

JANUARY 2012

CCG

NEWS

New opportunities for
Apprentices

Children's Corner

tenants'
VOICE

WHQS
update





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Neil Williams, Nia Parry and Aled Griffiths

TV stars at Penrhyn depot

Well known TV personality Nia Parry dropped by with a camera crew in December to film Aled Griffiths and Neil Williams hard at work at the Penrhyndeudraeth depot. They had kindly agreed to help Nia with preparations for the Penygroes Christmas Fair which featured in her new TV series, 'Mel a Nia' by building Santa's Grotto.

The series, was screened just before Christmas, and showed how the community pulled together to organise the event at Penygroes. Other members of staff and CCG tenants also chipped in to help with the preparations. Ten junior wardens from local schools under the guidance of CCG Wardens helped out on the day by tidying up after everyone went home, and several CCG contractors lent their support with staff and vans to carry equipment. Members of the Penygroes tenants' association also volunteered as stewards at the fair.

Festive fun in Pwllheli

Hundreds of tenants came together at the beginning of December to enjoy a family fun day with CCG. The event was a big success with all sorts of festive activities putting everybody in the mood for Christmas. Tenants met CCG staff and partners to get advice on how to avoid debt, save energy and reduce bills over the winter months.



Einir and Ffreuer of CCG with Casi from Pwllheli



The boys try out climbing wall

Sali Mali and Fireman Sam dropped by to say hello and there was one extra special guest who called in with gifts for our youngest tenants. To add to the festive atmosphere Llanrug brass band performed some seasonal favourites and well-known rapper and beat boxer Ed Holden gave budding performers some top tips.

Chief Executive of CCG, Ffrancon Williams said: "Following the success of two similar events held in Bangor and Dolgellau earlier in the year it was great to welcome our tenants to another fun day to mark the beginning of everyone's festive preparations. The response to the day was great. This is something we hope to do regularly and it's good for staff and tenants to get together like this in an informal setting."

Our contractors and partners came along, with the Fire Service, credit union, Citizens On-line, NEA Cymru and Prime Cymru on hand to offer advice and support. The Wales Air Ambulance also attended to raise awareness for their work and to raise money for their local funds.



Lili from Blaenau Ffestiniog receiving her bike from Apollo and CCG

A big thank you to our contractors Apollo, Symphony and Lovell for their kind donations of prizes for the event which included a bike, television set and festive food hampers.

WHQS Update

Our Welsh Housing Quality Standard improvement programme has now reached several areas with many tenants already seeing the benefit of the work. Over the past twelve months we have installed:

3,039 windows ...
1,567 new doors ...
299 modern kitchens ...
287 new bathrooms!



Most of the work has gone smoothly but we have had a few teething problems in some areas. We are working closely with our contractors to resolve these issues and have made a number of changes in the way we operate so we don't make the same mistakes again.

An updated timetable of work has been included with this newsletter for you to keep. It outlines when work will be done in your area. Following a consultation, many non-traditional homes are now included in the main timetable. However, in some cases these homes will get internal improvements only, and no external work. Tenants of non-traditional homes which require more extensive structural work will have received a letter from CCG informing them that their homes are included in a different timetable. This timetable is also included with this newsletter.

Jobs and training

With youth unemployment at an all time high in North Wales, Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd is bucking the trend by securing work for young people through its Targeted Recruitment and Training initiative.

The main aim of the initiative is to maximise the benefits of CCG's WHQS improvement programme by securing employment and training opportunities within Gwynedd.



Some of the WHQS apprentices

To try and tackle this issue and to boost skills and training within the county, every contractor appointed to CCG's investment programme is required to employ apprentices. To date, 30 apprentices have been taken on with 75% of those under 25.

Ffrancon Williams, Chief Executive at CCG said: "We are

working closely with our contractors and local training providers to ensure that every service provider employs local apprentices. As we are investing so much to improve tenants' homes it is also vital that we can improve local skills and increase employment opportunities at a time when there is a real need."

Tenant Liaison Officer

Sophie Watts (cover photo and right) lives in Bangor and works as a Tenant Liaison Officer (TLO) for



Nationwide Windows which is currently installing windows and doors in CCG homes.

Based at the new Nationwide factory, which opened last summer at Llandygai, Sophie started her apprenticeship in July. As a TLO, her work involves meeting with tenants to talk them through the process of receiving new windows and doors as well as being the first point of contact for tenants on behalf of the company.

"My role as TLO means that I'm right at the very heart of everything that is going on. I'm out and about every day and I love the fact that I'm not stuck in an office and no two days are the same. I love seeing the whole process first hand from start to finish, seeing how satisfied the tenants are with the work we do and being part of a process which improves people's lives.

"As a team we all strive for the same goal of complete tenant satisfaction by providing support, answers and advice. I love my job at Nationwide Windows because they encourage me to fulfil my role within the team. They are very supportive of me and have given me the opportunity to gain a qualification and great experience through my apprenticeship. I think this also gives me a chance to better myself. When I finish my apprenticeship I want to stay with the company. I would like to gain a higher level of qualification and perhaps, with greater experience obtain a more responsible position."

TAKE CARE THIS WINTER!

Taking care of you home...

The cold weather can affect your home. The most common problems can be a loss of water supply, loss of heating or toilets and sinks not draining. This is often caused by frozen pipes. Here are a few tips on what to do if your pipes do become frozen this winter.

Thaw the pipe with:

- hot water bottle
- microwaveable heating pack (similar to one used for injuries)
- cloths soaked in warm water to the exterior of the pipe
- warm water poured from a watering can

Do not use boiling water - this may cause pipes to burst

Do not attempt to thaw a pipe if you can't easily reach it from the ground

Be careful – water used can quickly freeze on pathways causing a slip hazard!

Taking care of yourself...

1. Get a flu jab

You can get a free flu jab from your GP if you are over 65, have a long-term health condition, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person.

2. Eat well

Food is a vital source of energy, which helps to keep your body warm. Try to make sure you have hot meals and drinks regularly throughout the day.

3. Avoid slips and trips

Make sure carpets are well fitted and check for other trip hazards around the house. Keeping active will also help you to stay warm and well so check out what's on at your local leisure or community centre.

4. Heating

Heat your home to the correct temperature and dress for warmth.

If it's very cold, set your heating to come on earlier and turn off later rather than turning the thermostat up. Wear several thin layers to help keep you warm rather than one thick layer. If you are worried about the cost of heating your home call the Energy Saving Trust on 0800 512 012 from a landline or 0300 456 2655 from your mobile.

REMEMBER...

You may be entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2011/12 if you were born on or before 5 January 1951. This payment can be between £100 and £300 depending on your situation. Find out if you are eligible for this payment and how to apply by calling Winter Fuel Payment Helpline on 0845 915 15 15.

Condensation

Condensation gets worse over winter.

What is it?

Condensation is moisture, which turns back to water on contact with cold surfaces like mirrors and windows. It can cause mould which can damage your belongings.



Here is some advice on how to prevent condensation:

- put lids on pans when you are cooking
- do not let pans and kettles boil too fiercely
- open windows when you have a bath or shower
- dry washing outside if possible
- if you have a tumble drier make sure that it has a vent to the outside
- open your windows regularly

If you do have problems with condensation please contact our repairs team on 0300 123 8082.

New tenant member



Claire Russell Griffiths (right) won the recent election for a new tenant Board member. Over 1,600 tenants voted – the highest number ever.

On hearing the news Claire said: "I'd like to thank everyone for voting, it's good to see so many tenants taking an interest. I'm pleased to be representing younger tenants and also an area of Gwynedd which hasn't had a Board member up to now. I am looking forward to making a difference to CCG tenants."

Benefit changes ... are you ready?

Under the Welfare Reform Bill, which is going through Parliament at the moment the Westminster Government is proposing to scrap tenants' right to have their housing benefit paid directly to their landlord. This will remove one of the most convenient ways for tenants to pay their rent and could lead to increased personal debt and arrears. The Government is also proposing to introduce a cap on the overall amount of benefit that people can claim. Families will be amongst the hardest hit as the cap takes no account of the huge variation in housing costs across the country.

The policies are expected to be introduced in April 2013.

If you are worried about these changes please contact us on 0300 123 8084 or Shelter Cymru on 0845 075 5005 or visit www.sheltercymru.org.uk

Talysarn Fireworks



Talysarn residents came together to organise a fireworks display to celebrate Bonfire night in the village.

The event came at the end of a very busy day for residents as they took part in a local clean-up. The idea for this and the bonfire came following uncontrolled fires near Bro Silyn, Talysarn in previous years and several cases of fly-tipping in the area.



Dafydd Roberts, CCG with the staff of Discount Tyres

To tackle both problems a group of local volunteers, with the help of Nantlle Communities First, North Wales Fire Service, North Wales Police, Wales Probation Trust, Caernarfon based Discount Tyres and contractors Apollo, came together to arrange something the whole community could enjoy.

On Friday, November 4th residents were urged to clear their homes, gardens and sheds of any unwanted items and rubbish in order to build the bonfire. Apollo kindly donated money to buy fireworks.

Glenys Lloyd Williams, Talysarn and Nantlle Communities First officer said: "Events like this give local residents and organisations the chance to work together for the sake of the community. I hope that the Talysarn bonfire night can become an annual event that everyone can enjoy."

TPAS Cymru Annual Conference 2011

Several members of the CCG Tenants and Residents' Partnership attended the annual TPAS conference at Llandrindod Wells in November.

This year's theme was 'Tenant participation in an era of cuts'. Huw Lewis AM and the Minister for housing was the guest speaker. Seminars were held throughout the day and a Q&A session with the Welsh Government, Welsh Tenants Federation, CIH Cymru and the WLGA.

This year's conference was also the last one for Margaret Bracegirdle as TPAS Cymru chair. A big thank you to Margaret for all her hard work on behalf of Gwynedd tenants and the TPAS Cymru Board. She will continue in her role as a CCG Board Member and as the secretary of the CCG Tenants and Residents Partnership.



Margaret Bracegirdle

Extending our repairs service

From February this year CCG will be offering a repairs service between 8:00 and 17:00 on Monday and Tuesday and between 8:00 and 16:45 from Wednesday to Friday.

This is good news and means that our staff will be available to do maintenance and repairs work on your home for more hours. To request repairs work please call us on 0300 123 8082. This is also the out of hours phone number for CCG.



CCG Privacy Policy

CCG is committed to preserving and protecting your privacy and we are registered with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) under the Data Protection Act 1998. Our privacy policy explains why and when we collect your personal information, and how we use that information.

We will collect information about you when you use our services, for example when applying for a property or when you become a tenant. We also collect information when you voluntarily complete customer surveys, provide feedback and participate in competitions.

Unless required by law, we will not otherwise share any of the personal information you provide us without your consent.

Access to your information

You have the right to request a copy of the personal information we hold about you. If you would like a copy please contact our data protection officer on:

enquires@ccgwynedd.org.uk

or write to us at:

Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd,
Unit 6 and 7,
Llys Castan,
Parc Menai,
Bangor,
LL57 4FH

We want to make sure all the personal information we hold about you is accurate and up-to-date. You may ask us to correct or remove information you think is inaccurate.

We are entitled by law to charge a fee of £10 to meet our costs in providing you with details of the information we hold about you.

If you would like a full copy of our Privacy Statement please phone 0300 123 8084 and ask for our data protection officer.

Children's Corner

A special page for our
youngest tenants!

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Elan Haf (7yrs) and Anna Grisial (5 yrs) both from Cricieth on winning our Christmas card competition. Here are their pictures.



Wordsearch Vegetables!...

CARROTS
PEAS
POTATO
PARSNIP
LEEK
CABBAGE
SWEDE

C	S	W	E	D	E	L	A
C	A	B	B	A	G	E	P
P	W	D	H	D	U	E	E
A	F	D	T	T	Y	K	A
R	C	A	R	R	O	T	S
S	G	Q	X	H	Z	B	F
N	B	N	A	L	D	W	R
I	G	O	T	A	T	O	P
P	L	O	R	Y	N	D	U

Cool Cookies!

175g softened butter / 50g golden caster sugar / 50g icing sugar
2 egg yolks / 2 tsp vanilla extract / 300g plain flour
juice 1 orange / 140g icing sugar / sprinkles to decorate

Heat oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas 6. Mix the butter, sugar, egg yolks and vanilla with a wooden spoon until creamy, then mix in the flour in 2 batches. Roll the dough into about 22 walnut-size balls and sit on baking sheets. Bake for 15 mins until golden, then leave to cool. Remember to get the help of a grown up when using the oven.

Meanwhile, mix the icing sugar with enough orange juice to make a thick, runny icing. Dip each biscuit half into the icing, then straight into the sprinkles. Dry on a wire rack.



Tenants' Voice

This page is dedicated to articles by tenants for tenants, so please send in your stories and photos to communications@ccgwynedd.org.uk

Our improvement works (I could do with them too, I'm 57!!)

Hello neighbours and community! George (he's 57 too!!) and I are on day six of our improvement works in beautiful Dyffryn Nantlle.

They are so very different from what I had expected! Prior to day one, I was going around with a fixed smile on my face but with fingers crossed behind my back, hoping against hope that CCG knew what they were doing.

Six days into the work, I'm going around with a natural, irrepressible smile on my face! The idea of booking us into a B&B for the 15 days was brought up by several people, but I'm so glad that I have stayed firmly put. I have had the fascination of setting eyes on our bathroom floorboards for the first time ever, and then observing as the floor was expertly built up in layers and the bubbles in the new vinyl were made to lie down with a hot air blower. To see this, and much more, with my own eyes has been priceless: however else could I have done so?

My overall impression of the work is "seamless coordination" and a very palpable spirit of goodwill between the different teams, whether CCG or contractors. It has meant that we have felt comfortable in our home the whole time. After the old vinyl in the bathroom was taken up, the floor was sticky with the old adhesive and we were like flies stuck on flypaper in there. We told the electrical contractor who was next to come, and he sent

word so that at the end of the working day, a different team brought a roll of plastic floor protection and put it down for us. Each night we have gone to bed feeling thoroughly cosseted by this and other small helpful acts.

What has the best part of the 6 days been? It has to have been the end of day one. That was the day the Cartrefi "demolition" team moved in. I heard that word from Arwyn of Cartrefi when he answered a call to visit us a few days later, and I was so glad I had not heard it before day one, as I would not just have had fingers crossed behind my back, I would have been full-out petrified!

It turns out that the Cartrefi "demolition" team just come to strip all the fixtures like cupboards out of the kitchen and bathroom to expose the walls for the electricians and others who will follow. We did not have a problem disposing of any of the units, in fact we never saw them after they were "demolished"; they must have been loaded onto the van in one streamlined operation.

At the end of the day, the kitchen and bathroom had become echoey, and I was seized with the urge to sing! I sang in the kitchen, I sang going up the stairs, and I sang in the bathroom!! That is why it was the best of a very good six days. I am a Feng Shui master, for me a house is a living being and the walls thrill to the sound of singing. Not only was I happy that evening, I also had a blissfully happy house!!



George Lockett in the new kitchen

Arwyn gave us just the reassurance we needed, and we realised that the 15 days would not all be filled with "big" jobs... the first week is when most of it "happens" and then it gradually tails off. I was surprised and pleased that Arwyn took so long to talk to us and in such detail, he gave us the time we needed without checking his watch once. He made us feel like VIPs.

It's half past two on Friday, today the plumber is due to fit our new bathtub and I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that he will turn up because I have learned to trust the workers implicitly by now. Trust is worth a fortune, so I can only call myself very fortunate.

I hope your own improvement work experience will be as enriching as mine has been!!

DEBORAH LOCKETT
Glan Rhonwy