



Cartref



Life changer for Leighton

After years of serious illness left Leighton confined to one room in the family home he'd lived in for 30 years, life is now much brighter. Moving into a new, accessible bungalow in Cwmafan has transformed daily life for Leighton, his wife Mel and their family, giving independence, improving wellbeing and hope for the future.

Turn to page 6 to read Leighton's story about how the right home made all the difference.



Chief Executive announces retirement

After 15 years leading Tai Tarian, Linda Whittaker announces her retirement and reflects on a journey shaped by homes, people and communities.

More on page 5.



Solar power for 2,000 more homes

We're expanding our solar programme to 2,000 more homes, cutting energy bills, reducing carbon and supporting tenants with greener power.

More on page 7.



From bowls to gardens: Time to Thrive in action

Time to Thrive grants are supporting local groups, from historic bowls clubs to community gardens, helping neighbourhoods grow stronger together.

More on page 2.

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Community Challenge winners announced

Following a fantastic response to our latest Community Challenge, we’re excited to reveal the two winning projects that will benefit from a summer transformation.

Working with our contractors, we’ll be delivering improvements at Margam Community Centre and DOVE Workshops in Banwen.

At Margam, work will include painting the entrance and hallway, replacing toilet

taps and resealing PVC doors to address water ingress.

In Banwen, improvements include painting the entrance area and planters, tidying the outdoor space, jet washing and patching around new light fittings.

These improvements will help create more welcoming community spaces for local people.

We’re also pleased to share that £10,000 of additional funding has been secured to

support the excellent work of Mind Neath. Improvement works are underway, with an update to follow in the next Cartref.



Schools out for Barnabee!

As schools break up for summer, we’ve looked back at our schools engagement programme, a key part of our commitment to educating and inspiring future generations about biodiversity and protecting our planet.

Since September, we’ve visited several primary schools across our communities, including Cymmer Afan Primary, Eastern Primary, Pen Afan Primary, Blaenbaglan Primary and Rhos Primary, where pupils took part in fun and educational sessions focused on preserving and enhancing nature.

The sessions included interactive classroom workshops, followed by a special visit from our much-loved bee mascot Barnabee,

who always creates a real buzz of excitement!

A huge thank you to our contractor Spring Designs, who supported the sessions by generously donating biodiversity gifts and plants to schools to help enhance their outdoor spaces.

Rebecca Parker, our customer and community engagement officer, said:

“It’s really important that we all play our part in looking after nature. Being able to visit local schools and share

our passion for biodiversity with pupils is fantastic, especially as they share our enthusiasm for the environment.

This year’s programme has been a great success, and we’re already looking forward to creating even more buzz next term.”

Has your local school met Barnabee? Interested in a visit? Get in touch at community@taitarian.co.uk to book for the new school year.



From bowls to gardens: Time to Thrive in action

Our Time to Thrive community grants programme continues to support local groups across our communities.

One of the latest recipients is Mount Pleasant Bowls Club in Neath, which has served the local community since 1914. Thanks to a Time to Thrive grant, the club has upgraded its toilet facilities, improving access

for members, visiting teams and other groups that use the venue.

Andrew Harris, speaking on behalf of the club, said:

“The funding has helped us upgrade our toilets, benefiting both our members and the wider community. If you’re thinking of applying for a Time to Thrive grant, don’t miss out - get your application in.”



Time to Thrive has also supported Taibach Men’s Shed, a community-led group based at Taibach Education Centre with a £1,000 grant.

The group has used the fund to expand and enhance its thriving garden, building on a space where members come together, share skills and grow fresh produce for the community.

Time to Thrive is funded by our contractors, who are committed to giving back to the communities in which they work. The programme supports projects that strengthen wellbeing, inclusion and opportunity across our neighbourhoods.

Grants of £500 to £10,000 are still available for community groups, including sports clubs, schools, arts organisations and wellbeing initiatives.

If you think your group could benefit, find out more and apply here:

■ www.taitarian.co.uk/thrive

Welcome from Linda

Welcome to the summer edition of Cartref – full of positive stories and lots of need-to-know information.

Later this year, I’ll be stepping down as Chief Executive of Tai Tarian. It’s been a privilege to lead the organisation over the last 15 years, with tenants at the heart of everything we do.

Our cover story is a powerful example of that as Mel and Leighton share how their new home has completely changed their lives.

You’ll also read about how we’re continuing to invest in our homes for the long term, including the expansion of our solar panel programme. Dawn tells us about the benefits this brings – from lower energy bills and pride in her home.

With the summer holidays here, we’ve also included plenty of inspiration for families, with practical tips and low cost ideas to help keep children busy, learning and having fun over the break.

Alongside this, you’ll find updates on how Tenant Voice is making progress and shaping our services, plus some lovely community stories.

We hope you enjoy.

Linda Whitaker

Chief Executive



Waggy tails for a good cause



Tenants from two of our Haven schemes in the Swansea Valley came together recently for a pawisitively brilliant charity dog show.

There were wagging tails galore as tenants showed off their four-legged friends and enjoyed a fun social event that brought everyone together.

A big thank you to our expert judges and local Neighbourhood PCSOs for lending a hand and helping everything run smoothly. Thanks to everyone who took part, a fantastic £72 was raised for Greyhound Rescue Wales.

Feathered friends find a Tai Tarian home

Tenants at our Haven Housing scheme, Llys Nant Fer in Gwaun Cae Gurwen, have welcomed some feathered friends recently.

A pair of swallows first arrived at the scheme three years ago, building a nest and quickly becoming part of the community. Since then, it seems word has spread, with another pair recently choosing to nest at the entrance to the site.

The birds have settled in well, with residents and staff enjoying a close-up view of nature, and a daily catch-up with their feathered neighbours.

Katherine, who works at the scheme, said: “It’s been lovely to watch the swallows make Llys Nant Fer their home again this year. Residents really enjoy seeing them, saying hello and taking pictures as we watch them

grow day by day. It shows what a welcoming place Haven is, not just for people, but for wildlife too.

We’ll miss Rick, Mick, Nick and Vic when they fly the nest and hope they spread the word about our little scheme here in the Swansea Valley.”

Swallows are a protected species and are well known for returning to the same nesting spots each year, making their presence a special sign that they feel safe and settled. They typically arrive in the UK in spring after migrating thousands of miles from Africa, and their nests are often a welcome signal that summer is on the way.



Celebrating success at the TPAS Cymru Awards

Tenants and staff attended the TPAS Cymru Good Practice Awards last month, for a fantastic evening celebrating the very best in tenant participation and community involvement across Wales.

TPAS Cymru is Wales' leading tenant engagement organisation, supporting housing providers and tenants to work together to improve services and strengthen communities.

We were proud to be recognised in two award categories, highlighting our commitment to clear, accessible communication and meaningful tenant engagement.

Our nominations reflected the work we do to keep tenants informed through this very publication, Cartref, as well as our work with tenants to co-create the Tai Tarian Repairs Promise.

The evening was also a great opportunity to hear about the work happening across Wales, sharing ideas and learning from others, with plenty of inspiration.

On the night, we won the award for communications with tenants and residents for Cartref, and were highly commended in the involving tenants in designing and reviewing services category for our repairs promise work. A great achievement and a testament to the growing relationship between tenants and staff.



Katie is crowned Rising Star!

Our tenant engagement officer, Katie John, has been named winner of the prestigious CIH Cymru Rising Stars Award, 2026.

Since joining us two years ago, Katie has led on tenant involvement across the organisation, bringing fresh ideas, driving innovation, and shaping our Tenant Voice opportunities so that tenants can have their say.

Katie took to the Tai 26 conference stage alongside two strong finalists and delivered a powerful presentation on the importance of social housing in Wales. Following her presentation, conference delegates and the CIH Cymru judging panel cast their votes, crowning Katie the 2026 winner.

Our Chief Executive, Linda Whittaker, said:

"She is a truly deserving winner of this Rising Star award."



Contract update reminder: Notice of Variation

In June, we contacted all tenants about updates to your contract, known as a Notice of Variation. This was a legal requirement across Wales, so all renters will have received similar information.

These updates strengthen your rights and protections, they do not reduce them in any way. For example, you cannot be treated unfairly because you have children or because you claim benefits. While these protections already existed, they are now clearly included in your contract.

You don't need to take any action, just keep the information safe with your contract for future reference. If any personal information within your contract needs changing, please get in touch by emailing mycontract@taitarian.co.uk or call 0300 777 0000.

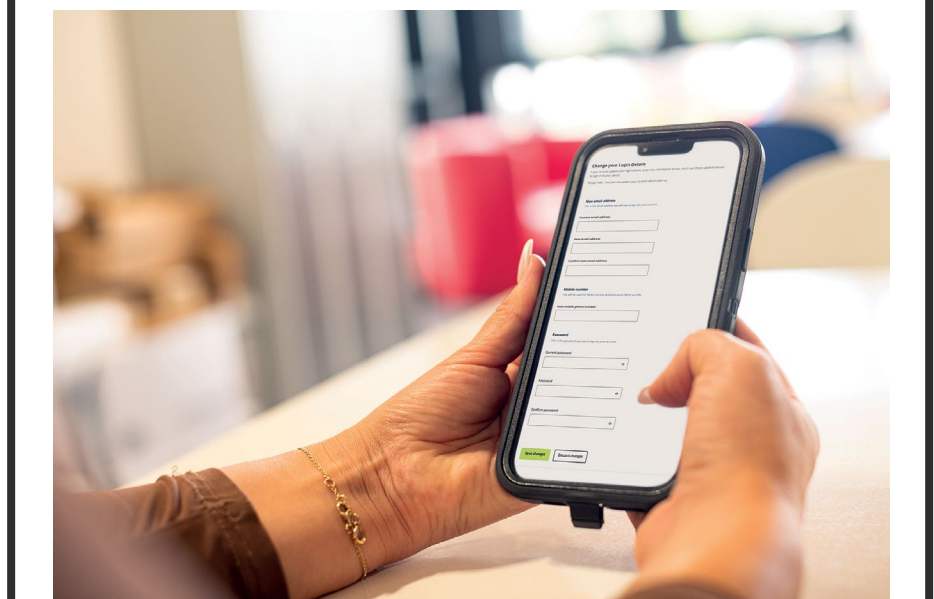
Everything Tai Tarian at your fingertips

We're getting ready to launch a new tenant portal, designed to make it easier for you to access all things Tai Tarian.

Available 24/7 as an app you can download to your smartphone, it will allow you to take care of everyday tasks such as checking your rent balance and statement, making payments and requesting repairs, at a time that works for you.

You'll also be able to update your account details and share information with us more easily, including uploading photos when you report an issue, helping us understand things better first time.

We'll be sharing more details in the next edition of Cartref, including how the portal works and how you can get started. Watch this space.



This home has changed my life

For Leighton and Mel, their previous house was filled with memories. It was where they raised their children and spent three decades building a family life. But after a series of serious and life-changing health issues, the home they loved could no longer meet Leighton's needs.

Leighton had been living with spinal pain when routine surgery led to devastating complications. An infection developed, followed by meningitis, and in early 2025 he became critically unwell, spending time in intensive care. Doctors later described his survival as a "modern-day miracle", but the impact on his health was significant.

After months in hospital, it became clear their home was no longer suitable. With steps up to the front door and no accessible living space, Leighton became confined to one room. Getting to hospital appointments, physiotherapy and hydrotherapy was incredibly difficult, and many sessions had to be cancelled simply because leaving the house was such a challenge.

"The house we'd lived in for 30 years suddenly felt like it was trapping him," Mel said. "Everything was harder

physically, mentally and emotionally."

Mel contacted Tai Tarian to explain their circumstances, and the housing team quickly began working with the family. There was medical evidence to gather and things to put in place to get their home ready for a transfer. But the priority was clear – finding a suitable home close to their support network in the Port Talbot area.

When Mel met with Andrea and Dave from the Housing Team, she brought photos and videos to show what daily life was like. Not long after, hope arrived in the form of a call about new bungalows being built nearby at Golwg y Foel.

"I was worried about downsizing," Mel admitted. "We have so much medical equipment, I worried a two-bedroom bungalow wouldn't be big enough."

Those fears disappeared as soon as she viewed the property.

"It's open plan and spacious, and we've adapted it so Leighton's bed and chair fit comfortably into the living space. I could have cried when we first saw it."

Since having the keys in May the impact has been huge. Flat access and a designated



car parking space means appointments are manageable again. The wet room allows Leighton to shower independently and wide doors open straight onto a peaceful outdoor space, something he hadn't been able to enjoy for years.

"It sounds small, but being able to sit outside and enjoy the garden again is incredible," Leighton said.

"This home has changed my life completely. It's taken away so much stress and worry and given me the drive to focus on rehab and getting stronger."

Family life has changed too. Their grandchildren can now visit and spend time with Papa, and 4-year-old James, who

has always known Leighton confined to one room, is excited to play wheelchair football in the garden with his grandad and his "magic boots" this summer.

Even their dog Coco is enjoying the feel of his new home.

"He's like a different dog," Mel laughed. "He absolutely loves it here."

With energy efficient features including solar panels and an air source heat pump, the home also offers comfort, affordability and peace of mind.

After years of uncertainty, Leighton and Mel finally feel settled.

"This isn't just a new house," Leighton said. "It's changed everything for us."

Chief executive announces retirement

Our chief executive, Linda Whittaker, has announced her retirement from the organisation.

Linda has led Tai Tarian since 2011, when Neath Port Talbot's social housing stock transferred from the local authority to the newly formed organisation, then known as NPT Homes.

One of her first major priorities was overseeing the modernisation and upgrading of thousands of homes to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). Since then, Tai Tarian has continued to grow, now managing more than 9,000 homes and employing around

600 people, most of whom live locally.

During her time as chief executive, Linda has also helped shape services to better support tenants. This includes the creation of dedicated teams focusing on tenant liaison and engagement, financial inclusion and tackling damp, mould and condensation, alongside an ongoing programme of building new homes.

Speaking about her decision, Linda said:

"I have taken immense pride in leading Tai Tarian over the last 15 years.

From delivering new kitchens and bathrooms,

to building new homes and strengthening our support services, everything we do is focused on providing the best possible service for our tenants.

This has been a difficult decision, as I remain passionate about the future of Tai Tarian and the ambitions we have for the years ahead. However, I feel now is the right time to hand over to someone who will lead the organisation into its next phase."

Linda will officially step down on 30 September 2026. We will introduce you to our new chief executive Nick Tagg in the next edition of Cartref.



A look back at 2025/26

Our annual review was shared with members at our AGM. It reflects on the past year, including what we've achieved and the progress we've made. Scan the QR code here to read more.



The faces behind the phones

Whenever you call us to report a repair, ask a question or get support, you'll speak to a member of our contact centre team.

The 14-strong team always try to put your mind at ease and help with your query, but what is the job really like, what type of calls do they get, and who are the people behind the headset? We went to find out:

Alisha and Lauren are busy talking on the phone when we arrive – fielding two of the 300 calls the team deal with every day. Once they finish, they and team leader Naomi, tell us a bit more about the job.

"We're often the first voice people hear when they call Tai Tarian, and we could be asked absolutely anything", said Alisha. "It's important we know exactly what is going on throughout the organisation so that we're in the best position to help the caller."

Lauren adds:

"There's quite a lot of responsibility involved in the job, especially when someone phones in to report a repair. We have to work with the caller and try to diagnose the problem, so we know how to deal with it – is it an emergency? Can it be assigned to our in-house trades? Do we have to employ a

contractor to deal with it? There are a lot of things to consider.

But it's not just on the phones that the team works, as Naomi explains:

"Answering calls is just one part of the job. We get a lot of queries and repair requests via e-mail, so team members have to be adaptable and deal with them too. We'll also be launching a new customer portal this summer, available as an app, which will make it easier for tenants to get in touch with us, so the team will need to adapt again to deal with the queries that come in that way."

The unpredictability of the job is what excites Alisha:

"When the phone rings, you have no idea what you're about to be asked to deal with. It can be daunting. I remember answering the phone for the first time, I was terrified. But thanks to my training the nerves soon settled."

For Lauren, it is the support of the team that helps her:

"We have a great team and we're all there for each other. If I don't know the answer to something, then one of the team will. Some of the team have been doing this job for years and they're like an encyclopaedia when it comes to dealing with any issue. We know we can always rely on them for help."

As you can imagine, the phones are constantly ringing, but as Naomi explains, some days are busier than others:

"Mondays are usually the busiest times as people ring in to report an issue that has come up over the weekend. Fridays are also busy as that's when people who are applying for housing with us can bid on properties, so we get a lot of requests for help with that. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are usually quieter days, so if your call isn't urgent and you can wait until then, it should be easier to get through to us on those days. Our call positioning system will also tell you where you are in the queue, so should also give you an indication of how long you'll need to wait before your call is answered."

Alisha then sums up what working in the contact centre is all about:

"It's a very worthwhile job. Knowing you can help people who need it and that you can make their day that little bit better is very rewarding. If they put the phone down knowing that we've helped them in some way, then that's all that matters."

With that, it's back on with the headset and to take the next call of the day – whatever it will entail.



Tenant Voice latest

Our Tenant Voice groups continue to play a vital role in helping us improve what we do. Here's how recent feedback has made a difference:

Membership and involvement
Tenants recently met with us to discuss our shareholding membership policy and how we can spread the word and encourage more people to get involved.

They told us that membership should be promoted more widely and highlighted at tenant engagement events. In response, we are now sharing information about membership at all engagement events to help encourage new members. We're also planning a promotion in the next edition of Cartref so watch this space.

TPAS training

Members of all six Tenant Voice groups have now completed training with TPAS Cymru. This included an introduction to the world of housing and housing associations, covering how we're governed, what tenant engagement means and why it's so important. This training has helped tenants feel confident to share their views and given them an understanding of how this knowledge can help influence decisions.

Repairing repairs, repairing trust

Following our Repairing Repairs, Repairing Trust co-design sessions, we caught up with tenants to share an update on progress. We also explained the new WHQS ruling and offered a first look at the tenant portal, coming soon.

We also explored opportunities for tenants to get involved in future projects and help shape services around their needs.

Making solar panels easier to understand

Our environment and sustainability group has worked with us to improve how we talk to tenants about solar panel installations.

They told us that our letters needed to be clearer and easier to understand. In response, we've shortened them, used clearer language and explained the process in a simpler way, including the support available from our tenant liaison officers.

They also asked to see more real-life examples of how solar panels can benefit tenants. This edition of Cartref includes Dawn sharing her experience of how solar panels have helped reduce her energy bills, you can read more below.

Reviewing complaints and value for money

Our scrutiny and value for money groups have helped review our complaints policy following changes introduced by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, helping to ensure our complaints service is clear, accessible and works for everyone.

What's next?

Our Tenant Voice groups will continue to shape key areas of our work. The value for money group will soon begin looking at rent setting for next year, while the communities and homes group will be reviewing a new good neighbour policy to provide clarity around what is classed as anti-social behaviour and help ensure tenants feel safe and supported in their homes.



Solar power for 2,000 more homes

We've made a commitment to make our homes more energy efficient. After installing solar panels on over 1,600 homes last year, thanks to more Welsh Government funding we're now expanding the programme.

With support from our dedicated tenant liaison team, work is already underway with three trusted south Wales-based contractors to bring clean, renewable energy to even more tenants.

Over the next 12 months, solar panels will be fitted to just over 2,000 of our least energy efficient homes, helping reduce energy bills, cut carbon emissions, and move us closer to our goal of becoming a carbon-neutral organisation.

Using information from our home surveys, we've carefully selected the homes that will benefit most from this investment. Tenants whose homes have been chosen have received a letter explaining the next steps and how they'll

be supported throughout the process.

Dawn from Sandfields has already seen the benefits since her panels were installed in May:

"I didn't expect it to be so quick. The contractors were fantastic and respectful, and the Tai Tarian team were lovely. I'm really happy with the savings on my bills. I paid just £48 last month when I was paying double that before the install. Anyone on the fence about getting solar, get off the fence and onto the green side! With bills going up all the time, don't miss out on the savings."



The whole process is designed to be quick and low disruption, with most installations completed in a single day.

Solar panels offer many long-term advantages, including lower energy bills, reduced reliance on fossil fuels, and a smaller carbon footprint. Once installed, they also require little to no maintenance. Thanks to Welsh Government funding the installation is completely free for tenants, and you won't need to pay to maintain the system.

Not every home is suitable for solar panels, but we are following a carefully planned Tenant Energy Pathway to ensure the programme is delivered fairly and efficiently.

This is a big step toward a greener future for tenants and we're proud to be leading the way.

Find out more here:



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 through our Homes by Choice bidding scheme.

In Sandfields, the derelict Red Dragon pub has been demolished to make way for 16 one-bedroom flats and six two-bedroom flats, due to complete in spring 2028.

The homes are being built to be energy efficient, with features like solar panels and modern heating systems to help keep them warm and reduce energy bills.

Progress at Golwg y Foel, Cwmafan, is going well, with

phase one now complete. This mixed development includes one- and two-bedroom bungalows alongside one-bedroom apartments.

A further 18 new homes will be ready later this year. These homes help meet significant local housing need, contributing to a total of 43 homes across the site. The overall development remains on track for completion by late winter.

At the former Tudor Inn site in Cimla, work continues to move forward, with most timber frames now in place, a key milestone for the redevelopment. The scheme will deliver 22 new homes, including one-bedroom apartments and a mix of two-, three-, and four-bedroom homes.

Planning approval for our veterans' housing scheme, which will provide six high-quality, self-contained homes with shared communal areas, is expected early next year.

The Armed Forces Minister, Louise Sandher-Jones MP, along with Stephen Kinnock MP, recently met with us to hear more about the plans. Backed by £1 million from the Veterans Capital Housing Fund, alongside a further £1 million investment from us, the development will include shared communal spaces designed to promote independence, encourage peer support, and help tackle social isolation.

During the visit, there was also discussion around the wider social and economic benefits the scheme will bring

to the veteran community, including targeted recruitment and training opportunities, as well as community benefits built into the contract to support the local area.

With many veterans choosing to return to Wales after leaving service, the scheme responds directly to the need for high-quality housing in our area.



Red Dragon, Sandfields

Keeping pets responsibly at home

We know pets are an important part of family life, and we support responsible pet ownership. At the same time, we need to make sure homes and shared spaces feel safe.

Here's a reminder of what you need to know about keeping pets as a tenant with us.

Permission to keep a pet

If you have a pet, or are thinking about getting one, you must ask for permission first.

When we look at a request, we'll consider:

- Whether your home is suitable
- The type and size of the animal

- Access to outdoor space and the fencing and flooring in your home
- Keeping a pet without permission is a breach of your contract and could lead to further action.

If you're not sure whether you already have permission, please get in touch with our community housing team communityhousingteam@taitarian.co.uk or call 0300 777 0000.

Being a responsible pet owner

If you own a pet, you're responsible for making sure they are well cared for, properly supervised and not causing noise, nuisance or distress to neighbours.

In the case of dogs, they must be kept under control or in a separate room when staff or contractors visit your home. If this doesn't happen, the visit may need to be cancelled and rearranged.

They will also need to be kept on a lead in communal areas and cleaned up after in shared and public spaces.

By law, all dogs must be microchipped and registered with up to date owner details. This helps reunite lost dogs with their owners and supports responsible ownership.

Banned and restricted dog breeds

If you own a dog that is classed as a banned or restricted breed under current legislation (including XL Bully dogs), you must meet all legal requirements. This may include:

- Holding a valid Certificate of Exemption
- Ensuring the dog is correctly registered
- Following all control measures set out in law

Failure to comply with these laws is a serious offence.

By following these guidelines, you help keep your home, neighbours, and our colleagues safe.



Helping our tenants online

Our digital connections team continues to make a real difference in our communities by helping tenants gain confidence and independence online.



Recently, Mike contacted us for support with online shopping. Following an operation, he was unable to leave his home to visit the shops so needed help ordering online. After receiving support from the team, he told us:

"Your help has been priceless. I'm genuinely very grateful."

Another tenant got in touch after buying something online that never arrived. She was worried she may have been the victim of a scam, so the team helped her check the company's details and guided her through the next steps. With her permission, they contacted her bank and reported the issue as a disputed transaction. The bank investigated and refunded the money back into her account that very same day.

The tenant said:

"I was so worried, but Emma and Hannah made me feel less stressed about the situation and handled the whole thing for me. When they left, I felt so much better, a fantastic service thanks so much"

Where to find us

The digital connections team hold monthly drop-in sessions at Melin Advice Centre on the last Tuesday of every month and regular drop-in session at Ty Llansawel, Briton Ferry where tenants can access support and advice.

The team supports people to feel more confident, connected, and comfortable using technology and can help with:

- Getting online and setting up Wi-Fi
- Using phones, tablets and computers
- Help with emails, apps and general device support
- Accessing and using online services
- NHS apps, job searches and CV support
- Online courses and education support
- Housing services support
- Staying safe online

If you, or a tenant you know needs a bit of extra help to get online the team are here.

Call Hannah or Emma on 01639 506694/01639 506026.

Stay safe by the water this summer



Many of us will be heading to the beach, river or lake over summer. While open water can be great for cooling off, it can also be dangerous. Even on hot days, sea temperatures average around 12°C – cold enough to cause cold water shock, affecting your breathing and movement.

The RNLI's lifesaving advice is simple: Float to Live. If you get into difficulty in the water, float on your back, keep your ears submerged, relax and control your breathing. Use gentle movements to stay afloat and don't worry if your legs sink – everyone floats differently. Once calm, call for help or swim to safety.

Please watch and share the RNLI's short video – it could save a life. Watch here:



Making summer fun more affordable

Planning activities for the summer holidays can feel overwhelming but things don't have to be expensive. There are plenty of free and low-cost options available locally to help you make the most of the break.

There's lots of gorgeousness on our doorstep so why not pack a picnic and enjoy a cheap day out at places like Aberavon Beach, Margam Park or Gnoll Country Park?

Free swims for kids take place during the holidays, check out your local pool to find the session times. There's always lots on at our local libraries, you can't beat taking a selection of new reads home, but many venues run free or low-cost activities too. Contact your local library to see what's on near you.

At home there are lots of simple ways to keep children entertained without spending much. Low-cost crafts using recycled materials, or gardening projects like creating bug hotels or planting herbs, are great for rainy days.

The summer holidays are also a great time to help children build confidence with money in fun, practical ways. Simple finance games and activities can make a big difference, why not try:

- Making a DIY piggy bank from a jar or bottle to encourage saving
- Playing board games like Monopoly to manage spending and decision-making
- Getting children involved in meal planning on a budget, including shopping smart and choosing ingredients
- Practising real-life skills, like working out prices, handling change or spotting how people pay for things in shops
- Talking about spending habits on trips out from ticket prices to petrol or bus fares

Ideas can help children understand the value of money while having fun and getting involved in day-to-day activities.

Eating out is a lovely treat for the kids but it can be expensive.

The good news is that over the summer many cafés and restaurants also offer kids eat free or £1 deals, including Tesco, Asda and Morrisons. More independent local businesses may be taking part this year, it's worth checking what's available near you.

With a bit of planning, there are plenty of ways to keep children busy, learning and having fun over the summer without breaking the bank.



Ask Ana: don't miss out on support

With the summer holidays here and a new school term approaching, it's a good time to check you're getting the financial support you're entitled to and know what help is available.

If you're already claiming benefits, it's important to keep your details up to date. Changes such as starting or leaving a job, changes to your hours or pay, someone moving in or out of your home, growing your family, moving house, or changes to your health and wellbeing can all affect what you receive. Even smaller changes like a pay rise, a partner moving in or a change in rent can make a difference, so keeping everything accurate can help avoid problems with payments. Speak to us first for advice.

There's also support available to help with the cost of back to school. The School Essentials Grant can help with uniforms (including coats and shoes), equipment and activity costs for families receiving certain benefits. Families with children from reception age through to Year 11 can apply online via the Neath Port Talbot Council website by searching "School Essentials Grant 2026/27", or by contacting the child and family team on 01639 763515 to request a postal form.



For older students, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) offers £40 a week to support 16- to 18-year-olds in

further education. It's available to households with an income of up to £24,570 (for one young person) or £27,273 (for more than one), and students must meet attendance requirements. Applications can be made through Student Finance Wales via the Further Education section, with links and further information also available on the Neath Port Talbot Council website.

If you're feeling the strain this summer, please don't struggle alone. Our Financial Inclusion Team is here to support you with everything from checking your benefits to make sure you're getting what you're entitled to, to arranging foodbank support or connecting you with other organisations for more specialist help. Even if you don't claim benefits there could be help available. We'll always do our best to find practical solutions to make things more manageable.

■ 01639 506623
■ financialinclusion@tairarian.co.uk



Making the most of summer at home

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy your garden, fire up the BBQ and spend time outdoors with family and friends. As we make the most of the longer days and good weather, it's also important to be considerate of neighbours and our shared spaces. A little courtesy goes a long way in helping everyone enjoy the summer months and here are some top tips from us.

Enjoying the outdoors

- If you're spending more time in your garden or inviting people over:
- Give your neighbours a quick heads-up if you're planning a gathering.
 - Keep music at a reasonable level, especially in the evening.
 - Be aware of smoke and noise that might drift into nearby homes.
 - Keep your outdoor space clean and tidy. Keep a track of bin day and dispose of your rubbish properly.
 - Be mindful of the time, if it's getting late and you're still enjoying your outdoor space be aware that you could be disturbing your neighbours.

Enjoying your outdoor space is also an opportunity to get to know your neighbours, just a smile or a wave can help build community spirit.

Summer naturally brings more activity and noises so it's important to expect this and



respond with understanding. Keep your cool if a neighbour issue arises and get in touch if you need our support.

Respecting shared spaces

Communal areas like stairwells and walkways must be kept clear. Don't leave BBQs, furniture, or personal belongings where they could block escape routes or create fire risks. These spaces should never be used for cooking or lighting candles.

A quick reminder of your contract responsibilities:

- Keep shared areas clear and safe.
- Be respectful & considerate to your neighbours.
- Don't store flammable materials near your home.
- Treat neighbours, staff, and communal property with respect.

Let's look out for each other as neighbours and enjoy summer.

Losing a loved one is incredibly difficult

When someone passes away, the 'Tell Us Once' service can help you notify multiple government departments in one go.

However, this service doesn't include Tai Tarian, so if you lose a loved one who was a tenant, it's important you contact us directly.

- Our team can:
- ✓ Update records once they have a copy of the death certificate
 - ✓ Talk you through what happens with the tenancy
 - ✓ Support you with next steps during a difficult time

Grief can be overwhelming, Cruse Bereavement can help. Call 0808 808 1677 or visit their website here:



Contract Talk

Access to your home

There are lots of reasons why we may need access to your home.

It could be to carry out essential repairs that we've identified or you've reported, complete vital safety checks such as annual gas servicing or electrical inspections, carry out surveys to help plan future improvements, or sometimes simply to check in on your wellbeing and the condition of your home.

Your occupation contract requires you to allow access when we give reasonable notice. We will normally give at least 24 hours' notice, and in some cases (such as planned inspections or surveys) longer notice. We will always try to arrange a time that works for you.

Some checks like gas safety inspections are a legal requirement and it's essential we have access for your safety and that of your neighbours.

We respect your home and your right to privacy. We will only ever ask for access for a clear and lawful reason, and at reasonable times.

Tai Tarian staff need access to your home so we can:

- Keep your home safe and fit to live in

- Meet legal safety requirements (such as gas and electrical checks)
- Prevent small issues becoming bigger and disrupting your life
- Protect you, your household, and neighbouring properties

Missed appointments and repeated refusal of access

We understand that life is busy, and sometimes things don't go to plan. However, missed appointments can put your home or others at risk.

If access is repeatedly refused this may be considered a breach of your occupation contract.

We will always try to resolve matters with you first, but in serious cases, particularly where safety checks cannot be completed, we may need to apply to the court for an injunction to give us access.

What happens if an injunction is ignored?

An injunction is a serious legal order issued by a court. It requires you to allow access at specified times so that essential work or safety checks can be carried out. Ignoring an injunction means



you may be in contempt of court, which is a serious offence and can result in fines or legal costs.

If an appointment isn't convenient or something changes, please let us know as soon as possible. We want to be flexible and will do our best to rearrange at a time that suits you.

Helping us complete your visit

To help your appointment run smoothly, please:

- Keep areas we need to access clear
- Ensure there is enough gas or electricity credit if required
- Keep pets safely secured
- Let us know in advance about any specific needs or concerns

If you have concerns about your appointment, please contact us as soon as possible. We will work with you to provide support.

Working together on rents and service charges

We are a not for profit organisation, which means our money goes back into our homes, services and communities. Around 87% of our income comes from rent, so keeping your rent account up to date allows us to maintain homes, carry out repairs, improve neighbourhoods and provide support when tenants need it most.

Working with tenants on how rents and service charges are set has been happening for several years. As part of this work, we have regular feedback on services.

Tenants tell us how important it is to have repairs done and that homes are maintained to a good standard. Some have shared their experiences of renting privately or owning their own homes before joining Tai Tarian, where getting work done wasn't always easy or affordable. That feedback helps shape how we plan and prioritise spending.

To ensure tenants have their say on what they pay we've worked with them in different ways, including workshops, surveys and discussion groups to develop a shared set of affordability principles. These are reviewed each year and updated based on tenant feedback.

This year, we've already been out in our communities talking to tenants about rents



and the cost of living. We were also invited by TPAS Cymru to share our approach with housing organisations across Wales.

It was great to see so many tenants from our Tenant Voice groups taking part in our rent setting workshop in June. More sessions are planned, so if you'd like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you. Just email tenantvoice@tairarian.co.uk or call 0300 777 0000.

Coming soon: annual rents survey

Keep an eye out for a text this September to share your views on rent. All who take part will be entered into a draw with plenty of prizes up for grabs.

Keeping your home up to standard

Each year we report to Welsh Government on how our homes meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) – a set of rules designed to make sure homes are safe, comfortable and energy efficient.

Recently we shared detailed information about every one of our homes with them. This includes everything from heating systems and insulation to kitchens, bathrooms, smoke alarms and outdoor spaces.

Over one million pieces of information were compiled, helping to build a full picture of the quality of our homes and where improvement work is still needed.

This work is a key part of making sure we continue to invest in your homes and meet the standards expected.

Bacon & egg quiche

This easy quiche makes a simple filling meal, enjoyed hot or cold – leftovers work just as well for a picnic. Use ready-rolled pastry to save time or make your own if you prefer.

Ingredients:

- 1 sheet ready-rolled shortcrust pastry (or see below to make your own)
- 6 eggs
- 150ml milk
- 4–5 rashers bacon, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 50g grated cheese
- Salt and pepper

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan).
2. Line a tin with the pastry and press into the edges. Trim any extra.
3. Cook the filling: fry the bacon and onion until lightly browned.
4. Mix the eggs: whisk eggs, milk, salt, and pepper in a bowl.
5. Assemble: add bacon and onion to the pastry case, sprinkle cheese on top, then pour over the egg mixture.
6. Bake for 30–35 minutes until set and golden.
7. Cool slightly before slicing (or chill for picnics).

Make your own pastry (optional):

Ready made pastry is quick and easy but if you did want to make your own:

- 200g plain flour
- 100g butter or margarine
- 2–3 tbsp cold water Rub the fat into the flour until crumbly, add water to form a dough, roll out, and use as above.

Top tips:

- Delicious hot or cold ideal for lunch or summer picnics
- Use up leftover veg or bits from the fridge
- Cheddar, soft cheese, or even a little cream works well
- Keeps in the fridge for 2–3 days
- For a crispier base, you can bake the pastry on its own for 10–15 minutes before adding the filling, but this step can be skipped if you’re short on time.



Serves:
4-6



Prep/Cook time:
15 mins (+ cooking)



Vegetarian option:

Swap the bacon for:

- Mushrooms and peppers
- Spinach (fresh or frozen, squeezed dry)
- Or simply extra onion and cheese

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.

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

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 or call 0300 777 0000.

All those who get in touch before 20th August will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 shopping voucher.

Congratulations to Orianna from Cwmafan who was our spring edition winner.

Monday 31st August is a bank holiday.

On this day our offices will be closed but emergency repairs will be in operation. For more on what we class as an emergency, please scan here:



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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