

FCHA



Spring 2022

TENANTS' VOICE

A FIRST CHOICE NEWSLETTER. WRITTEN FOR TENANTS, BY TENANTS.



**PG Tips
Activities
Recipes**



**First Choice
&
Tenant News**



WELCOME

Spring is here at last!

At First Choice Housing Association HQ we have been really busy recently planning lots for the next financial year. You, our tenants told us how important Wellbeing was so we listened and employed Eve our Wellbeing Coordinator. Eve is just finishing her new strategy which lots of you have fed into and this means lots of wellbeing events next year.

Added to this will be our usual Tenant Participation events and we really enjoyed getting to see you all over Christmas so look forward to more of this in the weeks and months to come.

We have also been training really hard for the Cardiff Half Marathon in order to raise money for Gig Buddies - we are passionate supporters of the project as it helps people with a learning disability meet new friends in their area and go to gigs, quizzes or football / rugby matches if they share an interest with that person.

We cant wait to raise the money and hope that as many of you as possible will join up as Gig Buddies to enjoy the benefits!

We also realise how worried some of you will be about things like increasing costs of living and fuel bills. We want to help with this where we can so please contact us if you are concerned about being able to pay your bills and would like support. Look forward to seeing you at our next round of events.



Diolch

Adrian, Chief Executive

Keep an
eye out
for the
Star Story



How many Lambs
can you find? The
answer is on the
last page.

SEND IN YOUR STORIES

Do you have a story you'd like to submit to our tenant newsletter?

If you send your story in about your hobbies, holidays or anything else, we will send you a £10 voucher and your story will be featured in the next newsletter. Group stories will receive £5 per person.



Two tenant stories will be selected as star stories! Those tenants will receive a £20 gift voucher instead!

Welsh Language

Mae Cymdeithas Tai Dewis Cyntaf yn falch i fod yn Gymraeg ac eleni rydym yn gyffrous i ddechrau gwersi Cymraeg gyda llawer o'n staff. Os hoffech gyfathrebu â ni yn Gymraeg rhowch wybod i ni , gobeithiwn gynnig mwy o wasanaethau yn y Gymraeg yn y dyfodol.

Here at FCHA we are proud to be Welsh and this year we are excited to start Welsh Language lessons with many of our staff. If you would like to communicate with us in Welsh please let us know, we hope to offer more services in the Welsh language in the future.

NATIONAL TRUST WALKS

We have been awarded a special pass from the National Trust Would you like to arrange a trip?

This pass is for First Choice tenants to visit any National Trust site in Wales for free. You can even go in groups of up to 50 people!



There are so many ways the pass can be used. These are just some ideas:

- To join a group at your local National Trust site, like walking or photography
- To meet friends and family for a cup of tea in the fresh air
- To go on a National Trust tour where you can learn about the history of the site
- To join in with some volunteering
- To help with your exercise or wellbeing goals, like challenging yourself to a new hike
- Maybe just to visit somewhere new?

First Choice would love the pass to be used before it expires in November 2022, so please contact Eve if you are interested. eveexley@fcha.org.uk

Family, friends and support staff are welcome too!

FCHA WEBSITE

Did you know a lot of what we share in the Newsletter is also available on our Website?

The FCHA Website provides you with lots of information such as tenant news and events alongside information about your home



You can access the FCHA website by going to fcha.org.uk or you can scan the QR code below.

If you haven't used a QR code before, open your camera app on your phone and hold it over the QR code. This should give you a link to click on and will take you to wherever the QR code would like to take you.

You will find QR codes throughout the Newsletter to keep an eye out!



GARDEN PROJECT

Last year, Tenants told First Choice how important their gardens are and we listened!

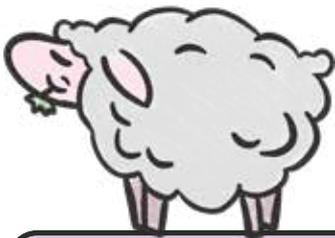
As part of the Local Places for Nature project, we have worked with 7 First Choice properties to make their gardens better.

So far, we have made 4 'fruit and herb gardens' where we planted fruit trees, fruit bushes, herb plants and wildflowers.

We have also made 3 pollinator gardens where we built homes for wildlife, raised flower beds, and planted lots of flowers.



GARDEN PROJECT



Staff from First Choice were excited to get involved and we were so happy to work with Tenants and support staff, even when it was wet and muddy! We are looking forward to seeing what the gardens look like this Spring.

If we came to your house to do a garden project, please send us some photos or let us know what you have been doing in your new gardens



TENANT SURVEY RESULTS

In September 2020 we sent out our Tenant Survey questionnaires to all of our tenants. 220 tenants (24% of all of our tenants) completed and returned their questionnaires. This is what they told us:

	Yes
Are you happy with your home?	98.5%
Do you feel safe in your home?	99%
Does your home help you to be independent?	98.5%
Do you feel like you belong in your community?	97.5%
Are you happy with your neighbourhood as a place to live?	97%
Are you happy with First Choice's repairs and maintenance service overall?	97%
Do you have enough ways to communicate with First Choice?	95%
Are you happy with how any recent repair request was dealt with?	99.5%
Are you happy with the overall services provided by First Choice?	99%
Do you think First Choice is a good landlord?	99.5%
Do you trust First Choice?	99.5%
Does First Choice provide enough options to get involved?	96%
Are you happy with the overall quality of your home?	97.5%
Does your rent and service charge provide value for money?	96%

We are very pleased that so many of our tenants are happy with their homes, communities and First Choice's services.



HEALTH CHECK N WALES

Attention North Wales Tenants!

Would you like to learn more about health checks?

The 'Health Check Champions' are doing workshops for people with a learning disability living in North Wales.

This is an exciting opportunity to learn about health checks for free! Family and support staff are welcome too.

The Health Check Workshops are held over Zoom call. You can arrange your own Health Check Workshop for a group of people.



Our Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, Eve, joined one of the workshops and she said:

“The Health Check Workshop was fun and interactive. The Health Check Champions are really friendly and you can ask any question you like.”

For more information, please email:

**sophie@conwy-connect.org.uk
geraldine@conwy-connect.org.uk**

DIGITAL INCLUSION

We have been given the opportunity, in partnership with Digital Communities Wales (DCW) and funded by the Senedd, to loan tablets to tenants in supported accommodation throughout Wales, to enable them to access online communities and communicate with people during this tough period.



As part of the scheme, DCW provided FCHA with 197 digital devices, which included Chromebooks, iPads and Android tablets. The devices, along with access to DCW's digital skills training resources, were then gifted to 200 tenants, with some opting to share a device. 168 devices were gifted to tenants living in a supported setting and a further 29 devices were gifted to non-supported tenants.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

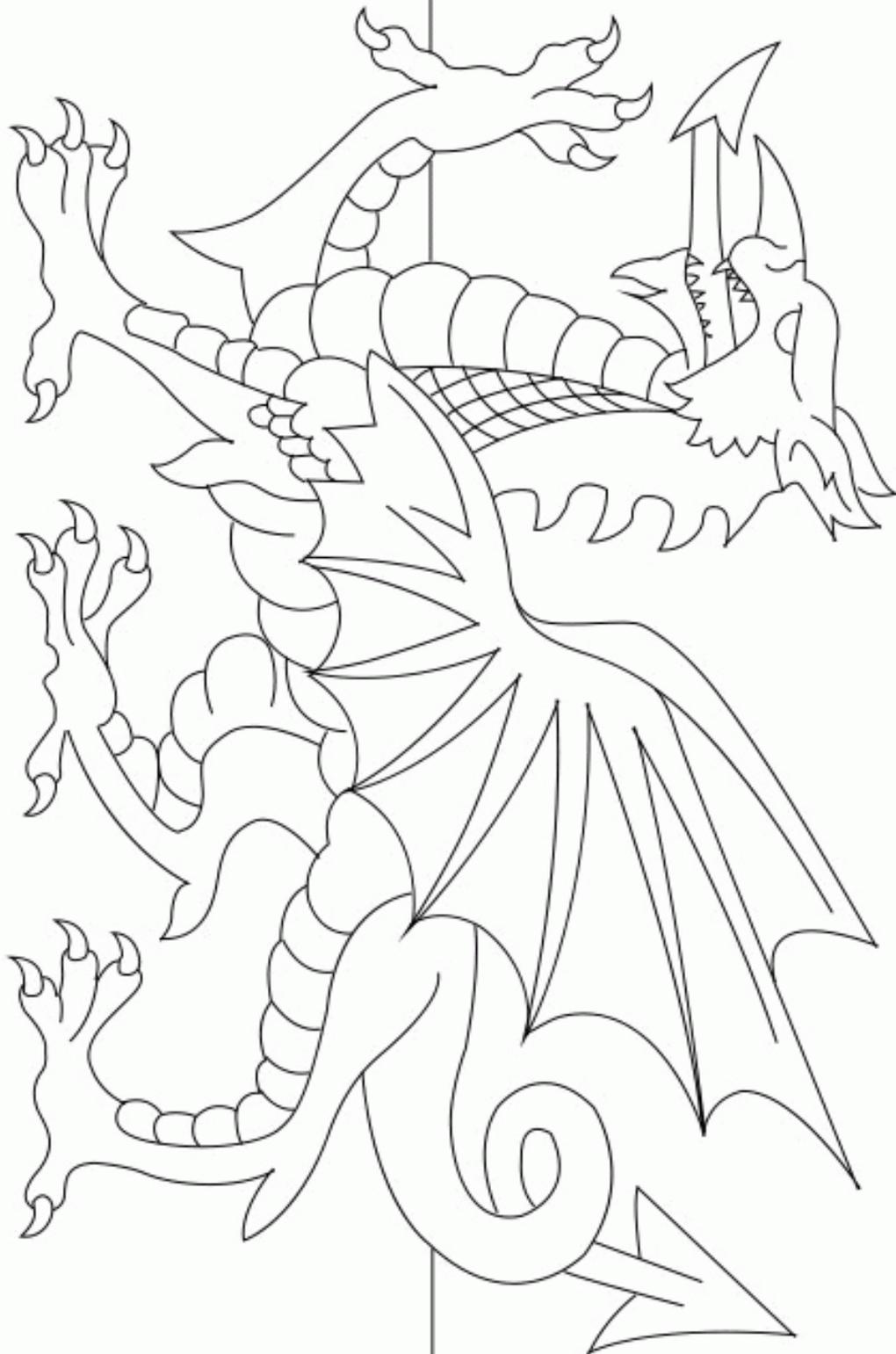
Our very own tenant Kylie from Brecon was seen on ITV news in January talking about how she uses her iPad to talk to her friends and family.

Kylie said "I'm now able to FaceTime my mum, at one point I didn't see her for 4 months. I've got into drawing in lockdown and found creative social groups where we share what we're doing."



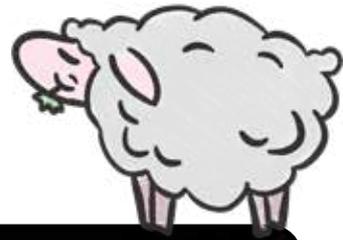
Digital Communities Wales has been given more money to provide tech to tenants in the future. We cannot wait to deliver more ways for FCHA tenants to communicate with their neighbourhood and families.

WELSH FLAG COLOURING



ANNMARIE CHRISTMAS

Annmarie from Oswestry spent Christmas with her family, the first one since 2019 because of the pandemic.



Annmarie and Kathy also went to a Pantomime in Shrewsbury in January and had a wonderful time!

ENERGY PRICE RISING

Housing Officer, Dave has given us 10 tips to reduce your energy bills this year.



1. Use a timer on your central heating system. Set the heating and hot water to come on only when required.
2. If you have a hot water tank, set the cylinder thermostat to 60°C (140°F).
3. Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat from escaping through the windows. Check for draughts too.
4. Always turn off the light when you leave a room.
5. Use energy-saving light bulbs.



ENERGY PRICE RISING

6. Don't leave appliances on standby or laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily.
7. When washing up, washing or drying by machine, try to fully load the appliance. One full load uses less energy than two half loads.
8. Try to only boil the water you need.
9. Turn taps off properly. In a single week, a dripping hot tap can waste enough hot water to fill half a bath.
10. Dry your clothes outside during nice weather.



You can find more information on our website! Just scan the QR code below.



DOUGLAS HEALTH & SAFETY

Douglas from Cardiff has a new role within Dimensions!

Douglas is now the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) coordinator!

He has been going to the office and sorting out who needs what PPE. Putting them in the relevant piles and ensuring each Service has their required amount.

Douglas enjoys distributing this to the houses once they have been sorted. He is getting to learn the different names of each service.

Douglas loves to drive in his car listening to heart radio, so this this never really feels like he is working. Just having a 'great time' and enjoying meeting people and having a chat.

We cannot wait to hear more from Douglas and his work in Dimensions!



DOORBELL DANCE-O-GRAMS

In December, Kitsch & Sync Collective did 18 'Doorbell Dance-O-Gram' performances for people supported by Innovate Trust in Cardiff. First Choice tenants were amongst the lucky people who saw these amazing performances right on their doorsteps.



A big thank you to Lisa, Nico, Kylie and crew for spreading Christmas cheer to all!

You can find a video of the doorbell dance-o-grams by scanning the QR code here:



BOARD UPDATE



Donna Jones: Director of Corporate Services

Donna presented the Communication Strategy. This was approved by Board and it was agreed that a Welsh language working group would be set up. Donna also presented the Equality Report. Donna also presented the Rent Setting Policy and the new rents for 2022/23 were discussed. Board agreed that First Choice's rents would increase by 3% in April.



Adrian Burke: Chief Executive

Adrian presented his report to Board. Adrian also updated Board on First Choice's decarbonisation work and how next year's rents will be set. Adrian also updated Board on the progress of Gig Buddies Cymru and future funding from First Choice will be discussed.



Nigel Bowen: Operational Housing Manager (South)

Nigel presented a short video from the Tenant Panel that was held in October 2021. Tenants said what they think about First Choice on the video.



Eve Exley: Health & Wellbeing Officer

Eve told Board about First Choice's health and wellbeing achievements to date. FCHA has secured a number of Keep Wales Tidy garden packages and has been accepted for a 12 month pilot scheme for a National Trust Well-being Access Pass.

BOARD UPDATE



Richard Lloyd: Director of Operations

Richard told Board that he has spoken to a First Choice tenant in north Wales who wants to be a 'technical champion'. This gentleman has a passion for compliance and health & safety. Richard will meet him to discuss this role, particularly around consultation.



Huw Thomas, Development Manager

Huw presented the development report to board.



Richard Griffiths: director of Finance & ICT

Richard presented the IT Strategy Review. This was approved by Board.

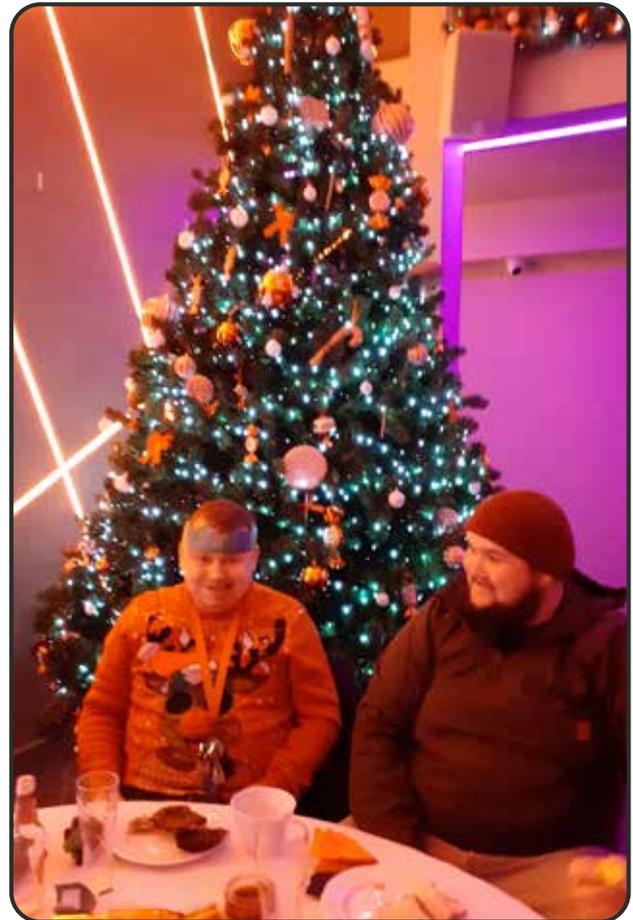


Sarah Roberts: Health & Safety Manager

Sarah presented the Compliance Policy. This was approved by Board. Sarah also presented the Board Health & Safety Assurance Report.

CHRISTMAS DISCO

This Christmas we were able to hold discos in North and South Wales and were able to invite tenants to attend in person for the first time in 2 years. There were prizes of vouchers and chocolates for best dancer, best Christmas jumper and best overall outfit at the discos, although it was very hard to choose the winners as so many of you looked great and danced your socks off!



We had such a fantastic time and it was so good to see you all dancing and enjoying yourselves. We can't wait to see you at the next tenant event later this spring.

JODIE - LITTER PICKING

Jodie from Cardiff has been looking for something meaningful to do with the local community.

Jodie and staff put their names down for a litter picking event last weekend. There were about 40 volunteers in all who collected 71 bags of rubbish. It was absolutely bucketing down with rain, but this just made it even more fun. There were lots of belly laughs whilst getting muddy.



Jodie enjoyed chatting to other volunteers and was over the moon with a passer by telling her 'Thank you'. She will be joining them on the next event.

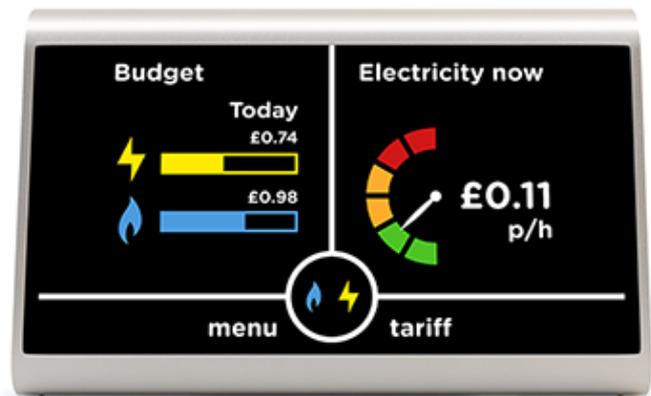
PG'S TIPS: SMART METERS



My name is Philip. I work in the Technical Services Team at First Choice Housing Association. You may have seen me visit you at home in the past. This is my guide to having a smart meter installed by your energy supplier. Every home in England and Wales will be offered a Smart meter by 2025

What is a smart meter?

A Smart meter is a new type of gas and electricity meter. They can replace the existing energy meters in your home.



The benefits of having a smart meter.

Energy bills will not be estimated. Meter readings will be sent direct to your energy supplier, so you do not have to take meter readings. You will receive an in-home display, which shows how much energy you are using.

PG'S TIPS: SMART METERS

What you need to know about having a smart meter fitted.

Your energy supplier will arrange for the smart meter to be put in.

It will take about 1 hour to be fitted and your energy will have to be turned off during this time.



How and when you can get a smart meter?

A Smart meter will be offered by your energy supplier, but you can request to have one fitted.

If your property has been surveyed for solar roof panels, First Choice Housing Association will be requesting that the property has a (generation 2) smart meter installed.

TECHNICAL CHAMPION

Richard Lloyd who is FCHA's Director of Operations met with our new Tenant Technical Champion Marc!

He was given his own FCHA high vis jacket and joined Richard in talking about how we are going to reduce our carbon footprint.



We cannot wait to provide updates about Marc's work!

CARDIFF HALF MARATHON

In March 7 FCHA staff and board members are going to be running the Cardiff Half Marathon for Gig Buddies Cymru.

Support our runners at the Cardiff Half Marathon



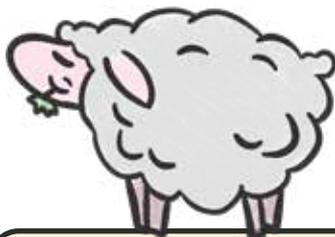
We're delighted to have 26 runners fundraising for Gig Buddies Cymru at the Cardiff Half - including 6 runners from our project's main funder, First Choice Housing

Adrian, Nigel, Tudor, Dave, Michael and Richard are running for Gig Buddies Cymru at the Cardiff Half on 27 March.

You can sponsor them at the link below.



See all our runners at www.ldw.org.uk/cardiff-half



Adrian, Mike, Richard, Tudor, David, Nigel and Matthew have been training all winter to get ready for the Half Marathon. They have a goal to raise £1750.

This money will help match people with a Learning Disability with someone who shares the same interests and go to events!

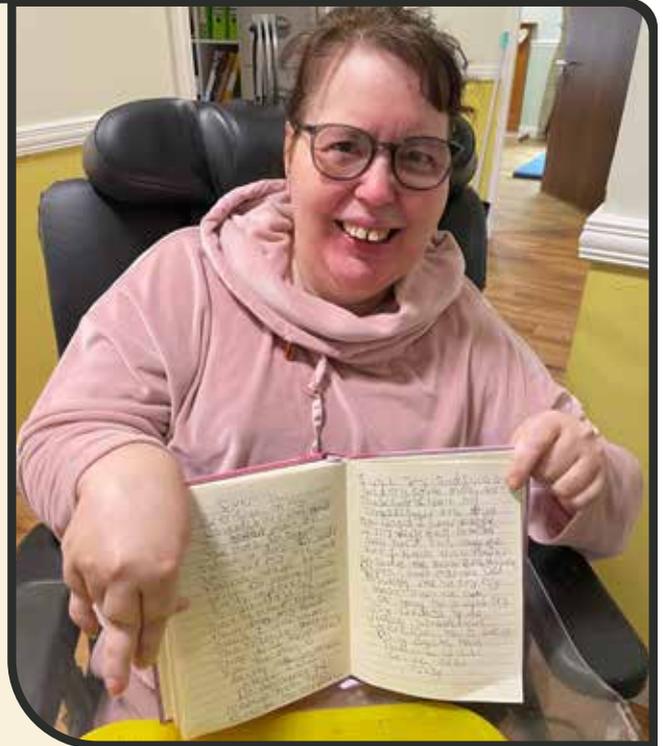
You can find more about Gig Buddies on page 32.



MICHELLE'S POEM

Michelle from Tonypandy has written a poem she'd love to share called 'Exercise'.

Exercises in my wheelchair
All designed to keep me on
the move.
Doing them twice a day
To help to keep the aches and
pains in my back away.
So I will do them twice, each
and every single day
To come, just to keep this pain
in my back away.
I will do just what the physios
say.

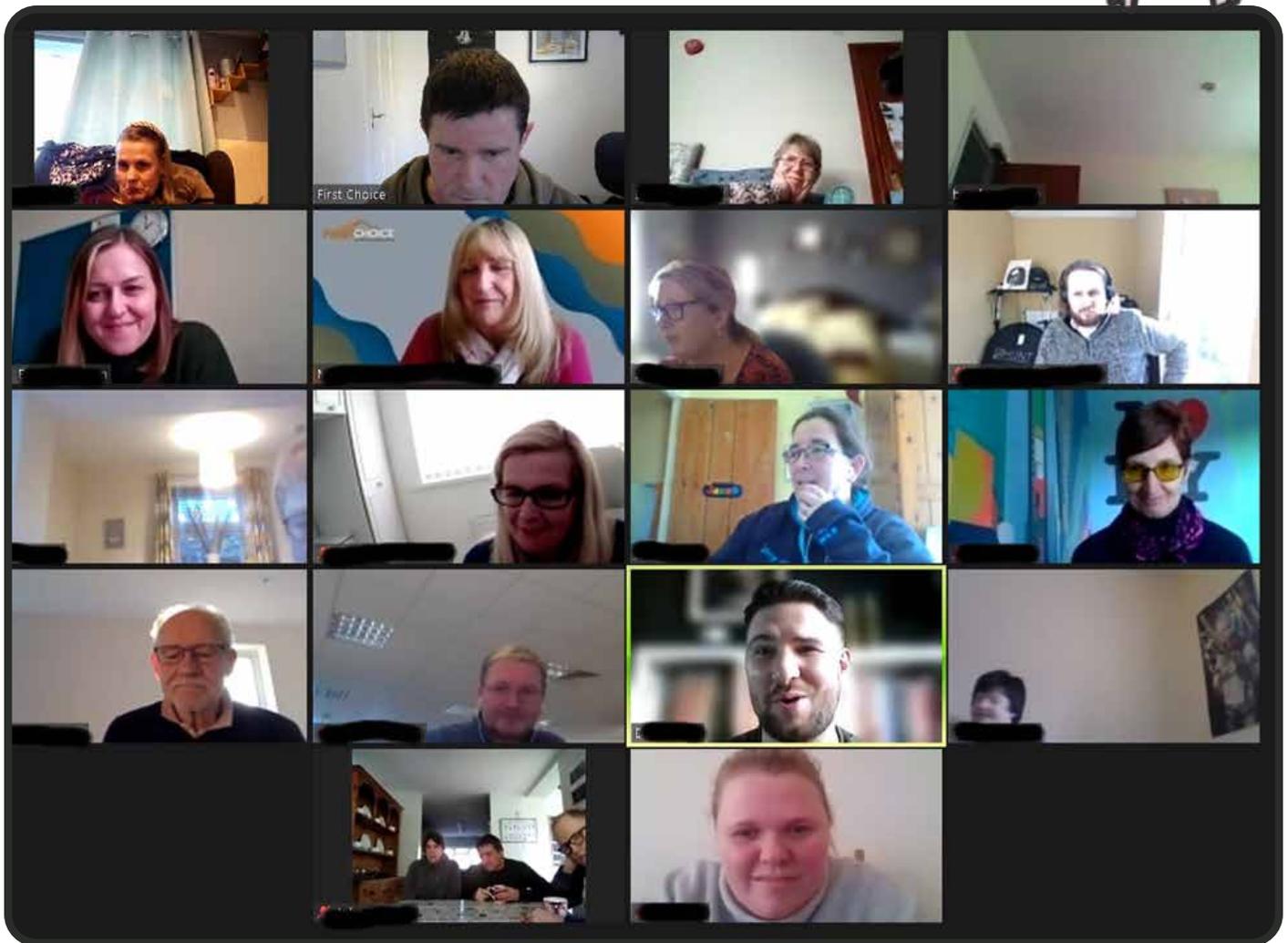


Anything that will help me, for
the pain in my back is giving me so much pain,
That I will do anything to make this pain in my back go
away.
And can make me feel better.
I will try my best and try some more, for these
exercises in my wheelchair are doing me good.

I swear already I try my very best
No matter how hard this may be for I have will power
inside of me.
From both my late mam and my late lovely dad always
took me to try my very best in everything I do.
That's all we ever ask of you our daughter.
So I try my hardest to do these wheelchair exercises
If it eases my back pain then I will give them are try.

TENANT PANEL

In January we met 16 tenants online via Zoom. 4 FCHA staff and 7 Board members also attended. We talked about what rent is and how we set it. All tenants that attended said they are happy with how First Choice sets our rents.



Tenants also said that their homes and rents are good value for money.

SUZY'S BIRD WATCH

Suzy from Pontypridd was given a bird stand for a birthday present from her parents and since then the ladies have enjoyed the lovely display of birds.



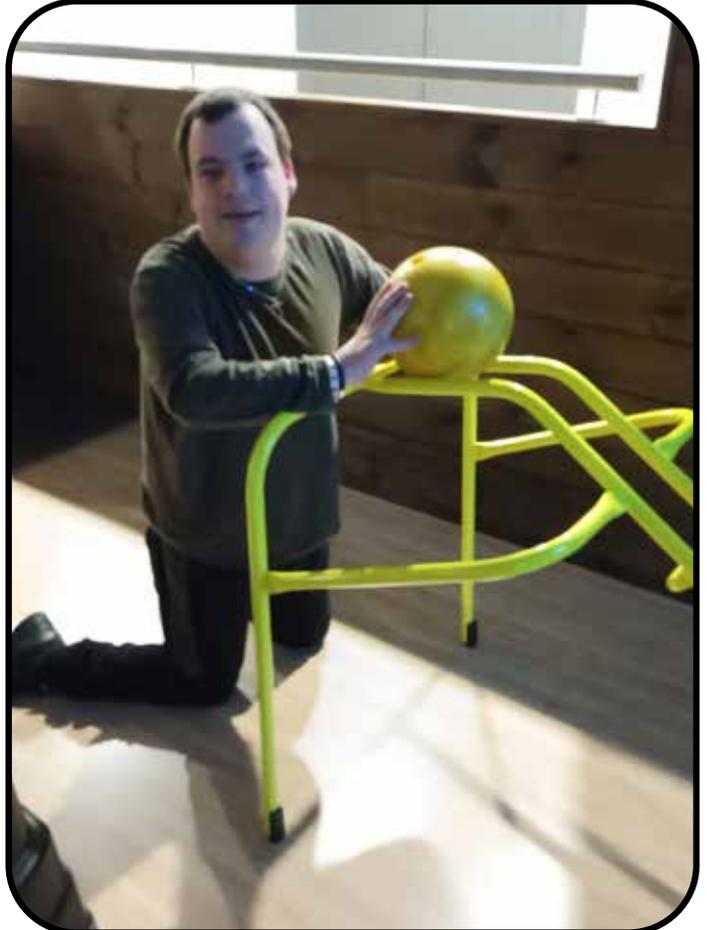
This winter suzy registered to take part in the RSPB Big garden birdwatch. We watched the birds come and go! Over the hour given we waited patiently and saw a Robin a pair of starlings, great tit and chaffinch and of course black birds.

Leanne ticked the boxes for the survey and returned the information in the post. Julia enjoys looking out the window in the mornings and alerts staff when a bird arrives, Suzy enjoys keeping the containers full of bird seed and making sure they have water.

Hopefully in the summer we will see different kinds of birds in the garden, we are so lucky to see them all.

COWBRIDGE BOWLING

Richard, Dylan and Joe from Cowbridge talked about their time they went bowling.



Richard said he really enjoys bowling with his mates it makes it happy. He spent his whole time there laughing.

Joe said "I really enjoy bowling. I like to win!"

Dylan said he likes seeing the pins going down. Dylan said he likes having fun with his friends.

DANCECLUSION

If you are a tenant in North Wales there is an exciting opportunity for you to attend a dance class!



Josh is excited to be starting the new class! He has performed and taught all over the world, such as Disneyland, Cruise Ships, UK Tours, Stage and TV.

He is a full-time support worker and wants to create dance opportunities for adults with additional needs!

The session is held in Prestatyn every Thursday. You can follow this QR code for more information and for contact details to join!

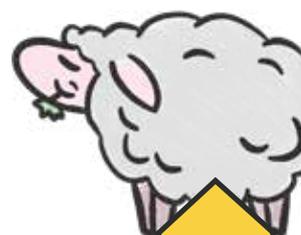


WORD SEARCH / HELFA GAIR

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CARTREF
YSTAFELL
TRWSIADAU
DRWS
GEGIN

TELEDU
FFRINDIAU
GARDD
CYMYDOG
TEULU



TENANTS RECIPE

My name is Andrew from Caerphilly and I am a new Tenant. I enjoy playing cards and dominos but I also like cooking! Since I moved I have made a lot of recipes with the support staff. My favourite meal to make is lasagne. You can find a recipe for lasagne here!

Ingredients:

9 lasagna noodles
1 tablespoon olive oil
500g ground beef
1 onion, diced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 can crushed tomatoes
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
430g whole milk ricotta
787 grams shredded mozzarella, divided
1 large egg, beaten
25g freshly grated Parmesan
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves



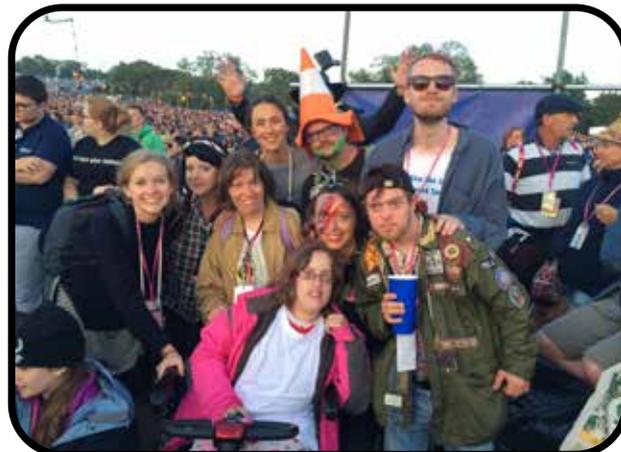
ANDREWS LASAGNE

- 1.** Preheat oven to 180c. Lightly oil a 9*13 baking dish or coat with nonstick spray.
- 2.** In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook lasagna noodles according to package instructions.
- 3.** Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add ground beef and onion and cook until beef has browned, about 3-5 minutes, making sure to crumble the beef as it cooks; season with salt and pepper, to taste. Drain excess fat. Stir in tomatoes and Italian seasoning until well combined.
- 4.** In a medium bowl, combine ricotta, 120g mozzarella and egg; set aside.
- 5.** Spread 225g tomato mixture onto the bottom of a 9*13 baking dish; top with 3 lasagna noodles, 1/2 of the ricotta cheese mixture and 225g mozzarella cheese. Repeat with a second layer. Top with remaining noodles, tomato mixture, 225g mozzarella cheese and Parmesan.
- 6.** Place into oven and bake for 35-45 minutes, or until bubbling. Then grill for 2-3 minutes, or until top is browned in spots.
- 7.** Let cool 15 minutes. Serve, garnished with parsley, if desired.

A big thank you to Andrew for his story and recipe!

GIG BUDDIES

A Gig Buddy is a volunteer who shares the same interests in music and hobbies as you. They can support you to go to gigs and events that are sometimes hard to get to.



A Gig Buddy can help you:

- Go to 1 gig or event every month for the next 10 months.
- Meet up every month to plan your next gig.
- Attend regular social events with other Gig Buddies.

Getting a Gig Buddy is free - it doesn't cost you anything. All Gig Buddy volunteers get a day of free training before they are matched with their Gig Buddy.

If you would like to get involved and attend events with a Gig buddy

Email: gigbuddies@ldw.org.uk
Or phone: 029 2068 1160

WINNERS AND RESULTS

Star Story Winner

The winner of the FCHA Star Story is Jodie from Cardiff for litterpicking!
Well Done! A £20 Gift Card is on its way

Star Story Winner

The winner of the FCHA Star Story is Andrew from Caerphilly for his recipe!
Well Done! A £20 Gift Card is on its way

Calling for Newsletter Stories

If you have any stories or recipes that you would like to have printed in the next Tenants' Voice, please send them to us with a picture!



Number of
Lambs: 10





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First Choice is a Welsh Language Scheme. First Choice will treat the Welsh and English Language on the basis of equality. A full copy of our Welsh Language Scheme and a Welsh version of the newsletter are available on request and on our website.

First Choice is an equal opportunities landlord. If you feel that you have been treated unequally in any way by First Choice, please contact us.