

OpenHouse

The Magazine for **Council Tenants and Leaseholders**

Issue 2 2022



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**On the
1st December
2022**

**THE WAY
YOU RENT
IS CHANGING**

for tenants & landlords

Return Address: City and County of Swansea,
Civic Centre, Oystermouth Road, Swansea, SA1 3SN



Cyngor **Abertawe**
Swansea Council

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ALL INFORMATION IN OPENHOUSE IS
CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

Welcome to Open House

Welcome to the latest edition of Open House. This edition contains important information about a new law called Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 that will come into force on the 1st December 2022. More detail about what the Act means for you is contained within the magazine as well as some frequently asked questions. Please take the time to read through pages 1-5 so you understand what the changes will be. For this reason, we have sent a copy of Open House to all tenants and leaseholders, even if you have previously opted out or have asked to receive a digital copy, as we want to make sure that all tenants are fully informed of the changes. The next edition will be sent in your usual preferred format. During 2023 we will be moving to a digital copy of the magazine so please let us know on ☎ **01792 635045** if you would like to continue to receive a paper copy.

We know that many of you will be worried about the current cost of living. On page 16 we have included some useful information and details on a range of organisations that can offer you support and advice. There is also information on the Energy Awareness Hub and the Welsh Government Fuel Support Scheme on page 17-18.

Finally, there are details about how you can sign up for our new portal for council tenants called 'My Housing.' Via the portal you can pay your rent and check your balance as well as keep track of any repairs you have reported. Find out how you can sign up on page 18.

Rachel Cole, Editor

Useful Contacts

Editor - Rachel Cole	☎ 635045
Repairs Contact Centre	☎ 635100
Out of Hours Emergency Repairs	☎ 521500
24 hour Neighbourhood Support Unit	☎ 648507
Housing Options	☎ 533100
Environment Contact Centre	☎ 635600
Housing Benefit Queries	☎ 635353

Central Area Housing Office

The CENTRAL AREA covers all the Townhill and Town Centre housing areas and will be based in Townhill and Town Centre Housing Offices.

✉ centralarea.housingoffice@swansea.gov.uk ☎ **01792 513900**

East Area Housing Office

The EAST AREA covers all the Eastside and Morriston housing areas and will be based in Morriston Housing Office.

✉ eastarea.housingoffice@swansea.gov.uk ☎ **01792 601720**

North Area Housing Office

The NORTH AREA covers all the Blaenymaes and Penlan housing areas and will be based in Blaenymaes Housing Office.

✉ northarea.housingoffice@swansea.gov.uk ☎ **01792 534060**

West Area Housing Office

The WEST AREA covers all the Gorseinon, West Cross and Sketty housing areas and will be based in Gorseinon Library Hub and Sketty Housing Offices.

✉ westarea.housingoffice@swansea.gov.uk ☎ **01792 897700**

If you require this information in a different format eg large print, Braille, disc or other, please contact Housing Customer Services ☎ **01792 635045** or visit our website

🌐 www.swansea.gov.uk/housing or email

✉ housing@swansea.gov.uk

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and will deal with Welsh and English correspondence to the same standards and timescales.

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Renting Homes Act - all you need to know

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 is a new law being introduced by the Welsh Government on 1 December 2022 and it affects every tenant and landlord in the public and private rented sector in Wales, including Swansea Council as your landlord and you as our tenant.

The Act will improve how people rent, manage and live in rented homes across Wales.

There is no need to worry

The Council will still be your landlord and you will continue to receive the same housing service as you do now. You will still be able to live in your home, you will still pay rent, we will still do your repairs and look after your estates and communal areas. We have been working closely with Welsh Government and other housing organisations to prepare for the changes and our staff will be working hard to ensure the changes are implemented as seamlessly as possible.

This newsletter sets out the important things you need to know and aims to answer any questions you may have.

You can also find out more information on the Welsh Government's website:


www.gov.wales/renting-homes-housing-law-changing

www.swansea.gov.uk/housing
housing@swansea.gov.uk



If your question has not been answered or if you would like more information, you can contact us in the following ways:

- Email us at [✉ housing@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:housing@swansea.gov.uk)
- Contact the Council's Tenant Participation Officer Alison Winter on [☎ 01792 635043](tel:01792635043)
- Speak to your Neighbourhood Officer or your Independent Living Officer (Sheltered Warden)



Whether you're a landlord or a tenant it is important you know what the changes mean for you.

What are the changes?

The Council remains your landlord and we will issue you with an 'occupation contract' which will replace your tenancy agreement.

There are two types of occupation contract created under the new law:

- 1. Secure contract:** this will replace secure tenancy agreements issued by the Council. It will also replace assured tenancies issued by housing associations.
- 2. Standard contract:** this affects tenants in private rented accommodation but will also be used by the Council and housing associations in certain circumstances.

Your occupation contract must be set out in a 'written statement'. The Council provided you with a written tenancy agreement and conditions of tenancy (your red booklet) when you first moved in, but the new law means that we will send you a new occupation contract, which must include the following:

Key matters: For example, the name of the landlord and contract-holder/s and address of the property.

Fundamental Terms: Cover the most important parts of the contract, including how the landlord gets possession and duties regarding repairs.

Supplementary Terms: Deal with the more practical, day to day matters. e.g. the requirement to notify the Council if the property is going to be left unoccupied for four weeks or more.

Additional Terms: Addresses any other matters, e.g. a rule relating to the keeping of pets.

How it will affect you as a Council tenant

- There is no need to worry. Your legal right to live in your home will remain the same and you will not have to move home.
- You will continue to receive the same housing service from the Council.

- Tenants will become contract-holders.
- Tenancy agreements will become occupation contracts.
- You will not have to pay more rent - other than the usual annual rent increase, which is set by Welsh Government.
- The Council will now be known as a 'community landlord', a change from the term 'social landlord'.
- Succession rights will be increased - if you share your home, it is possible for two successions to the contract to take place e.g. a spouse followed by another family member. In addition, a new succession right for carers is created.
- Joint contracts - contract holders can be added or removed from occupation contracts without the need to end one contract and start another. This will make managing joint contracts easier and help victims of domestic abuse by allowing the perpetrator to be targeted for eviction without affecting the contract of the victim.

What you need to do

There is nothing that you need to do right now. But you will need to familiarise yourself with your new occupation contract when it arrives and keep it safe so you can refer to it when you need to. You can also have a look at the information guides on the Welsh Government website.

🔗 www.gov.wales/renting-homes-housing-law-changing

The new law will automatically apply from 1 December 2022, however existing tenants will receive their new occupation contracts within six months from 1 December 2022 and new tenants (contract-holders) will sign up to a new occupation contract from this date.

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Frequently asked questions

These are some frequently asked questions to help you understand the changes.

What is an occupation contract?

This is the new name for your tenancy agreement.

Is there anything that I need to do?

The only thing you need to do is read your contract when you receive it and familiarise yourself with your rights and responsibilities.

Will the Council still be my landlord?

Yes. The Council will still be your landlord.

Will I still be called a tenant?

The law changes tenant to contract-holder so this is what you will be called in any formal documentation. However, the word tenant will still be used informally.

Will I have to move home?

No. This change will not mean you have to move home. Your right to remain in your property is unaffected.

Will my rent go up?

No. The amount of rent you pay will be unaffected. Council rents will continue to increase in line with Welsh Government Social Rent Policy.

Will my welfare benefits be affected?

No. There will be no impact on your benefits if you're in receipt of any.

Will I have to sign a new occupation contract?

No. When you receive your new contract all you need to do is familiarise yourself with your rights and responsibilities.

When will I receive my new occupation contract?

Existing tenants will receive their new occupation contracts within 6 months from 1 December 2022, and new tenants (contract-holders) will sign up to a new occupation contract from this date. Regardless of when you receive your written contract, the new rules will apply to everyone from 1 December 2022.

Will the housing services I receive be affected?

No. There will not be any changes to the housing services you receive as a result of the new law. The Housing staff that you deal with will remain the same.

Will it be easier for you to evict me?

No. Your right to live in your home remains the same. You can only be evicted if you do something to break the terms of your contract such as anti-social behaviour or serious rent arrears.

How much notice will I have to give if I want to end the contract?

You must give the Council a minimum of 4 weeks' notice if you wish to end your contract.

Will I be able to have a joint tenancy?

Yes. The new law makes it easier to add or remove others to an occupation contract as there will no longer be a need to end one contract and start another.

If you are a joint tenant you will now be called a joint contract-holder.

Will my spouse/child/family member be able to succeed my tenancy?

The new law improves succession rights. These set out who has a right to take over the occupation contract and become the contract-holder after the current contract-holder dies.

If you share your home, it is possible for two successions to the contract to take place e.g. a spouse followed by another family member.

A new succession right for carers is created, if the carer meets certain criteria, including having been living with the contract-holder for at least 12 months as their main home.

What happens if I have already succeeded to a tenancy?

If you succeeded to a tenancy before the new law as a spouse, civil partner or someone living with the tenant as if you were a spouse or civil partner you will be considered a 'priority successor'. This means there can be a further succession but no more.

If you succeeded as another member of the family you will be considered a 'reserve successor' and there can be no further successions.

Will you be able to help me if I have problems with my neighbours?

Yes. Under the new law all occupation contracts must include a term about anti-social behaviour and other prohibited conduct. If a contract-holder breaches this term of the contract, the Council is able to take action to prevent the behaviour continuing.

The Council will continue to provide the same support services for contract-holders who have experienced anti-social behaviour through the Neighbourhood Support Unit, Anti-Social Behaviour Support Team and Neighbourhood Officers.

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Will I be able to get repairs done in the same way?

Yes. You can continue to report repairs via the Repairs Call Centre or on line here

📞 www.swansea.gov.uk/article/3047/Request-a-repair-for-your-council-house

During office hours: ☎️ 01792 635100

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

The out of hour's emergency repairs service will remain the same.

Out of office hours: ☎️ 01792 521500

Monday - Thursday 5.00pm - 8.30am

Friday 4.30pm - Monday 8.30am

Will I be able to buy my property?

No. The Right to Buy was abolished by the Welsh Government in 2018 and before that it was suspended in Swansea from December 2014. The new law has not changed this.

Can I still apply for a transfer?

Yes. You can contact your Neighbourhood Officer in the same way to discuss a transfer.

Can I still arrange a mutual exchange?

Yes, but you must ask our permission before you do.

Will I be allowed to make improvements to my home?

You have the right to carry out improvements to your home provided that you have our agreement in writing before carrying out the work. You may also need planning and building regulation approval.

Will I be allowed to have a lodger?

Yes. If you are a secure contract-holder you

continue to have the right to have a lodger without asking our permission as long as this does not create statutory overcrowding. You must let us know in writing.

A lodger is someone who lives in your home but does not have exclusive right to any one part of it. They will receive some kind of service from you such as cooking or cleaning.

The Renting Homes Act is improving the condition of rental properties. How will this happen?

The new law states that all properties must be safe and fit for human habitation. The Welsh Government has published rules for this called Fitness for Human Habitation Regulations.

The aim of these regulations is to ensure landlords properly maintain properties and that they are safe to live in.

This includes installing hard wired smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and regular electrical safety testing. These are all things that the Council currently does. However, if you have any concerns about the condition of your property please get in touch with your Neighbourhood Officer or report a

repair via the Repairs Call Centre.

Over recent years the Council has had a programme to install carbon monoxide detectors. If you have yet to benefit from this scheme council officers will be visiting you in the coming months to make sure you have what you need.

Will I be allowed to have a pet?

As now, you must ask our permission first. Permission will not be refused if your request is considered reasonable.

Will there be an easy read document to help me understand the jargon?

Yes. You can find an easy read guide to the Act on the Welsh Government's website:

📄 www.gov.wales/tenants-housing-law-changing-renting-homes-easy-read

Information is also available in other languages.

📄 www.gov.wales/renting-homes-alternative-language-guidance

If you need help accessing this information please get in touch and we will help you.

How will the Renting Homes Act affect me if I am a leaseholder?

If you are a leaseholder currently residing in your own leasehold property there is no impact on you and nothing further you need to do.

If you are a leaseholder renting out your property the changes **will** affect you, the Act applies to anyone who is a landlord.

The Welsh Government has published guidance for landlords to help you to comply with the new law. Due to the amount of complex information regarding the new Act, and its legal implications, it is advisable for you to read the guidance available. This can be found on the Welsh Government's Renting Homes website:

📄 www.gov.wales/landlords-housing-law-changing-renting-homes

The Welsh Government is using Rent Smart Wales to share information and updates on the Act with landlords in the private rented sector. Since November 2015, all Landlords with a privately rented property let out on a domestic tenancy in Wales are legally required to register with Rent Smart Wales.

Landlords are also advised to opt in to Rent Smart Wales emails to ensure that they receive the most up to date information from Welsh Government as soon as it is released.

More information can be found here:

📄 www.rentsmart.gov.wales/en/news/

Gardening Competition 2022

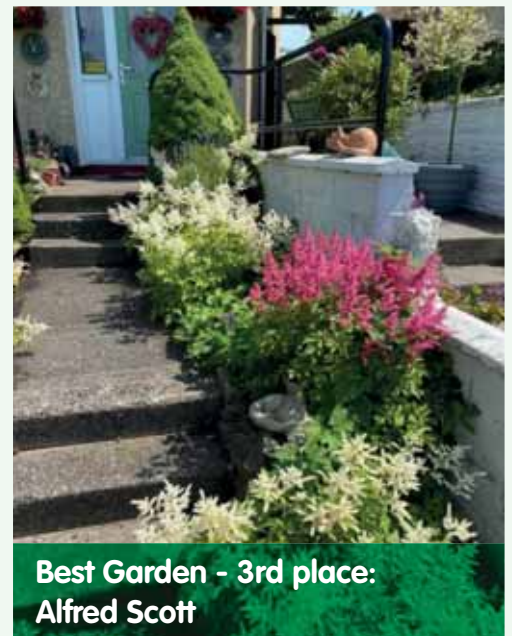
The judging panel for the 2022 Gardening Competition were, once again impressed by the high standard of entries for this year's competition. In addition to our regular entries, it was pleasing to see new entries in several of the categories such as the Best Lifestyle and Best Wild Flower Garden categories.

Photographs of the winning entries do not capture the full beauty of the gardens, the clever use of often limited space, or the quirky ideas! We hope that they will however inspire both new, and longer-standing, tenants to plan entries for next year's competition.

As you will see from the Best Use of a Small Space and Best Eco Garden winning entries, you don't need to have a large garden, or spend a lot of money, to create something special!

The new category of Best Sunflower particularly raised a smile with the judges and shows that there really is a category for everyone regardless of the type of property you live in.

So thank you to everyone who entered, congratulations to all our winners and we look forward to seeing your gardens next year!



Here is a selection of the winners' gardens...



Best Edible Garden: Andrea Evans



Best Garden Transformation: Andrea Evans

Best Use of a Small Space: Jean Jenkins



Best Newcomer: Leonard Nicholas



Best Lifestyle Garden: Louise Hopkins



Best Eco Garden: Patrick McCormack



Best Sheltered Complex: Laughtarne Court



Best Sunflower: Aaron Brown



Best Wildflower Garden: Richard Russ

Preparing for next year's competition

If you feel inspired by the winners' gardens and would like to enter next year's competition, start planning your improvements now and make sure you are ready for next year! Making small changes will make a huge difference!

Winter is the time to tidy your garden – remove rubbish, clear away fallen leaves, get rid of any pesky weeds and trim hedges.

Take a photo of your garden as it is now and continue to take photos throughout the year as you make changes - you will be amazed at your progress and next year you can enter your garden in the 'Best Garden Transformation' category!

If you have any household items that you no longer use, don't throw them away! You can recycle normal household objects you may have in your cupboards, such as plastic bottles, and paint them to create attractive plant pots - all you need is your imagination and the possibilities are endless – and next year, you can enter the 'Best Eco Garden' category!

Keep an eye on our Facebook page and future editions of Open House for help and advice on improving your garden.

We look forward to your entry in 2023 and you could win a cash prize!

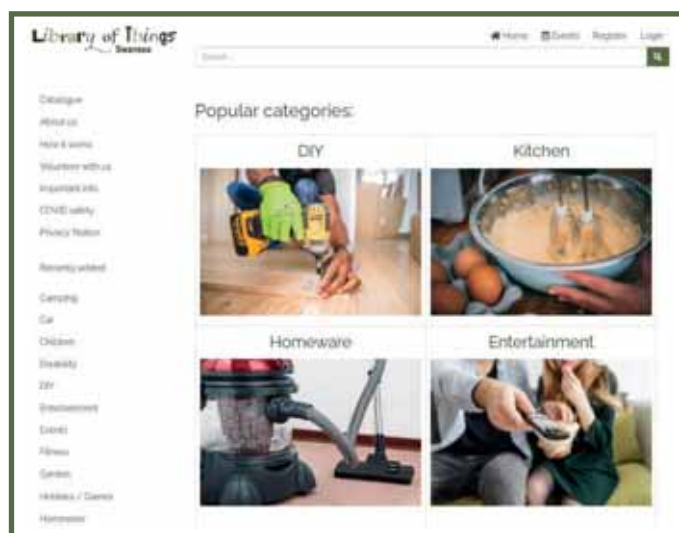


Swansea Library of Things and Repair Café Wales

There are 2 schemes currently running in Swansea for all residents which offer low-cost borrowing of useful items and free repairs to many things which are broken.

Library of Things

The Library of things is based in the Quadrant Shopping centre in the city centre by the St.Mary's Church/Whitewalls entrance (next to HMV). It's a new low-cost borrowing initiative which aims to help people borrow useful items they may only need for a few jobs instead of buying it and it never being used again. Members can pay a small fee to borrow, use and return an item when they've finished using it.



The Library is open every Monday - Saturday 10am - 4pm.

To see what items are in the Library, prices, borrowing periods and whether items are available, customers can browse a catalogue online or visit the Library itself.

Items are being added all the time to borrow

📍 www.swansealibraryofthings.co.uk/

📍 www.facebook.com/SwanseaLibraryOfThings/

✉ info@swansealibraryofthings.co.uk

Library of Things
Swansea

Repair Cafe Wales

Repair café events are run by volunteers who will try to fix most things that are brought to them. Visitors can bring damaged or broken household items for repair/advice. Typical items include electrical goods (except microwave ovens), technology, ornaments, clothes, bicycles for basic maintenance & guidance, jewellery and more. The repair café volunteers then attempt to repair the items. The visitors are encouraged to join in and learn how their item is being fixed so that they can attempt similar repairs in the future.

There are currently 2 active repair cafes running in Swansea:

The Environment Centre, Pier Street, Swansea, SA1 1RY (in the city centre)

(no booking required)

Clydach Community Hall, Vardre Road, Clydach, SA6 5LP

(to book a slot please contact Pam Cram on ☎ **07790 546890**)

Customers can contact the repairs café via Facebook or Twitter with any queries before taking an item to be repaired.

They are also always looking for more volunteers, particularly for a potential new repair cafe at the Llansamlet recycling centre, so if you someone who may be interested, let them know!



🌐 www.repaircafewales.org/

🌐 www.facebook.com/repaircafewales/

Siop Ailddefnyddio
Trysorau'r Tip

Tip Treasures
Reuse Shop

www.abertawe.gov.uk/trysoraurtip
www.swansea.gov.uk/tiptreasures

PRYNWCH BUY
AILDDEFNYDDIWCH REUSE
ATGYWEIRIWCH REPAIR
RHOWCH DONATE

Canolfan Ailgylchu **LLANSAMLET** Recycling Centre

@ailgylchutawe @recycle4swansea
Ailgylchu dros Abertawe Swansea Recycles

Cyngor **Abertawe**
Swansea Council

ABERTAWWE

Daliwch ati,
CADWCH YR AILGYLCHU MAS!



Cofiwch
na chaniateir
ailgylchu yn
y sachau
du

Don't
forget
recycling is
banned from
black bags



SWANSEA

Keep it going,
KEEP RECYCLING OUT!

 @recycle4swansea
 Swansea Recycles

 Abertawe yn ailgylchu
Swansea recycles

 Cyngor **Abertawe**
Swansea Council

Reusable Nappy Cashback Scheme

Make the Switch to reusable nappies today and Swansea council will reimburse you up to **£100** towards the cost!



Why Switch?

Reduce Waste! In the time it takes to potty train an average child will use **5,000** disposable nappies. That's **156** black bags going to landfill.

Save Money! Save up to **£500** per year on disposable nappy costs.

No more Nappy Rash! Reusable nappies are made from natural fibres so won't irritate the baby's skin.

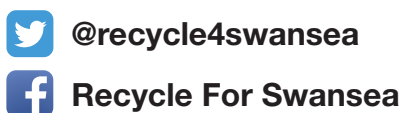
Easy to Use and Wash! Velcro and popper fastenings mean no pins are needed and nappies are machine washable.

Fun & stylish! They come in a wide range of colourful designs, patterns and fabrics.



Apply today!

The scheme is open to all residents of the City and County of Swansea. For a full list of terms and conditions and to apply online go to **www.swansea.gov.uk/nappies**



Need more Green bags or Food liners?

You can request these bags from the crews on collection day by attaching the reorder tag to your green bags or food waste bin on the kerbside.

This is the most convenient and environmentally friendly way of obtaining green bags and food waste liners.

If you're having problems getting bags this way?

Please email ✉ **recycling@swansea.gov.uk** or phone ☎ **01792 635600** so that we can look into the problem.

Independent Living News

100th Birthday Conway Court

Congratulations to Eileen Doyle, Conway Court Penlan who recently celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends. Eileen was delighted to receive not only a card from the Queen but the Pope too.



Jubilee Celebration at the Queen's Garden Party

Congratulations to Mr Pelzer, Ty Dewi Sant who was invited to attend the Queen's Jubilee Garden Party. Mr Pelzer said "I was honoured to be invited to be a part of the Jubilee Celebrations back in June, especially since the Queen has since passed away. I had a wonderful time".

Heol Y Gors and Thomas Evans House also celebrated the Jubilee with a party. Debra Thomas, Independent Living Officer said "It was a fantastic day everyone really enjoyed this was organised by Mrs Susan Miller and Mr John Miller. They all absolutely really enjoyed and it was an amazing party."



Refurbishment of Communal Lounges

The 3 photos show the newly refurbished lounge at Gelli Gardens, it's one of 6 lounges that has been refurbished as part of a 5 year scheme to refurbish all communal lounge in our Independent Living Schemes, with our specialist contractor Teal Living. The other 5 that have been refurbished are Tirdeunaw, Penrhiw Court, Aneurin Way, Thomas Evans House and Heol y Gors.

Plans are already underway to refurbish another 3 lounges this financial year.

Places for Nature Grant

Congratulations to Heol Y Gors who was awarded the Development Package from the Places for Nature Grant ran by Keep Wales Tidy. Debra Thomas, Independent Living Officer said "The residents are really happy we have been awarded this grant and following on from the Starter Package; the project is going from strength to strength" The Development Package builds on from the Starter Package which helps larger more challenging projects to grow.



Wellbeing Grant

Congratulations to the Independent Living Team who secured a grant from the Wellbeing 50+ Network to to reduce social isolation amongst Independent Living Tenants which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Tenants have benefited from a range of equipment, including indoor bowls, other indoor games, garden furniture and gardening equipment. Additionally they have had classes such as chair yoga, which are now going to carry on beyond the project

Independent Living Manager Llinos Price said "We are delighted that we have received this Grant, the impact it has had on our tenants has been really positive and it's good to see everyone enjoying the benefits of the items purchased from the funding".



Energy rebate scams

Please be aware of a new energy rebate scam that targets members of the public, claiming to be from the Office of Gas and Electronics Markets (OFGEM).

Fraudsters send official looking emails pretending to be from the energy regulator, OFGEM, asking people for their bank details. The email promises money off energy bills and states households will receive a £200 reduction in their bills, which will be paid back over 5 years. The email asks the individual to follow a link so the money can be paid into their bank accounts. However, it leads to websites designed to steal personal and financial details.

OFGEM, banks or other genuine organisations **will never** ask for details by text or email. If you need to check if it is a genuine message, contact the company directly but do not use any contact details on the text/email you receive.

If you receive an email like this, please report to the police via action fraud:

📞 www.actionfraud.police.uk/



Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

A few months ago, we asked you to complete a Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey so that we could hear your views and help us improve the services you receive.

1809 of tenants and leaseholders took part in the survey

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



80%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied with the service provided by the council.



71%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied by the ways repairs and maintenance are dealt with.



74%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied with your neighbourhood as a place to live.



75%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied with the overall quality of your home.



60%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied that your Service Charges provides value for money.



81%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied that your home is safe and secure.



70%

agree with the statement "I trust my Landlord".



51%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied with the way the service deal with Anti Social Behaviour.



47% are satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision making.

57% are very satisfied and fairly satisfied that we listen to your view and act upon them.

45% are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the opportunities to have their say in in how housing services are managed.



65%

are very satisfied and fairly satisfied that your rent provides value for money.

This is what you told us:

We take your feedback seriously and have identified 4 areas that we need to improve on:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Neighbourhoods as places to live
- Opportunities for participation
- Value for money

We have introduced;

- Dedicated Anti Social Behaviour Support Officer works with your Local Area Housing Office staff to deal with instances of anti-social behaviour quickly.

- Engaged and increased levels of partnership working with the Police, Local Area Co-ordinators, Community Safety and other Council Departments.
- Neighbourhood Support Officers are attending more engagement events and have an increased presence in your community.

There are a number of measures we have recently introduced in relation to estate management including:

- Neighbourhood Support Workers attending more engagement events and carrying out welfare checks.
- Caretaking workplans being more regularly

reviewed to ensure resources are better targeted and are more responsive.

- Joint initiatives being discussed with Waste, Recycling and Environmental Health to tackle overgrown gardens.

Face to face consultation has now resumed and you can have your say in a way and time that suits you. We want to increase the opportunities for tenants, making it as easy as possible to get involved and break down barriers to involvement.

We have reviewed our Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan, this outlines how we plan to

develop our engagement with tenants and how we are going to do this going forward. This will be in place in 2022.

We need to let you know a bit more about how we spend rental income such as on repairs and improvements, building new homes etc.

Thanks for completing the survey and taking the time to return it to us; your opinions are very important to us. The next Satisfaction Survey will be undertaken in 2023.

Congratulations also to the lucky tenants who won the prize draw.

Tenant drop in sessions:

If you live in West, North or East Area Housing Office, call into one of drop-in sessions in your local community to;

- Chat with Housing Office staff about issues that are important to you
- Discuss your rent account or queries about benefits
- Find out about opportunities to get involved and have your say about the housing service

West Area drop in sessions are held in:

West Cross Community Centre

3rd and 17th November 10am - 12pm

Surgeries will take place every other Thursday after these dates

For more information contact:

✉ westarea.housingoffice@swansea.gov.uk

Telephone ☎ **01792 897700**

North Area drop in sessions are held in:

Penlan Library

4th November 10am - 12pm

Surgeries will continue fortnightly on a Friday after this date

For more information contact:

✉ northarea.housingoffice@swansea.gov.uk

Telephone ☎ **01792 534060**

East Area drop in sessions are held in:

Parish Hall, St Thomas

1st and 15th November 9.30am - 11.30am

Surgeries will continue fortnightly after these dates

Port Tennant Community Centre, St. Thomas

2nd November 10am - 12pm

Surgeries will continue every four weeks after this date

Birchgrove Community Centre

2nd November 12pm - 2pm

Surgeries will continue fortnightly after this date

Bonymaen Community Centre, Bonymaen

18th November 12pm - 2pm

Surgeries will continue fortnightly after this date

For more information contact:

✉ eastarea.housingoffice@swansea.gov.uk

Telephone ☎ **01792 601720**

Help with the cost of living

We understand that the rising cost of living can be worrying, especially if you have difficulty paying your bills and / or your rent. We have a section dedicated to cost of living support on our website www.swansea.gov.uk/costoflivinghelp but there is also plenty of other help and support available to you.

Energy bills

One of the main issues affecting everyone is the rise in energy bills. There are many practical things that you could be doing around the house to try and lower your bills. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Turn your thermostat down 1 degree.
2. Switch the lights off in the rooms you don't utilise and use energy saving bulbs.
3. Don't leave things on stand-by – you can save up to £30 by switching off appliances at the wall when they are not in use.
4. Only fill and boil the kettle with the water you need.
5. Use washing machines and dryers to full capacity unless you have half load settings.
6. Don't leave taps dripping, especially hot water taps.
7. Only heat rooms that you are using and close doors to keep heat in rooms.

These small changes can make a big difference to your bills. However, if you are struggling to pay for your energy bill or to top up your pre-payment meter then speak to your energy supplier. Your supplier has to help you come to a solution and you should try to negotiate a deal that works for both of you.

A list of organisations who can offer support and advice can be found on our website

www.swansea.gov.uk/energycosts

Water bills

If you are having difficulty paying your water bill, you should contact your supplier immediately. Welsh Water are offering financial help to some customers,

with up to £230 off your water bill. More information is available on their website

www.dwrcymru.com/HelpwithBills or call **0800 052 0145** to discuss your options.

Struggling with your rent payments

If you are unable to pay your council housing rent, please get in touch with us. You may be entitled to benefits or other help. To discuss your options and find out what support is available to you, please contact the Rents Team by email

rentsteam@swansea.gov.uk or by telephone **01792 534094**.

Food Banks

If you are struggling to buy food then help is available. There are food banks situated throughout Swansea. The majority of the food banks operate via a voucher and / or referral system, but please do not let this put you off accessing this help when you are in need. The agencies that can help you with a referral or voucher will also be able to help provide additional support, including accessing benefit or debt advice. The 'Hope in Swansea' app is a useful way of finding out what help to access food is available on the day you need it. Further information on foodbanks can be found on our website

www.swansea.gov.uk/foodbanks

Debt and money worries

The first thing to do if you are struggling with money is to find out if you are receiving everything you are entitled to. If you are unsure whether you qualify for benefits, use an independent benefits calculator to check.

If you are concerned about paying your bank or credit card payments, you should contact your financial services provider immediately, to see what support they could offer.

Debt advice, including details on who can help you, is available on our website

📍 www.swansea.gov.uk/helpwithdebt

Other organisations you can contact for help and advice:

Advicelink Cymru

Advicelink Cymru is a Welsh Government funded Citizens Advice service that offers free and confidential advice on a range of subjects such as:

- welfare benefits
- debt
- employment
- education
- housing
- discrimination

Telephone 📞 **0800 702 2020**

Age Cymru Advice

Age Cymru Advice offers free, confidential and impartial support service. They can help older people, their families, friends, carers and professionals with information and advice on matters affecting older people.

To find out more, call 📞 **0300 303 398** between 9:00am and 4:00pm, Monday to Friday or email ✉ advice@agecymru.org.uk.

Citizens Advice

Citizen's Advice Cymru offers free, confidential advice on a range of issues including money, debt and benefits. To speak to an adviser, please call 📞 **03444 77 20 20** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Energy Awareness Hub



The Swansea Council funded scheme to help households cut their energy bills has been extended until March 2023.

Swansea Council has been the principal funder of the Energy Awareness Hub since the beginning of 2022. This service, delivered by The Environment Centre, offers advice to Swansea residents on paying their bills and how to make energy savings. This service was first provided on Nelson Street in the city centre but during the summer months has been out and about in the community, at libraries and foodbanks. It will shortly be returning to the city centre, albeit at a different location, and will

continue to provide the service at a number of community locations across the county.

So, if you need advice about paying your energy bills and want to find out about the ways you can reduce the amount of energy and carbon you use then please visit the Energy Awareness Hub for free and confidential advice.

To find out when and where you can visit the Hub please go to:

📍 www.environmentcentre.org.uk/switched-on

Welsh Government Fuel Support Scheme 2022/23

To provide eligible households living in the Swansea Council area with support towards paying their fuel bills, Welsh Government has announced the Fuel Support Scheme.

Everyone who believes they are eligible will need to apply using our online form. It will be available until Tuesday 28 February 2023 (5.00pm).

Eligible households living in Swansea can claim a one-off £200 payment from us.

It does not matter how you pay for your fuel, whether that is, for example, on a pre-payment meter, by direct debit or by paying a bill quarterly and the £200 can be claimed regardless of whether they are

using on or off-grid fuel.

Applicants can only claim for a fuel support payment for a property in Wales and only where this property is their primary residence.

This payment is in addition to the Energy Bill rebate being offered by the UK Government and the Winter Fuel Payment normally paid to pensioners by the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions).

📄 www.swansea.gov.uk/fuelsupport

My Housing – Sign up today!

We are proud to share My Housing, our online housing portal for Swansea Council tenants.

Set up a personalised housing account that you can use at a time that suits you, and is a quick and useful tool to help you manage your rent account. It is accessible from your smartphone, tablet or pc, no matter where you are.

Sign up / log in: 📄 housing.swansea.gov.uk

Signing up is easy using our step by step instructions. You will need to provide:

- your name.
- address.
- date of birth.
- your tenancy number.
- an email address.

Once set up we will send you a verification code to enable you to log in, this could take up to 2 working days.

You will be able to:

- pay your rent.

- view your rent balance and transactions.
- download and print rent statements.
- keep track of repairs you have reported.
- amend your personal details.
- send us messages or report any housing management issues.

If you have any questions or need help, please email: ✉ helen.davies@swansea.gov.uk

✉ layton.jenkins@swansea.gov.uk

Or alternatively, you can call in to your local Area Housing Office or speak with a member of the housing team at a housing surgery.



Tenants' Voice



My name is Alison Winter and I am your Participation Officer.

This is my regular update on tenant involvement in Swansea, where I provide you with news from local and citywide groups.



Return of Tenant Meetings

Throughout the pandemic, face to face consultation with tenants was suspended and activities were moved online. From July 2022, face to face consultation has resumed with the first meeting of the Tenants' Consultative Panel being held to introduce tenants to the new My Housing Portal. Over the coming months we will see the return of all City and Countywide Groups and Local Groups.

Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan

The Participation Strategy is currently being reviewed. This strategy and action plan details how tenants can get involved and in a way that suits them. More information about the strategy will be available in the next edition of Open House.

Tenants Consultative Panel "My Housing" Portal

Two sessions were held in the Rear Studio, Grand Theatre during July for tenants to learn more about the new "My Housing" portal. This new Housing portal called "My Housing" will allow tenants to set up a personalised housing account that you can use at a time that suits you from your smartphone, tablet or PC. It provides easy access to view your rent balance and transactions, pay your rent, request repairs, keep track of any repairs reported, amend your personal details and send us messages or report housing management issues.

Open House Feedback Group

The Open House Feedback Group recently met to

discuss the most recent edition of Open House Magazine including the design, layout, most interesting and least interesting features and what do they think of the magazine overall. The meeting was well attended with positive feedback given about the magazine.

If you would like to join the Open House Feedback Group please contact Alison Winter, Participation Officer.

Facebook

Swansea Council Housing has its own Facebook group, which any council tenant or leaseholder can join. We post useful information, advise you on updates and changes to housing services and of course, answer any questions you may have. If you have any suggestions for topics that you would like to include, please get in touch.

If you would like to join, search for Swansea Council Housing on Facebook, request to join and you will be asked the following questions 1. Lead tenant name, 2. Address, 3. Language preference.

Your request will only be approved if you answer these questions.

Have your say

You can get involved as much or as little as you like, you also don't need to attend meetings and can have your say from the comfort of your home.

If you would like to know more about any of the groups or portal please contact me by telephone on ☎ **01792 635043** or ☎ **07775221453**, contact me via messenger or email me on ✉ **alison.winter@swansea.gov.uk**

Support services

Housing Benefit Claim

To make a new claim for Housing Benefit contact the **Take Up Team** ☎ **635353**

or email ✉ newclaims4benefits@swansea.gov.uk

To discuss your existing claim with a Housing Benefit Officer please ring ☎ **635353** or email

✉ benefits@swansea.gov.uk

Rents Team

If you are having difficulty with paying your rent account, contact the **Rents Team** on ☎ **01792 534094**

✉ rentsteam@swansea.gov.uk

TSU Tenancy Support Unit

The **TSU** is run by the City & County of Swansea; they can offer a support worker to help with financial problems or any other support issues with your tenancy. Please contact your Rent Officer or the **Tenancy Support Unit** on ☎ **774360** if you feel you need support

Housing Options

Money advice and debt advice -

Also free advice given if your tenancy is at risk.

☎ **01792 533100** ✉ housingoptions@swansea.gov.uk



Swansea Citizens Advice

Second Floor, City Gates, 50a Wind Street, Swansea SA1 1EE

☎ **0300 3309 082** 🌐 www.adviceguide.org.uk/wales.htm



If you are threatened with homelessness they will offer you free advice and assistance ☎ **01792 469400**

Housing Advice helpline ☎ **08000 495 495**

🌐 www.sheltercymru.org.uk/shelter/home/



Stepchange Debt Advice ☎ **0800 138 1111**

🌐 www.stepchange.org



For advice on how to get into work

☎ **01792 637112** 🌐 www.workways.wales

✉ workways+@swansea.gov.uk

Garden Cutting Service



A free Garden Cutting Service for elderly or disabled Council Tenants who need help managing their gardens.

What is the service we offer?

- ✓ Garden Cutting Services

What to expect?

- ✓ We will undertake cuts and clearance of lawns and overgrowth.
- ✓ We will cut back overgrown hedges in the winter months unless they encroach on access.
- ✓ We will take all the trimmings and cuttings with us.
- ✓ Leaving you with a garden you can access and enjoy in the good weather.

Eligibility

To qualify for this service the household must satisfy one of the following criteria:-

- Tenants who are aged 70 plus with no family in the household or living nearby who could assist.
- Tenants with a disability which means they are not able to cut their own grass and who have no family living locally who could assist.

NB: Tenants will be expected to verify their disability e.g. letter from DWP.

Priority

- ✗ There is no priority for the members on this scheme - the team will cut the gardens on an area by area basis, weather permitting.

What DON'T we do?

- ✗ Landscaping
- ✗ Weeding
- ✗ Rubbish Removal
- ✗ Clean up after pets
- ✗ Planting
- ✗ Pressure Washing

Contact your Area Housing Office to find out if you are eligible. For all other queries, please contact 01792 513948



Have you had your **FREE** Carbon Monoxide Detector?

Pop into your local Area Housing
Office and collect yours today!



We are committed to providing all our properties with Carbon Monoxide detectors, many of our homes already have hard wired detectors fitted.

BUT in order to get CO alarms into all our properties as quickly as possible - we are asking for your help!

There are stocks of alarms in all our Area Offices, so if you don't yet have a CO alarm in your home, **PLEASE** pop into the office nearest you and ask one of our Housing Advisors for one.

It could save a life and they are **FREE**, modern and discreet, hold a 10-year battery and can be placed anywhere in the room where your gas appliance is located.

Please call in to see us - **OR** if you have difficulty getting to your local office please do call and ask for their help.

Can we help you?

Do you have difficulty reading small print or perhaps you sometimes feel bogged down by the amount of information you see on letters, leaflets and application forms.

If this is the case we can provide information to you in other ways. We can send you information in Large Print, Braille, or on a Compact Disc. If you are a Welsh Speaker or are learning the language we can also provide information to you in Welsh.

To receive information in an alternative format, please let the staff at your Area Housing Office know or contact the Customer Services Team on ☎ **01792 635045** ✉ **housing@swansea.gov.uk**

If you need help completing a form that we have given you, please ask your Area Housing Office staff for help.

It's important to us that you are able to have access to all of the services which are available to you from the Housing Service; so if you would like us to do things differently for you, please just ask and we will be pleased to do so.