



FCHA

Autumn 2021

TENANTS' VOICE

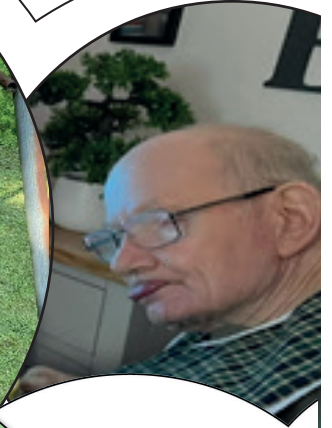
A NEWSLETTER FOR FIRST CHOICE TENANTS. WRITTEN FOR TENANTS, BY TENANTS



Hobbies
Tenant Stories
Recipes



First Choice
&
Tenant News



WELCOME

Adrian's Chief Executive Update

Hi everyone,

After almost 18 months of not being able to meet with you, our tenants, face to face, it is lovely that we are able to start looking forward to seeing you again! We are putting on at some tenant events in the autumn and can't wait to welcome you. We will be looking at what else we can do safely to allow us to meet up more often in the coming months, so please keep an eye out for this!

The team here at First Choice is working hard on delivering our new strategy. In the summer I told you about the solar panels and our work to make your homes more energy efficient. We are looking at the next phase of properties in the coming weeks and have surveyed almost 100 homes for these now! Dave has also been really busy working with Digital Communities Wales to deliver almost 200 digital devices to you, our tenants. You told us that being connected was really important to you and we hope that the devices will help with this.

We have also been busy working in our offices and after what feels like a very long time will be welcoming staff back to the office from September. While everyone has been working really hard from home to keep First Choice running smoothly it will be great to see colleagues again.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Adrian



SEND IN YOUR STORIES

Calendar

Tenants Talk Meeting

27th September 2021 - 11.00am - 1.30pm

The Elephant & Castle Hotel, Broad St, Newtown SY16 2BQ

Tenants Talk Meeting

29th September 2021 - 11.00am - 1.30pm

Alyn Waters Country Park, Mold Rd, Wrexham LL11 4AG



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.

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



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

Keep an eye out for the Star Story!

OFFICE UPDATE

Chair of Board update

Holly is stepping down as chair this month. We would like to thank Holly for all of her hard work as Chair over the last couple of years.

We are very pleased that Holly will still be a member of the Board of Management for First Choice so you may still see her at tenant events in the future.

Our new chair will be announced later on this month and we will let you know who it is via our website and social media.



No Newsletter Video

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic we are unable to make a newsletter video for this version of the Newsletter. The videos will come back in the future when we can record them.

SOPHIE'S ENGAGEMENT!

Sophie from Torfaen got engaged over the summer! She shared her story with us all below:

"The day I got engaged.

It was very exciting and when my boyfriend got down on one knee and said "Will you marry me?" I said yes because I love him so much.

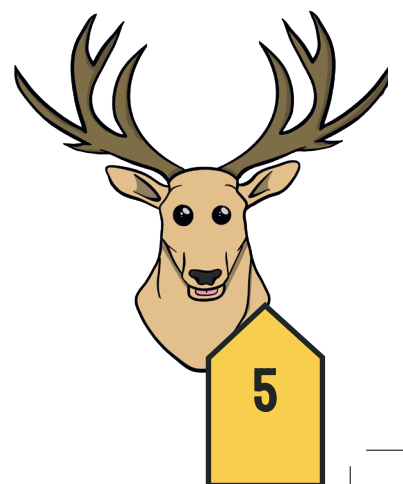


We got engaged in Wednesday Club before it closed down.

All our friends and staff were there, they clapped and shouted with joy.

After club and when I got back to the house, my Mum came over and I showed her the ring. My mum was very happy and hugged me.

I went to bed feeling very happy."



SELWYN'S CHURCH BELLS

Selwyn from Meifod helps out in his local church. Due to lockdown there was no church for 12 months. Now that church is open again Selwyn pulls the bells on a Sunday and has other jobs.

On the day of Prince Philip's Funeral in April, Selwyn was asked by the vicar to go get the key as the church was locked and pull the bell 99 times for every year Prince Philip was alive.

At 2:30 everyone in the village heard Selwyn pulling the bell and thanked him very much.

In July Selwyn was asked to pull the bells at Meifod Church at a wedding when the bride and groom walked down the aisle.

"They came to thank me for pulling the bells and the Vicar thanked me as well"



STAFF INTRODUCTION: EVE

Eve is a new member of staff in a new role here at FCHA as a Health and Well-being Coordinator.

My name is Eve and I am the new Health and Well-being Coordinator for First Choice Housing Association.

My job is to help you feel happier and healthier. This could be in your home or in your community.

For example trying a new sport or activity, cooking new foods, or meeting new people.

There are lots of things that might be important for your own health and well-being and I would love to hear your ideas. If you would like to chat about any of this, then please let First Choice know.

I am really looking forward to meeting all of you at events shortly!



You can find the digital version of this on our website by scanning the QR code here:





ALLEN'S TOUCH SCREEN



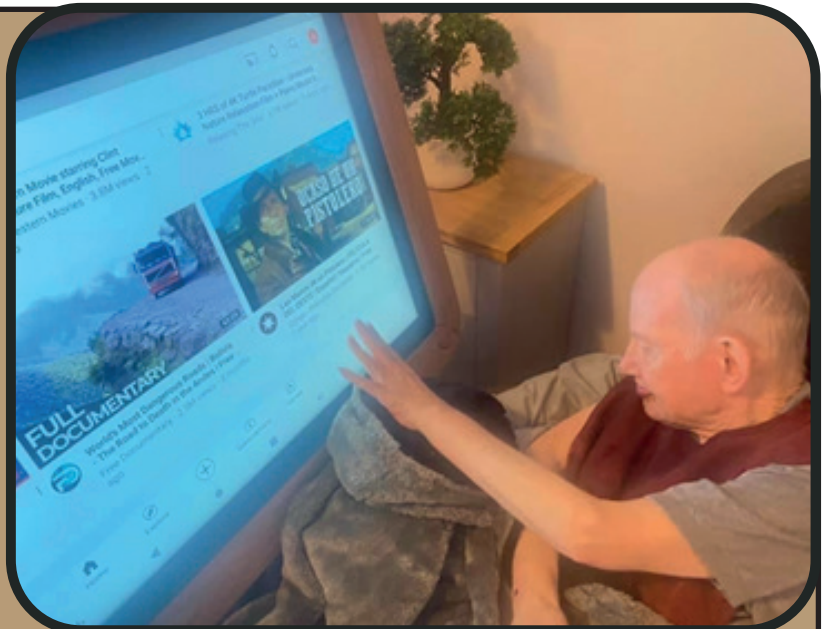
Allen from Swansea has a diagnosis of Dementia and in the last 6 months has been less engaged in activities. His pace of life is relaxed and needs to be predictable to support his wellbeing. As a team dimensions started to explore specialist activities and equipment that Allen could do that he may enjoy. Their wish list was something that helped with the things Allen needed and the things he enjoyed which included:

- **Relaxation**
- **Music**
- **Memory games and other activities**
- **Touch screen, sturdy and height adjustable**
- **Communication aids**
- **Reminiscence tours and apps**

They came across a company called Inspired inspirations that produce touch screen activity tables for adults with Dementia.

The screen was 39 inches in size and on a height adjustable table.

This was ideal as Allen has scoliosis and it could be adjusted to eye level based on how he was seated. He seemed to respond better to close up activities than his TV for instance. The activity table met all of the things on their wish list and more.



ALLEN'S TOUCH SCREEN

Dimensions met with Allen's care manager and appointee and decided that the benefits could outweigh the cons and it was worth trying the touch screen. They felt the size of the screen was important as Allen hasn't engaged with iPad and laptops previously very well.



The screen is height adjustable and tilts for good positioning. It can go flat for instance to play a piano app. It also has toughened glass.



The table was ordered and delivered quickly at the end of July and although they are still exploring its full functions they can already see improved engagement and interest from Allen.

He has started singing to songs which they have not heard him do for some time and engaging with the touch screen activities. Allen finds watching the fish relaxing and is less agitated when sitting now

APRIL BOARD UPDATE

Holly Evans: Chair of Board



Holly presented the response letter to the statutory accounts and this was approved by Board.

Holly also announced that she would be stepping down as Chair in September so a new Chair will be appointed.

Adrian Burke: Chief Executive



Adrian presented the 5 Year and 30 Year Business Plans and they were approved by Board.

Adrian also presented a paper on Board Assurance for Welsh Government. This was also approved

Huw Thomas: Development Manager



Huw presented a paper on increased development work costs. Increased costs for two developments were approved by Board.

Huw also presented the monthly development report and this was also approved.

APRIL BOARD UPDATE



Richard Griffiths, Director of Finance and IT

Richard presented a paper on loan agreements to the value of £15 million. This was approved by Board.

Richard also resented a paper on FCHA Treasury Policy and Golden Rules. This was also approved.



Sarah Phillips: Procurement Manager

Sarah provided a procurement update to the Board.

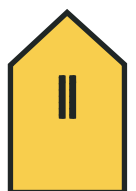


Daniel Woods: Compliance Officer

Daniel presented the biennial contractor review to the Board.

Bevan  **Buckland**
Chartered accountants, tax and financial planners

The Association's financial auditor, Bevan & Buckland presented the Audit Findings Report, the statutory accounts to 31st March 2021 and the Auditors' Letter of Representation. These were approved by Board.



ALEX'S NEW PETS!

Alex in Swansea wanted a pet and talked with his support providers about getting a rabbit.



Just so that they are not on their own I decided to have two so that they can keep each other company.

I have decided to call them Kylie and Cruella.

This will be part of my regular routine to look after them by making sure they have enough food and water as well as keeping them nice and clean.



Holding the rabbits, make me calm and happy and I'm pleased that they are living with me.

CHURCH LAND CONVERSION

FCHA is thrilled to share the news that we have joined forces with fellow South Wales housing associations to form a new team which will be working alongside Housing Justice Cymru to transform old church land into new affordable rented housing.



This is a before and after of some church land that was changed into housing for people in need.

It is hoped that this new partnership will greatly increase the number of affordable homes being built through the charity's national project, 'Faith in Affordable Housing', which sees a lot of church land and buildings transformed into affordable rented housing. To date the programme has delivered almost 100 affordable homes across Wales.

Bishop John Davies said, "Everyone deserves a decent home that meets their needs, and we hope this next phase of the programme will produce more homes for the people most in the need."

TECH TIPS

The technical services team have an announcement if you have large work done in your Kitchen or Bathroom.



As you may be aware First Choice completes regular refurbishments at its properties on items such as kitchens and bathrooms. Whilst the improvement work is a benefit. Such refurbishments can restrict access to the facilities during these works. For example, in some circumstances tenants may not be able to access a shower or kitchen for an over week, often this means First Choice tenants may need to leave the property and find alternative accommodation that meets their needs. This is very often challenging for tenants and support staff having to leave their home.

TEMP KITCHENS & BATHROOMS

First Choice has recently been trailing a Temporary Kitchen Pod at one of its properties with success.



First Choice have now found an alternative to tenants leaving their homes during bathroom and kitchen refurbishments. Temporary Kitchen and Bathroom pods by The Temporary Solutions Group, provide Kitchen and Bathroom pods that can be placed on the drive of the property. These pods come with an array of options.

This provides a successful alternative to tenants who would normally struggle to decant properties during kitchen and bathroom refurbishments.

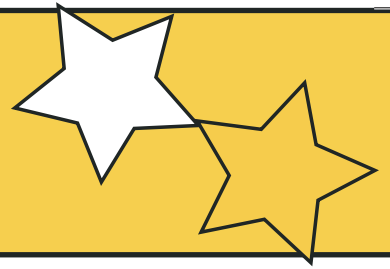
GARDEN MAKEOVER

Suzy, Leanne and Julia from Pontypridd sent photos of a transformation of their garden, from neglected to a well loved magical area to relax and have afternoon tea parties and a safe environment for their family to visit.



“We had a kind donation of artificial grass from PGS. They layed the grass aswell and our new neighbour cut the tree in our garden as it was very over grown he was like a monkey up the tree.”

GARDEN MAKEOVER!



We had some help to move our old shed and Leanne painted it a lovely green.

Julia did the gardening and even grew some flowers from seed.

Suzy has her tea down there most of the time, its so pretty and very magical, our neighbours say how lucky we are.

INSIGHT

Innovate Trust support lots of First Choice tenants across South Wales. They have developed an app called Insight which you can use on your smart phone or tablet. The app includes many features for users - from a wider community group where individuals can communicate with each other and share how they spend their time, to a private digital diary for each user that can only be seen by those who have been granted access, such as close friends, family and support workers.

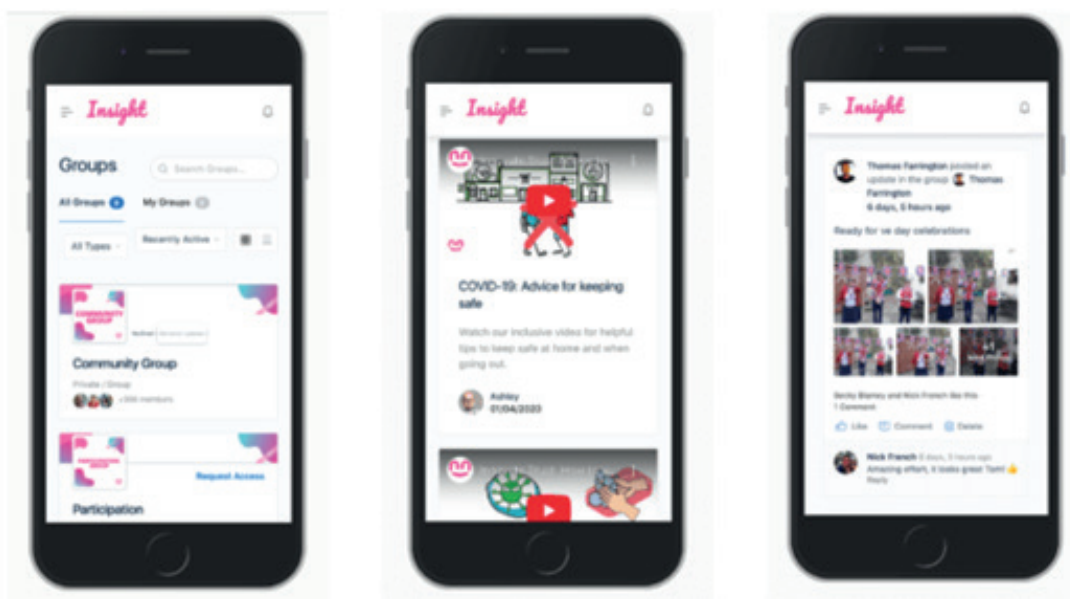


You can watch a youtube video about the insight app by scanning this QR code

Around 40 activities have been put online each week for people to help people connect. Innovate Trust run a weekly advice surgery to help people to use the app and get support if they get stuck. They want other organisations to work together and share their activities to create a large calendar of choices. They have already connected with other organisations that are part of the 'neighbourhood'. This includes First Choice, Learning Disability Wales, Gig Buddies, Cardiff People First, Vale People First, RCT People First, Spectacle Theatre, and Electric Umbrella.

INSIGHT

There are now more than 500 people using the app. People are enjoying the activities and some people are taking part in activities for the first time. Some people are getting involved who wouldn't normally attend real life meet-ups due to lack of confidence or lack of support or time to attend. They can now do them virtually. People have more control and are more independent



First Choice has its own group on the Insight where First Choice tenants from all over Wales and Shropshire can connect. If you would like to get the app and join the group please email nigelbowen@fcha.org.uk to find out more.

LYNETTE'S GARDENING

Lynette from Glynneath has been growing a variety of produce in her new veg patch and greenhouse as well as a container garden and hopes to have a bumper crop of tomatoes, beans, peas, leeks, lettuce and cabbage!



We look forward to having more gardening images from Lynette and other tenants as we head into Autumn

If you are a tenant with a hobby or a story you would like to share please email your stories to customerservices@fcha.org.uk

COVID ANXIETY



Are you feeling worried about leaving the house because of COVID-19? These 5 tips might help.

We have all spent a lot of time at home and away from other people because of COVID-19.

We are allowed to do more now and see people but it is okay if this feels scary sometimes.

1) **Take your time.**

You do not have to rush or do too much. Set yourself little goals that you feel comfortable with, like going for a walk or meeting a friend for a coffee. A good tip is to focus on today. Try not to worry about tomorrow or next week.



2) **What are the rules?**

We hear a lot about COVID-19 and this can get confusing. You can check a website like GOV.UK or the NHS but sometimes it is best to ask someone you trust for help.



3) **Prepare for an outing.**

Check that you feel happy with the plans and try to think of all the good bits too. Are you going somewhere you enjoy with people you feel comfortable with?



4) **Make time to relax.**

Doing the things we could not do before is exciting but it can also be tiring. Make sure you take breaks. People do different things to relax, like listening to music, being outside, or drawing.



5) **Speak to someone about your thoughts.**

Talking to someone you feel safe with is a good idea. It can help you feel happier and remind you that you are not alone. Talking about how you feel means other people can understand you better so they can do the right things to help you.



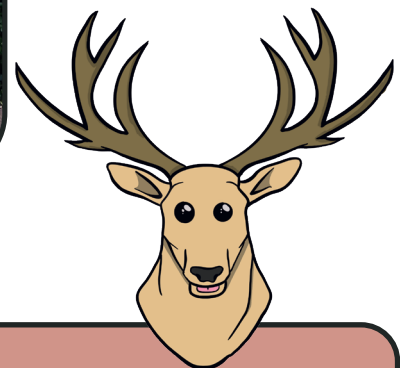
FREE LAPTOPS AND TABLETS!

FCHA, in partnership with Digital Communities Wales (DCW) have had the fantastic opportunity to give 190 iPads, tablets and laptops to tenants across Wales.

Everyone receiving a device has been asked to complete a survey measuring their access to online activities and to tell us how these activities have benefitted their health and wellbeing.



Our aim along with that of DCW, is to use the study findings to get more money for more tech for digitally excluded people across Wales.



Our aim along with that of DCW, is to use the study findings to gain more device funding for digitally excluded people across Wales.

HALLOWEEN COLOURING



AUTUMN RECIPE

- 2 cooking apples , peeled, cored and cut into small pieces
- 50g golden caster sugar
- 150g blackberries
- 1 tbsp cornflour
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 x 320g shortcrust pastry sheets
- 1 egg , beaten
- 1 tbsp white caster sugar
- custard , to serve (optional)



SPICED APPLE AND BLACKBERRY HAND PIES

Method

- 1.** Put the apples and golden caster sugar in a saucepan with 2 tbsp water and cook, covered, for 6 mins or until the apples are soft, stirring once or twice.
- 2.** Tip the mixture into a shallow dish and spread out to cool slightly, then tip in the blackberries and stir. In a separate bowl, mix the cornflour with the honey and cinnamon, then stir it into the fruit mixture.
- 3.** Unroll the pastry sheets and, using a 10cm round cutter, cut out 12 circles. Spoon the fruit filling onto half of the pastry circles, leaving a border of about 1cm around the edge. Brush the beaten egg around the edges and place a plain pastry disc on top to encase the filling, then make a little dent in the top and bottom to form an apple shape. Seal the edges all the way around using the prongs of a fork, then brush with egg.
- 4.** Use the pastry off-cuts to cut out little leaf shapes and stalks, then stick them on with beaten egg. Poke a steam hole in the top with a skewer. Repeat with the remaining pastry and filling. Arrange the pies on a baking sheet lined with baking parchment and chill for at least 30 mins, or up to 24 hrs. Can be frozen unbaked for up to 2 months.
- 5.** Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Bake the pies for 20 mins, or until the pastry is golden and the filling is bubbling through the hole. If cooking from frozen, bake for an extra 5 mins. Sprinkle with the sugar, then leave to cool for at least 20 mins before serving with custard.

HALLOWEEN WORD SEARCH!

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

GHOST
 TREAT
 BATS
 SPOOKY
 COFFIN
 SKELETON
 WEB



TRICK
 COSTUME
 PUMPKINS
 BROOMSTICK
 BLACK
 SCARECROW
 WEREWOLF



CANDY
 VAMPIRE
 STRAW
 WITCH
 CAT
 SPIDER



WINNERS AND RESULTS

Star Story Winner 1

The winner of the FCHA Star Story are Suzy, Leanne and Julia from Pontypridd!
£25 Group Gift Card is on its way.

Star Story Winner 2

The 2nd winner of the FCHA Star Story is Allen from Swansea!
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!

A graphic consisting of several overlapping speech bubbles in various colors (yellow, red, green, blue, pink) with the word "Newsletter" written in white text across them.

Newsletter

A cartoon illustration of a stag's head with large, brown antlers, facing forward.

Number of
Stags: 6



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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.