

Tenants' Newsletter

Welcome to the Autumn edition of your newsletter

This year, we have begun the work of improving services. We still have many challenges arising from the pandemic, but we have worked with tenants and partners to create a strong foundation on which to create good services and safe homes for all:

- You said you wanted to improve Repairs & Maintenance to your home, and in response, we have transferred our trades service to its own company within the Corserv Group, called Corserv Facilities Ltd. Excellent progress has been made on reducing the backlog of outstanding repairs and inspections.
- We have engaged specialist staff and focused on ensuring we are working hard to make sure all your homes are safe and have made really solid progress in achieving our objectives.
- We now have a new skilled and experienced Board in place, to drive the changes required over the next few years, and to really challenge and scrutinise what we are doing and how we are performing.

You told the Council that you wanted them to create a new management agreement with us, and a new contract is now in place. We thank you for your faith in us, and we recognise that we must do better in the future and provide a service you can trust and which delivers for you.

The new management team, led by our new Managing Director Su Spence, will embark on the journey of improving tenants' services for all tenants and residents.

Iain Sim - Outgoing Interim Managing Director of Cornwall Housing



In this issue:

- Introducing Su Spence – Cornwall Housing's new Managing Director
- Top tips on keeping your home free of damp, condensation and mould
- Our 2022 Garden Competition Winners
- Help with the cost of living this winter
- New online fire safety tool



Introducing Su Spence - Cornwall Housing's new Managing Director



Hello, let me introduce myself. My name is Su and I am the new Managing Director of Cornwall Housing. I started on 1 September and have been busy meeting lots of people and hearing about current issues.

Many people have been speaking to me about the changes that have taken place across the company recently, their concerns on some of the areas and also where we need to improve, especially around the repairs service.

I want to let you know that I have heard these messages loud and clear. I know that we need to improve, and I give you my commitment that repairs are top of my list of things we need to do.

“ These are your homes... and we must never forget that ”

There are no quick fixes unfortunately, but there are some changes that have already happened that should deliver a better service and many more to come. I'm hoping that many of you will be involved in helping shape how these services are run, and that together we will ensure that you get the right services.

“ I know that we need to improve ”

A little about me, I grew up in Plymouth and my family still live there. So while I know that this is the wrong side of the River Tamar, I do understand what it feels like to live in the South West and the challenges that we face down here.

For the past 8 years I have been working in Poole, running housing services there and this means I bring lots of experience on how we can do things. However, I firmly believe that we need local services for local people, and while I bring ideas, I need to find out what you want and what works for Cornwall, and I'm really looking forward to those discussions. These are your homes that we are managing and we must never forget that.

There will be more time to talk about different issues in future newsletters, but I hope you enjoy reading this issue and I look forward to meeting many of you.

Su Spence - Managing Director of Cornwall Housing

National Fraud Initiative

To make you aware of how we are using your data, we wanted to let you know about the National Fraud Initiative.

Cornwall Council is required by law to protect the public money that it manages. To do this they may use information or share information with other organisations that are responsible for checking or managing public money, to prevent or detect fraud.

Cornwall Council is required by the Cabinet Office to take part in the initiative and to provide details of Cornwall Housing residents, like names and addresses. This is so that the details can be compared with information from other public organisations and help to detect fraud, for example, unauthorised sub-letting.

Further information is available on Cornwall Council's website www.cornwall.gov.uk/nfi



Reaching out to **hear your voices**

In our summer edition we let you know that we had asked national tenant participation experts TPAS to improve how we engage with you.

To understand our needs, TPAS has worked with 27 Cornwall Housing tenants, the Cornwall Housing Board Members, Council commissioners, the executive and senior leadership team, as well as our frontline staff.

TPAS worked with a 'co-design group' of 12 Cornwall Housing tenants and 4 members of staff to finalise their proposals. These included three main recommendations and 25 sub-points.

What TPAS said...

TPAS has said that Cornwall Housing needs to pay more attention to tenants' experiences and priorities by 'noticing' what tenants want, instead of always asking. This is because many of you aren't able to participate in groups or surveys, and you feel we should 'listen' more to the day-to-day conversations and experiences during our contact with you.



How we will improve our engagement with you

In July, the TPAS proposals were jointly considered by Board members and tenant volunteers. They agreed we will:

- 1.** Make greater efforts to hear a wider range of views, including the 'silent majority'
- 2.** Start a 12-month project to test and evaluate some of the recommendations, including:



Reaching out to tenants that we don't usually hear from



Promoting a listening culture through a staff and customer communication campaign



Creating a Tenant Influence Group to check that tenants' views and experiences are influencing what we do



Using 'noticing and insight' to identify website and communications improvements

- 3.** Continue to use the Tenants' Forum as a route for residents' voices to the Council, ensuring it is hearing and presenting a wide range of tenants' voices and experiences.

Get involved... Get your voice heard



We will be doing more over the next 12 months to reach out to a range of tenants. Hearing your voices and noticing your experiences - we will be making sure that tenants influence our decisions and services.

However, there are a range of ways you can be more involved without having to commit a great deal of time and without having to travel. You can be as involved as you like. We will have more information in our next issue. You can find out more now on our website, or by emailing us at: myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk

Working together for a **better future**

Our Annual Tenants' Performance Report for the year April 2021 to March 2022 is now available on our website or on request by calling us on 0300 1234 161.

The report includes information about how we are:

- working hard to make sure all your homes are safe
- tackling antisocial behaviour
- engaging communities
- improving our repairs and maintenance service.



Annual Report 2021/22
www.cornwallhousing.org.uk

Our performance during the year from April 2021 to March 2022:

Safety and Compliance



100% 

Asbestos

Asbestos remedial action complete – **90.53%**



Electrical testing:

(10-year cycle) – **93.77%**

(5-year cycle) – **62.68%**

(We will transition to a 5-year programme testing cycle by 2025)



98.89%

Managed homes with a gas safety certificate



100% 

Fire risk assessments

Critical action complete – **100%**

High priority action complete – **37.81%**

Medium priority action complete – **32.08%**



100% 

Legionella



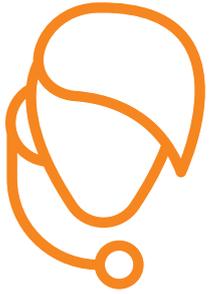
100% 

Communal Passenger and Stair Lifts



Customer Service

Calls to our customer call centre totalled:



167,324
(working hours)



8078 - Out of hours emergency calls



835 complaints

37.65% of complaints were responded to on time

42% of complaints were upheld



220 compliments

Repairs and maintenance

At the start of the year covered by this report, there were backlogs for both repairs and inspections. Excellent progress has been made in reducing these during the year; for repairs from **2549** to **1444**, and for inspections from **561** to **180**.



100% 

of emergency repairs were completed on time, and **93%** of tenants and residents were satisfied with the repair completed for them.



£20,527,235
capital money spent on
improving homes and
neighbourhoods

5573
properties receiving
capital works

91%
capital programme
(improvement works)
completed



241 kitchens



214 bathrooms



87 doors



223 home adaptations



287 windows



286 roof replacements



588 heating upgrades

Celebrating Success

Our 2022 Garden Competition Winners



Our first prize winner Linda

Thank you to everyone who entered our Garden Competition this year. There were so many fantastic entries, despite the intense hot weather this summer. The judges spent several hours going through all the photos to select the winners.

After much deliberation, we're delighted to congratulate our 1st Prize winner Linda from Cawsand, who's multi-level garden impressed the judges. Linda received £30 in shopping vouchers and winner's certificate from one of our Judges Steve.

On receiving the news Linda said: "Over the years entering the competition and sharing my garden, has given me a lot of enjoyment and encouragement to improve it. During the last few years I've been trying to adapt the garden for less work and more recently planting things for our hotter climate, like grasses. I've also seen this year that some established plants are thriving better in the heat and with less water.

Linda added "Why not enter next year, whether you are a dedicated or new gardener, go for it!"

Christine from St Cleer was awarded second prize and a £20 shopping voucher. She said "When we first came here six years ago, the gardens were a blank canvas due, I suspect, to many years of neglect. I am now very happy with how they are maturing. However, as is the way with gardening, it is still a 'work in progress' and I have a few different ideas for next year!

"My garden is my favourite place, and my plants are like my friends. I love to sit and just watch the birds having a great time in their bath, going from feeders to the bushes, sitting and drying out. I love my garden and hope to be able to do gardening for many years to come!"



Linda's first prize garden



Second prize winner, Christine's lovely garden



Jasmine's sweet peas

Highly Commended

This year, our judges also wanted to recognise two further entries that stood out – a **communal garden at Prince Philip Road in Launceston** and our first entry from a young person; **Jasmine from Laneast who grew sweet peas in her grandmother's garden.** Both of which received a £10 garden voucher to continue their gardening activities.

Thank you again to everyone who entered and congratulation to our winners. We're already looking forward to seeing your entries next year!

Tidying your estates

Our Neighbourhood Caretaker Team is making excellent progress improving the areas that you've reported as being in need of attention. St Margaret's Crescent in Bodmin is one such area, where the team has created a huge impact by clearing overgrown brambles from the footpath and steps at the rear of the properties.



One resident said: "The team have done a really good job; their work has opened up access to our back gardens from the footpath. It's very much appreciated."

We're concentrating on some of the smaller sites at present, so please continue to let us know if there's an area of your estate that needs attention. You can do so by emailing a photo and a description of the location to groundsmaintenance@cornwallhousing.org.uk We can then consider your request when planning our improvement work.



Making fire evacuation routes safer at the Sunrising Estate

Fire safety compliance and tenant safety is of critical importance, so earlier this year we started our 'Fire Safety Escape Clearance Programme' with residents at the Sunrising Estate in Looe.

The main objective of the clearance programme is to make sure all fire evacuation routes, including decked areas, open stairwells and landings are kept clear at all times. This is because any items left or stored in these areas could fuel a fire or cause an obstruction that prevents escape in the event of a fire.

Residents thought storing items in communal areas and landings wasn't a fire hazard because they are open sided, but a Specialist Fire Risk Assessor advised that all the possessions were fire risks that had to be cleared. This is why Cornwall Housing has a 'sterile area' policy for all types of landings and corridors.

We undertook a 3 stage engagement process, sending letters to the residents to keep them informed about the clearance:

1. We wrote to all the residents to explain what we were doing, why and that we were coming to speak to the community
2. We visited the estate, listened to residents and agreed to provide wheelie bins
3. We set a clearance and removal date, and explained staff would be present to help clear the areas, without passing the cost onto tenants.



Following the clearance, and as a result of feedback from residents that these areas were the only place they could store their rubbish, Cornwall Housing purchased wheelie bins for residents' use. These are stored away from the building and we are engaging with Cormac to have site meetings and design better waste storage.

Need to know

Keeping your home free of damp, condensation and mould

Condensation is the most common cause of damp and mould, so it's important to know how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum in your home.

Condensation happens when warm moist air meets a cold surface, such as windows or the walls in your home. You are most likely to find condensation on or near windows, in corners of rooms and behind furniture.



Here are our tips for minimising condensation in your home:

- Maintain a regular minimum temperature in your home – ideally the main living room should be between 18-21 °C and the rest of the house at a minimum of 16 °C
- Dry clothes outside whenever possible
- Keep the kitchen door closed when cooking
- Don't leave water boiling away in pans on the cooker
- When cooking put lids on pans and reduce the heat – this also saves you money!
- Keep the bathroom door closed after showers/baths to prevent moisture travelling to other areas
- Wipe down your windows and sills each morning, especially in bedrooms and bathrooms
- Allow air to circulate by keeping window trickle vents and air vents open
- Do not use a paraffin heater or portable bottled gas heaters
- When running a bath, put cold water in first and then add the hot water

“ Condensation is the most common cause of damp and mould ”

Preventing the growth of mould

Mould spores are always present in the air, however mould needs certain conditions to grow on surfaces, and there are some simple things you can do at home to control it.

- Leave a gap of 2 inches (50mm) between furniture and the walls to allow air to circulate
- Increase ventilation – open window trickle vents and air vents where possible
- Regularly open cupboards, wardrobes and drawers open to allow air to circulate.



We know that tackling condensation is a challenge and the unpredictable damp Cornish weather makes it tricky to dry clothes outside. If you do need to dry clothes indoors, here's our top tip:

Only dry clothes on a clothes airer and place it in the bathroom. Then close the door and open the window slightly to allow the moisture to escape.

Don't forget to wipe down any condensation that forms in the bathroom and wring the cloth out .

Updates from the Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel

CORNWALL HOUSING



Working with Cornwall Housing to improve services

Having resumed our face-to-face meetings earlier this year, we're now virtually back to normal, and have even welcomed some new panel members.

We're pleased to see that our review of Cornwall Housing's Pets and Animals Policy led to it being re-written, and the updated policy adopted by Cornwall Housing.

The updated Pets and Animals Policy is online at: www.cornwallhousing.org.uk/media/46638509/pets-and-animal-policy.pdf

Message from our Scrutiny Panel Chair – Richard McCarthy

We expect to be very busy in the coming year and would love to welcome more volunteers to our team. No experience is necessary - you'll have a full induction and training will also be given.

Our next exercise will be a review of the Complaints Process. We'll be looking at good practice from other housing providers and making sure we are following the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

How you can join us:

There are two ways to join us – you can either join as a Panel Member or through the Task & Finish Group.

Being on the Panel involves a little more commitment – on average we meet once a month. There is still a place for online meetings, but we prefer to see each other in person, where we achieve more and enjoy a good chat.

If you can't commit to the time needed for the formal Panel, please consider joining the Task & Finish group – where you can actively contribute to the scrutiny process at a time that suits you.

Reasons to be involved

Tenant-led scrutiny aims to give you more power in holding your landlord (Cornwall Housing) to account for their decisions, performance and conduct

- Enabling the voice of all residents to be heard
- Scrutiny drives change, helping improve services
- Report back evidence-based outcomes and focused recommendations which are adopted and monitored
- Opportunities for you to network with and learn from other tenants and residents, including residents from other housing providers.

Please give this some consideration and contact Julia Walsh by email at myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk if you're interested in having an informal chat about joining the Scrutiny Panel or the Task & Finish Group.

Resident scrutiny is a way of making a difference that goes beyond getting an individual complaint or problem resolved – it can address the fundamental underlying issues that caused the problem in the first place and ensure it doesn't affect other residents in the future.



Help with the **cost of living this winter**

The Government is providing some support with the cost of living this winter. You can find out more information online:

- www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment
- helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/

Energy Price Guarantee

From 1st October, a new 'Energy Price Guarantee' will mean a typical UK household will pay no more than £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years. This is automatic and applies to all households.

This will save the average household at least £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October and is in addition to the £400 energy bills discount for all households.



Energy Bill Discount

£400 off energy bills for households in Great Britain from this October. This automatic, non-repayable discount will be applied in six instalments between October 2022 and March 2023 to help households through winter.

There is no need to apply for the scheme and you will not be asked for your bank details.



Cornwall Council's Household Support Fund

Cornwall Council has secured funding of more than £4.5m to help support households who have been hit the hardest by the national cost of living crisis.

The Household Support Fund – made available by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – is aimed primarily at helping families and pensioners who would otherwise struggle with food and energy bills.

It will provide a one-off payment of £100 to around 16,500 pensioners identified as having low incomes and around 15,500 families with children who are eligible for free school meals will also receive a one-off payment of £80.

The remaining money will be used by the Council and partner organisations such as;

- Volunteer Cornwall
- Disability Cornwall
- and Community Energy Plus

to help support those most in need.

Community Energy Plus

Access to support and grants as well as information and advice (for example, about how to economically use heating).

Factsheets and Leaflets :

www.cep.org.uk/resources/factsheets-and-leaflets/

For advice call Freephone

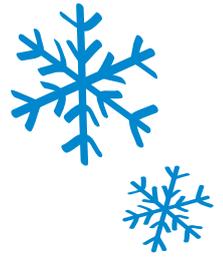
0800 954 1956



**COMMUNITY
ENERGY PLUS**

Pensioner Cost of Living Payment

If you're entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2022 to 2023, you will get an extra £300 for your household paid with your normal payment from November 2022. This is in addition to any Cost of Living Payment you get with your benefit or tax credits.



The full amount of Winter Fuel Payment you will get for winter 2022 to 2023 depends on your circumstances. These amounts are for winter 2022 to 2023 only:

Your circumstances	Born between 26 September 1942 and 25 September 1956	Born on or before 25 September 1942
You qualify and live alone (or none of the people you live with qualify)	£500	£600
You qualify and live with someone under 80 who also qualifies	£250	£350
You qualify and live with someone 80 or over who also qualifies	£250	£300
You qualify and live with a partner who qualifies, and either of you gets certain benefits	£500 - only one of you will get the payment	£600 - only one of you will get the payment
You qualify and live with someone (not your partner) who qualifies, and either of you gets certain benefits	£500 - you'll both get the payment	£600 - you'll both get the payment
You qualify, live in a care home and do not get certain benefits	£250	£300

The council website also has leaflets and information available on a range of subject from staying well during the winter and what to do if you are worried about money. Call us on **0300 1234 161** if you would like a copy of either leaflet.



Monthly direct debit rent collection dates

To help with budgeting, we're offering two additional monthly direct debit rent collection dates. This means you can now choose to pay by direct debit on either the 1st, 8th, 16th or 23rd of the month. These date options are in addition to the weekly and fortnightly collections on a Wednesday.

If you'd like to set up a monthly direct debit or change the date of an existing direct debit, just call us on **0300 1234 161** or email incometeam@cornwallhousing.org.uk and we can arrange this for you.

More information on paying your rent by direct debit can be found at: cornwallhousing.org.uk/residents-area/paying-your-rent



Beware of 'No win, No fee' compensation offers



We are hearing about a worrying growing national trend where law firms contact and encourage tenants to bring Disrepair Compensation Claims against their landlord with the promise of 'No win, no fee.'

Although the law firm might say there will be 'no fee' for their services, there can be other costs that a tenant is left with. These costs can include the other parties (i.e. the landlord's) legal and court costs which can amount to many thousands of pounds – leaving the tenant in huge debt.

We are working hard to resolve and reduce the repairs backlog. If you have an outstanding repair, please speak to our Customer Service Centre on **0300 1234 161** or make use of our complaints process.

You can make a complaint in one of three ways:

Email us at: info@cornwallhousing.org.uk

Telephone us on: 0300 1234 161

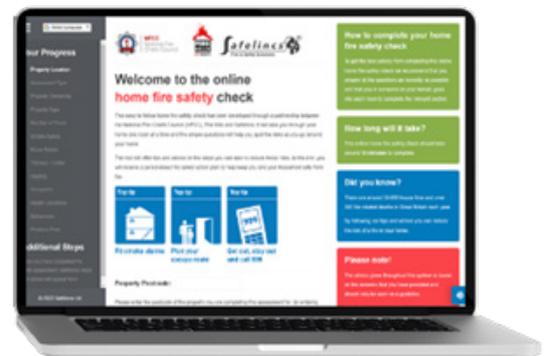
Write to: Cornwall Housing Ltd, Chy Trevail, Beacon Technology Park, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL31 2FR

Check your home's fire safety online now

We are working with the Cornwall Fire and Rescue Services to promote an online tool that can help you identify ways to stay safe from fire in your home.

The webpage asks you a series of questions about your home and circumstances to give you specific advice about fire safety.

To get this tailor-made fire safety advice go to: www.ohfsc.co.uk/cornwallhousing



It asks for your postcode, and if it finds that you might need specialist advice, you can request a home visit from the fire service prevention team.

If you do not have access to the website, you can request a home visit, call our Engagement Team on **0300 1234 161**.

Get in touch

Cornwall Housing Ltd, Chy Trevail
Beacon Technology Park
Bodmin, PL31 2FR

Email: info@cornwallhousing.org.uk
www.cornwallhousing.org.uk
Tel: **0300 1234 161**

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