



# home

Our new look Customer Magazine  
Autumn 2023



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# Hello



and welcome to the Autumn 2023 edition of your Customer Magazine...

In previous editions we introduced you to the new management team at Cornwall Housing and we are continuing to change how we deliver services to you to ensure we meet your needs.

There has been lots of focus on repairs over the last 6 months and this edition sets out some of the changes we have taken forward following your input. We know the service is not there yet, but we are committed to getting this right for you and showing improvements.

Elsewhere, we have included information on what we will be doing in your neighbourhoods and how we can review and work together to manage local community areas.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition and please let us know if there is anything you would like to see included in future editions.

**Su Spence**  
Managing Director



## Investing in your Council homes – priorities are safety and energy efficiency

This month, Cornwall Housing and Cornwall Council announce details of major improvement works for social housing throughout the county for the next three years. £79m has been earmarked for improving homes and communities, spread across a total of 53 separate locations ranging from Bude and Torpoint to Falmouth and further west.

Since November 2022, we have been and are continuing to perform 'stock condition surveys' on homes. Currently we are working with a company called Ridge. These surveys are really important as they provide information that help shape where investment is most needed.

The major programme will see investment in energy and decarbonising improvements for homes, replacement roofing, new kitchens and bathrooms, fire safety improvements and a host of other upgrades to existing homes. Major works will focus on properties with poor energy efficiency (EPC ratings of F and G), plus those identified as needing work to protect and improve the structural integrity of buildings.

Upgrade works to improve safety have already started, with contractor Harmony Fire replacing flat fire doors. Mark Statton, Head of Building Safety said *"This partnership aims to upgrade 900 fire doors over a two-year period. We are starting in Prince Philip Road in Launceston, and then the upgrade programme will be guided by the areas with the most urgent replacement need. We are pleased to be working with Harmony on such important work – putting our residents' safety first."*



# Improving neighbourhoods – Residents help plant new benches in Camelford

We've worked with Newquay Orchard to install some new planter benches at Highfield Road estate in Camelford.

Last year, as part of a regeneration project and in consultation with Highfield Road residents, Newquay Orchard designed a beautiful green space of native and edible plants. Hedges and fruit trees were planted, and the residents did a great job taking care of them.

This year, we joined residents and Newquay Orchard to build some new planter benches, planting herbs, strawberries and flowers within them.

A huge thank you to the local residents who got their hands muddy, and to Newquay Orchard for all of their expertise. Highfield Road residents now have a new green space where they can sit and relax.



## Bude Community Action Day Antics



Residents of Berries Avenue in Bude came together in the Spring to take part in a Community Action Day.

The event aimed to spruce up the area by bringing together partner agencies and local residents for a day of action.

Cormac and our Estate Wardens cleaned paths and communal areas, and the Cormac Tool Trailer and team helped volunteers to plant trees and maintain shrubs. Residents also took part in a community litter pick.

Representatives from Bude Stratton Town Council, Cornwall Council's Adult Social Care, Biffa Rubbish & Recycling teams, Volunteer Cornwall, Healthy Cornwall, and Cornwall Housing Management and Rent Officers were in attendance to provide information to residents.

We organised for family friendly entertainment from Entertainingly Different with parachute games, circus skills and plenty of refreshments. Argyle Community Trust also led multi skill and football activities for young people to enjoy.

# New service standards for repairs



Whilst many repairs are being completed in good timescales, we are still not achieving the timescales we'd like for all repairs. We are working hard to improve this.

A shared vision and key aims, and new service standards have been created and agreed with Corserv Facilities (who provide most of our repairs). This is to make sure we are delivering the services you have told us you want and we need to ensure our homes are of a good quality.

## You said...

“You want to know when your repair is scheduled as soon as possible, ideally when you report it.”

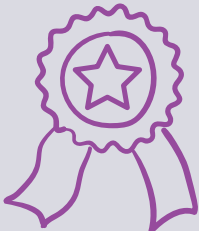
“You would like most repairs completed in one visit.”

“When repairs need more than one visit you want to be informed of when the follow up visit is scheduled.”

“You need more flexibility with appointments because of your work, caring responsibilities or medical needs.”

## Our new vision and service standards

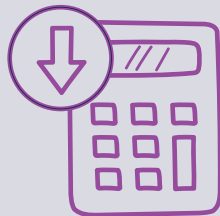
“To provide a high quality, cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants. Delivering compliant repairs, right first time solutions and statutory requirements concerned with the health and safety of people in their homes.”



**A high-quality service**

### TARGET:

To achieve average performance in comparison with similar social housing providers by 31 March 2024 and above average by 31 March 2025.



**A cost-effective repairs and maintenance service**

### TARGET:

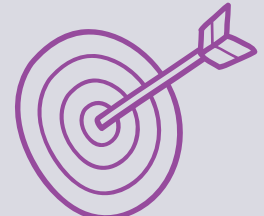
To increase the operational hours of the repairs service, improve the repairs performance and reduce the average cost of a repair.



**Responds to needs and offers choices to tenants**

### TARGET:

All works to be appointed at the first point of contact with residents or before an operative leaves the property if a follow on visit is needed.



**Repairs are completed right first time**

### TARGET:




95% of repairs are completed in one visit.

We will be asking our tenant volunteers to help us monitor whether we are achieving this through the performance reports they receive every three months. We will let you know how we are doing on our website and in our magazine.

# Our complaints process – a quick guide

We are working to resolve issues more quickly when things go wrong. This includes a big focus on responding to complaints in good time, keeping you informed throughout your complaint, and reaching a satisfactory outcome together.

## Our standard

-  **We will acknowledge complaints in 3 working days and advise you of the name of the investigating staff member.**
-  **We will aim to resolve your complaint within 10 working days.**
-  **We will ensure we keep you updated.**

## Our process

- Have you reported the issue to us? We need to have an opportunity to address the issue.
- If we haven't dealt with the issue in a reasonable time or if our service was poor, there are a number of ways that you can make a complaint. Including by telephone, email or completing our online form.
- We will send a complaint acknowledgment to you saying who is looking into your complaint and provide you with a reference number.
- In most cases, the person looking into your complaint will get in touch by phone or email to better understand the complaint and the outcome you would like.
- We aim to resolve complaints in 10 working days, but where this involves work which takes longer, we will provide a time frame.
- We will provide a written response to your complaint by e-mail or post.

“

Hello, I'm Gabi Duffey and I am the Complaints and Disrepair Manager. I have been part of Cornwall Housing for nearly 10 years. My team are currently making good progress with the outstanding complaints and will continue to work hard to meet all deadlines in a timely manner. We know as a team we are not where we want to be but will continue to push to make it happen. The team are really making a difference to CHL and our residents.



”

## What can I do if I'm not satisfied?

If you feel that we have not fully answered your concerns, and you provide a reason, you can ask for it to be re-looked at by a senior manager.

## At what point can I go to the Housing Ombudsman?

If you have gone through our complaints process, and you are still not satisfied, you can refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. If they agree to take it up, they will investigate the complaint and issue their findings.



**If you want information or advice about the way we have handled your complaint, on their website the Housing**

**Ombudsman has a helpful Frequently Asked Questions, as well as a chat facility.**

# Regular inspections help keep you safe

We want to keep your home in good condition and you and your family safe. So, we conduct annual heating services on all Cornwall Housing homes with gas, solid fuel, or with a heat pump. Electrical safety inspections are also conducted every 10 years (but many landlords have to do every five years – and we’re aiming to move to this).



## Regular servicing can save lives

Appliances that are faulty can have dangerous and even fatal consequences.

- The gas safety check identifies faults, which if left could lead to a gas escape, fire, or carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Electrical safety tests check you have safe, up-to-date electrical installations in your home. Testing your electric reduces the risks of fires and shocks.

## Minimal disruption to you

The tests just require access to the gas and electrical appliances in your home. The power may need to be switched off for 1-2 hours for the electrical inspection. If you have concerns about how this will impact your medical equipment – call our team who can discuss your needs.

## We're flexible

We understand you may be busy, but our engineers can work around your schedule. Let us know a time and day that is convenient, and we will try our best to fit in with you.

## What if I ignore my gas service or electrical safety check?

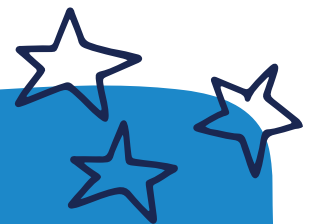
- This may impact your safety, as faulty gas and electric appliances can be fatal.
- If something goes wrong, you could have no access to electric, heating or hot water this winter.
- The tests are legal requirements, so we will need to take legal action to access your property if we cannot access your home by the service date.

**Claire, our Quality & Customer Coordinator, with members of the Customer Service team**



## We're here to help!

These services are free, and we will contact you when they are due. However, a small amount of gas or electric will be used to conduct the inspections. If you do not have any credit on your metres or are worried about money, please do not avoid your appointment! Contact our customer service team on **0300 1234 161** so we can help you.




# Measuring moisture in your home

Our Building Surveyors investigate the causes of damp and mould in our residents' homes. They find out where moisture is coming into houses and why.

A hygrometer is a handy tool that our surveyors use to measure the humidity, or amount of water vapour, in the air. Air can only hold so much water vapour before it condensates into water, causing damp and mould. So, it's important to monitor.

If you are struggling with damp and mould, please contact us on **0300 1234 161**. We may send you a hygrometer to help us monitor your moisture.

On our website we have more information about hygrometers and instructions on how to use it 

**Our Damp and Mould Team will assess your needs and may send you a hygrometer**



## Julie's top tips to reduce moisture in your home

There's never one factor contributing to damp and mould. It can be due to the way the property is constructed, inadequate extractor fans, or even property location and how much sun it gets. But you can help reduce it, by:

- **Shutting Doors** - when cooking, drying clothes, or for 30 minutes after showering, with the fan on or windows open.
- **Opening Windows** - when cooking, drying clothes or after showering.
- **Keeping extractor fans on** - when cooking or after showering.

# How our rent management team can help you

**I just love being out in the community and helping people. I get a real buzz.**

Paul Oxford, Rent Management Officer, helping Roger pay his rent over the phone.

Our Rent Management Officers help Cornwall Housing tenants stay in their tenancies. They help us to collect rent, supporting residents to pay rent on time and get help if they need it. They can also help with budgeting and assist residents with their finances if they are struggling.

## The Rent Team

Rent Officers are the first port of call if a resident needs help paying their rent. If a resident is struggling to pay for things like energy and food, or need money advice, they are referred to the Inclusion Advisors.

## Working in partnership

Our Rent Management Officers work closely with many charities and food banks across Cornwall and the UK. They liaise with the job centre, ensuring residents get all their benefits and reminding them about their appointments. Rent Management Officers also work together with Area Housing Officers, if issues such as neighbour disputes or safeguarding concerns are reported to them.

## What if I don't pay my rent?

If people don't engage with their Rent Management Officer, this can lead to court proceedings and eviction. But our officers do everything they can to help residents before it gets to this – this is a last resort.

## What can't they help with?

Our Rent Management Officers are not able to help with repairs. Repairs need to be reported to the repairs team at **0300 1234 161** or online on our website.

## Contact your Rent Management Officer

Our officers are happy to contact residents face to face, over the phone or by email. If you would like to speak to your Rent Management Officer, please call **0300 1234 161**.



**Struggling with money? Our Inclusion Advisors can help!**





# Our Inclusion Advisors help residents to...



**Make sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to.**



**Get advice with debt management.**

The team deliver a telephone service to residents that are at risk of losing their tenancy through debt, unemployment, benefit changes, or health issues.

**If you are concerned about your ability to pay your rent because of any of these issues, there is a lot our Inclusion Advisors can do to support you, including:**

- **Income maximization and budgeting**
- **Benefit support**
- **Debt advice**
- **Referrals & partnership working** with charities and organisations
- **Home moving support** if the resident is affected by the bedroom tax



If you need support with any money related issues, please contact the team at: [inclusion.advisors@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:inclusion.advisors@cornwallhousing.org.uk) or call **0300 1234 161**.

**A single woman living in a 3-bedroom house was having to pay an extra £100pcm under-occupancy charge. She accrued £1000's in rent arrears, so we managed to move her to a 1-bedroom bungalow. This saved her a fortune and helped clear her arrears.**

Jacqui, Inclusion Advisor





**Helena our Area Housing Officer, conducting an Estate Walkabout in Bodmin.**

# Monitoring Your Estates

**Do you care about your environment and neighbourhood? Become an Estate Monitor today!**

We want to make sure the service you receive for communal cleaning and grounds maintenance meets the agreed service standards. Our Estate Monitors inform us about the service they receive from our contractor, Cormac. Our Neighbourhood Services Manager responds to Estate Monitors feedback and, if necessary, will challenge the contractor on any failings. Apply to be an Estate Monitor today by emailing: [myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk).

## Keeping Neighbourhoods Tidy

Our Neighbourhood Wardens are responsible for tidying up Cornwall Housing estates. Their roles involve weeding, hedge cutting, clearing overgrown pathways and making sure there are no health and safety issues. The team aren't responsible for grass cutting, this is contracted out to Cormac. If you need them, please contact your Area Housing Officer.



**Our Neighbourhood Wardens**

**Did You Know?** The team don't plant flowers, but they can clear areas ready for community planting projects.

## Dates for your diary: Estate Walkabouts

We regularly visit all our large estates to make sure they are clean, safe and nice places to live. We hold "Estate Walkabouts," where officers from across Cornwall Housing meet with Councillors and tenant representatives, to review conditions and discuss problems. Below is a list of our upcoming estate walkabouts. If you would like to attend, please contact us on **0300 1234 161**.

### Mid and West Cornwall

- Rosedale, Truro** – 2 October, 12pm
- Tregurra, Truro** – 2 October, 10am
- Old Hill, Falmouth** – 3 October
- Malabar, Truro** – 9 October, 10am
- Tregundy, Perranporth** – 11 October, 10am
- Trelander Estate, Truro** – 24 October, 11am
- Daubuz Court, Truro** – 24 October, 10am
- St Clements Close, Truro** – 24 October, 11am
- Malpas Estate, Truro** – 31 October, 10am

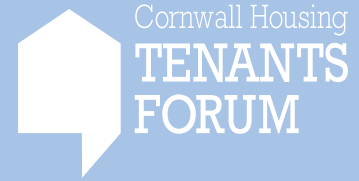
### North and East Cornwall

- Mount Camel, Camelford** – 3 October, 10am
- Highfield Estate, Camelford** – 3 October, 10am
- Berries Avenue, Bude** – 10 October, 10am
- Kinsman Estate, Bodmin** – 11 October, 10am
- Trengle Estate, Bodmin** – 11 October, 11am
- Greenbanks Estate, Polruan** – 19 October, 11am
- Berryfields Estate, Bodmin** – 26 October, 10am
- Trevithick Estate, St Merryn** – 25 October, 2pm
- Southern Way & Queens Park, Wadebridge** – 26 October, 2pm



**Find more estate walkabout dates on our website**





## From John Harris – Chair of the Tenants' Forum Changes in Social Housing Regulation

“ Things are changing in the world of social housing; the Social Housing Regulation Bill has passed into law. The question is, what will the new regulations and measures mean for residents and landlords and how will they affect the relationship between them?

Firstly, the **Tenant Satisfaction Measures** will give a clearer picture of how satisfied residents are with their landlord. The law makes it clear that residents must be treated with respect and their rights protected by the Regulator. The law will make it easier to hold landlords to account.

Secondly; the new **Social Housing Regulation Act** (based on The Charter for Social Housing White Paper) gives the Regulator new and much stronger powers, with specific requirements for housing providers to achieve and maintain a high standard and quality in all their properties with an emphasis on safety and damp and mould.

The regulator has also been explicit in its requirements for tenants to have a much greater role in monitoring and scrutinising the services social landlords provide.

To prepare for this, the Forum has changed its emphasis. Our Terms of Reference now say:

The purpose and objectives of the Forum are to **act in the interests of all residents**, to monitor, investigate and challenge, and where necessary hold the company to account.

Our main focus will be on repairs and maintenance, damp and mould, landlord services and complaints. We will also investigate wherever we feel the company is failing in its duty to its residents. Forum will also when we can, hold Cornwall Housing up as an example of good practice.

The Tenants Forum welcome new members to help with our work, it's easy to join and the only requirement needed is for you to be a Cornwall Housing or Council tenant, so why not apply? ”

If you are interested in finding out more, contact **0300 1234 161** or email [info@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@cornwallhousing.org.uk)

The Regulator is consulting on revised standards for social housing - find out more on their website. Closing date - 17 October.

## Your satisfaction measured through the Your Call survey

This year we are asking 1000 tenants to rate our performance in our Your Call satisfaction phone survey. This feedback will be reported to the regulator to help them assess how we are doing.

In June, we announced the lucky winner of the Your Call spring prize draw – selected at random winning £100 in supermarket vouchers. Congratulations! Our Autumn prize draw takes place in September. All you have to do to win is take part in the survey! For information about the survey, head to [www.cornwallhousing.org.uk](http://www.cornwallhousing.org.uk). If you have any questions or want to opt out, please contact us at [myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk).



**Mrs Taylor was our Your Call  
spring prize draw winner**

# Annual Tenants' Performance Report

CORNWALL HOUSING

April 2022 – March 2023

## Introduction from Managing Director, Su Spence

**“We have listened** to and shared residents’ concerns about the performance of the repairs service and are working closely with the contractor to improve service delivery.

### **This is why your feedback is so valuable.**

Thank you to every customer who takes the time to complete a survey or get involved.

**We still have a huge amount to do** to raise standards and performance to be where we want it to be and you deserve it to be. This is reflected in the performance figures for 22-23. Our new senior management team are working closely with the Council to make the big changes that will make the big difference. As we get quicker at answering your enquiries and completing most of your repairs, we are confident that you will start to feel the change this year.”

## Improving our customer service



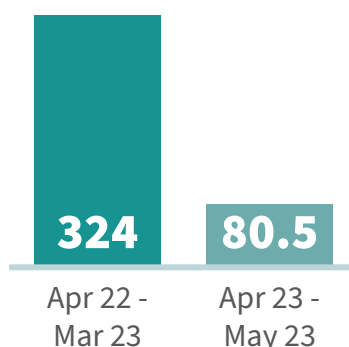
**835** complaints received

In January 23 we introduced a new policy and approach for handling complaints, which is improving the service for customers, but not reflected in these figures for last year.



**37.65%** responded to on time

### Average time to answer inbound calls (seconds)



In April 23, we created more capacity in the customer service centre which is reducing call waiting times and improving how we answer your enquiry.

## Supporting tenants and communities



**£921,000** in extra benefits or debt reduction



**440 adaptations works** to help our tenants live better in their homes









**55 ASB cases closed**  
*“I was very satisfied and happy with the way it turned out, and the work that your team put in to achieving a good outcome. Thank you!”*

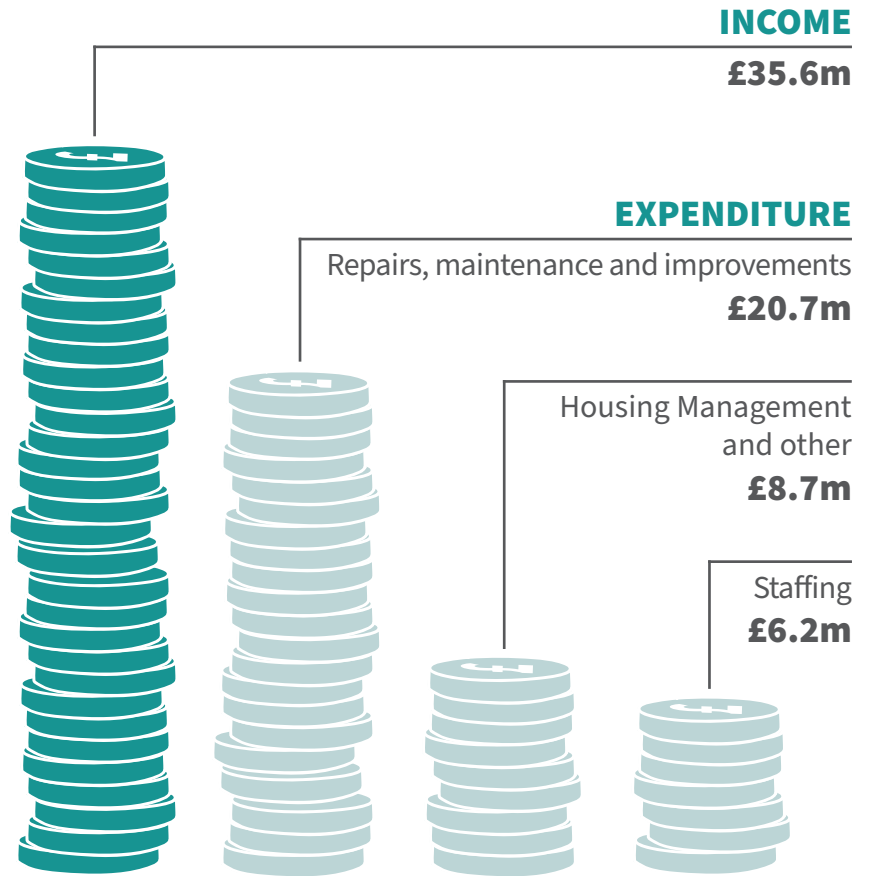


**21 residents and children** involved in Highfield planting day

## Safety servicing performance as of March 23

-  Gas - 99%
-  Oil - 97%
-  Solid fuel - 99%
-  EICR (10 year) - 97%  
Electrical
-  GSHP - 98%  
Ground-source heating
-  ASHP - 99%  
Air-source heating

## How the money was spent



### CASE STUDY

# SHARON

59, from Saltash

### Life can change quickly

Sharon always managed to pay her rent regularly, being in advance most of the time. A nasty fall from a ladder broke her arm and leg quite badly. She was signed off work and put onto statutory sick pay.

She really worried about not being able to pay her rent and cancelled her direct debit.

### Our team can help

Our Inclusion Advisor Kate helped Sharon to claim all the benefits she was entitled to, which has helped cover the rent and the council tax, and provide financial support during this difficult and unexpected period of not being able to work.

# Cornwall Housing Bake Off



We're introducing you to some of the people from the Cornwall Housing community - through their yummy recipes! This edition, Liz has shared one of her favourites: traditional Cornish saffron cake. Liz joined Cornwall Housing as a Customer Service Advisor in May 2022. Her role involves answering calls and emails and supporting the Housing Management team.



“

I used to bake for the local farm shop for 18 years, baking different cakes and homemade bread. But saffron cake has always been my speciality. In my spare time, I'm a semi-professional wildlife photographer!

”

## On your marks, get set... BAKE! Liz's Saffron Cake ♡ ♡

- To steep the colour of saffron strands, in a jug mix the warm water, saffron, and egg
- Then add the flour, marvel milk powder, granulated sugar, salt, butter, dried yeast and dried fruit
- Knead the dough, then leave to rise in a warm place
- Place in the oven on 200°C for 20 minutes
- If the bottom of the loaf sounds hollow when tapped, then it's done
- Serve and enjoy!

**Top tip:** The saffron mix is best made as a dough in the bread maker. Then knead by hand after and rise in a loaf tin before baking.

### Ingredients

- 11 oz warm water
- 1 g saffron
- 1 beaten egg
- 15 oz strong bread flour
- 1.5 tbsp dried marvel milk powder
- 3 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 2.5 oz butter
- 1 sachet dried yeast
- 7 oz dried fruit



# Funding digital devices for residents

We secured funding to gift more than 20 digital devices to residents, as part of our Digital Inclusion project. We used our partnership funds with the UK's largest supplier of building materials, Travis Perkins Ltd.

Tablets and my-fi devices were given to residents across Cornwall. The aim was to help them connect with others, search for jobs, do online training and courses, and give them access to health and wellbeing information.

Residents who required assistance to set up their devices, were directed to Digital Cornwall. This service offers free support over the phone or online, to enhance technical skills. To discuss how your digital needs can be supported, call **07973 497102** or email [digitalinclusion@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:digitalinclusion@cornwall.gov.uk).



“Receiving the tablet has been a life saver. I can now use it to do online courses, job search and more courses. Thank you so much, it truly is life changing to be able to access the internet independently and not have to worry about how to do future courses.”  
Christina Alleyne

## Engaging with residents about Fire Safety

As part of our commitment to raising fire safety awareness in the community, our Communication and Engagement & Fire Safety teams have been working together to hold coffee mornings and start fire safety discussions with residents across Cornwall.

Evacuation procedures, 'Stay Put' advice, and the importance of keeping fire doors closed were the key topics discussed with residents who live in flats with communal areas. The teams also conducted door knocks to reach even more residents.

A big thank you to all the residents that took part in our discussions, and to our teams for working hard to speak to as many people as possible. You can read our Fire Safety guidance at **Fire safety (cornwallhousing.org.uk)**. Remember to report any fire safety faults to us immediately by calling **0300 1234 161**.



## How to swap your Council home - Homeswapper

If you are looking to move to a different size of property or another area, you may be interested in our online mutual exchange scheme, Homeswapper.

Homeswapper enables Council house tenants to exchange their home with a tenant from another council or registered social landlord.

We have funded the service to enable our tenants to register free of charge.

Find out if you're eligible to swap your home at: [www.cornwallhousing.org.uk](http://www.cornwallhousing.org.uk)



## Have you claimed your pension credit?

You could be missing out on an average of £3,500 a year from Pension Credit. Pension Credit can help with daily living costs like council tax, housing costs and heating bills. Check your eligibility today at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or call **0800 99 1234**.

## Protect your household: purchase contents insurance



Contents insurance is really important. It covers the financial cost of repairing or replacing household goods and furnishings in the event of a burglary or unforeseen damage, such as a fires, floods or leaks.

Please be aware, tenants and leaseholders cannot make content claims through Cornwall Housing. You should always cover yourself and your belongings by ensuring you have purchased your own contents insurance.

## Age UK's Gardening Service



A new professional Gardening Service is being offered by Age UK Cornwall & The Isles of Scilly. It includes mowing, strimming, pruning, potting, clearance of weeds & brambles and general maintenance. The service encourages healthy living, improves well-being, and fights social isolation and loneliness in the Cornish community. Find out more at Age UK Cornwall Gardening Services or call **01872 266383**.

## Are your contact details up to date?

We need your most recent contact details on file, in case we need to send you important information about your home. If your email address or telephone number has changed, please let us know by emailing [myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk) or call us on **0300 1234 161**.



**CORNWALL HOUSING**

[www.cornwallhousing.org.uk](http://www.cornwallhousing.org.uk)



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