tenants through financial challenges, strengthening our workforce, and helping communities thrive, their work has made a real difference. We've

seen apprentices grow into skilled tradespeople, tenants transform their lives in new homes, and strong partnerships develop across our communities.

Over the past decade and a half, we've invested millions into modernising homes, from kitchens and bathrooms to energy saving technology like solar panels and air source heat pumps. We've helped tenants secure over £55 million in unclaimed benefits, expanded our local workforce, and supported people into long-term careers through our Copper programme. Our repairs teams have completed millions of jobs, while our development programme has delivered hundreds of innovative new homes using sustainable materials and new technology.

We've strengthened Tenant Voice, supported schools and community groups, and gone beyond our role as a landlord to improve local spaces and tackle financial hardship, even partnering with Michael Sheen to challenge high-cost credit. We've championed

sustainability, inspired young people through projects like Fusion, and transformed our Haven schemes into warm, modern homes with strong community spirit at the heart. Here's to the past 15 years, and to continuing this work for the next 15 and beyond.



## New homes, new chapters

There's more to homes than bricks and mortar, and one of our latest developments in Cwmafan really shows that.

We started building 43 new, energy efficient homes to replace the old Rofton Bungalows, outdated prefab homes that had been there since the 1950s.

For those living in the old bungalows it's been an emotional journey as they said goodbye to the homes in which they had built lives but were no longer fit for purpose.

For us, it's been just as much about supporting people through that change as it has been about building the new homes.

Everyone affected was found temporary accommodation that suited their needs, and with work moving quickly, returning tenants are now getting their first look at where they'll soon be living again.

**"We can't wait to move back in and see our old neighbours"**

Mr and Mrs Georgiou had been living in Rofton Bungalows since 2007.

We met up with them as they took their first look at a home with the same layout as the one they'll eventually move back to.

Mrs Georgiou said it had been emotional but that the couple had felt supported:

**"It upset us when we found out they were coming down because we'd been there so long, knowing everyone, but they found us another bungalow and we were grateful for that. My first impression of the new homes is that they're cosy, smart and economical."**

Mr Georgiou said he was really looking forward to seeing old friends:

**"We can't wait to come back to the neighbours and we know the area. We are lucky."**

**"This is my forever home"**

Alongside replacing the old bungalows, the Golwg Y Foel development also includes brand-new homes built on what used to be overgrown wasteland helping meet the high demand for housing locally.

Alison moved into one of these new homes a month

ago. She had been living in Aberavon and was happy there, but when her landlord decided to sell, she suddenly found herself without a home.

**"I bid for it, although part of me wanted to stay close to the beach, my mother and friends. But because it was a new build and on a bus route, I thought no, this is better. And it's lovely having a new build."**

Alison explained what a relief it was to find a place after being stranded without a home.

**"I felt like I was under a cloud, not knowing what was going to happen, but now I feel steady and settled."**

Now Alison is just waiting for the weather to improve so she can tend to her pots.

**"I'm staying here. This is my forever home"**



## From prefab to high spec

- Each one of the homes replacing the old prefab bungalows will be ready equipped for any accessibility needs of the former tenants ahead of their move back into the new properties.
- The new homes will have an air source heat pump, which is a lot more efficient than a gas boiler, as well as solar panels.
- Insulation and modern materials mean the EPC rating of the properties are being improved from around a D-E rating up to an A.
- The bungalows will have parking and a patio.
- Port Talbot-based CJ Construction are contractors for the project.

# Round up on our new homes

As demand for social housing continues, we remain committed to building new homes. We continue to work closely with the local council to support those most in need, while also making homes available on our Homes by Choice bidding system.

Plans for County Flats 2 continue to move forward. A full planning submission is expected in the months ahead, with the project currently at the stage of reviewing submissions. We will share more details as the scheme progresses through planning.

Progress at Golwg y Foel, Cwmafan, is gathering pace. A mixed development, including one and two-bedroom bungalows and one-bedroom apartments. A further 21 new homes are expected to be ready by early summer, contributing to a total of 43 new homes delivered on the site.

These homes will help meet significant local housing need. The overall development remains on track for completion by late winter, with phased handovers continuing season by season.



Residents have all now moved into Eagle House, a redevelopment of 18 modern apartments offering convenient, town-centre living. The scheme also includes dedicated supported housing elements, designed to enhance wellbeing and independence.

Demolition work has been completed, and foundations have been laid at the former Tudor Inn site in Cimla, marking a key milestone for this redevelopment.

The scheme will deliver 22 new homes, helping bring disused land back into use.

A second site entrance has also been opened to minimise disruption for neighbouring residents as construction activity increases.

Planning approval for our veterans housing scheme providing six high-quality, self-contained homes with shared communal areas is likely to take place in the summer.

# New home New start

Sometimes it's the small things – like finally getting a good night's sleep – that show the difference a new home can make to someone's life.

In the heart of Port Talbot, people are settling into their new apartments at Eagle House, close to the train station and shops. The development of eighteen 1 and 2-bedroom apartments has transformed the street scene.

But more importantly it's transforming the lives of the people who are living there. As one tenant told us:

*"Thanks for all your help with everything. I've really settled in and had my first good night's sleep for months."*

The original Eagle House dated back to the 1800s. Over the years it had been a pub, a hotel, offices and even an Air Training Corps base. But in recent years it had stood disused and was starting to attract antisocial behaviour.

Now, new tenants are making new lives there and benefitting from some of the most high-tech energy-saving technologies, which are helping tenants stay warm while keeping bills manageable.

Each home has an air source heat pump to heat water efficiently together with solar panels and battery storage, funded through the Homes as Power Stations (HAPS) project via Neath Port Talbot Council.



These features help reduce carbon emissions while giving tenants more control over their energy use, something we know really matters.

Because Eagle House is part of the HAPS project, it is also involved in a Cardiff University study looking at how different renewable energy measures work in different types of homes. This research will shape the future of Welsh housing, helping tackle fuel poverty and support the growth of the renewable energy supply chain across our area.

# Tai Tarian at your door



Our housing team recently launched an exciting new initiative: Tai Tarian at your door.

As part of this project, our Community Housing Team is visiting our communities to speak directly with tenants and help strengthen relationships.

These visits give us the chance to have meaningful, face-to-face conversations. You can share how you feel about your homes and communities, raise any concerns or let us know if you need support. Whether it's advice, wellbeing guidance, reporting an issue, or simply having a friendly chat – we're here to listen.

We're looking forward to seeing many more of you as the initiative continues.

# How does our rent compare?



Back in January, we sent you a booklet outlining your rent and service charges (where applicable) from April onwards. If you claim Universal Credit, you should have updated your journal with your new rent amount – please get in touch if you need help.

As a community landlord, we follow Welsh Government's new 10-year guidance on how rents are set. The 10-year rent settlement was introduced last year to make sure housing associations have enough money to maintain homes, provide services, and invest in communities.

After receiving the guidance, we work out what this means in pounds and pence

for all tenants to make sure rents remain affordable. Speaking to tenants about this has been key.

Last summer, we held a roadshow of workshops and face-to-face sessions, worked with TPAS Cymru, and gathered over 900 responses to our rent survey. These conversations were invaluable, and we thank everyone who had their say.

### How do we compare to the private sector?

When speaking to tenants, they were sometimes unaware how our weekly rents compare to the private sector here in Neath Port Talbot, this table gives the detail:

Property type	Beds	Tai Tarian rent	Private sector average	Difference
Flat	1	£97.90	£133.88	£35.98
Flat	2	£106.45	£158.93	£52.48
House	2	£118.93	£162.26	£43.33
House	3	£129.09	£197.85	£68.76
House	4	£132.20	£230.15	£97.95

### Worried about rent?

If you're worried about paying your rent or your household budget being squeezed by 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 were included on page 3 of your rent booklet, or you can call us on 0300 777 0000 for further advice.

# Contract Talk

## Sexual harassment – the law has changed

Your occupation contract with us sets out behaviours such as anti-social behaviour and conduct.

We want everyone who lives in our homes as well as our staff to feel respected, safe, and supported.

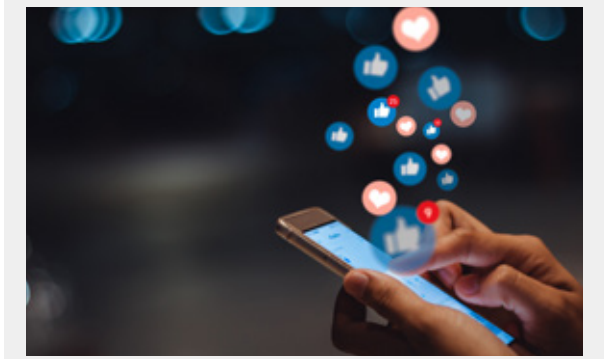
But this is an opportunity to update you about a new legal duty which strengthens protection from harassment in all circumstances for everyone, including tenants and staff.

The behaviours and circumstances covered are very broad and includes sexual harassment. This can include

unwanted remarks, gestures, messages, or behaviour of a sexual nature. Behaviours which you may be comfortable with may not be ok for someone else.

Housing officers deal with complaints about behaviours by providing clear advice on the options available to tackle them and, where necessary, work closely with the police to find practical solutions.

But if you or someone else are injured, in immediate danger or you need support right away, call 999. Further information around harassment can be found on the South Wales Police website.



# Did you know we're on social media?

If you're not following us yet, now's the perfect time to join us on socials. We share regular updates across TikTok, Facebook and Instagram, giving you an easy way to stay connected with everything happening at Tai Tarian.

From important news to community stories, there's always something new to see and we'd love you to be part of it.

Over the past few months, we've shared a mix of helpful and feel-good content, including why getting involved in Tenant Voice really matters, fire safety advice, tasty seasonal recipes, highlights from our 15-year anniversary celebrations, and community stories and donation updates. We've also posted new job opportunities and given you the chance to get to know our apprentices as they progress through their first year with us.

Whether you're looking for latest updates or something uplifting in your feed, our pages are a great way to stay up to date.

Every like, follow and comment helps us reach even more people across our communities so hit follow and join us online!



If you have any queries or need to speak to your housing officer, please email [communityhousingteam@tairarian.co.uk](mailto:communityhousingteam@tairarian.co.uk) or call 0300 777 0000. You can also find which officer covers your area on our website.

Please be respectful and considerate to others, including neighbours and staff.

# Fire safety: true stories from our tenants

As part of our fire safety feature, two tenants have bravely shared their recent experiences of devastating home fires – powerful reminders of how quickly fires can start, and how important prevention and preparation are.

## “It happened in minutes” – Neath home destroyed

One tenant described how she heard crackling one morning and saw an orange glow outside. Within seconds, a fire in the garden spread to her home. She managed to escape, but the property was destroyed and all their belongings were lost.

In the days that followed, community support made an enormous difference. Friends in America set up a Go Fund Me raising funds online, family provided essentials, Dŵr y Felin school donated clothing and vouchers, and Tai Tarian and the British Red Cross offered emergency help.

The mental impact on the family has been huge with added financial stress as they were without contents insurance.

*“Please, pay for contents insurance if you can. You never think you’ll need it – until you do.”*

The family have now been rehoused in Sandfields have taken out contents insurance and keep fire extinguishers at home for peace of mind.



## E-bike battery explosion leaves tenant injured

In a second incident in Cimla, a tenant described the terrifying moment an e-bike battery, not on charge at the time, exploded. Flames shot across the kitchen “like fireworks”, followed by further explosions.

She immediately got her children out, then returned to rescue the dog and cat before another blast. She was in hospital for a week, suffered burns and serious eye injuries that will require months of treatment. The fire caused extensive smoke damage, destroying almost everything they owned. The family is currently in temporary accommodation.

*“The Fire Service told us these fires are happening more and more often. Their advice was simple, don’t store e-bikes*

*or e-scooters indoors, don’t overcharge, unplug as soon as they’re done, and keep batteries in proper firesafe boxes. They can reignite in seconds.”*

Both stories show how fast fires can develop and why it’s vital to follow fire safety guidance, store items safely and make sure every member of your household knows how to escape.

### What to do if there is a fire

- Get everyone out quickly and safely
- Stay low if there is smoke
- Keep exits clear and know a second route
- Never gather valuables
- Check doors for heat before opening
- If trapped, block smoke, open a window and call 999
- Never use lifts in high-rise buildings
- Never try to tackle a fire yourself

### Contract changes

From 1st June, parts of the Renters’ Rights Act 2025 will come into effect in Wales. These changes are designed to provide stronger protection against discrimination for renters and introduce new fundamental terms that must be included in all occupation contracts.

From June, we will send you a notice of variation including details of what these terms mean for you and confirm that they have been added to your contract.

# Ask Ana: Help with energy bills and debt

**If you’re finding it hard to pay your energy bills or top up your prepayment meter, you’re not alone, but there is help available. You may be able to get fuel vouchers or a grant from your energy supplier.**

You might also save money by switching supplier or tariff. Free comparison sites like Uswitch.com can help you find the cheapest option for your home.

If you already have energy debt, many suppliers offer grants to help clear what you owe. These include schemes from British Gas, EDF, E.ON Next and others. It’s always worth contacting your supplier to ask what support they can offer.

If they can’t help, you might still be able to get a grant from the British Gas Energy Trust, even if you’re not a British Gas customer.

### Help with water bills

Welsh Water offer several schemes to help make bills more affordable.

### HelpU tariff

This lowers your yearly bill if you’re on a low income.

From 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027, the cap is £350.16. (£134.72 for water, £215.44 for sewerage)

To qualify, someone in your home must receive a means tested benefit, and Welsh Water will look at your total household income.

### Bill cap – Water Sure Wales

If you have a water meter, this caps your annual bill no matter how much water you use.

For 2026-27, the cap is £583.77. (£229.28 for water, £354.49 for sewerage)

You must be on a qualifying benefit and either:

- have 3 or more children under 19 living at home who you can claim child benefit for; or
- have someone with a medical condition that needs significant use of extra water.

### Customer assistance fund

This is for anyone in severe financial hardship with water arrears over £150.

If accepted, you make agreed payments for six months and Welsh Water will clear 50% of your arrears.

Keep paying for another six months and they clear the rest.

This is a one-off scheme, so it can’t be used again if arrears build up later.

**Ana**



# Going up in the world

**Did you know our reactive repairs team removes around 120 old chimney stacks every year?**

You might not realise it, but once a chimney isn’t being used anymore, it quickly becomes a problem. It turns into a cold, damp space that traps moisture, which can lead to condensation, rainwater leaks and the bricks start to break down over time.

To stop this from happening, our roofing and bricklaying teams remove these

redundant chimneys all year round, tricky jobs high up on rooftops, not for the fainthearted.

Repairs manager Jaime Greig said:

*“Once a chimney is no longer in service it becomes a cold, unventilated column that traps moisture. This can lead to internal condensation, rainwater penetration, and significant deterioration over time.”*

*Our teams’ experience means they can tackle these jobs safely and effectively,*



*always trying to keep disruption to a minimum.”*

So next time you notice a chimney disappearing from a rooftop, you’ll know exactly why, and chances are it could be us that made it happen!

# Your Senedd is changing: what you need to know before the 2026 election

**The Senedd election on 7th May will be the most significant change to Welsh democracy in 25 years. With new constituencies, more members of the Senedd (MSs) and a new voting system, we wanted to share everything you need to know.**



### More members

The Senedd will increase from 60 to 96 Members. This change helps ensure Wales has enough representatives to properly scrutinise Welsh Government decisions on issues like health, housing, education, transport and the environment.

### A new voting system

Instead of having two votes, voters will now cast one single vote for either a political party or an independent candidate. Seats will be allocated proportionally, based on how many votes each party or independent candidate receives, using the D’Hondt formula. Your ballot paper will show the full list of candidates in your constituency.

### New constituencies

Wales will move from 40 to 16 larger constituencies, with each one electing six MS’s. This means wherever you live,

you’ll have six members representing your community.

Local changes include:

- Tawe Nedd with Pontardawe
- Aberavon becoming part of Afan Ogwr Rhondda

Anyone standing for election must live in Wales and elections will now be held every four years instead of every five.

### What does the Senedd actually do?

The Senedd is separate from the UK Government and makes decisions on many of the public services and policies that affect everyday life in Wales including:

- Health and the NHS, including how hospitals, GP services, mental health support and community care are run.
- Schools and education, including the curriculum, teaching standards and support for learners.

- Local government and housing, including council powers, planning rules, building regulations, housing policy and social services.

- Transport within Wales, such as major roads, some rail services, buses, active travel and safety improvements.

- Farming, food production and animal welfare, shaping how Wales supports rural communities and protects livestock.

- Environmental and climate policy, covering issues like recycling, air quality, land use and measures to tackle climate change.

- The Welsh language, including policies that support its use in communities, schools and public services.

The Members you elect in May 2026 will shape decisions in all these areas.

### Who is eligible to vote?

You can vote in the Senedd election if you:

- are 16 or over on polling day
- live in Wales
- are registered to vote
- are a British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the EU, or a qualifying foreign citizen
- are legally allowed to vote

**Not sure if you’re eligible? Visit: Register to vote – GOV.UK**



### How will I know who I’m voting for?

The Electoral Commission website lists all candidates standing in your area. Parties and candidates will also share information via leaflets, websites and social media.

Your ballot paper will show:

- all parties and their list of candidates
- any independent candidates

You will make one choice.

You will be sent details of where your polling station is from NPTCBC in the run up to the election.

You can also vote by post or by proxy (allowing someone you trust to vote on your behalf) but applications for this type of voting must have been made by 21st April.

You cannot vote online.

The changes to the Senedd mean the 2026 election is especially important. The decisions made by your elected Members affect schools, hospitals, housing transport, local services, the environment and everyday life in Wales.

# 10 minute pitta pizzas



Serves: 4



Prep/cook time: 20 mins

These pitta pizzas are quick, tasty, and perfect for after school dinners or weekend snacks. They're also great for using up leftovers.

## Ingredients:

- 4 wholemeal or white pitta breads
- 4-6 tbsp tomato purée or passata
- 1-2 tsp dried mixed herbs or oregano
- 100g grated cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, or a mix)
- Any toppings you already have at home, such as leftover meat, pepperoni, sweetcorn, pineapple

## Method:

1. **Preheat the oven** to 180°C fan/Gas Mark 6.
2. **Prep the base:** Place the pittas on a baking tray and lightly toast for 2 minutes (this keeps them crisp!).
3. **Spread the sauce:** Spoon tomato purée or passata over each pitta.
4. **Season:** Sprinkle with oregano or mixed herbs.
5. **Add toppings:** Use whatever you have – the more colourful, the better!
6. **Add cheese:** Scatter a generous handful on top.
7. **Bake:** Cook for 8-10 minutes until the cheese is melted and golden.
8. **Serve:** Slice into strips or quarters and enjoy warm.



## Tips and variations

- **Budget-friendly:** Use supermarket basic pittas for a super cheap meal.
- **Healthier option:** Choose wholemeal pittas and load up with veg.
- **Kid-approved:** Set up a “make your own pizza” station for fun family cooking.
- **Freezer tip:** Freeze cooked pizzas, reheat in the oven or air fryer in minutes.

## 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.

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

*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](mailto:media@taitarian.co.uk) or call 01639 505860.

All those who get in touch before 10th May will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 shopping voucher.

Congratulations to Tom from Briton Ferry who was our winter edition winner.



## 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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