

# TENANT'S HANDBOOK



CARTREFI  
**CONWY**  
creu cymunedau i fod yn falch ohonynt  
creating communities to be proud of

# Your handbook contents

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# Welcome from the Chief Executive

First of all, we would like to welcome you to your new home and hope that you will be very happy being a tenant with us.

It may have taken you a long time to be offered one of our properties because of the demand we have from local people who want a home.

With this in mind, we would like you to really value your home and be proud of being a tenant of Cartrefi Conwy, who care about you, your environment and the local community.

However, with these benefits comes real responsibility on how you and your family and friends behave while living in one of our properties. Being a good neighbour is one of the best things you can do – it brings real benefits that are valued by everyone.

Finally, if you can, get involved with us to help us improve services to tenants now and in the future.



Mr A Bowden  
Chief Executive



Pam Lonie  
Chair of the Board

# About your handbook

This handbook has been written with the support and involvement of the staff and tenants.

Your handbook contains all the relevant information you need relating to your tenancy.

If you believe we have left any relevant information out of your handbook, please contact us on 01492 805503. We will try to keep all the information in your handbook up to date and will send you replacement pages for any changes we make.

**You can get this handbook in large print or audio format. If you want one of these, please phone 01492 805500 or email [enquiries@cartreficonwy.org](mailto:enquiries@cartreficonwy.org).**

If you want any of our information in a language other than Welsh or English, we will try our best to get it for you.

# The Board of Management

The Board of Management have overall responsibility for running Cartrefi Conwy including setting policies and directing activities. The Board is made up of 5 Tenant members, 5 Conwy County Borough Council nominees, and 5 Independent members.

The Board may also co-opt up to 2 members. Co-opted members have voting rights the same as full Board members but cannot be Chairs or Vice-Chairs of committees or the Board. They may be brought onto the Board because of particular skills or experience they may have.

Board members do not get paid, this is a rule set by the Welsh Assembly Government which all Registered Social Landlords in Wales must adhere to. Board members can only claim out of pocket expenses actually incurred in carrying out their duties.

Board members are selected at the Cartrefi Conwy Annual General Meeting (AGM), whereby long standing members can retire or be reelected. The AGM will be widely publicised to all tenants.

# The Executive Management Team

The Executive Management Team consists of the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Operations. They have overall responsibility for the day-to-day running of Cartrefi Conwy and report to the Board of Management.

# Cartrefi Conwy's mission statement

## **Our Vision and Values**

Cartrefi Conwy's key objective can be summarised as "Creating communities to be proud of".

## **Our vision**

Our vision is to provide sustainable affordable quality homes for local communities, actively encouraging the participation of everyone and respecting the needs of all.

## **Our values**

Cartrefi Conwy believes in:

- treating people with honesty and integrity;
- committing to and being positive about providing excellent standards of service;
- being an open and forward thinking organisation which provides the service that tenants need;
- listening to customers and consulting tenants on policy and service issues;
- a culture of openness, honesty and accountability;
- creating an environment where its employees are valued and realise their full potential.

## **About us**

As your landlord we will:

- manage estates;
- set and collect rent;
- recover missed rent payments (rent arrears);
- encourage tenants to get involved;
- carry out day-to-day repairs; and
- carry out improvements to our properties.

As our tenant, you also have responsibilities, these are set out in Section 4 of this handbook.

For more information visit our website at [www.cartreficonwy.org](http://www.cartreficonwy.org)

# Contacting us

## **Customer call centre for reporting repairs**

Freephone 0800 012 1431 (calls from a mobile may still be charged at the local rate). Local rate calls 01492 806040.

## **Out-of-hours emergencies**

For genuine emergencies that cannot wait until the next working day, please phone 0800 012 1431 and your call will be transferred to the Out of Hours Service.

## **Antisocial behaviour out-of-hours hotline**

01492 517700. To report an incident during the day, contact your Area office.

If you have any general enquiries, please e-mail [enquiries@cartreficonwy.org](mailto:enquiries@cartreficonwy.org) or visit [www.cartreficonwy.org](http://www.cartreficonwy.org)

For other general housing enquiries

## **Area office opening times**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 8.45am to 5.15pm

Wednesday: 10.30am to 5.15pm

Friday: 8.45am to 4.45pm

## **Colwyn Bay Area Office**

41 Conway Road, Colwyn Bay, LL29 7AA

Phone: 01492 805596 or 805598

## **Llandudno Area Office**

Town Hall, Lloyd Street, Llandudno, LL30 2UY

Phone: 01492 805632

Our other offices

## **Building Maintenance**

Mochdre Offices, Conway Road, Mochdre, Colwyn Bay, LL28 5AB

Phone: 01492 805564

## **Head Office**

Bryn Eirias, Heritage Gate, Abergele Road, Colwyn Bay, LL29 8BY

Phone: 01492 805500

# Moving In

We realise that moving into a new home can be a very stressful time and that there are lots of little things that need to be done. We have created the following checklist of people you will need to contact to tell them you have moved.

- Electricity
- Water
- Gas
- Phone
- Council Tax
- Housing Benefit
- Electoral roll
- Doctor
- Dentist
- Work
- TV licence
- Bank or building society
- Credit card
- Post Office (to arrange redirection of mail)
- Insurance company
- DVLA (driving licence and car registration)
- Benefits agencies
- Children's schools
- Library
- Vet
- Subscriptions (such as newspapers, Sky TV, magazines)

If you are not sure who supplied the gas and electricity for the people who lived in your home before, you can phone the following to find out (have your postcode ready, as this is essential information for these services).

- Gas 0870 608 1524
- Electricity 0845 270 9101

# Useful phone numbers

Please add your own useful numbers in the spaces below. They will be helpful to you and others in the case of an emergency.

My estate officer: .....

Phone: .....

Email: .....

Website: [www.cartreficonwy.org](http://www.cartreficonwy.org)

Doctors: .....

Dentist: .....

Local police station: .....

Community Beat Manager (CBM): .....

## Useful Conwy County Borough Council services

Switchboard	01492 574000
Dog warden	01492 575222
Homelessness - Housing Options and Support Team (HOST)	01492 576271
Supporting People Team	01492 574112
Refuse control	01492 575337
Street lighting	01492 57403 or 575443
Council tax	01492 576227 or 576225
Housing Benefit	01492 576291 or 576292
Conwy Careline	01492 514340
Fire, police and ambulance	999

NHS Direct	0845 4647
Citizens Advice Bureau	0845 120 3716
Department for Work and Pensions	
- Benefit Enquiry Line	0800 88 22 00
- Pensions Information Line	0845 731 3233
- War Pensions Helpline	0800 169 2277
- Working Tax Credit	0845 609 5000
Age Concern	0800 7314931
Traveline	0870 608 2608
Gas leak	0800 111 999
Electricity emergencies	0845 272 2424

## Other useful numbers

Police – to report an incident

English operator	0845 607 1002
Welsh operator	0845 607 1001
Crimestoppers – confidential information line	0800 555 111
Victim Support – support after the crime	01492 873 700
Witness Services – support through the court procedure	01492 873 095

# Living in your home

## **Your tenancy agreement**

Your tenancy agreement is the legal contract between you and us. It explains your and our rights and responsibilities. All tenants sign and receive a copy of this agreement before moving in, and we also hold a copy at your area office.

When you sign your tenancy agreement with us, we ask you to agree to the conditions of tenancy. It is important that you know and understand what you are agreeing to. If you are not sure, please ask your estate officer to explain anything you don't understand.

## **What if my circumstances change after signing my tenancy agreement?**

A change of circumstances might mean, for example, a single tenant gets married and wants to change the tenancy to a joint tenancy to include their partner.

The tenancy can only be changed when we and the tenant (or tenants) agree to the change. Otherwise, only the court has the power to change a tenancy. If your circumstances do change, please contact your estate officer immediately.

## **Starter tenancies**

We will give new tenants a starter tenancy if they have not had a tenancy with us before. This means that, for the first 12 months of the tenancy, starter tenants do not have the same rights as assured tenants (see the section on assured tenancies).

Starter tenants do not have the right to exchange, sublet, buy or improve their house, take in lodgers or claim compensation for improvements.

The tenancy will automatically become an assured tenancy after 12 months as long as we have not applied to the court for a possession order. We may apply for a possession order if the tenant has broken the conditions of their tenancy. We don't want this to happen and our officers are there to provide support and advice or refer you to others who can help.

### **Assured tenancies**

As an assured tenant you will be able to live in your home for the rest of your life (if you want to), as long as you keep to your tenancy agreement. This means that we are not allowed to end your tenancy without a good reason. If there is a good reason to end your tenancy, we must give you notice and apply to the court for an order to evict you.

If you break your tenancy conditions, we may have a reason to end your tenancy or we may apply to the court to get an 'injunction'. An injunction means that the court can order you to keep to your tenancy conditions. There are some circumstances (for example, anti-social behaviour) where you may also be breaking the law and appropriate action will be taken against you. This may include taking legal action to demote your tenancy back to a starter tenancy for a period of twelve months. If, during this period, there are no further problems, your tenancy will be reinstated to an assured tenancy.

### **Can you end my tenancy?**

Yes, but we must give you a legal notice. We will consider that you have received the notice if we send it to the address at which you are the tenant.

If you are an assured tenant, we can only end your tenancy by getting a court possession order unless you give up your tenancy voluntarily. We will go to court to try to get a possession order if you break the conditions of your tenancy agreement and we have taken all reasonable steps to get you to keep to your agreement.

## **Your rights as an assured tenant**

Below are listed a few of your important rights as an assured tenant. These are issues that you are most likely to want to know about. Please contact your estate officer if you have any questions.

*Repairs* – You have a right to have repairs carried out within a specific timescale. Please see the section ‘Repairs and Maintenance’ later in this handbook for more information on repairs.

*Lodgers* – You have the right to take in lodgers, as long as they do not lead to overcrowding in your home. A lodger would share your home as a member of your household. You can also sublet part of your home but you must get our permission in writing first (write to your estate officer). If you sublet the whole of your home, you risk losing your right to your home.

*Overcrowding* – Under the Housing Act 1985 you can be prosecuted for overcrowding your home. This can happen if you have more than the allowed number of people sleeping in your home. To find out how many people you can have sleeping in your home before it becomes overcrowded, contact your estate officer or see the section in your tenancy agreement.

*Succession* – When you die, your tenancy will pass to your husband, wife or partner if they are living with you in your home, or to a member of your family who has been living with you for at least 12 months. He or she will be your ‘successor’ as long as you did not succeed the tenancy after transfer. If you have a joint tenancy with another person, it will pass to him or her when you die. There will be no further automatic succession, although we may agree to let another member of your family take over after that. For more information about your right to succession, contact your area office.

*Right to acquire* – If you are an assured tenant, by law you may be entitled to buy your home. There are exceptions to this, such as sheltered

properties for the elderly or adapted properties. If you were a tenant pre-transfer to Cartrefi Conwy, you have a preserved right to buy. For more details, see the section 'Moving On'.

### **Your responsibilities**

*Paying rent* – The payment of rent and other charges set out in your tenancy agreement are due in advance on Monday each week. You must pay on time. If you do not pay your rent, we may apply to court to get an order to evict you from your home. We will send to you a swipe card after your tenancy starts. You should use the swipe card when making payments, look out for the pay point logo at your local shop or pay at any post office.



You can also pay your rent by direct debit or standing order, please contact your Estate Officer to discuss these options.



Another way to pay is over the phone using your debit or credit card (you may have to pay a charge when paying by credit card). Phone 0870 243 6040, have your swipe card ready and follow the automated instructions. We offer discounts to tenants who keep a clear rent account throughout a full financial year.

*Repairs* – You are responsible for keeping the interior of your home in a good, clean and tidy condition. This includes repairing and maintaining your own fixtures and fittings.

You are also responsible for reporting to us any disrepair or defect in your home that we are responsible for. Please see the section 'Repairs and Maintenance' for more details.

*Access* – You must allow us, or contractors we send, into your home to undertake inspections, carry out repairs, improvement and maintenance and to conduct the annual servicing of gas appliances. If you do not allow us access, we can take court action against you.

*Insurance* – It is your responsibility to get insurance for your household contents. There is more information on a scheme we manage later in this section.

*Carrying out improvements* – Before you carry out any improvements to your property, you must get our permission first. We cannot unreasonably withhold our permission. If the improvements affect the gas or electrical systems, the work must be carried out by a tradesperson we have approved. At the end of your tenancy, you may have the right to receive compensation for improvements you have carried out.

## **Ending your tenancy**

You must give us at least four weeks' notice, in writing, when you want to give up your tenancy. If you fail to give us adequate notice, we could charge you extra rent.

At the end of your tenancy, you must leave the property. You must empty it of all your furniture and belongings, leave it in good repair and in a clean and tidy condition, and return the keys to us. If you don't, we may charge you for:

- the costs of emptying the property or garden;
- cleaning the property;
- repairing any damage or neglect;
- replacing any fixtures or fittings you have removed and not replaced with alternatives of a reasonable and similar standard; and
- changing the locks.

The last day for your tenancy must be a Sunday and you must return the keys to your area office no later than 12noon on the Monday following this date. If you fail to do this, we will charge you extra rent.

If a tenancy ends because the tenant has died, we still charge full rent on the property until the keys are returned. Executors should be made aware that entitlement to benefits end when someone dies.

### **Cartrefi Conwy's responsibilities**

Service standards related to your tenancy. As our tenant you can expect us to do the following relating to your tenancy agreement.

- When we receive a written request for succession, we will carry out an investigation within 10 working days.
- When we receive a written request to amend the tenancy details, we will carry out an investigation within 10 working days.
- If we are due to increase your rent, we will write to you at least four weeks before the date of the increase.
- If we want to change your tenancy agreement, we will consult you (in line with legislation) beforehand.
- At least once a year, we will send you a tenant newsletter.
- We will send you a rent statement every three months.
- We will not provide personal information held by us to any outside organisation or person without your permission in writing.

### **Garages**

There are garages on some of our estates, which we can let to you for a fee. We operate a waiting list for garages, although we will give preference to our tenants with a clear dwelling rent account. For more information about garages, you should contact your area office.

You can pay the licence fee for your garage in the same way as you pay the rent for your home (we will issue swipe cards automatically). Please contact your estate officer to discuss the best method of payment for you.

If you have arrears (missed payments) on the garage or if you use the garage for purposes other than storing a car or motorcycle, we will take the garage back.

### **Keeping pets**

You are allowed to keep dogs, cats or caged birds at your home. You must gain permission to keep any other pet that is not a dog, cat, caged bird or tropical fish.

The maximum permitted number of dogs, cats or caged birds you may keep is two of each type of animal.

We will not give permission to keep an animal if the property is unsuitable for the type of pet or there are already too many pets in your home.

Any pets that you keep must be kept under control and you must make sure that it does not cause a nuisance. We will take action if you allow your pet to cause a nuisance such as continually barking inside or outside your home. You must not allow your pet to foul in communal or public areas in the vicinity of your home.

You are responsible for the welfare and control of your pet. If you do not do this it will be seen as a breach of your tenancy conditions and action will be taken.

### **Home contents insurance**

Many tenants believe that their furniture, belongings and decorations are automatically insured against theft, damage from fire, burst pipes or floods. **This is not the case.** To help you get your own home contents insurance, we have negotiated a special low cost scheme with a leading UK insurance company.



To ask for an application form, contact your nearest area office, ask your estate officer or phone us on 01492 805543.

When set up, you will be able to pay your insurance every week with your rent instead of having to find the money to make one expensive payment each year. We will confirm, in writing, that we have accepted you onto the scheme.

Note: Insurance payments do not qualify for Housing Benefit.

### **Lost or stolen keys**

On most occasions, we will charge tenants who lose the keys to their property for new keys and any relevant charges for forced entry, a new door, new locks and so on. If this happens outside normal office hours, or at the weekend, the costs can be high.

### **Antisocial behaviour**

We take unacceptable behaviour on our estates very seriously, so in partnership with Conwy County Borough Council and the North Wales Police, we have formed an Anti-Social Behaviour Unit.

Anti-social behaviour comes in many forms, but generally it is behaviour that is selfish and unacceptable and has a negative effect on the quality of life in a community.

Briefly, the type of behaviour which might be considered to be anti-social include:

- Loud noise from televisions, radios, music centres, and so on;
- Late-night parties;
- Abandoned vehicles;
- Nuisance caused by domestic animals;
- Nuisance caused by children or guests; and
- Neglecting a garden or cleaning responsibilities.
- Stone throwing
- Playing of ball games against houses.

This list is not exhaustive.

More serious forms of anti-social behaviour include:

- Serious incidents that break tenancy conditions;
- Harassment / Racial harassment / Bullying / Intimidation;
- Violence;
- Verbal abuse; and
- Behaviour related to drug or alcohol abuse.

Such behaviour, as in the lists above, is a breach of tenancy. We can apply to court for injunctions and / or take court action for possession or demotion of your tenancy to one which is less secure. We will use Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and work in partnership with the North Wales Police to obtain and serve Anti-social Behaviour Orders where necessary.

If you feel that you are suffering from anti-social behaviour, you should initially contact your Estate Officer at your area office. Working together with the Anti-social Behaviour Unit, your estate officer will investigate the incident and keep you informed of their progress.

If the incident happens outside of normal office hours, you can report it through the anti-social behaviour hotline phone number 01492 517700. Although this phone number is staffed 24 hours a day, there may be times when the line is busy, in which case there will be an answerphone. If you do not get to speak to an operator, please leave a message about the incident.

The hotline is not an alternative to reporting actual acts of crime to the North Wales Police.



If you are a witness to a crime, you should dial 999 immediately. Please make a note of the 'crime reference number' the police give you as we may ask you for this later.

# Repairs and Maintenance

Report any repairs to your home by phoning 0800 012 1431.

This line is staffed by customer services advisers, who speak Welsh and English, who can help you to report a repair, check on job progress and monitor the quality of the repairs service.

You must allow authorised employees and our agents to come into your home to carry out these repairs or inspect the property. Always ask any caller to show you their identification.

If the repair is needed due to any neglect or deliberate damage by anyone from your household or your visitors, you will have to pay the cost of these repairs.

## **How do you prioritise the day-to-day repairs?**

Under the Right to Repair scheme, we must carry out repairs within a certain time. As a result, we put repairs into one of the following four categories based on the information you give us.

*Emergencies* – We will make safe and repair within 24 hours. This covers damage that is a risk to health and safety or security (for example, burst pipes, total power cuts, a gas fault or a severe roof leak).

*Urgent work* – We will carry this out within seven working days. This covers damage that causes an inconvenience or where comfort is seriously affected.

*Non-urgent* – We will carry this out within 28 working days of our inspection. These are less urgent repairs that can wait a short time before being dealt with.

*Routine work* – We will carry this out within 42 working days of our inspection. This is for work that we can carry out with other work so that it becomes cost-effective.

For genuine emergencies that are outside office hours and cannot wait until the next working day, please phone 0800 012 1431 – your call will be transferred to the Out of Hours Service.

### **Repairs – our responsibilities**

We must keep in good repair the structure and outside of your home. This includes:

- drains, gutters and external pipes,
- the roof,
- outside walls, outside doors, windowsills, window catches, sash cords and window frames including necessary external painting and decorating,
- internal walls, floors and ceilings, doors and door frames, door hinges, door handles and skirting boards **but not** including internal painting and decoration,
- chimneys, chimney stacks and flues including sweeping,
- pathways, steps or other means of access (front and rear),
- plasterwork,
- integral garages and stores, external stores and outside WC
- boundary walls, fences and gates
- external lighting, door entry systems, communal alarms, communal aerials and smoke alarms.

We must also keep in good repair and proper working order any installation provided by us for space heating, water heating and sanitation and for the supply of water, gas and electricity, including:

- basins, sinks, baths, showers, toilets, flushing systems and water pipes,
- electric wiring including sockets and switches, gas pipes and water pipes,
- water heaters, fireplaces, fitted fires and central heating installations.

If you, any member of your household or your visitors damage any of the items noted above, we may give you notice in writing to carry out repairs immediately. If you do not do so, we may do the work and make you pay for it. Where there is no immediate danger, we will give you a reasonable time period in which to carry out the repairs.

We must make sure that heating appliances and pipework are tested at least once every 12 months. We will keep a record of the tests and give you a copy of the safety certificate. Please keep this certificate in a safe place.

**We will contact you to arrange an appointment to come to your home to service the heating installations. If you fail to allow us access, you will be in breach of your tenancy and we will take court action against you which could result in you losing your home and having to pay us for any legal costs we incur.**

### **Repairs – your responsibilities**

You are responsible for keeping the interior of your home in good, clean and tidy condition (including repairing and maintaining your own fixtures and fittings), and decorate the interior of your home as often as is reasonably necessary, to keep it in good decorative order.

You are responsible for carrying out minor repairs such as:

- replacing light bulbs and electric fuses,
- door bells,
- altering internal doors to fit over carpets,
- repairing and maintaining your own fittings,
- lost keys, and
- replacing glass broken or damaged by you, an occupant(s) or a visitor to your home.

You must keep in good repair all parts of the property that we do not have to repair. Also, you must not allow your home to fall into disrepair due to neglect.

If you fail to do repairs that are your responsibility, we will give you written notice of the work you need to do and give you a reasonable time period in which to carry it out. If you do not do the work, we may do it and make you pay for it.

You must report promptly any faults in the property that we are responsible for repairing (see the 'Contact Details' section).

All repairs to your property should be carried out by people who we have authorised to do so.

You must get our permission in writing before you knock down, alter or remove any part of your home, or carry out improvements. When you have our permission, some of the improvements you can do may include decorating the outside or fixing a satellite dish. We cannot unreasonably withhold our permission.

**Important note: Improvements affecting the gas or electrical systems of a property must be carried out by a tradesperson we have approved.**

If our tradesmen turn up to do a repair for you and you are not at home, they will leave a card letting you know that they have been, please make sure you return the card to us so we can arrange for another tradesman to come out to your home. If you do not contact us after receiving a card, we will cancel the repair request.

### **What to do if you are not happy with a repair**

If you are not entirely satisfied with a repair we have carried out at your property, you should first contact your estate officer. He or she will investigate the matter for you. If you are still not satisfied, contact your area manager (see the 'Contact Details' section).

## **Code of conduct**

All our workmen and contractors must follow a code of conduct when carrying out work in your home. You can find details of the code on our website ([www.cartreficonwy.org](http://www.cartreficonwy.org)). If you feel that a workman does not follow the code when they are at your property, please phone us on 0800 012 1431 or e-mail us at [enquiries@cartreficonwy.org](mailto:enquiries@cartreficonwy.org). The matter will be passed on the relevant supervisor.

## **Your right to repair**

As part of the Citizen's Charter scheme, a right-to-repair scheme was introduced for tenants from April 1994. The scheme will make sure that certain small urgent repairs which might affect your health, safety or security are done quickly and easily. By law, we have to carry out these repairs within a certain time. If we don't, you can tell us to get another contractor to do the work. If the second contractor doesn't carry out the repair within a certain time, you can claim compensation.

For details about the compensation you may be entitled to claim, please see the back of your 'job ticket', phone the Building Maintenance team or visit our website ([www.cartreficonwy.org](http://www.cartreficonwy.org)).

## **Carbon monoxide**

Carbon monoxide is a gas that is highly poisonous to people and animals. It is particularly dangerous because it has no colour, no smell and no taste.

If your heating appliance burns gas, coal or oil, carbon monoxide can be produced if the appliance has not been installed properly or maintained each year. You should make sure there is enough ventilation for the appliance.

Here are some important points you need to watch out for. They may show that your heating appliance is not working properly.

- Staining, sooting or discolouration on the appliance or on the decorations around it.

- A yellow or orange flame instead of a normal blue flame.
- A strong smell when the appliance is working.
- Effects on your health such as headaches, sickness, stinging eyes or tiredness.

**If you notice any of these signs, or are concerned in any way, stop using the appliance immediately and phone the Customer Call Centre for advice on 0800 012 1431.**

## **Condensation**

Too much moisture in the air within your home causes condensation. When the moist air meets a cold surface such as a wall or a window, the air cools and turns into droplets of water. If this happens regularly, mould can start to grow. Because of this, many households who have condensation think they have damp in their property.

If your home suffers from condensation, you should reduce the amount of moisture in your home by doing the following.

- Keep your home as warm as you reasonably can, but try to allow some ventilation, such as keeping trickle vents open.
- Do not allow kettles and pans to boil for longer than necessary. If possible, cover pans.
- Dry washing outside whenever possible.
- Do not dry washing on radiators.
- Do not allow steam to travel into other rooms. Close the kitchen door when cooking and washing.
- Avoid using paraffin or portable gas heaters.
- Use extractor fans where fitted.
- Make sure tumble dryers have an outside vent.

If the condensation does not dry out, it will cause mould and mildew, which can ruin personal items in your property.

## **Safety checks**

By law, we must carry out a safety check on any home with heating appliances. This includes checking flues and making sure there are no leaks. When we have carried out the check, we will issue a safety certificate. We will give you a copy of the certificate, which you should keep in a safe place.

These checks and any work on heating appliances and equipment should only be carried out by someone on the Gas Safe Register and who we have authorised to do so.

We will make an appointment with you to carry out the safety check. If you are not in when we call, we will leave a card that gives instructions on how to make another appointment. We will also send a letter asking you to call and make another appointment.

After three failed calls, we will start legal proceedings to gain access to your home. If this happens, you will incur costs.

It is important for your safety that we carry out this check. Always ask any caller to show you their identification.

If your current safety certificate has run out or is about to run out, and we have not made arrangements to visit your home, please phone the Building Maintenance team to arrange an appointment. (see the 'Contact Details' section).

You should report gas leaks by phoning 0800 111 999. You should also report any problems with heating appliances in the normal way by phoning the Customer Call Centre on 0800 012 1431.

## **Smoke alarms**

All the smoke detectors we fit in our properties are connected to the mains power supply as well as having a battery backup.

It is important that you test any alarm regularly. First check that the green mains indicator light is on (the red light on the cover should also flash every 40 seconds). Press the button for 10 seconds and the red light on the cover should flash while the horn is sounding. The alarm will stop when you release the button.

It is also important to clean your alarm regularly. This can be done easily with your vacuum cleaner nozzle and will reduce the risk of false alarms. Please remember that the alarm is connected to the mains power supply, so do not remove the cover or put anything in it.

Many of the new smoke detectors installed will also have a remote control switch. This allows you to test the detector (which should be done weekly), locate (when more than one detector is installed) and to hush the detector in the event of a false alarm. The hush function will not silence the detector in the event of a real fire. All these functions can be carried out from the switch which is in a safe and convenient location on a wall in your home.

If the alarm goes off and there is no sign of smoke, heat or noise, you should get your family to a safe place before investigating. If the alarm goes off for no reason and will not reset, please call the customer call centre on 0800 012 1431 to report the fault.

Make sure you have a planned escape route in case there is a fire. Do not open a hot door, and close any doors you go through. If smoke is heavy, crawl out and stay close to the floor and walls. Do not stop for anything and call the fire brigade as soon as possible.

## **Planned and cyclical maintenance**

Planned and cyclical maintenance is how we make sure that your home is well looked after in the long term. For this reason, we aim to repair and paint your home every five years through a cyclical maintenance programme.

We will also make other programmed and renewal improvements to our properties, depending on what funding is available. These improvements include installing or refurbishing central heating, PVC-u double glazing, and kitchens and bathrooms.

We will write to you before we are due to carry out any planned maintenance that will affect your home. This will usually be about a month before any programme is due to start in your area. After this we, or the contractor who will be doing the work, will liaise with you as to any specific requirements you may have and to discuss any colour choices and the like. The contractor will contact you again five days before the work is due to start on your home to remind you.

Note: Many of our tenants who have recently had gas central heating installed have received advertisements from companies inviting them to take out insurance for servicing and maintaining the central heating. We are responsible for servicing and maintaining your central-heating system and, by law, must service your boiler, and we employ qualified gas engineers and contactors to do this work. Please ignore any offers of extra insurance, and rest assured that we have it covered.

# Tenant involvement

Cartrefi Conwy believes that involving tenants in our decision-making will lead to an improved housing service for all. As part of our commitment to addressing the housing needs of communities, we provide ongoing support to tenants, enabling them to play an active role in our organisation and ensuring that they have a say in the issues that affect them.

The Community Involvement team works to increase tenant involvement in the services provided by Cartrefi Conwy by improving communication, creating and developing opportunities for tenants to influence decision making, and supporting tenant groups to find local solutions to local problems.

The team realises that everyone is different and will prefer different ways of expressing their views. To encourage a free flow of information and involvement, the team coordinates a number of initiatives, from full involvement in the Tenants' Forum to receiving information in the form of newsletters, to hopefully appeal to each person's individual taste. A 'Menu of Involvement' has been designed in consultation with tenants and offers a full range of ways tenants can be involved.

We are committed in all our involvement work to empowering tenants to influence change, and to ensure that the way we work allows people of all ages to play an active part.

To find out more contact the Community Involvement Team on 01492 805529.

*Tenants' associations* – To find out if there is a tenants' association in your area, phone 01492 805529. If there is not an association in your area and you are interested in starting one, please contact us. We would be pleased to offer help and advice.

*Tenants' Forum* – The Tenants' Forum was launched in December 2002. The idea behind the forum was to bring tenants from across the county together to discuss housing and related issues, and to refer any questions or concerns directly to senior officers. The aim of the forum is to promote tenant input into decision-making.

We are fully committed to working together with the Tenants' Forum to improve the service it provides to tenants.

If you are one of our tenants and would like more information about the Tenants' Forum, or would like to come to a forum meeting, please phone us on 01492 805529 or e-mail [enquiries@cartreficonwy.org](mailto:enquiries@cartreficonwy.org).

*Tenant newsletters* – We distribute this publication to all tenants at least once a year. It contains information about tenancies and relevant issues and news. We also use it as a way of finding out tenants' views. Please contact us if you would like to contribute to the next issue. We welcome all contributions from tenants.

### **What if I don't want to get involved?**

It's fine if you don't want to get involved. We will always keep you informed and will consult you about matters that affect you.

# Moving on

## **Can I be transferred from my current property to another property?**

We have a transfer register for our properties. You can ask us to add your name to this by filling in an application form, which you can get from your area office. When filling in this form, please give as much detail as possible about why you want to move – we will only transfer you if there is good reason to do so. Your estate officer can provide guidance on this. We will assess your points in the same way as a standard application.

In some areas, and for certain types of property, there are lengthy waiting lists. Your property must also be clean, tidy and undamaged, and your rent account clear before any transfer can take place.

## **What about moving to another area?**

There are organisations that can help you move to other areas whether it is short- or long-distance.

Please try the following website [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)

## **Mutual exchanges**

This is a way of swapping your home with another housing-association tenant or local authority tenant who also wants to move. The other person may live in the Conwy borough or another local-authority area.

To apply for a swap, ask your area office for a mutual exchange form. Each area office keeps a file of information on tenants wanting to swap, so you can find someone to swap with. When you find someone to swap with, you must apply to us for permission. If you intend swapping with someone who is not one of our tenants, they must contact their landlord for permission too.

You must not owe us any rent and must not have broken your tenancy conditions before you will get our permission to exchange. We will give this to you in writing. If you exchange without our permission, we can force you to move back.

The date of the exchange will always take place on a Monday. It must be agreed by the two people swapping, as well as the landlord of each of the properties.

If you are exchanging with someone who is not a tenant of ours, we will need references from their landlord before the exchange can happen.

## **Buying your home**

### **Who can buy their home?**

There are exceptions where it is not possible to exercise the Right to Buy or Acquire, these are set by the Government and include properties such as those in sheltered housing.

### **Preserved Right to Buy**

If you were a secure tenant of Conwy County Borough Council before your home was transferred Cartrefi Conwy, you may have what is known as the Preserved Right to Buy. This means that you can buy your home for a reduced price. The Preserved Right to Buy only applies if you were living in your home in September 2008 and are still living there.

### **Right to Acquire**

If you have become a new tenant of Cartrefi Conwy since October 2008 then you may be able to buy your home, this is called a Right to Acquire. This applies to properties a council or housing association built or bought on or after 1 April 1997.

However, it only applies if the Government gave the council or housing association funding towards the cost of building or buying the properties. You must also meet one of the following criteria:

- If your tenancy began before 18 January 2005 you can buy your property if you have spent at least two years as a public sector tenant.
- If your tenancy began after 18 January 2005, you will become eligible to buy your property once you have spent at least five years as a public sector tenant.

The property cannot be sold for less than it cost to build. A small discount is available to help tenants buy their home under the Right to Acquire.

For more information on the above from the official Government website, please visit [www.communities.gov.uk/housing/buyingselling/ownershipschemes/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/buyingselling/ownershipschemes/).

To find out if you qualify for the Preserved Right to Buy or the Right to Acquire, please contact the Leasehold and Right to Buy Officer, who is based at Head Office, to discuss your options (see the 'Contact details' section).

# Customer care

## **Getting your views across**

We are committed to customer care. That's why we are keen to hear your views on any part of the service we provide.

We have a separate leaflet on Customer Care and another on our Complaints procedure. This is to make sure that any comments, compliments or complaints we receive go to the right place so we can deal with any issues promptly and efficiently.

To obtain a copy of any of our leaflets, please contact your area office.

# Other information

## **Applying for housing**

If you know someone who is not one of our tenants but would like to apply for housing with us, please refer them to their nearest Area Office.

## **Housing Benefit**

If you need any help or want to apply for Housing Benefit, please contact Conwy County Borough Council's Housing Benefit Department, who are based at Bodlondeb, Conwy, LL32 8DU, or phone 01492 574000 or e-mail [hben.enquiries@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:hben.enquiries@conwy.gov.uk).