

# Vale Standard NEWSLETTER

Spring  
2024

Packed with  
information,  
advice and  
support!



**NEW**

Keeping up  
to date on  
community news

What is it like  
to be a  
volunteer

New  
Developments



# Welcome

## to the Spring edition of our newsletter



**We hope you found the summer edition useful, we have had some great feedback and we hope to build on this in future editions.**

We are really keen to listen to your ideas for future items you want to read about. Have your say and get in touch via emailing [get-involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:get-involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) This is your newsletter, and we want to make sure we provide you with information that is important to you.



We have been busy starting to roll out our **NEW INTEGRATED HOUSING AND BUILDING SERVICES IT SYSTEM**, what this means for you is amongst other things, we will have a new tenant portal which will make reporting repairs, making payments, and checking rent balances much easier. We will be looking for willing helpers to test the system before a full roll out during the Summer, would you like to be one of our helpers? If so, do get in touch using the same email address as above.



### WE ARE ACUTELY AWARE THAT THE COST-OF-LIVING PRESSURES ARE CONTINUING TO CAUSE HARDSHIP TO LOTS OF YOU.

Please visit our cost of living page on our website <https://bit.ly/vhcols> in addition to this we have recruited some additional team members to provide help and support with things like budgeting and money advice.

**We are here to help so if you are worried or need any advice, please contact our money advice team on 01446 709 / 588 / 146 / 312.** In this newsletter we also feature an article on loan sharks turn to *page 18* and find out about what help is at hand!



### OUR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

have been busy this year, running a number of outreach services from digital training, employment advice to volunteering to name just a few. Our volunteering service "Value in the Vale" has celebrated its first birthday having provided volunteering opportunities to 187 residents. If you have any spare time and want to give something back to your community or just learn something new, we have a number of projects that could use your help and you can be rewarded in return - turn to *page 2* to find out more. And finally, a huge thank you to all of our Working Group members who continue to work on your behalf

to improve our services and provide valuable feedback to myself and my staff. I along with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tenant Participation Cllr Sandra Perkes and the Chair of the Working Group were delighted to launch the Tenant Compact in December. The Tenant Compact is our promise to you as our Contract holders on how we will commit to involving and listening to you. This Compact is a short reader friendly version of the Tenant and Leaseholder Participation strategy which the Cabinet passed last year - we recognise not everyone wants to read a strategy - please visit <https://bit.ly/vhginv> for further information.

*It just remains for me to wish you all a great 2024 and I look forward to continuing to work with you!*

*Mike Ingram, Head of Housing*

# It's our 1st Year Value in the Vale

**Since launching in October 2022, the project has grown from strength to strength.**

### What is the Value in the Vale Project?

Its a project that allows you to volunteer in your local community and gain rewards

### What rewards can I get?

Anything from a free coffee in a local coffee shop - or a free car wash or money off a meal and much, much more.

### Here's some of what we have been doing:

Within our first year, we have worked with **30 organisations**, offering them support in recruiting volunteers as well as rewarding many of their volunteers for their time.

**19 businesses** within the Vale have kindly provided rewards for volunteers to redeem at various locations with a total of **26 different rewards** on offer, from free coffee to beauty products, car washes and archery.

We have run two **gift it forward campaigns** which have seen residents of Ty Iolo Hostel and LIFE Charity receive free coffee, meals and family activities which has gone some way in helping toward the cost-of-living crisis.

Working closely with Adult Community Learning, we have delivered 6 free accredited training courses to 22 learners with all having achieved an Agored Level 1 in An Introduction to Volunteering.

It's been a busy year, but a pleasure to support so many volunteers within the Vale

### Where can I find more information about the Value in the Vale Project?

If you are interested in volunteering and earning rewards, please contact:

[lyoung@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:lyoung@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)  
**07522 710 254** or please visit:  
[www.valueinthevale.com](http://www.valueinthevale.com)

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### How do you wish to receive the newsletter going forward?

- English only • English and Welsh OR • Welsh only
- Via post or via email.

Please provide your email address and email your preference to: [get-involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:get-involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) Or call us on **07523 300308**

# Condensation and Mould

Moisture is always in the air even when you can't see it. Look for it in corners, on or near windows, in or behind furniture, cupboards and anything that may be resting or hanging on walls such as pictures. It often forms on walls and/or in unheated spaces.

During our daily routine we can be adding more than 11 litres (20 pints) of moisture into the air of our homes, this comes from: Open fires including gas flame heaters, Bathing/showering, using washing machines, tumble dryers and dishwashers, cooking and breathing. On average 9 pints of moisture is produced by drying your clothes inside.



## Damp can also come from:

Rising damp, damaged roof tiles or slates, blocked gutters, leaking waste or overflow pipes.

## How to avoid condensation:

Produce less moisture by covering pans and don't leave kettles boiling, ventilate to remove moisture by keeping a small window ajar or open, lessen temperature variations between rooms with insulation, draught proofing and heating your home.

## To kill and remove mould

Wipe down the affected surfaces with fungicidal wash which carries a health and safety executive approval number. Follow all the instructions. Disturbing mould by vacuuming carpets and soft furnishings can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

If you require any additional advice or support, please contact C1V on

**01446 700111**





### If you live in Gibbonsdown and Treharne

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Manager is  
**Sharon Cull**



phone: 01446 709428  
mobile: 07973714899  
email: scull@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Assistant is  
**Gareth Downes**



phone: 01446 709701  
mobile: 07730 284147  
email: gadownes@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

### If you live in Barry East, Dinas and Penarth

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Manager is  
**Stephanie Stoye**



phone: 01446 729633  
mobile: 07860 526359  
email: slstoye@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Assistant is  
**Luke Wagstaffe**



phone: 01446 709573  
mobile: 07971677980  
email: lwagstaffe@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

### If you live in Buttrills, Central Estate and Colcot

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Manager is  
**Maria Loe**



phone: 02920 673209  
mobile: 07855 311895  
email: mloe@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Assistant is  
**Cara Taylor**



mobile: 07912 293024  
email: carataylor@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

### If you live in Barry West, Llantwit, Rhoose, St Athan & Rural Vale

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Managers are  
(job share)



**Georgia Thomas**  
(Mon-Wed)  
**Christine Ball** (Wed-Fri)

phone: 02920 673170  
mobile: 07815938413  
email: Gthomas@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Your  
Neighbourhood  
Assistant is  
**Paul Martin**



phone: 01446 709546  
mobile: 078166 50757  
email: Pjmartin@  
valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

# Who is Who ?

## Neighbourhood Managers and Assistants

Your neighbourhood  
Assistant and  
Manager would be  
your first point of call  
to raise any Tenant/  
Contract Holder  
and neighbourhood  
related issues.

To speak to your  
Neighbourhood Manager/  
Assistant please use  
these contact details.



# THE ROLE OF A TENANT LIAISON OFFICERS (TLO's)

Consists of 6 officers  
- Heather Powney,  
Bronwyn Allison-Davies,  
Dawn Bailey, Alison  
Davis, Linzi Dibble &  
Debbie Taylor.

**THE ROLE OF THE TLO** is supporting the Vale of Glamorgan Council tenants (contract holders) during internal/external works in their homes. The TLO send letters to all tenants who are having the work undertaken confirming which contractor will be working on this project. They also complete a Welfare Form, prior to works starting at each property, checking how many occupants live in the property and if there are any children, pets, medical problems which the contractor may need to be made aware of during the works. Once works are completed the TLO will contact the tenant/contract holder and ask them to complete a Tenant Satisfaction Form relating to the quality of works and performance of the contractor. This information is shared with Senior Managers and the Welsh Government.

## THE WORKS:

Works involved include new kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, rewiring, External Wall Insulation (EWI), new windows, roofs, fascia's/soffits/guttering, communal upgrades, path repairs, shed repairs, fencing and painting projects.

## THE TLO TEAM

Work with a range of internal teams as well as external contractors, visiting properties, attending meetings, and providing tenants/contract holders with regular updates.



## Current/New Projects:

- **New roof, EWI\*, windows and external doors**, refurbishment of scooter storage unit and additional patio area at Longmeadow Sheltered Scheme in Cowbridge. 
- **Communal area upgrade** in Barry area to 75 blocks of flats.
- **Fencing and painting works** throughout the Vale of Glamorgan Council.
- **EWI/communal area upgrades, Solar Panels** and redesign of back garden area at Severn Avenue, Barry.
- Starting in 2024 - **A ZERO CARBON pilot project** consisting of 26 properties followed by additional properties going forward.
- **Internal works** at Gwenog Court Sheltered Scheme, Barry



## In November the Housing and Building services Team said farewell to Rob Thompson.



*Rob was a longstanding Senior Housing Manager who worked in the Vale Council Housing and Building Services team over a number of years.*

It is likely that most of you will have come across Rob over the years. Although he has retired from his role as a Senior Housing Manager, Rob will be supporting the Housing team over the next 12 months to help develop and support our

transition into launching a new Housing ICT system - which will help us deliver a more efficient and streamlined service for customers and staff.

We hope you will join us in thanking Rob for his efforts over the years.

# Are you unhappy about a service you have received from us

Vale Homes strives to offer a good service, but sometimes we get things wrong.

In such cases you are encouraged to speak with the Housing Managers (see page 4), if you are still unhappy you can escalate this to a formal complaint. You can do so by calling C1V or visiting our website to make a complaint.

## *We are listening and learning*

You can also complain on behalf of someone else who cannot complain themselves (as long as you have their written permission). You should contact us as soon as possible but you have up to 12 months after you become aware of any problem to make a complaint. In exceptional circumstances this timescale could be extended.

### **A complaint may include:**

- Failure of the council to provide a service.
- A delay in responding (or no response) to your request in the specified timescale.
- The council failing to follow their agreed rules, statutory responsibilities or published service standards.
- An unhelpful attitude of someone who works for the council.
- If you feel you have suffered any form of bias or discrimination.

### **A complaint is not:**

- An initial request for a service, a one off missed collection or an insurance claim. Report an issue to the Vale of Glamorgan Council.
- An appeal against a 'properly made' decision by a public body.
- A means to seek change to legislation or a 'properly made' policy decision.
- A means for lobbying groups or organisations to seek to promote a cause.

For further information about the Council Complaints policy please visit:

<https://bit.ly/vogoc>

# Quality Assessor

## What are service quality assessors? (SQAs)

SQAs will help us to scrutinise the services we deliver in detail, providing constructive challenge on *WHY and HOW* services are delivered the way they are.

The type of services the SQA's will check will be determined by the level of complaints we receive from service areas. The SQA's will look at what is working well and what isn't, making recommendations on what needs to change. This will be key to enabling Vale Homes staff to provide improved services to our tenants/contract holders, providing value for money and delivered in a timely manner.



*Do you think you can help us with improving our services? Why not join our service quality assessor group or become a mystery shopper?*

## What are mystery shoppers?

Mystery shoppers will periodically complete "mystery shopping" exercises and test out how services are actually being delivered and whether they are delivered to the correct standard and, if not what changes are required.

For further information please call **07702 338840** or email us on [get-involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:get-involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)



# WE NEED YOUR HELP

**MYSTERY SHOPPER REQUIRED**

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME A MYSTERY SHOPPER LOOKING AT OUR REPAIRS SERVICE?

**Have you recently had to report a repair or had one completed?**

We are looking for people who are willing to give up **10 minutes** of their time to complete a short questionnaire over the phone or it can be completed via a postal survey.

The questions will be based on your experience and your responses will help us to establish areas of the service that are working well and those that are not

If you are interested, please contact Shani Payter **07813068324**  
[spayter@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:spayter@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)



# getting to know you

In this edition Farida Aslam Senior Neighbourhood Manager interviews the Chair of the Working Group -

## Gina Doyle



**The Working Group consists of 20 Contract holders living in areas throughout the Vale of Glamorgan who meet every 6 weeks, to consider Strategic Issues affecting their housing services for example, monitoring the delivery of the Tenant Participation & Leaseholder Strategies, new policies, performance, new services and initiatives. Find out more below about the range of things that Gina is involved in and what keeps her motivated.**

### **Hello Gina, can you describe what you think Tenant Participation is and, what it means to you?**

To me Tenant Participation is a process that involves bringing contract holders, leaseholders and the landlord together to meet, collaborate and share ideas to create better services to improve standards in the housing services we receive. Practically that means, making things better for us, as tenants.

### **What kind of things are you involved in as part of the TP work?**

Personally number 1... I'm Chair- or Chairperson - whatever you want to call it of the STAR Resident Association in Penarth ... They chose me quite a few years ago, and I've been Chair ever since - this group consists of a Chair, a Vice Chair a Secretary and a Treasurer and other local members - everyone is welcome if you're a Council contract holder or a leaseholder living in the local area. As part of the STAR group we hold meetings once every 6-8 weeks. Next door to where we meet we have something called a Food Pod (*I'm really pleased we have this*).

I organise outings for the residents of all ages. For the youngest - last year we took them to the Penarth pantomime ... and the year before we took them to the Rugby Club where they had a disco and a dance and hotdogs, and they all had selection boxes. This year they are just going to have selection boxes and in the spring with the money saved, we're going to take them to Folly Farm. This is all part of the STAR group meeting work; we have funding from the Council to arrange events

and activities in this area - and it's all part of keeping the community together. For the older residents we recently took them on a lovely trip to The Old Court Hotel at Symonds Yat where 16 of us had a 2 course lunch and walked around the beautiful gardens and had coffee to finish off. We all thoroughly enjoyed it.

At our residents meeting we listen to peoples worries complaints and concerns - at these meetings we also invite the Council staff members which include the Housing Manager, the local Police PCSO's... oh and a couple of Local Cllrs ... as well...

I am also involved in the QDF that's the Quality and Design Forum, this group works with the building services side of housing and makes sure that contract holders' ideas and feedback is captured - for example we as contract holders can go out and visit properties when they are built and, even before that, we can look at the contracts and, in some cases also be involved as part of an interview panel interviewing contractors who, will be awarded the tenders to do the work. Our work here is all about questioning the Council and the Contractors about things that matter to tenants.

I am also Chair of the Tenant Working Group - this is a really important group, and we monitor the Tenant Participation Strategy - we get to know about what the Housing Teams are doing, express our opinions on new projects and policies. I am also a member of the Housing and Communities Scrutiny Group - this group is also attended by Local Councillors and the Head of Housing - we get to hear about all the strategic issues, it's really quite informative ... oh and, I occasionally help out in the food pod when someone is sick ...

### **My goodness that's a lot - how do you fit it all in....**

I am very busy .... I can do it at the moment – but eventually I am going to have to slow down... but, I love it -I really love the work I do, it's rewarding, I simply just enjoy it – I see the difference that we make and it keeps me motivated.

### **It sounds quite formal? Going to meetings... what's it really like? Is it off putting - can you actually understand what's going on?**

It's definitely not off putting – going to resident meetings – we have tea, coffee and cakes and meet friends, have a laugh (sometimes we're hysterical), and it's nice to meet new neighbours and hear their voices and opinions.

### **How long have you been involved in Tenant Participation, working with the Vale**

10 years!

### **What is it that you most enjoy about your involvement with TP?**

I like the fact that tenants/contract holders get involved - I like taking the feedback from the Tenant Working Group and the other groups that I sit on back to my residents in my local area... I love the training and at the moment I am doing an Open University digital skills course and it's all free! I also like the support they (Vale Homes) give us, I like to meet new people, as I am a people person and, I learn something new each time I go to a meeting.

### **Do you think Vale homes listens and acts on your tenant views?**

Mostly yes - through groups that I am involved in, we always get feedback if we raise an issue things get done, changes are made through our feedback - also in the newsletters ... for example, we wanted it to be useful and reader friendly - it was. It was easy reading, we were told who we could report things to - how we can pay our bills, what to do with your waste - the blue, black and green bags... there have been so many changes that information was very useful... also, what to do in an abusive relationship, the money advice information and health and wellbeing all were just so useful - also, you have surveys - I've just done one this morning - this was for TPAS Cymru and, at the end of it you could win a reward! These surveys capture what we think - it gets our voices out there as tenants/contract holders and that's what all of this is about - getting our voices heard.

### **Vale Homes talks about rewards for involvement (Value in the Vale/time credits) - what do you know about this?**

Volunteers that get involved in any project and donate their time are eligible to get rewards in the form of vouchers to spend at their leisure - the more hours you volunteer the more rewards you can redeem.

### **I believe you are also involved in the work of the Food Pod in Penarth. Can you sum up your thoughts on what difference this has made to the residents living in this area?**

Well, the food pod is essential at this very time especially - more and more residents are using it, and it is absolutely needed and necessary and we're finding that its not only just people living in the street using it - people from further afield are coming in - Its run by volunteers and they do a fantastic job. Its like a food bank - you pay a small amount, and you can take quite a bit of food in return. Some people can't afford to pay anything, and we do help them. When we get the donations we can pay for more food to help the community. It's a great initiative.

### **What advice would you give to somebody thinking about Getting Involved with Tenant Participation?**

Quite simply ... I would thoroughly encourage tenants/contract holders to Get Involved in TP ... for a number of reasons .... No.1, you get support, No.2, there is plenty of training - No.3, funding ... is available for the contract holder and resident groups... (that's how I pay for the trips)! No.4. Rewards, you get rewards (or vouchers ...whatever you want to call them) for your involvement ... and most importantly, it means you have your say and get them to listen to your thoughts....and you can provide feedback to the other tenants and residents and you can even hold or develop your own resident association/group in your areas - we have actually got 15 new members last year that are getting involved. You can really learn new skills like I'm doing, I've got new digital skills and if your younger you can also gain skills that can help with employment.... So, I would say to anyone - Get Involved, it's so rewarding - I think I will end it at that.

*Thank you, Gina, for your time - it's been great chatting to you.*

**If you want to get involved contact us on:  
Get- [involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:involved@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)  
or call 07523 300308**

Vale Homes

Sheltered Housing

# FORUM is relaunched

The Vale Homes Sheltered Housing Forum was set up over 13 Years ago - the aim of the forum was to bring the 5 Sheltered Housing Schemes in the Vale together to hold bi-monthly meetings.



Sheltered Housing residents visited each scheme at least once a year to attend a meeting to discuss what activities/events and project works were taking place. The residents enjoyed having face to face meetings and this was a great opportunity to get to know other people and socialise.

Since the COVID pandemic in 2020 these meetings had been placed on hold mainly because of Covid social distancing rules. Residents of the scheme asked for the meetings to restart.

In August 2023 we relaunched the Sheltered Housing Forum meetings. The relaunch meeting was held in Gwenog Court in Barry. All residents living in Sheltered Schemes were invited to attend, approximately 40 residents plus Housing Staff were in attendance.

Since the relaunch of the Forum, we have had a number of council departments/teams come and speak to the Sheltered Housing residents about services they offer the residents with:

The Housing Benefit Team who offered assistance relating to benefits advice and support on the current Cost of Living crisis.

Tom Geere the Healthy Living Officer in the Council attended and spoke to the residents about Getting Active within their schemes. He offered to attend each scheme and meet with the residents to see what activities they may be interested in taking part in.

Lianne Young from the Vale Homes Housing and Community Investment team talked to scheme residents about Volunteering and gaining digital skills to get online

Liz Cremer, the Council Telecare Officer gave a short presentation followed by Questions & Answers relating to the new telecare Call System.

Finally, all members that attended the forum also took part in a discussion on the forthcoming review of sheltered housing. This work is as a result of the recently published Older Persons Housing Strategy.

THE FORUM is both informative and an opportunity to get social with other residents - refreshments and a light lunch is also provided.

If you live in one of our sheltered schemes:

- GWENOG COURT in Barry,
- REDLANDS HOUSE in Penarth,
- FAIROAKS in Dinas Powys,
- LONGMEADOW COURT in Cowbridge and
- CRAWSHAY COURT in Llantwit Major

You are all welcome to attend.

To find out when your next Sheltered Housing Forum meeting is please contact your Scheme Co-ordinator.



# New Developments



**Our development team have been busy working on new developments.**

**On the 31st July 2023, the Council handed over 14 new one bedroom apartments for people aged 55 and over.**  
Residents on the Councils' Homes4U Waiting List have now been housed in these properties - this work is vital in helping us reduce the housing waiting list in the Vale.



**This is the Council's first new housing development that meets Welsh Governments Enhanced Energy Performance standard.**

The scheme was built using modern methods of construction and relies on new electric heating and hot water technology. This new development also benefits from solar panels, with the electricity generated used to power the communal areas. The scheme also uses below ground rainwater harvesting, this not only prevents the possibility of localised flooding, but also stores and recycles the rainwater to flush the toilets in the apartment block.

Lôn yr Ysg

# Crawshay Court

## Holds Celebration Picnic Event in the Community Garden

The annual picnic celebration event was held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> August at Crawshay Court, Llantwit Major. The sheltered housing complex is a scheme for older people and is run by Vale Homes.



The project aims to work in partnership to support our local community, especially with the current cost of living crisis.

The picnic food was kindly donated by Ogi Wales who have been providing support to the project by volunteering in the garden and assisting with funding for the installation of the plastic bottle greenhouse.

Mark Ellis, the community project lead for the Community Investment team commented

*"This has been a long standing project since before Covid and the work that has gone on with partners in the past couple of years has been fantastic. A big thank you to everyone involved for making the garden look so amazing and beautiful for the contract holders living at the scheme."*

*Pictures L-R: Contract holders and volunteers from Vale Plus, Llantwit Major. Harvested crops at Crawshay Sheltered Housing*



The event was held to recognise and thank all the volunteers that have been involved in setting up and maintaining the garden. Volunteers were presented with certificates of thanks at the event.



## A Big Thank you

A big thank you goes out to the team of **Penarth Food Pod volunteers** who have worked so hard over the last 2½ years since the Food Pod opened to ensure that local people have access to affordable food.



From the delivery drivers, to the volunteers helping out at the Penarth Food Pod at the three weekly sessions, stocking the shelves and helping customers.

A volunteer recognition event was recently held at Penarth Pier Pavilion where one of the volunteers, *Isobel Lloyd* received flowers and a card to help celebrate her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

*From the Community Investment team within Housing, we say a big thank you for all that you do to make the Food Pod such a success.*



# Check out our Website

There are 4 main questions we would like to ask you for feedback on.

We are currently looking at redesigning our Vale Homes Webpages and would like your support and feedback

- Do you think the Vale Homes web pages are easy to find on the Vale of Glamorgan website?
- Do you think the Vale Homes pages are easy to navigate?
- Do you think the web pages are informative and engaging?
- What suggestions do you have that will improve the look and content of the pages?

Once we have your responses, we will be looking to put together a group of tenants who would like to work with us to develop our new pages



So, if you would like to provide us feedback or become part of the group redesigning our pages (no experience is necessary) then your support would be greatly appreciated.

To provide feedback or get more information please contact: **Shani Payter** 07813068324 or email [spayter@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:spayter@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

The web pages can be found on the Vale of Glamorgan Council website <https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/>

## Supported Employment Mentors

If you live in the Vale of Glamorgan and would like support to access employment opportunities, we can provide,

- 1-2-1 support for disabled individuals - including those with physical or sensory impairment, learning difficulty, autism or mental health conditions
- In work support
- Training and help to access volunteering opportunities.

To find out more or to meet a mentor contact [c4w-barry@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:c4w-barry@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) 07874634237 / 07860 784880



For a range of support and advice on tenancy, housing and more

## VALE ONE STOP HOUSING SUPPORT



Drop-in at 110-118 Holtton Road, Barry, CF63 4HH  
Contact us on 01446 735444

Or email us on:  
[valeonestopshopsupport@poblgroup.co.uk](mailto:valeonestopshopsupport@poblgroup.co.uk)

Additional drop-in's various locations

- Cardiff & Vale College (Barry site) every Tuesday 11am-2pm
- Palmerston Adult Learning Centre every Thursday 10am-2pm

### SUPPORT AREAS INCLUDE:

- Homelessness
- Support maintaining any tenancy
- Budgeting, utilities, bills and debts
- Housing benefit, rent and rent arrears
- Student finance & welfare benefits
- Support to fill out forms
- Support wellbeing



# EVERYONE'S GARDEN Summer Event

hosts

After a successful season of activities at Everyone's Garden, Home Education Wales in partnership with the Vale Homes Community Investment team hosted a summer event.

Everyone's Garden was decorated in bunting and provided an opportunity for people to view the open space. The garden, thanks to the support from Home Education Wales and other partners provides a place for



people to take part in outdoor activities.

**Fun activities on the day** included the ever popular paint bike where children and adults ride a static bike creating lovely pictures via a rotating turntable. Children and adults also took part in duck racing and a scavenger



hunt along with face painting and a magician entertained with balloon modelling being a favourite.

**Donna Rapley, a trustee of Home Education Wales** and co-organiser of the event commented "It was lovely to see the garden hosting a wonderful event like this during the summer holidays and to see everyone attending enjoying the community garden".

**A special thank you must go out to all the volunteers** who helped out in the sunshine to get the community garden looking so fantastic. It was brilliant to see so many new children and families turn up for the event.

*If you would like to get involved with Everyone's Garden at Margaret Avenue, Colcot. Please contact:*

**Mark Ellis, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Community Investment and Involvement Officer**  
[markellis@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:markellis@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

## Join eCymru today!

### What is eCymru?

eCymru is a new and innovative housing portal designed to connect social housing tenants across the whole of Wales. Our mission is to help tenants live happier and healthier lives by providing access to events, engagement opportunities, and e-learning courses. With a focus on community and collaboration, eCymru is the bridge to a brighter future.



### Benefits of joining eCymru?

There is something for everyone on eCymru. You:

- Will be able to access a variety of FREE online courses in arts and crafts, education, fitness and health
- Can participate in events and webinars to help to stay connected and informed
- Have opportunities to connect with other tenants and join in collaborative activities
- Will be part of a supportive community that will help you achieve your goals and improve your wellbeing



# Working towards an Age Friendly Vale



It is important that the Vale of Glamorgan is a place where older people have equal rights, respect, opportunities and the same access to services as the rest of the population.



To achieve this, we need to work together side by side with our community to ensure that people are ageing and living well in the Vale. The work to make the Vale more age friendly is based around the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Age Friendly Communities concept which has been informed by the views and opinions of people all over the world.

Across the Vale, some great work is already being carried out by partners, community groups and individuals to improve the lives of older people but we recognise that more

needs to be done. Recent engagement with residents, community groups and partners has influenced the eight commitments set out in our Age Friendly Vale Charter. We will now be taking this forward through development of a collective action plan to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our ageing communities.

For the last year, Age Friendly Officer, Siân Clemett-Davies has been working with partners to create new positive wellbeing opportunities for older people. These have included a River Watch Survey and social in Cowbridge, Stroller walks in St. Athan, community information and support events across the Vale, social get togethers and a relaunch of the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum.

### How you get involved:

- Sign up to the Age Friendly Vale Network and be the first to receive information, support and activities aimed at people aged 50 and over.
- Join the St. Athan Strollers every fortnight on Thursday's for a short accessible walk around St. Athan followed by free refreshments and biscuits at The Three Horseshoes.

To express an interest in any of the above activities or to find out more about the Vale's application for Age Friendly status, please contact Siân by emailing; [snclmnett-davies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:snclmnett-davies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) or call 01446 700111.

## QUIT SMOKING WITH FREE NHS SUPPORT

**SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE IN:**

- Meetings with other smokers (the best way to stop smoking)
- 1:2:1 appointments, face-to-face or over the telephone
- Community venues
- Hospitals
- Pharmacies

**WE UNDERSTAND HOW HARD IT CAN BE TO QUIT. WE ARE FRIENDLY AND NOT HERE TO JUDGE YOU.**

We will offer you confidential support each week, talking about:

- The steps involved in quitting
- How to set a quit date that works
- How to use stop smoking medication
- How you are getting on

**EVERY YEAR WE HELP OVER 15,000 SMOKERS IN WALES.**

Take the first step to become smokefree and contact Help Me Quit to find the support that's right for you:

Call us: **0800 085 2219**

Text\*: **HMQ TO 80818**

or visit: **HELPMEQUIT.WALES**

\*standard rate message

**MOST SUCCESSFUL**

Alone

With medication

With NHS support

**HELP ME QUIT IS THE BEST CHOICE YOU CAN MAKE TO STOP SMOKING**



# Interviewing our Inspiring Volunteer

Lianne Young from Value in the Vale  
talks with one of our volunteers

We talk with one of our volunteers who has been instrumental in making a huge difference to Vale Homes residents' lives and find out a little more about her journey.

## Why did you decide you wanted to volunteer

I am single mum of 3 children and when my son was diagnosed with autism and slow development I had to stop working and became a full-time carer to support his needs. I'll be honest with you, I quite enjoyed it at the beginning, spending time with my kids and learning some DIY jobs, but there was something missing. I missed people, I missed talking to them, see them laughing, hugging, and even believe it or not, the gossiping. One day I had quite an ordinary phone call from a lady from the council. We had such a lovely chat and I still remember it; I'll probably never forget it. After a while she asked me if I would like to start doing some volunteering? I said yes without even thinking. That was one of the moments when my mouth says something without thinking, but it was a good one.

## Where did you initially volunteer?

I was introduced at Crawshay Court as volunteer in the summer of 2022. After Covid, events such as coffee afternoons in most of the sheltered schemes such as Crawshay Court didn't seem to pick up again. I was so glad that residents accepted me and gave me the chance to work with them. They didn't "fire" me yet! I was paired with a female resident and every Tuesday afternoon we run our "Gathering" as we call it. We run different activities each week such as quizzes, learning digital skills, craft, art, chair yoga, baking and cooking and never miss a cup of coffee or tea. We also celebrate residents' birthdays and other special events like Halloween, Christmas, Easter, St. Patrick's day etc... We've got lots of plans in the near future such as day out trips, learning British sign language or Makaton.... It's so much fun! There are now other people who come along to support residents with us, such as the local PCSO's, Llantwit Major Rotary Club, Vale Plus (young adults with learning disabilities) primary school children and their families.

## How much of a difference do you feel volunteering has made?

I have been asked many times: "Why are you doing it, they don't pay you, it's your time." My answer? "I do it because I Love it, it's part of my life, I have met such good friends, I am managing my time, my mental health is good, I love seeing people happy and smiling. It has been proved by scientists that volunteering will enrich your life, longevity and help you make lots of memories. Crawshay Court has grown to such a wonderful and joyful place. As a Volunteer through

Value in the Vale, we are rewarded for our time, which allows us to redeem vouchers for free cups of coffee, car wash, cosmetic products, discounts etc which are great as Christmas or birthday presents.

## Where will your volunteering journey take you next?

I now also volunteer for Vale Plus. I was asked to come along and do some chair Yoga. From one session of chair Yoga, it became regular Wednesday session where we do different chair exercises, making aromatherapy oils and air fresheners and making healthy drinks. As I am qualified massage therapist, so I also introduced them to "Hot Stones massage". Now, one of the residents of Crawshay Court has started her volunteering journey and is now also signed up to Value in the Vale. I am now looking forward to bringing

the same 'vibe' to another sheltered scheme in Cowbridge called, Longmeadow. I am also very grateful to the Vale of Glamorgan Councils, Vale Homes Team for offering me these opportunities and supporting me in my upcoming studies. I have already passed my Autism Awareness, Learning Support Assistant level 2 training, First Aid, British Sign Language, Makaton, Introduction to Volunteering, and Certificate in counselling training. Recently, I decided to start another new journey to help and support children and teenagers with mental health issues, especially around self-harm. My group is called "U Matter" and I am looking for kind people who have the same mindset to help without expectations. The reward is warmth in your heart.



# Bowel Cancer screening



The bowel screening age has been lowered to 51 in Wales. It means people aged between 51 and 54 in Wales will now automatically receive at-home bowel screening tests.




Health Minister Eluned Morgan is urging people to use their kit when it arrives in the post. She said: "Even in the early stages of bowel cancer, you may feel well. So screening is vital to detect cancers before symptoms show, and early detection and treatment drastically improve survival rates."

People aged 51-54 who are registered with a GP in Wales will be offered self-screening for bowel cancer and will automatically receive an easy-to-use bowel screening kit in the post every two years. The programme will come into full effect for the newly-eligible age group gradually over the next year.


A new, easy-to-use FIT (Faecal Immunochemical Test) at-home testing kit was introduced in Wales in 2019. With increased sensitivity, the kit can better detect bowel cancer in those who are at risk and has contributed to an improved screening uptake of 65% in the previous age cohort of men and women aged 55 to 74.

## Signs and Symptoms of bowel cancer


Contact your doctors' surgery if you notice any changes




bleeding from your bottom or blood in your poo



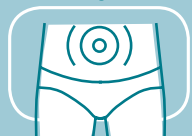
a change in your bowel habit



losing weight for no reason



feeling tired all the time for no reason



a pain or lump in your tummy

[www.phw.nhs.wales/bowel-screening](http://www.phw.nhs.wales/bowel-screening)

Are You Aged 51-74?

## Don't ignore your bowel screening test

Bowel cancer is one of the most common cancers in Wales, with more than 2,200 new cases diagnosed every year.

It's also more common as you get older. Most cases of bowel cancer are diagnosed in people over the age of 50.

Bowel screening is an important step we can take to help detect bowel cancer early when it can often be cured. More than 150,000 people in Wales take their screening test every year.

which is posted back for checking. The screening test looks for hidden blood in your poo. Your results will be posted back to you within two weeks.

The screening involves completing a test kit at home

Almost nine out of 10 people survive bowel cancer when it is detected and treated earlier on.



# Loan Sharks

Loan sharks often target the most vulnerable amongst us.

They may appear to be kind and friendly but don't be fooled. Absolutely anyone can be affected by loan sharks.

If you are worried about a friend/relative/ neighbour or think you may be a victim, then please get in touch.

You can remain anonymous, and our team can help guide you through the process and support you with any other legitimate debts you have.



Tabitha Richardson, an 83-year-old great-grandmother operated as a loan shark in Newport for 20 years preying on vulnerable neighbours.

Tabitha Richardson was described as 'threatening and menacing', by charging 40 per cent interest on six-month loans. Richardson lent money to neighbours who were financially struggling so that they could pay their bills. Mrs Richardson frightened customers who missed payments with messages stating, "you know I can find you". A safe found during a search of Mrs Richardson's property. £6,000 was found inside the safe as well as loan books and records.

24/7 Hotline – 0300 123 33 11

E-Mail: [stoploansharkswales@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:stoploansharkswales@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

[www.stoploansharkswales.co.uk](http://www.stoploansharkswales.co.uk)

[www.facebook.com/stoploansharkswales](https://www.facebook.com/stoploansharkswales)

## Case Study

of a very recent case in Newport, South Wales.

This case is a great example of how loan sharks aren't all your typical big, burly bully but in fact can be anyone

In August 2023 Mrs Richardson pleaded guilty to illegal money lending and money laundering and was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment, suspended for 2 years.

We await the outcome of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) hearing which will establish how much money was made through this criminal activity and how money can be recovered for the victims.

## Break-Time

### Word Search

Can you find these words hidden within the grid?

- Energy Advice
- Manager
- Windows
- New builds
- Loan Shark
- Resident Forum
- Food pod
- Complaints
- Mystery shopper
- Volunteering
- Mould
- Damp
- Neighbourhood

g	v	r	i	e	m	m	e	c	i	d	i	e	f
r	o	e	n	n	d	o	p	d	o	o	f	n	i
e	l	p	e	m	o	u	l	d	a	o	m	e	m
s	u	p	w	p	o	p	o	d	n	h	n	r	r
i	n	o	b	n	o	h	g	s	s	r	g	g	m
d	t	h	u	o	d	u	d	m	h	u	s	y	a
e	e	s	i	w	s	k	a	m	a	o	r	a	n
n	e	y	l	h	i	e	m	n	r	b	e	d	a
t	r	r	d	m	c	l	p	d	k	h	l	v	g
f	i	e	s	r	e	i	y	e	s	g	a	i	e
o	n	t	o	g	e	a	e	m	v	i	m	c	r
r	g	s	s	w	o	d	n	i	w	e	s	e	o
u	t	y	c	o	m	p	l	a	i	n	t	s	o
m	m	s	o	p	e	u	m	d	t	b	d	f	

# Money Advice Energy Support

**As cost of living has increased, more people are worried about being able to pay their energy bills.**

According to recent data published 140,000 households annually cannot afford to top up their meter. 88% of impacted households have children or are living with long term health conditions.

Money Advice has recently partnered with the Fuel Bank Foundation whose vision is a United Kingdom in which everyone can afford to pay to heat their homes and cook meals.

If people who prepay for gas or electricity run out of money, they are simply left without heating, lighting, hot food or hot water.

This is a fuel crisis. 96% of people supported by the Fuel Bank Foundation were having to choose between heating and eating, and 14% were sacrificing hot food daily.

**If you are on a prepayment meter and need assistance with your energy, please contact Money Advice on 01446 709588 / 709146 / 709312. Please leave a message if we are out visiting and we will call you back.**



## Colouring

### Competition

Winning entries will get a  
**£10 Voucher**

Open to  
ages

**3 - 10 years**

**Please colour in  
and send to:**

Amy Hilbert,  
Housing Services,  
The Alps,  
Quarry Road, Wenvoe.  
Vale of Glamorgan  
CF5 6AA



Your name .....

Address/email or Tel: .....