RHA

YEAR IN REVIEW
2019/2020

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Welcome to RHA's Year In Review

Hello and welcome to our latest edition of our RHA – Year in Review, our annual publication where we share news, information and updates with you. We have also enclosed your six-monthly rent statement so you can view your tenancy account information.

Luke Takeuchi,
RHA Chief Executive

I hope that you and your families are keeping well and staying safe. The Covid-19 pandemic has meant some changes to the services we provide and new ways of working over the last 6 months, but I have been so inspired and impressed by the resilience shown by our staff, tenants and the communities we live and work in. We have been following Government advice throughout and by doing so, we have been able to safely maintain our essential services. I want to reassure you that we remain focused on delivering our services, supporting you, continuing to listen to your views, and improving and expanding the services we offer.

Our relationship with you and our communities has always been important to us at RHA and I think it's these strong relationships that has helped us and will continue to help us to respond to these extraordinary times. We know it's difficult to live with the restrictions the pandemic has imposed on lives and we are here to support you and to listen. If you are feeling isolated or you have financial concerns, please don't hesitate to let us know as we have lots of help available.

Despite the challenges in 2020, then I wanted to share our successes we have achieved together. These included launching our new RHA brand, developing our new Tenant Involvement Commitment, 'RHA on the Road', and continuing to invest in our homes. In this edition you will find information about your rent and how it is spent on services as well as opportunities to be involved with RHA. We have also provided information regarding the work of our Tenant Scrutiny Group and how we have used the feedback you've given us to inform the way we work.

Stay safe.
Luke Takeuchi

Dave Power,
Chair of the Board of Management

2020 has certainly been an extraordinary year. Both the Board and the Executive Management Team have been very aware of the challenges being faced by many of our tenants and we have focused on ensuring that we have maintained essential services for you wherever possible and in line with government guidance. Our primary aim has been to ensure your safety and wellbeing during this time.

RHA have remained strong throughout this pandemic and our association continues to grow and develop its services for you. I have been very pleased that our staff have maintained critical contact with our tenant scrutiny groups throughout this process and our tenant scrutiny panel Chair has also been involved in our Board meetings which has been extremely valuable for the board to receive feedback from a tenant group perspective. I would like to thank tenants for their patience and understanding during these challenging times.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, it has certainly been a very busy year for RHA with our 40th Anniversary and recent rebranding. However, as always we remain committed to our helping and assisting our tenants.

Best wishes.
Dave Power

We hope there is something useful or of interest to everyone and that you enjoy the magazine. If you have any questions then please call us on 01443 424200.

WE ARE RHA

Rhondda Housing Association started forty years ago with one terraced home in Tylorstown and this year, forty years on, we are one of Wales's longest-serving housing associations.

In January 2020 we launched our new name at a special event with tenants, partners and guest speaker Welsh Government's First Minister Mark Drakeford, who spoke about the importance of a home, and the role housing plays in ensuring we can all lead happy settled lives.

As part of our 40th-anniversary celebration, we revealed our new brand name, which is RHA. We have consulted with our board of management, staff and tenants on our new name and RHA can mean many different things; Responsible, Honest, Authentic, reflecting our organisations' values, and Regeneration, Homes, Agility which explains how we work.

"It's been a fantastic 40-year journey for our organisation and we have an ambitious plan for the future and some exciting projects planned. We will soon start our Tonypandy town centre regeneration project, delivering a mixed-use development which incorporates retail space, new homes and local community space.

The foundations are set for RHA to deliver on the next chapter and we are looking forward to the challenge."

Luke Takeuchi
RHA Chief Executive

2020 has been a hugely challenging year for everyone, but we are here to help you.

STAYING COVID-19 SAFE

These continue to be exceptional times and we wanted to remind you of our services and how we are keeping everyone safe.

To ensure the safety of our staff and tenants

- We have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment for all our activities and services
- Our staff are working from home where it is practical to do so
- We have taken all reasonable measures to ensure 2m social distancing in our work
- We are regularly washing our hands and using hand sanitizer
- We are not sharing equipment

How can you help us to stay safe?

- Tell us if you have any COVID-19 symptoms or are isolating
- Prevent the spread of the virus by following Government Guidance
- Maintain 2m social distancing in relation to our staff and your neighbours
- Open doors and windows in your home when you have a visit from one of our officers to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus

The welfare and safety of tenants, staff and our communities remain our priority and we are guided by Welsh Government and Public Health Wales in deciding the level of service we can provide. From August we were able to offer a routine repairs service again and we would like to thank you for your patience in working through all those non urgent repairs on hold during the national lockdown and recent firebreak in Wales.

We are providing the following services:

Health and Safety compliance checks

Emergency and all routine repairs

Letting our homes

Grounds Maintenance

Estate Inspections

Income Advice Service

Tenancy Support

Information on our website and social media channels

Digital 'Get Involved' opportunities

Welsh Government advice continues to be for our staff to work from home as much as possible so our offices in Tonypandy remain closed. We regularly provide updates on our new website www.rhawales.com and via our social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Your continued understanding and support is greatly appreciated.

enquiries@RHAwales.com
01443 424200
@RHAWales
rhawales.com

TENANT INVOLVEMENT COMMITMENT

Last year we introduced our new Tenant Involvement Commitment – our promise to listen to your feedback and ideas and to talk to you as much as we can about the way we manage RHA.

Our Commitment explains why tenant involvement is important and tells you our plans over the next 5 years. This Commitment is based on feedback we have had from tenants and the things they told us were important.

There are lots of ways you can get involved with us:

RHA / Get INFORMED

by following us on Facebook or visiting our website.

RHA / Get TOGETHER

by being part of groups where you live.

RHA / Get INVOLVED

by joining our Service Improvement or Scrutiny Groups to help us review the way we work.

Right now we have an amazing 228 tenants involved in shaping our services.

If you would like to know more you will find all the details on our new website: www.rhawales.com
Get in touch with the team on 01443 424200 or email Getinvolved@rhawales.com

GET CONNECTED

We have set up a project to support you to get online and use new technology like tablets and mobile phones. Not everyone wants to learn to use the online services but we want to offer support to those who want to video call family members, order groceries and generally shop for themselves online.

With funding from the Pen Y Cymoedd Wind Farm we are launching our Get Connected project which will offer support for tenants to gain new digital skills and become more confident online.

RHA / Get CONNECTED

If you would like to use the internet and build your confidence to do more online then please get in touch:
01443 424200
GetInvolved@rhawales.com

RHA ON THE ROAD

In October 2019 we launched RHA On The Road and we brought RHA to you!

Get INVOLVED

140 tenants signed up to get involved and you told us you'd like to see us in our communities more often. When safe to do so, we will be planning more visits. We'll let you know when that will be and then you can decide if you'd like to come and chat to us. At these visits we'll have no agenda, you can come and speak to us about anything that's important to you, we don't promise to have all the answers straight away, but we promise we will listen.

We visited 25 communities in 5 days

140 new tenants signed up to be involved

We've been in touch since to find out how they want to be involved

We now have 226 tenants helping us review the way we work

We received 80 queries during #RHAontheRoad and all have been dealt with

When we visited in 2019 you said you would like us to come back

Look out for future #RHAontheRoad events

GetInvolved@rhawales.com

01443 424200

YOU SAID WE DID

Last year there were many opportunities for you to share your ideas and suggestions with us, from our rent consultation events and survey, to our All Tenant Survey where we asked what was important to you.

We've used your feedback and suggestions to plan the way we work and improve our services.

One example is how we planned to deliver services as lockdown restrictions started to ease. In June we worked with our Tenant Scrutiny and Service Improvement groups to write and share a tenant survey asking you for your thoughts on our services during lockdown, what was important to you and what you needed in future months – as things start to change.

We shared the survey with all tenants using text message, email and social media and telephone call – we had 196 tenants take part. If you took part – thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts.

Overall, you told us that we'd delivered our services well and our offers of support were reassuring to you.

You **SAID**	we **DID**
You were concerned over hygiene in shared areas.	• By putting new notices in place, we made sure tenants and visitors to shared areas understood the importance of social distancing and good hand hygiene.
You wanted to know our plans for safely delivering our repairs service.	• We've been sure to follow all Government guidance and have risk assessed all areas of our work to make sure we could safely carry out repairs and visits to your home. • We wrote to all our tenants to tell you of plans and keep you updated in August 2020.
Making sure we take care of older, lonely and vulnerable tenants was important to you.	• During lockdown we offered practical support to tenants who needed it, collecting food and medication for them. • We made regular calls to make sure tenants were safe, checking if they needed assistance. • We will be working with local projects like ReConnect 50+ to make sure tenants who are lonely can have regular company and make friends.

You **SAID**	we **DID**
We need to offer support to tenants who are experiencing mobility issues and finding it difficult to live freely in their home.	• Our staff will regularly visit tenants (when its safe to do so) in their homes and these important issues are something we would discuss. Very often you will get in touch with us if you feel your home is no longer suitable for you. • If you do feel this way, please talk about your concerns with your Housing Officer.
You told us we could improve the way we manage anti-social behaviour.	• We reviewed our way of working and have put a new process in place. We promise to better communicate with you if you are experiencing anti-social behaviour and we will explain to you how we are dealing with your concern.
You said we should be offering support to tenants who are struggling to pay their rent.	• We already have a dedicated team of staff who support tenants with their financial situations, but we are constantly looking at new ways of working and how we can be better. This work is something we are currently reviewing and improving.
You wanted to know more about the way RHA money is spent – as good value for money is important to you.	• On page 13 we have provided a breakdown of the way we spend our income throughout the year.
You told us that a one-size fits all approach to communication isn't good and doesn't work for you.	• We are working hard to communicate with you in many ways. We have a new website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram pages, we share information through text messaging, video chat, phone calls and through letters to all tenants. When safe, we will visit communities and tenant groups to talk face to face. • Our Tenant Scrutiny group will be reviewing the way we communicate with you, this is a big project and will take time, but we will update you on this when we have news.
You told us that the maintenance of areas outside of your home is important to you.	• We plan to work more closely with tenants to review and improve our grounds maintenance work.

TENANT SCRUTINY AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

RHA / Get INVOLVED

Our tenant volunteers have busy reviewing RHA services and policies in the last year. The below areas of our work have now been looked at by them and 'Tenant Approved'. This means that our groups are happy we have listened to their feedback, we have made changes they requested, and they agree the work is fair for all tenants so have given us the 'Tenant Approved' kitemark.

RHA / Tenant APPROVED

Tenant volunteers have reviewed four areas of our work:

Policy/ Project reviewed	Tenants said	We did
Decant Policy	The policy was fair and covered everything you needed to know, but the language we used in the policy was hard to understand.	• We changed some of the words we used so the policy is easier to understand. • We added a glossary of 'Professional Terms' to explain phrases in the policy which are complicated.
Antisocial Behaviour Policy	The policy was fair and covered everything you needed to know, but the language we used was hard to understand. The group didn't feel some of our language was fair or equal – as we used words like 'his/her', but not words like 'they/their'.	• We changed some of the words we used so the policy is easier to understand. • We added a glossary of 'Professional Terms' to explain phrases in the policy which are complicated. • We changed some of the words we used to reflect our commitment to equality and diversity, because everyone is welcome. • We changed words like 'his/her' to 'they/their' and we changed 'disabled' to 'accessible'.
Volunteering Policy	This policy was fair and easy to understand, but some words were confusing. The team wanted to know more about the way we expect our volunteers to behave.	• We changed the confusing language so the policy is now easier to understand. • The team is now reviewing our Volunteer Code of Conduct (the way we expect volunteers to behave).
Here to Help Campaign	This review was an online survey and tenants told us they were happy with the information we were sharing.	• We know that not all tenants will have seen the campaign as not everyone is online or on Facebook. We will need to find other ways to share information – this yearly update is one way of doing that.

TENANTS HEALTH AND SAFETY
KEEPING YOU SAFE AT HOME

	What we do	What you should do
Fire	• Test Smoke and Fire Alarms regularly • Provide you with safety information • Have plans for emergencies	• Test your own smoke alarm regularly • Read the safety information we provide • Have a nighttime routine including making sure your escape routes are clear
Gas Safety	• Carry out an Annual Service • Give you safety information	• Allow access for the annual service • Make sure you know the Gas Emergency Number 0800 111999
Electrical	• Provide you with Information • Carry out regular checks	• Have any installations done by a qualified person • Disconnect and do not use any appliances that you have concerns about • Allow access as required
Asbestos	• Keep records of where the Asbestos is in all our properties	• Take notice of the Asbestos Certificate • Do not carry our any alterations (however small) without permission
Overcrowding	• Tell you when you move in, how many people may safely live in your home	• Tell us if your family circumstances change
Alterations/ Adaptations	• Receive our permission if you want to make any changes • Only use properly qualified people to carry out work	• Request permission if you want to alter anything however small • Have properly qualified people carry out any work
General Housekeeping	• Carry out regular checks on our estates • Visit you at home every 2 years	• Keep homes and gardens clean and tidy to reduce risks including the likelihood of having any pests • Allow access for any checks we request • Dispose of rubbish properly and keep door/exits clear • When having parties or gatherings be aware of the safety and comfort of guests and neighbours

Throughout the pandemic, RHA's contractors have continued to carry out essential servicing and testing work to make sure your homes remain safe. This included servicing gas appliances, testing electrical systems, servicing adaptations, testing fire alarms and emergency lighting systems.

Our contractors will be continuing to complete this important safety work, so if they, or a member of staff from RHA, contact you about a service or test, then please allow them access to your home to complete this essential safety work.

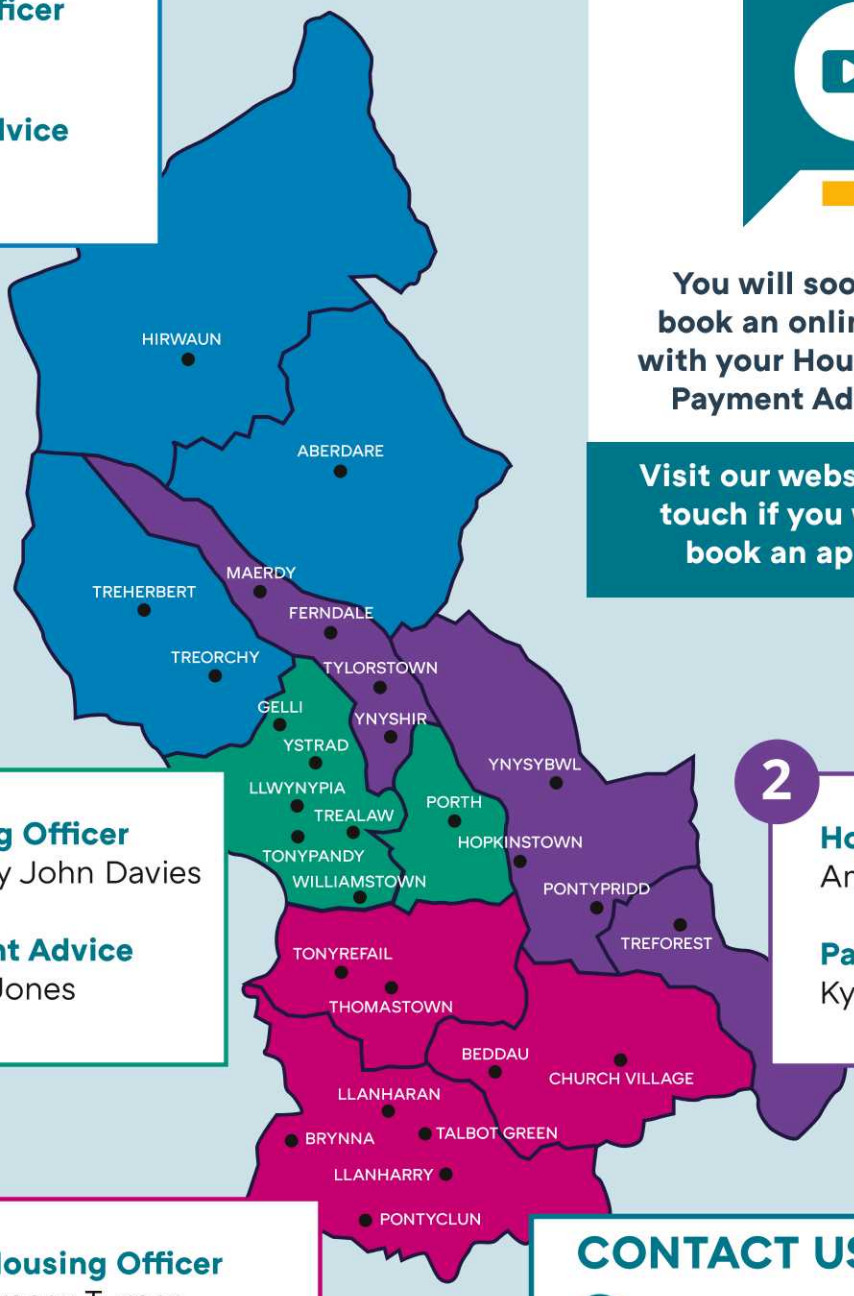
WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

If you want to speak to your housing officer by phone or video chat or would like to arrange a home visit then please call 01443 424200.
Our Customer Advisors can help you with routine enquiries and can book in a suitable time for you and your housing officer to discuss your query. If your call is urgent matter, then you will be called back on the same day.

1

Housing Officer
Liam Way

Payment Advice
Donna Gale



You will soon be able to book an online video chat with your Housing Officer or Payment Advice Officer.

Visit our website, and get in touch if you would like to book an appointment.

2

Housing Officer
Amanda Anstee

Payment Advice
Kyron Pike

3

Housing Officer
Beverley John Davies

Payment Advice
Emma Jones

4

Housing Officer
Tracey Turner

Payment Advice
Mark Richards

CONTACT US:

01443 424200

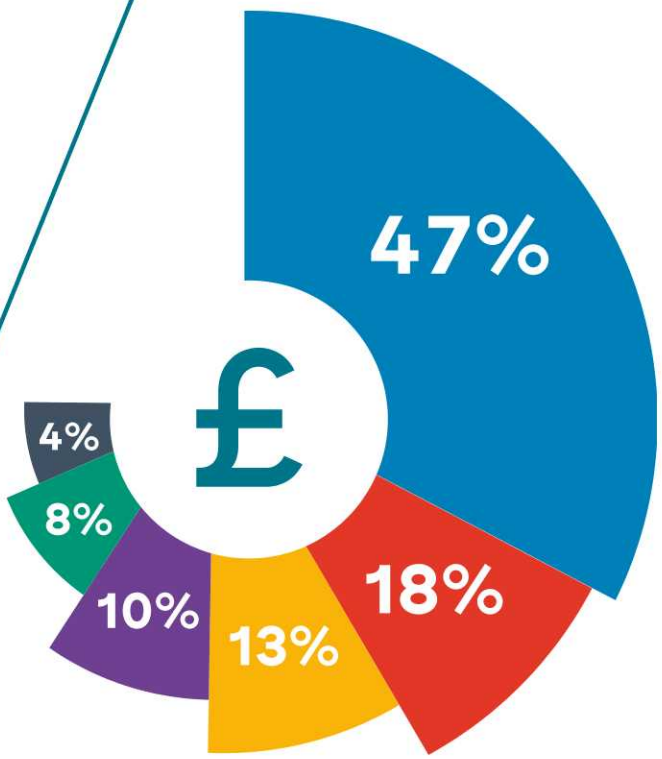
enquiries@rhawales.com

www.rhawales.com

@RHAwales

HOW WE SPEND RHA MONEY

- Regeneration, investment and planned repairs
- Staff costs
- Interest paid
- Other running costs
- Day to day repairs
- Community engagement



INCOME ADVICE AND SUPPORT

We understand the Coronavirus is affecting many of you financially, but our Income Advice Team are here to help you. Our specialist team are able to offer support and help you make informed choices regarding your budgets.

They can support you to:

- Ease your financial worries and ensure you are not in rent arrears
- Support you to claim benefits, including Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and other entitlements
- Put you in touch with partner organisations who can give you free and confidential advice

We are here to help you so please get in touch:

01443 424200

IncomeAdviceTeam@rhawales.com

www.rhawales.com/rent/trouble-paying

PLANNED HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Every year we make sure that planned improvements are carried out to your homes. Every part of your home has what we call components (things like kitchen units, windows, bathroom suites, front and back doors etc).

Every component has a life expectancy and we will plan to replace components at the end of their life, depending on their condition.

To find out the condition of the components, our surveyors will carry out a 'Home Improvement Survey'. We will get in touch with you to make an appointment when your survey is due.

Last year we invested over £894,000 on component replacements and physical adaptation work, this included:

60
NEW BATHROOMS

52
NEW KITCHENS

69
NEW HEATING SYSTEMS

32
NEW EXTERNAL DOORS

42
HOMES WITH NEW WINDOWS

96
PERSONAL ADAPTATIONS

£238,000
WAS SPENT ON VOID PROPERTIES TO IMPROVE THEM AND RE-LET TO NEW TENANTS

Before the end of March 2021 we are planning to install more heating systems, bathrooms, kitchens, external doors, fire doors and windows in some of your homes. If your home is due for an improvement, then we will be in touch.

If you are planning on making any improvements yourself, then please get permission from your Housing Officer or a member of the RHA team.

01443 424200 enquiries@rhawales.com

WELCOME TO OUR NEW TENANTS

We would like to say a very warm welcome to all our new tenants this year.

Despite challenges during the pandemic in 2020, we worked closely with our contractors to continue to deliver our new builds. We have safely handed over nine homes in Carne Street in Pentre and eight homes in our Cwrt Coed Y Lan scheme in Pontypridd and we wish all our new tenants every happiness as they settle into their new homes.

RHA REPAIRS

Due to the pandemic we could only provide emergency repairs between 23rd March and 17th August 2020. So all our other repairs had been on hold in line with Welsh Government guidance.

Since the 17th August we have been able to offer a routine repairs service again and this continued during the local lockdown taking all the safety and precautionary measures. We are working through the routine repairs that we had on hold in our system since March and we apologise if there has been a longer than usual wait for your repair to be completed. We thank you for your patience during this challenging time.

If you need to report a repair or would like an update on a repair you have reported then get in touch with us on 01443 424200 Or visit our new website: www.rhawales.com/repairs-improvement/report-a-repair/

HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE

RHA Wales does NOT provide insurance cover for your home contents as part of your tenancy agreement. Therefore it's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover, so that you can choose the right cover for your possessions, if you wish to do so.

My Home
Contents Insurance

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen so Home Contents Insurance can help provide peace of mind.

We do not cover your contents as part of your tenancy agreement.

Contents insurance includes cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

To help you decide whether Home Contents Insurance is right for you, we have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks, an Allianz Insurance plc who provide the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme, a specialist contents insurance policy for tenants.

Their My Home scheme is available for all tenants and residents living in social and affordable housing and can offer insurance on the contents of your home.

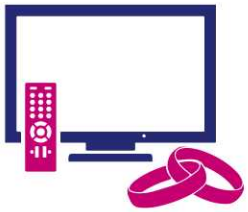
The National Housing Federation and Community Housing Cymru are Appointed Representatives of Thistle Insurance Services Ltd. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 310419. Lloyd's Broker. Registered in England under No. 00338645. Registered office: Rossington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. Thistle Insurance Services Ltd is part of the PIB Group.

Some useful tips to help you calculate the value of your possessions

WORK ROOM BY ROOM AND MAKE A LIST OF YOUR POSSESSIONS

MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE EVEN YOUR LOW-VALUE ITEMS

TAKE PHOTOS OF THE CONTENTS OF EACH ROOM



KEEP RECEIPTS OF VALUABLE ITEMS

For more information:

www.thistlemyhome-cymru.co.uk

0345 450 7288

myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk

Thistle Tenant Risks,
Thistle Insurance Services Limited,
Southgate House, Southgate Street,
Gloucester, GL1 1UB

BE ACTIVE RCT

Be Active RCT is a health and wellbeing project and we offer support so you can become more active, improve your health, understand nutrition and increase your wellbeing.

2020 has been really challenging but we are here to support you and help to improve your mental and physical health. Be Active RCT will work with you to feel better, feel heathier and feel connected. And we can offer so many activities that there is something to interest everyone, all abilities and all fitness levels.

Let Steph help you improve your health and wellbeing:
01443 424270
BeActive@rhawales
Follow **@BeActiveRCT** on Facebook
Take a look at Steph's interactive wellbeing videos on **@RHAWales** YouTube channel

Be Active RCT works together with Interlink, Spectacle Theatre, Volunteering Matters, Active Nutrition, Cambrian Village Trust and Welcome To Our Woods.

Keep Talking

Try to stay connected with others. Friends, family, neighbours and projects such as Be Active can be a wonderful source of support.

Keep Moving

Try to keep active in any way that you can! Go for a walk, stretch or dance in your living room! You are welcome to enjoy any of the different activities that Be Active has to offer you and your family.

Keep Well

Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, drink lots of water and try to absorb daylight into your skin every day during a walk or doing some gardening. This will support your immune system ready for the winter months.

Keep Relaxed

Take time out each day to relax. Play your favourite music, read a book or magazine or enjoy some mindfulness, yoga or meditation.

THE LITTLE SHED

In 2019 we joined forces with the 'Black Sheep' project (managed by ARC Training Company) to refurbish our old office on Dunraven Street in Tonypandy. Black Sheep are a youth skills company that support young people to learn new skills by renovating buildings, community spaces and gardens, youth clubs and people's homes.

Our old office has a new look and a new name – The Little Shed. It will be home to our food parcel project Grub Hub, as well as our health sessions with Be Active RCT and community events.

We have been supported by Vision Products, Property Building Maintenance Wales Ltd, Flair Electrical Engineering Ltd, Howden's Kitchens and Bright Collie and sincerely thank them.

- 30 young people from Maes Gwyn and Ferndale Community School have helped turn our old office from something dull and boring into a beautiful space that the community can use
- They have all completed Level 1 in Health and Safety in construction, Level 1 in Asbestos Awareness and Level 2 in Manual Handling
- 5 young people from Maes Gwyn school have now finished school and have enrolled in college to continue construction training

We are thrilled to have been part of their journey and they are a real inspiration to us. Keep an eye on our website and our Facebook page for the opening of The Little Shed!

MEN'S SHEDS CYMRU

HOME GROWN

During the first lockdown we delivered small gardening kits to shielding tenants so they could 'grow their own' and we want to continue with the Home Grown project and offer it to more tenants.

- Are you interested in taking part in a beginners gardening project?
- Do you have an idea for a small community garden space?
- Do you have gardening skills you can share with others?

Get in touch with the Get Involved team: 01443 424200
Getinvolved@rhawales.com

RECONNECT 50+

We are launching a new project called ReConnect 50+ working together with an organisation called Safer Merthyr and we want to want to help as many people over 50 as we can and combat social isolation in our communities.

We will:

- Support tenants aged over 50 to get more involved in their community
- Ensure anyone over 50 doesn't feel lonely and has someone to talk to
- Offer people a chance to volunteer to befriend and support others

If you or someone you know is lonely or isolated and would like company or if you would like to volunteer then please get in touch:

Call 01443 424200 to speak to a member of the Get Involved team.

Email: Getinvolved@rhawales.com

Drop us a message on the RHA Wales Facebook page.

KEEP US UP TO DATE

It's really important that we have all your correct and up to date contact details.

If you have a new telephone number, changed your mobile number or have a new email address then please let us know.

Get in touch with us to find out more:
01443 424200
Enquiries@rhawales.com
www.rhawales.com

Did you know that you can nominate a friend or family member to support you with your tenancy and speak to us on your behalf? You can nominate someone to deal with your account and all we need is your approval and a signed 'form of authority'.

DID YOU KNOW

RHA Wales is on **Facebook**, **Twitter** **YouTube** and **Instagram**?
Just search for **@RHAWales**

Give us a **"Like"** to see what we are up to and keep in touch with us.

You can also keep up to date on our services and information on our new website: **www.rhawales.com**