



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing  
Cymru



# Good Practice Compendium

Sharing the lessons learnt from the  
Welsh Housing Awards 2022

Headline sponsor:



# Welcome

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The Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) Royal Charter says that our purpose is to "promote the art and science of housing." We must act, not just in the interest of our members, but in the wider public interest and that is the test against which we measure everything we do.

A large part of the work we do at CIH is about identifying, recognising and disseminating knowledge, skills and good practice.

Awards are an important part of this process. The entries we receive often highlight excellent or innovative practice, which directly impacts the homes and services experienced by tenants, residents and communities.

We share that good practice in a number of ways - through our exclusive free-to-member events, through our member briefings, and through our annual portfolio of webinars, round tables and networking opportunities. We do this not only to share learning, but to highlight and celebrate individuals and organisations who making a positive difference.



**Matt Dicks**  
national director, CIH Cymru

A central part of this approach in Wales is the Welsh Housing Awards, and from that, the accompanying Good Practice Compendium, which I believe, is one of the most important publications that CIH Cymru produces each year.

It is the publication that pulls together examples and case studies of how you and your communities make a difference in your local area, but also to wider public policy objectives that make a difference to all our lives.

And the importance of sharing that good practice has taken on an even greater significance as we continue to navigate our way through the cost of living crisis and the impact that it is having on the operating environment that we face as housing professionals.

If we don't share good practice, how are we to improve the service we provide to our tenants? We will continue to share that practice with our members and the wider sector.

And if we're proud to be housing professionals, which we should rightly be, then we should also be proud to learn!

		Page
<b>Communications in a crisis</b>		<b>6</b>
Caerphilly Homes Connects	Caerphilly County Borough Council	6
<b>Excellence in customer service</b>		<b>8</b>
Come Rent This Way	United Welsh	8
Ranting or Raving	Tai Calon Community Housing	10
What Matters to You & Kindness First	Aelwyd Housing	11
<b>Excellence in health and wellbeing</b>		<b>13</b>
Community Together	Caredig Housing Association	13
Vision Friends	RNIB Cymru	14
Wellbeing Team	Pobl	16
<b>Excellence in housing innovation</b>		<b>18</b>
Building State of The Art Energy Efficient Homes	Creating Enterprise	18
Delivering Comfortable, Low Carbon Homes Using Whole House Energy Systems	Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE), Welsh School of Architecture	19
Getfit.Wales	Newydd Housing Association	21
Sustainable Energy Centre - Collaboration and Skills Project	Robert Price Builders Merchants Ltd	22
<b>Excellence in championing equality and diversity</b>		<b>24</b>
Leading the Way - A Sector Response to Addressing Racial Inequity at Board and Officer Level	Cardiff Community Housing Association	24
Tŷ Pride	Denbighshire County Council	26
<b>Working in partnership</b>		<b>28</b>
Cosy Place	Tai Calon Community Housing	28
Fit and Fed	Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association	29
Hospital to a Healthier Home	Care and Repair Cymru	30
Neighbourhood Learning Centre	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	32
Opening all Avenues	Bron Afon Community Housing	33
The Swansea Standard - providing affordable low carbon housing for the future	Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE), Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University	34
Working Together to Provide Homes for Essential NHS Staff	Cartrefi Conwy	36

*In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.*

<b>Supporting communities award</b>		<b>38</b>
A Digital Revolution in Social Housing	Newydd Housing Association	38
Academi Adra	Adra	39
Community Regeneration Programme	The Community Impact Initiative CIC	41
The Bridging Project	Neath Port Talbot Social Services	42
Tŷ Pantri	Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association	43
Working Families	United Welsh	44
Working Wardrobe	Moxie People	46
<b>Delivering high quality homes</b>		<b>48</b>
Cwrt Canna	Newydd Housing Association	48
Awel y Dyffryn	Grŵp Cynefin	49
Building Better Homes	Swansea Council	51
<b>Community focused contractor</b>		<b>53</b>
50 Days to Make a Difference	Lovell	53
<b>Positive placemaking</b>		<b>55</b>
Anglesey Community Growing Project	Isle of Anglesey County Council	55
Neighbourhood Learning Centre	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	56
The Mill, Canton	Lovell	57
<b>Supporting active living</b>		<b>59</b>
Older Peoples Activities	Grŵp Cynefin	59
Maes Y More Extra Care's Happy Health Living Project	Wales & West Housing	60
<b>Sustainability in housing</b>		<b>62</b>
Whole House Energy Retrofit of 6 Terraced Bungalows in Swansea Driving Towards Zero Carbon Targets	Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE), Welsh School of Architecture	62
Sustainable Energy Centre - Collaboration and Skills Project	Robert Price Builders Merchants Ltd	64
Retrofit Project at Glannant, Pembrokeshire	Wales & West Housing	65

*In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.*

<b>Housing team of the year</b>		<b>67</b>
Living Well team	United Welsh	67
Caerphilly Tenancy Support Team	Caerphilly County Borough Council	69
Housing Rents Team	Swansea Council	70
Housing Team	Grŵp Cynefin	71
Afghan Resettlement Support Team	Taff Housing Association	72
Project Impact	Wrexham County Borough Council	74

<b>Best housing story</b>		<b>75</b>
More Homes Team	Swansea Council	75

*In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.*



# COMMUNICATIONS IN A CRISIS

Sponsored by: **resource**  
Sustainable Creativity

In challenging times, being there for your community is exceptionally important. This award recognises landlords whose communication with their tenants and residents has been outstanding over the past year, keeping them informed and supported or helping them stay connected.

## Caerphilly Homes Connects

Caerphilly County Borough Council



### Statement of support

With a housing stock of over 10,600 homes, Caerphilly County Borough Council is one of the largest social landlords in Wales. The Covid-19 pandemic saw the council face unprecedented challenges, but it rose to the task and found a variety of ways to ensure it continued communicating with its large and diverse tenant base.

Caerphilly Council recognizes that 'one size doesn't fit all' and that a wide range of methods are needed to ensure it reaches as many tenants as possible with its communications.

At the onset of the pandemic we needed to communicate office closures and service changes to tenants quickly and effectively. The GovDelivery platform enabled us to upload tenants' email addresses and send e-bulletins providing vital updates. We have continued to use this method to send monthly updates to tenants, providing key housing updates.

Social media is a fast and efficient method of sending key messaging and we know from previous experience

that many tenants prefer to communicate with us via this method. Therefore we regularly use both the housing specific Caerphilly Homes accounts, alongside our main council social media channels, to send key housing messages and raise awareness of services available. As the council's Communications Unit provides support for over 600 services the campaign hashtag #YourHomesYourFuture is used to highlight housing related posts.

As a council we have developed strong links with local press which was incredibly important in enabling us to share good news stories, but also to ensure tenants are kept up to date on key service changes. We also proactively send releases to local press on any housing decisions taken at Cabinet level, as we believe openness and transparency is essential in building relationships with our tenants. Press releases are also uploaded to the news article of the council's website and shared via our social media channels and e-bulletins to ensure maximum coverage.

We understand that not all tenants have access to digital methods of communication so, in addition, we also send an annual newsletter to all council tenants and leaseholders providing them with key housing information and contacts. In addition, sheltered housing tenants receive their own dedicated newsletter four times a year and also each received well-being packs during the pandemic.

Having one to one contact is extremely important to many of our tenants, particularly those most vulnerable. During the pandemic housing staff undertook assurance calls to all tenants, including designated older persons' and general needs accommodation. These calls provided an opportunity to identify any support needs within households but also offered a friendly ear to those experiencing social isolation.

Many of our tenants also expressed the desire to meet with officers face to face and, in response, a series of community housing surgeries have been established throughout the county borough. These sessions offer an opportunity for tenants to meet with officers on their doorstep to discuss any housing related concerns or support they require.

We believe this demonstrates our commitment to using appropriate methods and approaches to ensure we reach our wide ranging tenant base, particularly during the unprecedented crisis brought about by the pandemic.

### Outcomes and achievements

The council's most recent household satisfaction survey showed that 89% of residents felt Caerphilly County Borough Council delivered communications well or very well during the pandemic; demonstrating our success in this area.

In a recent tenant satisfaction survey 86% of respondents stated that the wellbeing calls delivered by housing staff during the pandemic made them feel that the council cared about them.

Social media analytics (combined CCBC & Caerphilly Homes):

Facebook reach: 137,132

Facebook likes: 31,557

Twitter followers: 21,641

# EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

In a rapidly changing environment, the need to deliver excellent service is more important than ever. This award recognises housing teams who go above and beyond to deliver outstanding customer service.

## Come Rent This Way

### United Welsh



### Statement of support

United Welsh launched a cross-team project which considered how the organisation could maximise rental income while providing a great customer service.

We considered that the rent payment methods available to customers may be a barrier, and some methods did not provide good value for money.

A customer consultation was held in three formats (a longer online survey, a shorter phone survey and in-person surveys) to get feedback about:

- how well customers felt United Welsh's payment methods worked
- customer habits for paying other bills (such as frequency and channel)
- how our payment methods differed from the way customers paid other bills
- what payment methods customers prefer
- what new methods could be offered.

Over 220 customers responded. The key results were:

- Direct Debit was the preferred payment choice that tenants would be interested in transitioning to

- PayPal was joint second with 'online with a card'
- 20% said they would like to pay their rent differently. Most of this group were telephone line payers
- 25% said they don't pay their rent in the same way as their other bills (though only one person paid via Universal Credit) suggesting they may not be aware of easier options.

This feedback, coupled with cost analysis, helped us to consider how we could consolidate rent payment methods and support people to take-up more cost-effective, digital channels.

Consequently, we implemented PayPal and Klickpay, and introduced a 'payment wallet' to online channels so customers can securely store their card details for ease.

We then launched a communications campaign called 'Come Rent This Way' to engage a customer group (449 people) who were paying by rent cards and the telephone payment line. This meant staff resources were dedicated to supporting people who may need more help with using a digital method (as they currently weren't).

The campaign was designed to:

- Raise awareness of existing payment methods such as Direct Debit and new methods such as PayPal and our re-launched app, TED: <https://bit.ly/3MlzixL>
- Support customers to transition to a different payment method if they wanted to

The campaign used different communication formats to accommodate different needs:

- Bright 'Come Rent This Way' branding was designed to make the campaign visually engaging, and used across all related content online and offline to help customers to recall the campaign and messages

- Personalised, plain English letters were sent to customers in standard print and large print. The content changed depending on what payment method the recipient used. The letters gave appointment times with Rent Officers, offering phone and video calls
- Follow-up texts were sent to customers who didn't engage with the appointments
- A website and Facebook campaign ran throughout the period; using customer feedback to inform the key messages. The Facebook campaign posts generated 14,648 impressions and 600 engagements.
- Print materials such as rent letters and our customer Welcome Guide were updated with the campaign to inform and signpost people.

The campaign was also communicated to staff via project meetings, MS Teams and our staff newsletter, Core Brief.

The appointment results were:

- 46% of customers identified as regular Rent Card users at PayPoint and Post Office (207 of 449) took up appointments

- 50 people changed to Direct Debit, 55 people changed to online payment and 102 people said they will consider changing in future or don't want to change
- 5 people changed from Standing Orders to Direct Debit

We also conducted a sample phone survey with almost 30 tenants to evaluate the campaign communications:

- How much did you like the content and style of the campaign communication (1 'not at all' - 5 'loved it'). Average response: 4
- How clear and easy was the payment methods communication to understand (1 'not at all' - 5 'loved it'). Average response: 4
- How much did the communication make you feel supported to change your payment method (1 'not at all' - 5 'loved it'). Average response: 4

United Welsh is continuing to proactively promote rent payment methods across all channels, and the next phase of the direct marketing campaign will be planned to coordinate with Universal Credit migration.

## Outcomes and achievements

The payment methods project launched by United Welsh was a cross-team effort involving colleagues across the business, from colleagues in customer-facing roles such as Rent Officers and Customer Engagement Coordinators, through to resources teams such as Communications and IT.

The project group were formed to consider how rental income could be maximised while providing a great customer service, and the direction of the project was steered by consultation with customers about payment methods and habits.

Acting on feedback from customers, United Welsh consolidated their rent payment methods; launching new channels and a new campaign to support people to transition to a different payment method if they wanted to.

United Welsh's campaign used a variety of methods to engage audiences with varying needs. Personal

support was provided to a targeted customer group to help them to transition to a digital rent payment method, and the campaign tactics maximised opportunities for other customers to learn about payment methods and choose a channel that suits them.

Customers responded well to the campaign and the project has created savings for the business, with more cost-effective rent payment processes being adopted.

For example, the value of Direct Debit payments increased by £2.3m in 2021/22 compared with the year before, and the value of Rent Card payments decreased by £427K for the same period. United Welsh's gross rent arrears also reduced from 3.76% to 3.23% in 2021/22 compared to the year previous.

# Ranting or Raving

## Tai Calon Community Housing



### Statement of support

When Tai Calon developed its new 2020-2025 corporate plan we set out a clear objective of achieving 90% customer satisfaction by 2025. As soon as this was done, it became clear that our current approach to collecting customer feedback wasn't going to be sufficient to help us achieve our aspirational key objective.

Our traditional way of collecting feedback on day-to-day service delivery was predominantly phone and paper based. This was time consuming, expensive and led to feedback not being collected for several weeks after the service had been received. We also couldn't easily gather sufficient volume of feedback to generate detailed insight, typically only collecting 100-200 items per month.

With this as our starting point, we knew we needed to find a solution that allowed us to gather and analyse higher volumes of feedback, in a simple, flexible, and intuitive way and that's when we made the decision to work with Rant and Rave.

Once we developed our requirements, agreed what we wanted to ask our customers, which included reducing our survey questions to just two. Pace was important and we were up and running in a matter of weeks. To make it easy, quick and free for our customers we started collecting customer feedback via SMS, email and web-based surveys. Crucially these were all channels that our customers said they liked and were actively using to engage with us.

Very quickly we knew our investment was worthwhile, receiving around 300 items of feedback a month, at

a response rate of over 20%. We now collect insight direct from customers the day after they had a service from us. Along with a scored customer satisfaction question (with a range of scores from 1 to 5) we now use an open question asking why, this question specifically generated new insights about what made a great service experience.

The initial phase of our transition to working with Rant and Rave has seen two significant benefits. Firstly, we knew almost instantly if customers weren't happy, which meant we could call them to resolve things the same day. The second was the ability to share great customer feedback about our staff directly with them in real time, both of which wasn't possible using our old approach.

This helped us build significant momentum in our objective to reach 90% customer satisfaction. Having real time, daily customer insight to share and learn from shifted the conversations in everyday work to ones focused on improving customer experience and raising levels of customer satisfaction.

Within a few months our response rates increased to over 25% which meant collecting around 600-750 items of feedback every month. As this insight has built and through using the dashboards provided by Rant and Rave, we can also easily see patterns emerging about the main drivers of satisfaction and consequently where we needed to pay attention to make improvements.

We learned quickly that our customers were overwhelmingly positive about our staff, having received over 4,500 items of feedback referring specifically to high levels of professionalism, politeness, and helpfulness of staff, comments included

"Good polite staff and service done professional"

"Pleasant and polite and great communication"

"I stressed about my situation, and she was very helpful so put my mind at ease"

We also learned more about what was causing higher levels of dissatisfaction, which included our capability to deliver services right first time, the time it took to fully complete repairs and the speed at which we were able to deal with customers' requests and queries. From this insight we set to work on focussing our efforts on where we could make improvements.

## Outcomes and achievements

We analysed over 8500 items of feedback across front-line services creating over 10,000 pieces of data and comments on which we could take action. This data has led to several improvements being made to the customer experience business wide, with the most significant changes in our reactive repairs and maintenance services. Based on the insights we gathered we have already:

- Changed the way we plan and prioritise work, creating more flexible appointment for customers
- Commissioned new services where we knew our capability was falling short of providing the service our customers expected.

- Improved our processes for how we deal with jobs that required either more time to complete or more than one visit to fix. This resulted in work getting done quicker and customer communication improving.

Our improvement work has seen customer satisfaction scores across our repairs and maintenance service increase from 86% in May 21 to 94% in August 2022.

A great comment from a customer sums up where we want to get to.. "The service was quicker than I thought it would take and the electrician was friendly, open, down to earth, he made me feel like there wasn't a stranger in my house! Honestly perfect service!"

# What Matters to You & Kindness First

## Aelwyd Housing



### Statement of support

Aelwyd Housing operates across South Wales and provides homes primarily to people over 55 years of age. In 2020 the organisation went through a period of huge transition with a new Leadership Team, and the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of services. The lockdown period was a significant cultural lesson for the organisation in the importance of personal contact and kindness to residents at a time when loneliness and isolation was felt by so many. The experience led the Board to review the organisation's Values. Consequently, Aelwyd Housing's new values were Compassion, Relationship, Embracing, Excellence, and Justice.

The organisation has since transformed the way in which it delivers services with two key approaches; 'What Matters to you?' and 'Kindness First'.

The 'What Matters to you?' approach means that services are delivered in a personalised bespoke way as much as possible. Residents are asked to talk about the things that matter to them as individuals and services are adjusted accordingly. All Aelwyd Housing staff including the Leadership Team answer calls from residents and time is taken to know the name and circumstances of every resident. No member of staff

is detached from contact with residents, and this has helped develop a whole organisation empathetic culture with vastly improved communication.

Resident feedback suggested they prefer face to face and telephone contact to letters, so in addition to existing services, a programme was introduced to visit all residents at home at least once a year to ask them about the organisation's performance and if anything can be done better. It is also an opportunity to check on resident welfare and identify support and property issues. Staff at all levels including the Chief Executive are part of this programme.

Case Study: A resident with Dementia frequently switched his freezer off resulting in significant food waste and financial cost. The Association was made aware of the issue. The socket was moved and fitted with a lockable box to prevent this happening again.

The 'Kindness First' approach is applied to every interaction with residents whatever the issue. It simply means to be kind and have compassion. This has led to a move away from standard letters, targets, and punitive enforcement action, with an individualised approach to customer service. The 'Kindness First' approach means staff go the extra mile to support and advocate for residents. The organisation has also achieved Dementia Friendly accreditation, and this has informed how services are delivered to ensure tenancy sustainability. During the past year the Association has also ended all Assured Shorthold tenancies to give residents parity of security of tenure.

Case study: A door knocking exercise was carried out as part of the programme to visit all residents at home. A resident indicated he had a repair, and the staff member was able to access the home. It was observed that the resident needed support due to self-neglect and needed basic possessions. The organisation was able to provide support through its Resident Welfare Fund and worked with the resident to ensure appropriate support from health agencies.

The 'Kindness First' approach also applies to allocations. Applicants are asked about the things that matter to them and this informs the void works carried out and the choice given before moving in. As excellence is also an Association Value, attention to detail is applied at the allocations stage, with a high

letting standard, and the aspiration that new residents should be delighted with their home. All new residents are given a Welcome Pack with a greeting card from the organisation and surveyed shortly after they have moved in.

## Outcomes and achievements

The approach to customer service has delivered tangible outcomes. Repairs are arranged through phone contact, not letters, with every interaction recorded on a database that staff can access. This has reduced missed appointments, with 98% of appointments kept. Income management has improved with no standard letters but a kind personalised approach instead. There are no income management targets to drive staff behaviour. The result is exceptionally low debt owed to the Association (Net arrears 0.5%).

The 'What matters to you?' approach means that the Association is 100% compliant on gas and electrical safety testing. New resident satisfaction levels are at 100%.

Welsh Government Tenant Satisfaction (May 2022) showed that Aelwyd Housing the highest satisfaction levels of all traditional housing associations in almost all categories, with 98% of residents happy with the quality of their home, and 97% feeling that their rent offered value for money.

Thank you for the kind manner towards Mum this morning. You were so kind and empathetic, and we really appreciated that. Mum sang your praises all the way home (Mrs S)

Excellent service. Top marks from me (Mr T)

The workmen are also kind and courteous, and can't do enough to help you when they come (Mrs M)

# EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Sponsored by:



This award is for organisations that have demonstrated excellence in their approach to the health and wellbeing of staff and/or residents over the past year. It celebrates new projects or initiatives which have improved health and wellbeing.

## Community Together

**Lead organisation: Caredig Housing Association**

**Partner organisation: Swansea City Council**



### Statement of support

Community Together started in October 2021 and is a new service which aims to reimagine community integration for people with mental health challenges living across Swansea. The services focus is on users of OASIS service (Opportunities for Accommodation and Support Information Service) in Swansea.

It is a pilot project exploring a new approach to how people integrate with their community based on the 'Trampoline Effect'. The aim is to bridge people into their community (trampoline them), rather than rely on social safety nets and risk-focused approaches that have been used in the health and social care sector.

Caredig wanted to explore how the sector can move away from focussing on keeping people safe,

typically surrounded solely by other service users and professionals, to enabling people to live flourishing exciting lives - the life we'd want for ourselves.

The project commenced at a pivotal time for communities as it followed covid 19 lockdowns. Since covid, Community Together has been at the heart of the OASIS community, supporting the growth and development of the community as a whole and has hugely benefited service users.

The project goes to OASIS services and has conversations with service users, finding out what they would be interested in doing within their community. It then assesses the resources that are currently available and links them with these services. If there is not anything available, it will support the service user in setting up a group. This is done by hiring a freelancer, eg an artist to run an art club, and organising a venue, time, and day in collaboration with the service user. The group is then advertised to OASIS service users, and then the wider community.

By understanding the barriers that service users face, the project works to overcome them eg for a neurodiverse service user who finds sensory stimuli triggering a group was established where the lights and music could be turned down whilst it was on.

It has been incredibly rewarding to see the impact that the project has had on service users, who have historically struggled to integrate with their communities.

24 new community groups have been established across Swansea, eg Nail Art, DJing, in partnership with 16 different organisations including third sector, statutory and freelance practitioners. Service users can volunteer and earn Time Credits, which are used towards free meals, cinema tickets etc.

In the first 10 months of Community Together, 205 Service Users have engaged and the Facebook Group has 2200 members.

Community Together is co-productive with the activities and opportunities born out of the likes, interests, and needs of service users. Service users who are 'in charge' of their activities get greater enjoyment and stay engaged.

Hear from Community Together users:

"I feel like my ideas are listened to - I said I always wanted to work in a café so Nic came and spoke to me about a new group she was doing in Morriston and asked if I would like to volunteer by serving the teas and coffees".

Just wanted to say a massive thank you for allowing us to join the Chinese cooking course. I initially joined this group as a sort of therapy for my son who has been diagnosed with psychosis and we have found that cooking helps him. Whilst the cooking lesson was amazing, sitting at a table eating while conversing with a group of people, laughing and putting the world to rights (all strangers) was the best therapy of all!"

"I don't like big crowds and Nicola has listened to that. Like we don't go fishing on a Saturday as that's a busy day".

## Outcomes and achievements

In 10 months 205 Service Users have engaged with Community Together and 24 new community groups have been established. The Facebook Group has 2200 members. It has had a significant impact on the OASIS community as a whole and individuals. As the Service is person centred everyone has their own health and wellbeing outcomes:

"I attend several groups which has helped me immensely. My Social Worker suggested the group to me and it has been a blessing to my life. On days when I don't have any purpose, it gives me a reason to smile. "

"I have joined two groups of Community Together: Cookery and Creative Writing. It is accessible to anybody. The groups are friendly, and non-judgmental, I have met people from different ethnic groups. The activities have helped me to meet new people, to get out of the house, it has helped me to socialize, and it has helped me with my depression and social anxiety.

Brilliant! I love it! I attended the Music Production Group with Rewrite. I'm not great at writing or spelling and they really helped me and I didn't feel stupid. They even called the song after me. It made me feel special.

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## Vision Friends

RNIB Cymru



### Statement of support

The Vision Friends project began in 2020 and has already trained 150 housing staff on how to understand eye conditions, identify signs of sight loss, access eye care services and improve the built environment to increase independence.

The two modules on the built environment talk about features such as colour contrast and lighting which can enable people to make the most of the eyesight that they have. The Vision Friends project has worked in partnership with 11 housing associations.

Christopher Thomas, Safeguarding and Service Standards Coordinator for Trivallis said: "Our work with the Vision Friends project has helped consolidate and build upon the work we have done with the RNIB Visibly Better Standards throughout the years. The training was comprehensive and enlightening and has given our team the essential skills and insight needed to best support our tenants with sight loss."

As a result of our Vision Friends training, staff have an improved understanding of the impact of sight loss on people's wellbeing, their everyday activities, and how it can contribute to falls. They report not only understanding sight loss and different eye conditions better, but also gained an insight into how they affect people's lives. Our project evaluation shows significant improvements in the confidence of staff in providing

support to people with sight loss; particularly in suggesting useful aids and adaptations that can support people with sight loss to complete everyday activities, and improvements and adaptations to living environments. Many participants talked about how the training had helped them to understand what physical changes could be made to living areas to help people with sight loss or potential sight loss, as well as the value of specially designed devices and appliances that make everyday life easier for people with sight loss.

Vision Friends is making a tangible difference to the daily lives of older people with sight loss in Wales in a number of ways.

Some examples of the changes that have benefited and improved the overall wellbeing of people with sight loss included:

Increased referrals to eye tests brought about by new knowledge.

Introduction and use of home aids to support everyday activities, including bump on stickers for appliances and magnifiers to continue activities such as reading and knitting. This has also connected tenants with the Wales Low Vision Service for tailored support where needed.

Changes to the living environment including improvement of lighting and increased suitability (furniture)

Provided information and support on how to use accessible features on tablets, such as iPads. Previously tenants were saying they didn't want a tablet as they were not sure how to use it due to with sight loss. This supports independence and connectivity for tenants.

Housing staff fed back that they now have better awareness of eye conditions like Charles Bonnet Syndrome. A condition which causes the brain to create hallucinations when it no longer receives messages from the eye. Tenants can fear talking about the hallucinations they have due to sight loss and become isolated and lonely. Better equipping people with the knowledge of the condition can encourage those affected to speak out and seek support.

'What has been good has been hearing about the different eye conditions and hearing it from the people who have those eye conditions. That has been really powerful.' (participant)

'I think for the people who have done the training, it's given us more of an understanding of how people struggle to access services as well. We want to be able to signpost people to get support.' (participant/manager)

## Outcomes and achievements

The Vision Friends project has trained 150 housing staff in 11 housing associations on how to understand eye conditions, identify signs of sight loss, access eye care services and improve the built environment to increase independence. Some examples of the changes that have benefited and improved the overall wellbeing of people with sight loss included:

- Increased referrals to eye tests brought about by new knowledge.
- Introduction and use of home aids to support everyday activities, including bump on stickers for appliances and magnifiers to continue

activities such as reading and knitting. This has also connected tenants with the Wales Low Vision Service for tailored support where needed.

- Changes to the living environment including improvement of lighting and increased suitability (furniture)
- Provided information and support on how to use accessible features on tablets, such as iPads. Previously tenants were saying they didn't want a tablet as they were not sure how to use it due to with sight loss. This supports independence and connectivity for tenants.

# Wellbeing Team

## Pobl



### Statement of support

Pobl is the Welsh word for 'people' and they truly are at the heart of our decision making. We proactively approach wellness by continually engaging with our 2500 colleagues. We have created an internal colleague wellbeing team to add to the existing offer of an employee assistance programme and our external counselling contract. The internal team is made up of three highly qualified specialists delivering services in wellbeing coaching, transpersonal coaching, CBT counselling and trauma intervention services. Referrals are confidential and receive a response within 24 hours. Between April 2021 to March 2022, 864 colleagues reached out for wellbeing support from the team. Due to the challenge of the last few years our focus has been on psychological and emotional wellbeing.

We support this by:

- Providing confidential wellbeing support accessible to all
- Having a health and Wellbeing page on our intranet with resources, links to websites, podcasts, and a wellbeing directory.
- Delivering individual coaching sessions to colleagues and teams
- Delivering reflective practice sessions to individuals and teams to develop resilience
- Providing trauma support after incidents in services such as death and physical violence.
- Delivering free internal counselling within two weeks of initial contact
- Delivering Mental health first aid and connect 5 training in house
- Running social wellbeing events alongside small gifts and acts of kindness throughout the year.
- Providing support for people exiting Pobl with interview coaching to transition well to another role

Feedback from sessions:

"Accessing the internal coach helped me make sense of my feelings and gave me a variety of tools to help me cope and be a good leader to those I line manage. Forever grateful."

"I really don't know where I'd be without the support. I was in a very bad place and really didn't feel I could get out of there, but the counsellor was amazing and had so much time to listen to me and help me get through it. Thank you so much."

We promote physical wellbeing by:

- Having run free online high intensity interval training and yoga
- Running three virtual mindfulness sessions every week
- Providing webinars and blogs regularly on nutrition and physical health
- Promoting active lifestyles with competitions and challenges
- Having an agile working policy to provide flexibility in workplace for colleagues to design their day.
- Implementing a meeting free period between 12.30 and 1.30 each day.

Financially we have had Pobl choices discount scheme and our Pobl loan scheme offering small loans with low interest. We continue to support financial wellbeing by:

- Having free financial advice accessible to colleagues
- Providing webinars and live Q&A's with experts on topics such as fuel poverty
- Providing the latest resources and organisations on the wellbeing directory
- Promoting the Blue Light card scheme.
- Offering everyone working from home £250 to purchase office equipment

The wellbeing team continue to meet monthly with key people across the business, including the HR Director to ensure the wellbeing needs are being met by those colleagues who are subject to a HR process. As well as this, the ability to be reactive to current events is also maintained. Examples of this include talking to your children about COVID; the war in Ukraine and the effect of the news on your mental health.

There have been multiple campaigns to focus the positive culture including a nature photography competition as well as open webinars and Q&A sessions with experts. The wellbeing team have also compiled useful information regarding the current cost of living crisis by providing practical hints and tips for saving money or seeking available resources for those in need.

## Outcomes and achievements

The Wellbeing Team has provided a modern service for all colleagues as a resource for the wider business. Team managers and HR teams have incorporated wellbeing practices into their processes, which has seen the mental health related sickness continue to be low.

Not only are the services well received, but the team have also continued to be as pro-active as possible such as with the impact of the cost of living and energy increases. We have created a series of webinar with experts in financial wellbeing in short bitesize videos for all colleagues to access. The Wellbeing Team deliver the wider group using webinars, blogs

and campaigns. The most recent saw colleagues sharing their experiences during their own Mental Health journeys which, which encouraged an open and honest environment for other colleagues who might have been more reserved or reluctant in discussing issues that affect them.

The aim of the team is to meet people where they are and support them with anything that might be impacting their wellbeing. We will ultimately continue to listen to our colleagues using the Colleague Voice pulse surveys that have already had a significant impact on our colleague engagement and wellbeing.

# EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING INNOVATION

This award is aimed at programmes or projects which can demonstrate how they have developed an innovative approach which has made a real difference in the lives of tenants and customers. This could be any new product, service or technology; in any sphere, e.g. decarbonisation, demonstrating innovation is the key.

## Building state of the art energy efficient homes

### Creating Enterprise



### Statement of support

Creating Enterprise, a subsidiary of Cartrefi Conwy, started trading in 2015 and has quickly grown into the Social Contractor of Choice for North Wales. Born out of the need for Cartrefi Conwy to create new, commercial income streams to support its development programme, whilst offering employment opportunities to unemployed tenants, Creating Enterprise has quickly grown and become an internationally recognised Social Enterprise with a £11.8 million turnover last year alone.

In response to the increased demand to build good quality, energy efficient homes at pace we have now established our own offsite timber home manufacturing site in Rhyl, North Wales. Our Creating Enterprise Modular Solutions (CEMS) factory manufactures state of the art, energy efficient homes that are 'passivhaus' standard to a range of clients across North Wales. This is the first of its kind in Wales.

The beauty of offsite modern methods of construction is that the work relies on the precision application of low skills, thus barriers to entry are lower than for traditional construction work. Off-site manufacturing

therefore presents more job opportunities for those furthest from the job market. The simplicity of the system allows for quick and risk free manufacture and erection that is:

- Locally manufactured at any location using readily available materials, further reducing our carbon footprint
- Minimal on-site material wastage as the designs allows all materials to be measured within 1mm

And word is getting out that this is a great solution to the housing crisis. Over the last two years we have manufactured homes for a range of social housing providers including Anglesey Council, Denbighshire County Council and Clwyd Alyn as well as building a range of homes for our parent organisation, Cartrefi Conwy.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic we saw a large increase in people facing homelessness, particularly single people. In response we built eight single occupancy modular units on an old unused garage site in Colwyn Bay. These state of the art 'haus for one' units provide tenants with a comfortable, self-contained, energy efficient home that is a much more sustainable temporary accommodation option. You can see a tour of these homes here: <https://vimeo.com/455722900>

More recently we have completed four one bedroom bungalows on behalf of Anglesey council. Four older tenants are now enjoying the benefits of up to 80% savings on their energy bills and a range of other health and wellbeing benefits.

The Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) system creates a continuous, consistent airflow at room temperature, ensuring high indoor air quality. The filters remove airborne pollutants, reducing allergies for residents. One of the residents summed up what its

like to live in one of our homes “in my old flat I would have to wear lots of layers after 4pm, even in the summer months, but I love the constant temperature in my new home”.

We are also nearing the completion of 19 modular family homes in rural Conwy. The Glanrafon estate in Llanrwst had sadly taken on a bad reputation and many of the homes (built in the 1960’s) were no longer fit for purpose. In 2020 we decided to embark on a large scale regeneration programme which included

the complete refurbishment of some buildings and the demolition of a large block of maisonettes. These have now been replaced with state of the art family homes built to passive house standard. We are also creating a range of new outdoor spaces for families to enjoy for many years.

We look forward to welcoming our new tenants to the newly named Rhodfa Phil Evans (in memory of our much loved caretaker who looked after the estate for many years) later in 2022.

## Outcomes and achievements

Since we started trading in 2019 we have built 49 energy efficient homes, 30 of which have been built for other social housing providers. These include eight ‘haus for one’ self-contained units for those facing homelessness, 4 adapted bungalows and a range of family homes.

The CEMS factory has also diversified its portfolio to include the manufacturing of timber posi-joists and fencing for a range of clients across the north Wales area.

Providing skills and training opportunities to our tenants and the wider community is at the heart of everything we do at Creating Enterprise. Over the last two years the factory has employed six Cartrefi Conwy tenants through our Employment Academy, providing

them with ‘on the job’ experience, qualifications and one to one support.

As we build more homes, we aim to create many more employment opportunities over the coming years.

Here’s what one lady had to say after moving into her new passive house bungalow in Anglesey:

I’m over the moon with my new home! The construction and finish are fantastic. When I shut my front door I feel so secure – it’s so quiet! The house is always at an ideal temperature for me, even on the really hot days we had last week and in the colder weather. The technology in this home is incredible – I can’t get over how clever the fresh air and misting system are. It’s all amazing and I want to wing its praises from the rooftops.

# Delivering comfortable, low carbon homes using whole house energy systems

**Lead organisation: Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE), Welsh School of Architecture**

**Partner organisation: Wales and West Housing**



## Statement of support

Ten homes across South Wales have been retrofitted with innovative whole house energy systems as part of a collaboration between the Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE) team at the Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University and Wales and West Housing, supported by the Welsh European Funding Office. The homes have floor areas of between 67 m<sup>2</sup>

and 100 m<sup>2</sup> and have a range of heating systems.

A whole house system-based approach which combines reduced energy demand, renewable energy supply and storage has been taken. Energy demand reduction measures include insulation of the building fabric, low energy lighting and Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) or positive input ventilation (PIV). Photovoltaic (PV) solar panels have been installed at all homes to supply renewable energy and a transpired solar collector has been installed in one home to meet part of the space heating demand. A lithium-ion battery has been installed in each home to store energy which allowed excess generation from the PV solar panels to be used when energy demand peaks and solar energy is no longer available in the evenings. Upgrades to electrical works were undertaken to allow the integration of the technologies as a whole house energy system.

Thermal and energy modelling (HTB2) was carried out for each home, the results of which enabled stakeholders to make shared decisions about the most appropriate technologies to suit each home. The VirVil plugin for SketchUp was used to model solar radiation

and size the solar panels for available roof areas.

Monitoring also played a key role in decision making, with a comprehensive monitoring campaign taking place both before and after retrofit works.

Monitoring before retrofit helped the project team to understand how the homes were used, diagnose existing performance issues and calibrate modelling. Focussing on fabric, the LCBE team measured air tightness using blower door tests, walls' U-values and used a thermal camera to identify heat loss areas where treatment may be needed. Following the retrofits, monitoring data provides evidence on actual energy savings, performance of the individual measures together with the system as a whole. It can also be used to assess the quality of commissioning.

What is striking about the collaboration is that the team have successfully demonstrated that the whole energy system approach is applicable to a diverse range of typical Welsh homes, including hard-to-treat solid wall construction and modern cavity wall homes with a wide range of occupant numbers and behaviours. In many ways the whole house energy system is very flexible, allowing different solutions to be applied according to context. For example, projects have different heating systems, installing transpired

solar collectors and air source heat pumps or working with existing traditional fossil-fuel heating systems – in all cases delivering energy bill savings for residents and carbon savings.

The challenge was not only to select the most appropriate individual technologies but also to involve all necessary stakeholders at each different stage to ensure technologies work as a system. Effectively delivering these systems depends on informed, evidence-based decision making with frequent and clear communication and collaboration across the project team, supported by both modelling and monitoring. Engaging with the wider team (main contractor to the supply chain to individual residents) from planning, through to design, installation and operation enabled fewer errors to arise and therefore minimised costs and increased efficiency.

With 29 million homes in need of retrofit in the UK, developing strong project teams that can deal with the scale and scope of retrofit is essential. For this reason, the LCBE team continue to work with Wales and West Housing to promote and implement whole house energy systems.

## Outcomes and achievements

A comprehensive monitoring campaign provides evidence of the performance of each whole house energy system. Kate Solomon, Technical Contracts Manager for Wales and West Housing, highlighted that “monitoring before and after retrofitting has helped to inform our long-term investment strategies.”

Compared to a typical Welsh home (National Energy Efficiency Data-framework), the retrofits import up to 55% less energy from the National Grid and achieve SAP scores as high as 93 (A). Residents saved up to 65% on their energy bills and avoided nearly 1.6 metric tonnes of carbon emissions. Residents can offset their energy bills by selling electricity back to the grid.

It is not enough to deliver energy efficiency however: the collaboration succeeded in providing comfortable, high-quality homes for residents. Monitoring of indoor air temperatures proves the homes consistently achieve their desired heating setpoints and feedback in post-retrofit surveys shows residents are highly satisfied with their improved housing conditions.

Local supply chains have been involved in all projects and retrofit practices have developed significantly within Wales and West Housing. The collaboration continues to share knowledge with the wider sector through a collaborative Demonstration whole energy systems retrofit house being launched in Bridgend in Autumn 2022.

# Getfit.Wales

## Newydd Housing Association



### Statement of support

Lack of physical activity can lead to heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes. Despite this, physical activity levels worldwide are poor and have been decreasing over the decades. According to a report by Dr Tedros, the Director-General of World Health Organisation released to commemorate World Obesity Day 2022, about 1 billion people are obese worldwide, and it's estimated that approximately a further 167 million people will become less healthy by 2025.

Unfortunately, this is no different in Wales. Wales has a population of approximately 3 million people, of which approximately 664,000 are children and young people under the age of 18. Swansea University carried out research looking at physical activity data from 60 countries and found that children in Wales are among the world's least fit, stating that in 'WALES 2021 Active Healthy Kids (AHK) Report Card' only 13-17% of children aged 11-16 years meet the recommended guidelines for physical activity which is at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

To help address these concerning statistics, staff at Newydd set up an innovative Getfit.Wales pilot to test if the use of step trackers as a method of evidencing physical output amongst young people aged 13-16 living in Rhondda Cynon Taf, would increase physical activity if presented with incentives to local healthy vendors, leisure centres, local gyms, free healthy food options at the school canteen, and health shop vouchers as rewards for achieving their personal targets.

Providing access to local healthy vendors through our reward scheme has raised the profile of local

organisations, helped stimulate the regional economy and create and retain valuable jobs, supported families, and strengthened local communities.

Following positive results with the participants on the pilot, over the lockdown period, the project gained the support from Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Cardiff and the Vale Regional Health Boards; Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Cardiff and the Vale Research Improvement and Innovation hub; Public Health Wales; the University of Wales Trinity St David; and Wales Institute of Digital Information to help build upon this success and widen the age range of participants referred into the program.

National Survey for Wales 2019-2020 highlights the need for physical activity interventions such as Getfit.Wales to support the wider population to help tackle current and future population health. The survey results reported that only 53% of adults had been active for at least 150 minutes in the previous week. Physical activity rates were lower among women, older adults, and more deprived areas. 33% of adults were inactive (active less than 30 minutes the previous week).

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board has been a key driving force in identifying and referring participants with low physical activity levels from across Cwm Taf Morgannwg through their Wellness Improvement Service (WISE) programme.

Further support and referrals have come from Newydd Housing Association through their strong relationship and direct connection with tenants living in areas of multiple deprivation and, or long-term health conditions. The Welsh Index of multiple deprivation 2014 states that in Rhondda Cynon Taf, where Newydd are a key housing provider, 42% of people are living within health deprivation 'hotspots', as compared to the Welsh average of 19.3%. Furthermore, Newydd equality and diversity records show that at least 16% of our tenants have stated they are living with a long-term health condition.

Together, through Getfit.Wales and the support of the partnership, we have provided participants with free access to opportunities to improve their physical and mental health; promoted general wellbeing; and supported the reduction of lifestyle-related diseases which are worsened by deprivation, health inequality, and social isolation.

## Outcomes and achievements

During the last year, Getfit.Wales achieved the below outcomes:

- Over 100 participants registered and participated in Getfit.Wales
- Over 50 local healthy reward vouchers were accessed
- 100% of participants said the project has increased their awareness of local health provision

Participant testimonials:

Since I started this project, I personally didn't think I would do so well, but now a couple of months down the line, I'm reaching all my targets and am 2 stone lighter...

...I have used the rewards at the local butchers who has been fantastic with me.

Before joining I used to spend all my time on the sofa. The project has helped me get out, my husband and son now also come along with me which has been brilliant for us all.

Partner testimonials:

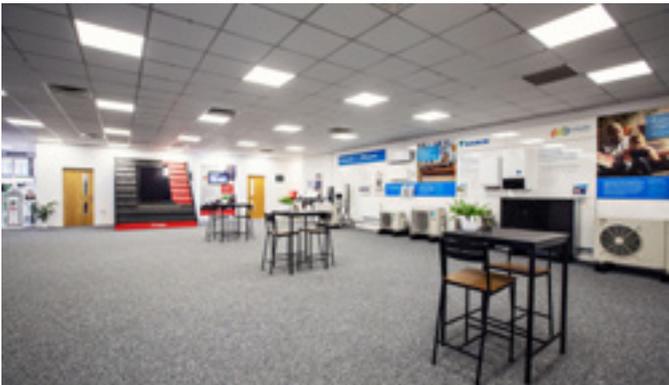
Getfit.Wales has encouraged our referrals to get out, get active and develop positive habits for life. Christie Williams (Youth Engagement Officer, RCT)

Getfit.Wales has continued to be a great support in helping us to motivate pupils to increase their physical activity levels and access local rewards, they are a great companion to have on board in our physical activity mission! Sarah Evans (PE Teacher, St Johns (CiW) High School).

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# Sustainable Energy Centre - Collaboration and Skills Project

Robert Price Builders Merchants Ltd



## Statement of support

Robert Price - Sustainable Energy Centre - Collaboration and Skills Project

"Excellence in housing innovation" award submission put forward by the Energy team at the Robert Price Sustainable Energy Centre.

What is innovation?

Innovation can be defined as developing innovative ideas leading to the creation of a new process or service. It is not just the invention of a new idea that is important; it is actually creating awareness, putting it into practice, and using it in a manner that leads to new services or systems that add value or improve quality. Innovation also means expanding modern technology and employing out-of-the-box thinking to generate new value and to bring about significant changes in society.

Why was the Sustainable Energy Centre created?

Legislative changes and the ever-increasing need

for environmental change has brought sustainability products firmly to the front of the Welsh housing agenda. With targets in place for the Welsh public sector to achieve net-zero carbon by 2030, the Centre was created to help housing providers overcome the problems and barriers that were hindering progress.

The Energy team hosted the Centre's Open Day on the 8th of June, and it was attended by one hundred and fifty people including Housing professionals, innovative technologies suppliers, Welsh Government, with eight innovative technology presentations throughout the day.

Although there were innovative technologies and solutions available, the market was showing a lack of awareness and understanding of how they could use them and take the journey to net-zero by 2030. The Centre was designed to make these innovative solutions accessible to the housing market from retrofit renovations to new build projects.

The lack of awareness and understanding highlighted a second barrier: the net-zero carbon skills shortage. Half of the current construction workforce will need training or retraining in one form or another, according to the Construction Industry Training Board's Skills for Net Zero Report and with the push for a net-zero public sector by 2030, this has become an increasingly important issue. The Centre was created to offer solutions and training, combatting these issues through offering in-house accredited installation training for the products supplied.

What does the Sustainable Energy Centre do?

The Sustainable Energy Centre is an innovative and unique approach to pushing sustainable construction

forward. The Centre has made a real difference in the lives of tenants and customers, helping the housing industry on their journey to net-zero by educating the industry on decarbonisation solutions.

The Centre comprises a dedicated showroom and an accredited training academy, created to inform customers on a wide range of sustainability products and renewable technologies within the construction

sector. It has been designed for registered social landlords, contractors, and tenants alike as the team understands how education throughout the supply chain is important to reaching net-zero. The Energy team has nurtured an environment where clients can collaborate and share successes and lessons learnt, allowing the industry to confidently step forward towards building a carbon neutral future.

## Outcomes and achievements

### Achievements of the SEC

- Engaged with a third-party training provider, delivering over 6000 hours of green skills training in the dedicated training academy so far.
- Collaborated with TPAS Cymru to host a NetZero Engagement Club, involving a "tour of a Net Zero technology centre, followed by a round table discussion with like-minded social housing staff who have an interest in net-zero. This is perfect for those who want to see and learn more about net-zero technology and its role in the new WHQS2 objectives."
- Engaged with local schools and held net-zero awareness days. The Energy team also presented to Green Sector Careers Week.
- The Centre has attracted visits from the likes of the Active Building Centre, Trustmark, and Optimised Retrofit skills programme, with the aim of collaboration to help the industry achieve net-zero in housing by 2030.
- The Energy team actively reaches out to social housing, offering everything from roadshows to in-house 'innovation weeks'.
- The Centre runs bespoke 'innovation mornings', designed to educate attendees on new green technologies and how they interact with each other. The Energy team has reached out and engaged with over 30 social landlords and, so far, delivering over 1500 hours of product education awareness training.

# EXCELLENCE IN CHAMPIONING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

This award recognises organisations leading in promoting equality and diversity in their business. It celebrates organisations which are driving positive, meaningful change and contributing to building a genuinely inclusive community.

## Leading the Way - A Sector Response to Addressing Racial Inequity at Board and Officer Level

**Lead organisation:** Cardiff Community Housing Association

**Partner organisations:** Taff Housing, Cadwyn, United Welsh, Linc Cymru, Hafod, Wales and West



### Statement of support

A partnership of 7 Housing Associations are working in committed collaboration to overcome barriers to racial equity by building strong, diverse and inclusive work cultures, ensuring workforces represent the communities in which they serve.

In 2021/22 two projects, Get into Housing and Pathway to Board, were launched with the aim of increasing ethnic diversity at both board and 'entry' officer level. These projects are at the heart of our

action for delivering meaningful and positive change for genuine inclusivity and have pathed the way for a long term strategic commitment in this area.

Get in to Housing has provided 40 paid entry level placements across the 7 housing associations for community members from an ethnically diverse background over the age of 25 who are long term unemployed. A variety of roles were available to ensure a range a skills, experience and future aspirations were catered for. The placements are 21 hours a week for 16 weeks. To effectively match the roles to employees the recruitment process was challenged and adapted to reduce the multiple barriers people face in securing employment. Cardiff Met delivered a NVQ level 2 housing qualification as part of the programme.

Officers provided bespoke, person centred support through mentoring. A barrier fund aided individual success at all stages of employment including pre employment. Support was not limited to employability outcomes, many participants have barriers due to poverty.

"I am ever so grateful for the get into housing project without the get into housing project I would have never even had a job I enjoy doing and the opportunities which came with it. I have learnt new valuable skills for life"

## Anwar, Get into Housing

Pathway to Board was created to address a distinct lack of ethnic diversity in Boards across Wales. It emanated from a number of recruitment exercises undertaken by Welsh Housing Associations where positive action to attract ethnically diverse candidates was taken. This highlighted that there is a plethora of brilliant people out there wanting to be Board Members but, recruitment processes presented barriers and, some participants were unclear of the role of a Board Member and the responsibilities. Pathway to Board was established to tackle both these issues.

The programme goal has never been just to change the profile of housing association Boards but rather to change the landscape of leadership in terms of ethnic diversity in statutory, third and private sectors Boards across Wales.

The success of the programme has been down to a robust, diverse training programme delivered by organisations that support the housing association sector e.g Centrus, Mazars, Blake Morgan, Hugh James, Acorn Executive, Academi Wales. The programme has attracted a wealth of talented

individuals who have gone through a varied programme of study focusing on the role of a Board Member; external and internal audit; experiential testimonies of Existing Board members and

Chief Executives; treasury management, team building and confidence building, good governance and interview skills. Throughout the programme participants have been allocated a mentor, an individual that currently sits on a Board to support and give advice

Fifteen participants have completed the programme as part of its very first cohort.

The programme is now in period of 'Board matching' i.e. matching participants to Boards. Anuja who recently was successful with Cynon Taff Housing Association said: 'I have received this unbelievable opportunity to join a board. This is a milestone in my career, and I intend to live up to it by serving the housing community. Given the support from Pathway to Board and the warm welcome from Cynon Taf, I am excited to be the voice representing the welfare of our tenants.'

## Outcomes and achievements

The true outcome of the projects is the whole organisational recalibration that is taking place across the seven housing associations. The projects have been the catalyst for reviewing our cross organisational approaches to recruitment and retention, the way we recruit Board members and what else we need to think about if we are serious about making the sector a place where everyone feels they can bring their whole selves to work or to a Board!!

Just 6 months into the project, Get in to housing has achieved many outcomes, having a real impact in the lives of people and communities who most need a

pathway to employment. 40 community members have been employed on placement with 11 already progressed into employment, the majority remaining within the housing sector. The project will run until December 2022 with investment being sought for continuation to refine, grow and improve the work already achieved.

Pathway to Board has resulted fifteen individuals that are Board Ready. We are currently in a period of 'Board matching' whereby one participant has already been recruited to a Board, two further participants are currently co-opted to a Board and many others are currently going through recruitment processes.

# Tŷ Pride

**Lead organisation: Denbighshire County Council**

**Partner organisations: Viva LGBTQ+, Llamau**



## Statement of support

Tŷ Pride is currently delivering its third year as a collaborative multi-agency specialist LGBTQ+ supported housing project designed to address the disproportionate representation of LGBTQ+ young people in the homeless population in Wales. This inequality was found in End Youth Homelessness's 'Out on the Streets 2019' report, indicating that 24% of 16-24 year olds experiencing homelessness in the UK are LGBTQ+. Even with this overrepresentation in the population Tŷ Pride remains the only LGBTQ+ specific supported accommodation in Wales, having received 65 referrals and enquiries since its inception. The project has been delivered in partnership between Denbighshire County Council, Llamau, and Viva LGBTQ+ as a small scale project in keeping with best practice.

The 'Out on the Streets' report demonstrated that services often lack an understanding of how LGBTQ+ identity has been central to someone's experiencing homelessness, which often leads to their feeling further rejected or dismissed. There also remains an increased risk of harm if they are placed in generic housing services with other service users who may not understand those experiences or be actively hostile. An LGBTQ+ specific service recognises that peer support can be a vital way to create feelings of safety, acceptance and hope, as well as minimises the likelihood of discrimination. The inclusion of a local LGBTQ+ group in the partnership as well as seeking

to actively recruit staff who are LGBTQ+ themselves has been key in enabling Tŷ Pride to develop an informed and empathetic workforce that also provides possibility models for the young people. Due to being from the community and for the community, Tŷ Pride has been able to specifically target some of the inequalities faced by those it supports, for example by the availability of psychotherapy from an LGBTQ+ counsellor, and the provision of personal budgets that allow young people to access transitioning services. Offering support to engage with their community by joining Pride events has meant the young people have experienced celebration for an identity that had previously isolated them.

The partnership has also been keen to ensure the project is more than a singular accommodation. To this end, an important aspect of the project is the preventative work undertaken by the partnership to reduce the risk of young people needing supported accommodation in the first place through early engagement with families and young people who are vulnerably housed. A major effort for Tŷ Pride has been trying to change the experiences and prospects for LGBTQ+ young people at the point they engage with services. For example, a large training programme for housing providers across the 6 counties spanning north Wales was undertaken to allow workers to feel confident and competent in their work supporting and engaging with LGBTQ+ people, but also to encourage internal and system changes with greater understanding of their needs; e.g the collection of demographics, or the impact of familial rejection due to identity.

Tŷ Pride has also developed a move on package to remove some of the barriers that young people face when looking for their own tenancy such as supporting them with rent in advance and a rent top up. Tŷ Pride also continues to support each young person after moving on to ensure their tenancy is sustainable long term by, for example, maximising income, looking at paid employment, and ensuring they have support in the community. The building of a sense of community and belonging allows a stable base in a home they would have otherwise never had. Tŷ Pride tries hard to create this sense of connection from the outset by making sure they have a notable mark on the project.

## Outcomes and achievements

Tŷ Pride has supported ten young people within the accommodation. Four of whom are currently in the accommodation, four moved on to sustain their own accommodation, and two returned to family following support around relationships. All young people accessed the specialist psychotherapy, having attended up to approximately 70 sessions.

Tŷ Pride has supported four young people to access the Gender Identity Clinics through advocacy, providing knowledge about referral pathways, and chasing lost referrals. Personal budgets have allowed young people to fund aspects of transitioning such as: laser hair removal, wigs, clothing, and makeup whilst in a stable and supportive environment. Five young

people have been able to change their names legally due to the knowledge and support of the project.

Over its tenure, Tŷ Pride has gained recognition and been approached by organisations for expertise. Examples of this include: presenting on LGBTQ+ inclusive housing in FEANSTA's 2021 conference, presenting at End Youth Homelessness Cymru's Best Practice 2021 event, speaking on a Oslo Pride 2021 panel, contributing to research by End Youth Homelessness England, and informing Tonic's opening England's first all-age LGBTQ+ community led housing. Mark Drakeford identified Tŷ Pride's work in the Senedd in March 2022 ([https://bit.ly/TP\\_Senedd](https://bit.ly/TP_Senedd)).

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Sponsored by: **LOVELL**  
PARTNERSHIPS

This award celebrates partnership and collaboration across the housing spectrum.

## Cosy Place

**Lead organisation: Tai Calon Community Housing**

**Partner organisation: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**



### Statement of support

Cosy Place was an unloved block of flats based in the middle of Brynmawr Town, it comprised 3 blocks of purpose built 1 and 2 bed flats constructed in 1964 on the site of the former 'Cosy Cinema'.

Continuous high tenancy turn over levels, fly tipping and antisocial behaviour led to the decision to close Cosy Place in 2017 and it fell into a poor physical and visual state of repair. Later being identified for demolition.

Working in partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC), Tai Calon Community Housing (TCCH) secured funding from Welsh Government to refurbish Cosy Place for the purpose of creating a Housing First Scheme. With TCCH acting as landlord and BGCBC providing support tailored to the needs of the individual.

Cosy place was designed and developed to accommodate 8 people who were experiencing homelessness, a place they could call home and the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Professors from 'Pathways' in California where the Housing First concept originated from, worked with us on the project.

Working with R&M Williams as a design and build contractor, the buildings were remodelled to meet the needs of the project, including three fully accessible flats. Micro renewables were installed to help reduce both fuel bills and the buildings carbon footprint. We developed user manuals for the micro renewables and briefed support workers, so they are able to help clients use the new technology effectively.

Consultation was undertaken with partners such as the local community, BGCBC and local Police. The local community were particularly concerned given the reputation the flats previously had. We worked with the local community residents, shops and Councillors to positively integrate the project into the community. We worked with Crisis to ensure the language used to communicate the scheme was effective and targeted appropriately.

The tenants at Cosy Place come from many different backgrounds. The main aim of the project was to provide a safe and supportive environment that would encourage homeless individuals to effectively manage a home and sustain a tenancy. While addressing the reasons why they may have become homeless in the first place and breaking the cycle of homelessness. This is done by offering constant tailored support, varying from help making benefit and job applications, to assisting the individuals to learn basic living skills, to help with addictions.

Community involvement is also a key in the scheme with Support Workers and Tai Calon staff assisting in re-introducing individuals to activities that they may have found challenging previously. The support workers hold regular sessions in basic living skills such as cooking and socialising in a comfortable

environment. Along with signposting to other agencies to provide support with issues such as substance abuse or mental health issues.

Currently all of our original tenants live at the scheme which is a huge success.

Rachel Rees, Head of Housing at Tai Calon said "The scheme has simply changed lives! It's given hope, a fresh start for people to be the best version of themselves that they can. Ultimately the recovery-oriented approach is helping to end homelessness and provides stability and consistency, something these people have never had".

Mark Congreave Team Manager from BGCBC stated "To relieve homelessness, it's important that we develop and produce different accommodation models. The Housing First Scheme is one that assists us to move towards a more Rapid Rehousing Approach, giving clients the support, they need to move out of homelessness. This always works better, when working in partnership with organisations that have the same common goal".

## Outcomes and achievements

The scheme has given clients key life skills so that they learn how to budget, manage a home, cook and addresses healthy relationships, behaviours & lifestyle. There is a sense of community at Cosy Place as the pictures illustrate. This impacts positively upon our statutory services, hospital admissions and health care in general. All tenancies have been sustained, which is an incredibly positive outcome when you explore what these individuals have been through, how circumstances have repeated themselves and how they can now see a positive future.

We have one of the tenants who is starting a new job on 27th September as a result of the constant support provided. This includes completing job application

forms and applying for a provisional driving licence. Part of the process has also been to support these individuals in building better relationships with both family and the community.

Robert says:

"I feel settled and glad I finally got my own place, it's the best place ever. Its brilliant and enjoy being with the staff and what they do for us."

Lewis says:

"I'm sound, it's a good feeling to have my own place but help from staff helps me get through everyday."

## Fit and Fed

**Lead organisation: Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association**

**Partner organisations: Street Games Wales, Welsh Rugby Union, Cefn Coed RFC, Bedlinog RFC, Treharris BGC, H Factor, plus 13 more.**



### Statement of support

Fit and Fed Merthyr Tydfil is a school holiday enrichment programme that works with 18 partners to ensure that children and young people of the borough do not go without nutritious meals during the holiday periods, or enriching activities. Through working in unison with trusted partners, Fit and Fed has been able to expand to fifteen sites across the borough, ensuring that most children and young people of the borough,

are within walking distance to a provision. This joined-up approach has meant that we are able to collectively tackle the issue of holiday hunger during the school holidays, as well as the loneliness and isolation that is faced by many children and young people during these times. The impact of this collaborative approach has been improving the wellbeing of those engaged, through tracking their wellbeing scores through using the Warwick/Edinburgh Wellbeing toolkit. Those young people participating have become more engaged within their communities, have developed their confidence and self-esteem, and have enhanced their learning along the way.

The below testimonials from just two of our partners help demonstrate the wider participation that is achieved through this approach. Not only that, but it also helps demonstrate how this style has become a best-practice model both in Wales, and across Britain, through Street Games, and our willingness and commitment to share our knowledge and experiences.

"Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association are working with a huge range of partners to ensure the success of the Fit and Fed project. The partnership approach is ensuring that Families and Young People gain access to opportunities and support that they need, whilst also ensuring learning is shared across the

varied organisations involved. StreetGames regularly showcase the work of MTHA as best practice across Wales and the rest of the UK in terms of a collaborative partnership approach, meeting the needs of specific communities, Families and Young People. The work of Bethan and the team is outstanding and they are a real pleasure to call a partner organisation within the StreetGames National Network. MTHA also regularly attends StreetGames local, regional and National network meetings and events to share their learning, but also to create links with other organisations that can support people across the Local Authority Area." Claire Lane, National Director Wales

"The Youth Service views this initiative as a central hub of our holiday delivery programme and all

settings work actively planning and implementing the programme which is currently accessed by young people from 15 local youth and community organisations. All settings consult with young people on the development of the programme and agree with participants the activities that are appropriate to their interests and needs. Organisations can come together to deliver the programme and an example of this is the joint working between Gellideg Foundation, Georgetown Boys and Girls Club and Barnardo's in combining their programmes in order to achieve wider participation. Activities include field games at a local park, guitar lessons, drama classes, and outdoor activities such as surfing and canoeing." Senior Youth and Community Worker Merthyr Tydfil CBC.

### Outcomes and achievements

- Over 2000 different children and young people accessing the project last four years.
- Over 400 sessions run in the last four years.
- Social value for the project has constantly exceeded £2million each year.
- 49 Accreditation outcomes achieved to date.
- Successful in gaining £299,281 from the National Lottery Community Fund for continuation of project for three years (2022-2025)
- Expanding from 8 sites across Merthyr Tydfil to 15 sites within the CBC.
- Wellbeing of each site improving through using the Wellbeing Toolkit.
- Developing a learning programme so that young people can gain skills and enhance their education along their journey.
- Providing weekend food parcels to the most in need families (over 400 to date).
- Summer 2022 figures have not featured in these figures.

## Hospital to a Healthier Home

**Lead organisation: Care and Repair Cymru**

**Partner organisation: NHS**



### Statement of support

Care and Repair brings housing to health. Our Hospital to a Healthier Home (H2HH) service employs 17 specialised caseworkers in 17 hospitals across five health boards in Wales. Our caseworkers work in partnership with hospital staff, patients, and their families to improve service delivery and patient wellbeing by proactively identify and resolving

housing and environmental issues that would otherwise prevent a hospital discharge. The service is targeted at older patients living in their own home who otherwise would go home into unsafe housing or be put on a lengthy local authority waiting list for small works.

H2HH improves patient flow through hospital by reducing a patients' stay on average by six days; and has been proven to reduce readmissions from a health board average of around 14 percent to 6 percent. 88 percent of patients are discharged back home. Our works include small adaptations to prevent trips and falls (such as handrails and ramps), damp- and draught-proofing, improving security, moving furniture, deep cleans and decluttering to allow for packages of care. Caseworkers complete a 'Healthy Homes Check' to ensure safety, warmth, and wellbeing, including a full welfare benefits check, providing longer term support at home and transition back to independent living.

H2HH is the product of a person-centred innovative collaboration across partners and sectors to resolve discharge problems, rather than working in silos. Caseworkers take part in multi-disciplinary team

meetings, ward rounds, and have a physical presence in discharge hubs. All our caseworkers receive referrals directly, having built a strong sense of partnership, teamwork and, crucially, trust with our NHS partners. This required a transformative culture shift for us and our partners. For urgent cases, our target is two working days for works, however we often complete works the same day. Without these essential works patients would either be held in hospital, or discharged home into an unsafe environment. H2HH has had huge success in turning an innovative approach into business as usual.

Partnership working has improved service delivery. We recently conducted interviews with NHS staff across Wales, to understand how and why they use the service. Repeatedly, staff commended the speed of the service, its reliability, and the relief at having a second pair of eyes and sounding board for planning adaptations and recovery at home.

[The service is] built into our initial assessment as a pathway onwards, that's how much we use it. It's part of our team. As I started the role, it was introduced to me as a service that we use for patients to support

discharge -Olivia Newton-Hale, Occupational Therapist, Medical Surgical Team, Ysbyty Gwynedd

If you came along and met the team you wouldn't really know she's a third party, which is beneficial for [the H2HH caseworker] and us. To have that access because she has so much more knowledge, but she is also independent from the health and social care aspect -Bethan Williams, Social Worker in the Joint Discharge Team, Withybush Hospital

"The quality [of discharges] is a lot better since we've got Care and Repair because there are a lot more checks going on than we would have done and been able to action previously. If you've got people with, say chest problems with damp and things in property, because they are those properties that have been changed now, that stops them being readmitted again in the future because of the housing condition. So, it's a knock-on preventative effect" -Tracy Daniel, Team Lead Orthopaedics, Princess of Wales Hospital

The service ensures hospital discharges for medically fit patients can go ahead, are of better quality, and patients have longer term support.

## Outcomes and achievements

Operating since 2019, the service has expanded to more hospitals, hospital staff and patients year on year. Last year more than 5,000 patients across Wales were referred to the service, of which we directly facilitated discharge of 4,000. We completed 2,600 Healthy Homes Checks and completed 6,800 home improvements, sourcing capital works of over £1.5m to complete these works. The service completed over 400 successful benefit claims, sourcing an average of £4,000 a year of extra income per patient. The service saved the Welsh NHS over 25,000 bed days last year alone, and so is vital for ensuring patient flow, reducing waiting times and creating bedspace for

scheduled care to go ahead. 100 percent of patients who completed our feedback form said the service helped them return home and live independently.

Beyond patient outcomes and operational successes, the service improves NHS staff morale knowing there is a trusted solution to a problem and a source of knowledge for housing issues. The service improves the speed, quality and success rate of discharges for the patient. The service also saves NHS staff time, removing admin and chasing to organise works, meaning staff have more clinical and rehab time with patients on wards.

# Neighbourhood Learning Centre

**Lead organisation: Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council**

**Partner organisation: Merthyr Valleys Homes**



## Statement of support

The project has been developed in partnership with Local Authority Housing Teams, Childrens Services, Employability, and partner RSL - Merthyr Valleys Homes to develop a much-needed supported accommodation for young people who are care experienced or leaving care and / or at risk of homelessness.

We have secured funding from the Authority and the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) Capital fund from Welsh Government to develop an existing under-utilised building to provide 5 units of one and two bed self-contained accommodation. This accommodation will be for the periods on leaving foster care or corporate parenting residential care accommodation.

The Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) will be branded in collaboration with all partners who have worked collaboratively to make the project a possibility, from, Merthyr Valleys Homes and their experience of leasing and management, employability colleagues, ensuring the offering for the young people residing there, and the wider community benefit from this exciting opportunity whilst playing a key role in supporting unemployed youths and adults access training with the aim of increasing their access to employment opportunities. Also Childrens Services have helped in the design and development with the young people in mind, including during consultation with young people in the rebranding, and what they want from the scheme to help them succeed and wider housing colleagues to make the scheme viable and help towards long term sustainable accommodation and brighter futures.

Through the wide ranging partnership, we have been able to maintain some of the current facilities, such as carpentry workshops, plumbing/metal and other construction style workshop areas; a hair dressing unit

with professional hair salon equipment, a potters kiln and ceramic workshop to name a few, along with staff office accommodation and currently empty unused existing flats.

The development is due to be completed by the 9th of December 2022 which will, in addition the training facility, convert one building (Block 2) into 5 self-contained apartments which will be staffed 24/7 by a support provider, and to re-locate existing workshops into the remaining buildings where the learning centre to remain open to the young people.

The intention is to create a unique accommodation centre where young people have direct access to suitable modern, safe accommodation, whilst also providing them with access to onsite training, that could lead to higher education by attending their local college and/or future employment.

This allows for a young person to feel supported to live independently, have housing related support in the management of a household, managing their own finances, food/nutrition/cooking, self-care, and household hygiene, whilst being supported with staff on site. This will be seen as a step-up approach to more independent living in their own accommodation, limiting the need for further support and preventing any escalation of needs. It is hoped that with this staff support and training on site, many young people will go on to attend the local college, and or take part in employment schemes, as necessary.

The whole facility will have a revamp to attract the young people to not only the great quality accommodation but the fantastic training and skills offering to help grow and create a brighter future.

The overall aim of the proposed project is to prevent homelessness for young people with complex needs in an environment that is trauma informed, supported and immersed in a Pathway to Work. Their needs are too high to be supported in our existing supported accommodation provision and they need a dedicated project that not only provides them with housing but supports them in having a successful transition to adulthood. The support provided will be tailored to the young person's needs and will focus on the following:

- Health including mental health
- Well-Being
- Life Skills
- Engagement in education
- Employment
- Social Inclusion

## Outcomes and achievements

This project works on prevention and early intervention for young people (aged 16 - 24 years) who have been in the care system and deemed as Children Looked after (CLA), children leaving foster care.

The provision of accommodation for young people, alongside support and access training will provide positive outcomes in the following:

- Acting early to prevent escalation of need continuing into adulthood, when and after children and young people looked after, leave their foster/care placements and prior to them living independently in their own accommodation.
- Improving transitions between children's services and adult services
- An intervention that will enhance independence, choice, and voice - young people will be involved in relevant aspects of the design

- The intervention will improve health and well-being of young people with care and support needs
- This is an innovation that will be evaluated, and successful features will be used to inform future developments.
- Ongoing strengthened partnership working with multiple agencies to maximise positive outcomes for young people including employability skills and sustained longer term accommodation for safe, secure and brighter futures.

The new Support provider, Adferiad is currently support provider recruiting, creating local jobs. Engagement will then start shortly with young people in readiness or occupation in December.

## Opening all Avenues

**Lead organisation: Bron Afon Community Housing**

**Partner organisations: Torfaen County Borough Council, Police, Garnsychan Partnership, Ward Members**



### Statement of support

In Spring 2021 Joanne Blossie, one of Bron Afon's Community Housing Officer noticed that she was spending a lot of time dealing with various issues on a particular street within the community she manages, The Avenue. This included ASB, arrears and untidy gardens, Joanne had recently taken over the patch and the housing service had moved from specialist teams to a holistic way of working.

Joanne decided something needed to be done and together with Sarah Clayton, Community Development officer set up a project group up, with the aim of all services to work together to try to improve the area for our customers and residents, in turn it was hoped that this collaborative approach would reduce demand and complaints for all services in the long term.

They involved partners including local councillors, Community Safety at Torfaen County Borough Council, Police and the Garnsychan partnership.

Joanne, Sarah and colleagues from the Community Development Team initially visited each property and asked a series of questions with the objective of understanding the root cause of any particular issue and to agree joint accountability and goals, which was well received. It wasn't a case of customers telling us the problems and us resolving in isolation, we used restorative approaches to discuss and understand the issue and the impact on the customer and their family, finding out any underlying issues and agreeing a plan around how we would work together towards a resolution and positive outcome. The wider team of partners was there ready to assist so tenants could see action in a timely manner across all services and agencies.

The targeting of the area helped officers to gain excellent working relationships with other agencies and our customers and wider community, they gained people's trust and worked together on a wide range of things. For example, the Community Housing Officer and local councillors carry out regular patch walkabouts to closely monitor any issues before they escalate.

The team are keeping the momentum going working with other agencies on lower-level things now so residents know that they are there to work with them and so that they continue to build relationships. For example, the Community Housing Officer, the development officer and 2 local councillors who are all heavily involved in the project have recently carried

out a door knocking exercise to talk to tenants about recycling and bringing their bins back in after they have been emptied, which is another issue identified.

The Joanne and Sarah showed outstanding dedication to their roles and to improving the wellbeing and opportunities for their community. They worked proactively with partners both within Bron Afon and externally to create a real sense of everyone coming together with shared objectives to deliver for a community. The outcomes speak for themselves and are a testament to the hard work and determination of the whole team involved.

Giles Davies, Ward Member said-

I have been really impressed by the commitment shown by Jo personally and Bronafon, I feel that the approach taken by actually talking to residents and listening to what they feel instead of talking at them has worked.

I've noticed the respect Jo has gained by residents as we walk around and the fact that they see her as a kind of friend who takes no nonsense, which is very refreshing.

### Outcomes and achievements

16 months on from the project starting, we have seen a significant reduction in demand in many areas, including-

- 0 ASB complaints reported over Summer 2022
- Gardens have improved
- 63% of customers have significantly reduced their arrears.

Joanne Blossie, Community Housing Officer said -

I deal with everything from letting properties, ASB, Rent and giving advice and support. This has helped me get to know residents so that I can deal with things proactively. By working closely with other agencies, I know who to contact and they have seen the benefits of working together.

I wouldn't know half of the tenants that I do now if we weren't responsible for such a wide variety of things. Sitting with people, talking about issues that are personal to them was warmly received. A few tenants commented that they enjoyed the chats and felt listened to.

Torfaen CBCs Anti-social behaviour reduction coordinator said

'This multi agency work with Bron Afon has proved to be more effective with complex cases. It enables both parties to share vital information that will help reduce anti social behaviour and ensures that residents feel safe and secure living in Torfaen.

## The Swansea Standard - providing affordable low carbon housing for the future

**Lead organisation: Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE), Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University**

**Partner organisation: Swansea Council**



### Statement of support

Swansea Council and the Welsh School of Architecture (WSA) at Cardiff University worked in partnership as part of the Specific 2 Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE) project to develop the Swansea Standard in

the move towards the decarbonisation of affordable housing.

Swansea Council is committed to reducing fuel poverty for its residents whilst delivering low carbon new builds and retrofits. In 2017 the Council commissioned 18 new Passivhaus standard houses and invited Cardiff Universities LCBE team to support them in understanding the energy consumption and thermal comfort of the homes. The LCBE team were asked to assess the potential benefits of incorporating further low carbon technologies into a similar design as the Passivhaus scheme had taken only a fabric first approach. The partnership worked to understand whether the Passivhaus development would be feasible to replicate and to understand whether further low carbon enhancements would reduce their carbon footprint further. The evidence generated has resulted in the creation of the Swansea Standard that has been used in over 65 built houses so far (at 2022).

The LCBE team were involved in the commissioning stage of the Passivhaus' and advised the Swansea team and contractors to interpret and communicate results. The LCBE team applied tests and carried out building

diagnostics to identify potential challenges and ensure good performance. Long term monitoring equipment was installed which allowed the assessment of energy use and comfort post occupancy performance of the 18 houses.

In the meantime, the LCBE modelling team together with Swansea Council initiated discussions on altering the design approach for future projects. LCBE modelling was informed by monitoring data and previous LCBE projects to produce tailored low carbon solutions using the LCBE whole house energy system-based approach. Swansea Council shared social housing considerations and LCBE shared quantified solutions including modelling of operational energy reduction, carbon reduction and cost savings and payback times. The two teams worked together evolving a solution that simultaneously met the Councils housing criteria and LCBE carbon driven targets.

The results confirmed that the fabric-only approach used in Passivhaus could be enriched by a whole energy systems-based approach that would reduce the operational energy, carbon and cost without increasing the capital cost resulting in high quality, affordable homes for residents.

Different combinations of system-based solutions were tested using data-driven modelling around a

base case. It was found that even though thermal performance and airtightness was not quite up to Passivhaus standards, capital cost savings could be used for low carbon systems which would ensure lower operational energy, CO2 and cost to run. The final Swansea Standard included a Ground Source Heat Pump, photovoltaic (PV) solar panels and electric batteries. Passive design strategies are included with the focus on airtightness, effective orientation and thermal bridge reduction. As part of the package Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery provide additional heat and high-quality indoor air. The importance of occupant engagement and understanding was confirmed, and methods of communication were developed to inform occupants of the services and how they should be operated effectively.

Swansea has applied the new Standard across four sites and the LCBE team are monitoring the 65 homes to provide reassurance that performance and comfort in practice are as designed, the results are being compared against the Passivhaus outcomes. First-year results confirmed the modelling projections and when compared to the Passivhaus Swansea development, the new Swansea Standard, developed in collaboration with Cardiff University LCBE team, exceeds operational energy savings and provides stable comfort levels with similar capital cost outlay.

## Outcomes and achievements

The mean daily energy consumption for the Passivhaus' was 19.0kWh, whereas for similar homes in the Swansea Standard developments it was 18.1kWh. 10.6kWh of the 18.1kWh is imported from the grid and paid for by the occupants. The remaining energy is provided either from the PV panels directly and or from the battery; 2.7kWh is exported back to the grid which provides potential for income. Operational energy imported by the Swansea Standard homes is 44% lower than the Passivhaus' which is vital in terms of fuel poverty and affordability. The energy consumed by the Swansea Standard homes is 62% lower and imported energy (paid) is 78% lower when

compared to an average UK house of a similar size. Therefore, the on average household in the Swansea Standard houses will pay for approximately 1/5 of the energy that an occupant in an average Welsh house would pay.

In addition to the energy performance, the Swansea Standard homes have a superior comfort performance. The Swansea and LCBE team monitoring and qualitative data from surveys have enable heat distribution to be optimised providing stable temperatures throughout the homes and together with humidity figures all fall within the CIBSE A guide range.

# Working together to provide homes for essential NHS staff

**Lead organisation: Cartrefi Conwy**

**Partner organisation: Adra**



## Statement of support

Adra, Cartrefi Conwy and Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board (BCUHB) came together in 2021 to look at innovative ways for the social housing sector to support the provision of good quality accommodation for healthcare professionals in the local area, including doctors and nurses.

### Background:

In November 2021 there were around 1719 nursing vacancies in the NHS in Wales and the NHS spent £69.04 million on agency nursing in 2019 alone. In addition, every week nurses give the NHS an additional 34,284 hours in overtime. This equates to 914 full time nurses.

In order to meet the shortfall in skilled nurses BCUHB are actively recruiting from outside Wales and overseas. They can only do this if they have good quality accommodation to enable these essential key workers to settle. Providing a sense of 'home' has proved challenging, particularly when the accommodation needs to be close to the hospital sites in Bodelwyddan, Bangor and Wrexham.

Whilst BCUHB has its own residential property available, this resource is limited and insufficient in terms of meeting the workforce recruitment requirements of the organisation. The current model does not meet demand and BCUHB is currently working through options to improve this provision moving forward. This will take time and the pandemic has not only accelerated the need to continue to recruit, but also the need for additional local accommodation.

### What we are doing collaboratively

Adra and Cartrefi Conwy have been working alongside BCUHB to secure suitable accommodation for these key workers that not only ensures close proximity to their place of work, but also supports and enables integration into the local community.

A Strategic Partnership Board was created in 2020 and initial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was established in 2021 to look at how Adra and Cartrefi Conwy can help BCUHB to provide suitable accommodation for healthcare workers from outside of North Wales.

The MOU outlines a commitment to provide accommodation that is fully furnished and within 30 minutes commute to their place of work. This accommodation can be provided either through RSL housing stock or working with private landlords.

We aim to source and secure furnished accommodation for circa 200 health care workers over the next 12 months. To date we have provided homes for 93 key workers.

We launched the partnership during the height of the pandemic which proved challenging as we had to prepare the homes and settle the key workers in following strict covid rules. Many of the workers have come from as far away as Africa so we also had to balance regulations set in their own countries.

There is significant demand for social housing in North Wales so both RSLs wanted to look at alternative options to increase supply. Cartrefi Conwy have used their HAWS team to source properties in the private rented sector offering landlords a wrap-around support and housing management package.

Both Cartrefi Conwy and Adra have provided brand new furnished accommodation through utilising homes within our development programmes. After the initial Covid lockdown in March 2020, Adra and Cartrefi Conwy proactively engaged with a local housebuilder. This was a time of uncertainty within the market which presented an opportunity to negotiate large scale acquisitions which provided much needed certainty for both the housebuilder and the RSLs. These acquisitions enabled the RSLs to deliver additional affordable housing as well as homes that were initially to be made available for market rent. The RSLs then took the opportunity to utilise a number of these properties to deliver high quality shared accommodation for nurses in a desirable mixed community development with easy access to amenities and their place of work.

## Outcomes and achievements

Since the partnership was established in 2021 we have provided homes for 93 key workers across North Wales.

April Bureros, a member of overseas nursing staff for the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Adra tenant, said: "When we arrived, the house was welcoming and everything we needed was here when we arrived.

"We have a comfortable and quiet environment to come home to after a busy shift at the hospital."

These innovative partnership working arrangements have made a tangible difference to capacity within the local healthcare environment at a time of unprecedented pressure on service delivery. We are

really proud of how fast our teams worked creatively to deliver units at pace to support the NHS under restricted Covid conditions when it was needed most.

Mark Wilkinson, Executive Director of Planning and Performance at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, said: "This is a great boost for us to have Adra and Cartrefi Conwy on board with their expertise in landlord services.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges in recruiting staff, particularly staff from overseas.

"Being able to provide this modern, high-quality accommodation for these staff in partnership with our social housing providers is a very welcome development."

# SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AWARD



This award celebrates projects, initiatives and organisations that have gone above and beyond, working to support their communities during these difficult times.

## A Digital Revolution in Social Housing

### Newydd Housing Association



### Statement of support

The National Survey for Wales (2019/20) shows that 17% of social housing residents are digitally excluded: an estimated 60,000 residents.

This is compounded by the fact that a further 37% of residents, who can use the internet, do not have the skills that Welsh Government deem essential to access it confidently and safely - an estimated 105,000 residents.

What do we do to combat digital exclusion?

- 1-2-1 Support - tenants can book home visits to support any needs they may have. We aim to fulfil these on the same week of referral.
- Loan I.T. - We have a number of tablets and laptops that are available for tenants to borrow.
- Donated PCs - we have partnered with several companies to recycle disused PCs from IT labs and training suites, which we can then repurpose and donate to tenants.
- National Databank SIMs - We have signed up as a member of the National Databank, meaning we can acquire free SIM cards to provide a stable Wi-Fi connection to tenants without internet access.
- MyNewydd - MyNewydd is our online platform through which tenants can pay rent and report repairs, anti-social behaviour and complaints. We are able to provide support for tenants that want an introduction to the platform, are having account issues or would like assistance completing a specific form or request.
- Digital Fridays - providing support not just for Newydd tenants but for the wider community, we work with council programs that host digital sessions from local libraries. We have implemented these in both Pontypridd and Barry.
- eCymru - working in partnership with 14 other registered social landlords to create an online platform that connects the housing sector in Wales, providing ease of access to courses and support for tenants.
- Afghanistan Resettlement Project - working in partnership with Rhondda Cynon Taf Council to provide a full digital support package for a refugee family resettling from Afghanistan. This led to the local authority adopting this as best practice and is now replicated for all refugees' resettlements.
- Independent Living Scheme Drop-ins - Weekly drop-ins for tenants aged 55 and over.
- Meta Portals - smart camera devices set up in the Independent Living Scheme communal lounges. We have been able to provide a range of activities with the HAPI Project, group calls and support sessions via these devices.
- Smart Speaker Project - working in partnership with Cardiff University to provide smart speakers to tenants in the Independent Living Schemes, in an effort to reduce isolation and determine the level of social support that can be provided.

## Testimonials

"Working with Newydd has been extremely beneficial to families seeking refuge and sanctuary in RCT. With access to the Digital Support package and fantastic teamwork from all partner agencies, families settling in RCT are able to digitally connect much faster and more efficiently than if we at RCTCBC had to set this up alone. The scheme allows refugees to communicate with family members far away, access services and education to promote independence, all of which are of great value to individuals moving to a new country."

Janine Thomas, Rhondda Cynon Taff Council

"The Resettlement Project is imperative to families moving within RCT to ensure they have the right support from the get-go and can sustain their tenancies. Conor, Scott, and Janine were very helpful not only towards the family but to me when arranging the delivery of the device, in order for mobile Wi-Fi to be installed. Without the great communication throughout the process and partnership working, the family would have a device but would not be able to connect it."

Emily Johnson, Cynon Taff Housing

## Outcomes and achievements

- A total of 65 minutes across several appointments spent supporting tenants with either Universal Credit or online Cost-of-Living claims has saved £1720.64, averaging £26.47 saved for tenants and Newydd per minute.
- A total of 179 instances of individual support from 01.07.21 to 01.07.22, averaging 3.5 per week.
- 28 PCs and laptops donated to tenants since April 2021.
- A total of 1753 tenants signed up to MyNewydd.

## Testimonials

"I was very nervous in the beginning, for older people computers are daunting, I'm not very technologically minded but I really enjoyed working with you. I shop online now, which I couldn't do before."

Linda, Tenant

"Not all of us have family [members] that can help in this direction, so I'm very grateful knowing I don't need to be anxious."

Anne, Tenant

"I know how to send emails now which I didn't before. I use MyNewydd all the time to check the balance of my rent."

Laraine, Tenant

"Supported using our tablet and phone, which we now use for socialising and entertainment, and watching the news - Robert goes to bed early due to health issues, so uses the tablet to catch up."

Jayne and Robert, Tenants

# Academi Adra

**Lead organisation: Adra**

**Partner organisations: Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, Gisda, Procure Plus, Williams Homes (Bala)**



## Statement of support

The groundbreaking Academi Adra focuses on developing skills and expanding employability options through work placements, apprenticeships, graduate placements and training schemes for residents across north Wales.

Launched in February 2021, to combat the impact of the pandemic, this initiative was developed by Adra's Community Partnerships team to kickstart access to work and training opportunities with a target of supporting more than 60 people.

Over the first year, this target was surpassed with more than 70 people being supported, including creating work opportunities for 16 to 24 year-olds on Universal Credit at risk of long-term unemployment.

Adra's Community Partnerships team is matching customers with opportunities through its services and ambitious investment development programme, enhancing transferable skills. The Academi's first two placements developed customer service skills with Adra's Call Centre.

Six month placements were also developed for local people, enhancing their employability and providing valued workplace experience, with the aim of helping participants to move to long-term employment with Adra and other partners in the area.

As part of its commitment to creating opportunities

for its customers, the social landlord also took on four new apprentices, one electrical, one plumber and two painter and decorators within its Repairs and Maintenance team, adding to the other apprentices currently working on its asset management programme and new build construction sites.

Adra has also developed its housing trainee programme, as well as offering four graduate placement opportunities and recruiting two housing trainees, who are Adra tenants, as part of a two-year programme to learn about housing management, customer care and supporting tenants to sustain their tenancies.

- The Academi Adra has collaborated with partners across the region, including partnering with Wales's largest Further Education College Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, as well as local SMEs such as Williams Homes Bala, working on Adra's Investment programme.

Iwan Trefor Jones, Deputy Chief Executive - Adra, said: "Academi Adra has had a remarkably successful first year; providing opportunities to young people from our communities to develop a career is especially important to us. We are so proud to be able to offer unique opportunities to customers of all ages. There is so much local talent, it's important we make the most of it."

Elin Williams, Community and Partnerships Manager - Adra, added: "It's a real pleasure for our team so see people from our communities and customers

succeeding through opportunities via the support of Academi Adra. We are so proud to be able to employ our customers and develop their skills.

"With the COVID restrictions we had to innovate to find new ways of providing opportunities, working with our partners and targeting our customers across north Wales who are facing so many challenges to access the job market."

Owain Williams, Joint Managing Director of Williams Homes Bala, said:

"We are pleased to be working in partnership with Adra to provide more opportunities for local people."

Kimberly Hughes started a work placement in Adra's Contact Centre in January 2022 through Academi Adra, partnering with Gisda, giving Kimberley expert employability support.

Kimberley said: "I didn't leave school with many qualifications and without the opportunity that I had with Academi Adra I know that I would never had the confidence to apply for a job and definitely not to turn up for interview. I was unemployed and had never had a job before.

"During the six months I've been at Adra, I have been more confident in dealing with enquiries and I have been able to receive training to improve my skills and my CV. I have good news that I have received a contract offer from Adra to continue in the role."

## Outcomes and achievements

- The Academi Adra scheme, which supports customers into work and training, is celebrating its first year of success having helped more than 70 people to access training and work experience opportunities across north Wales. So far, 29 have been supported with apprenticeships, 31 have had access to training and eight have paid work experience. Twelve have also been supported into work with Adra or its contractors.
- On the back of the success of Academi Adra's first year, the Academi has advertised for 24 Energy Warden jobs in various locations across Gwynedd, supporting Adra's commitment to decarbonisation and drive to net-zero. Several more new jobs will be created over the coming months with contractors on new investment and construction programmes.
- More opportunities in the next year include an Introduction to Construction and Maintenance course for over 16s, online remote learning courses, a Women in Construction and Maintenance course, as well as working with partners for volunteering opportunities.
- Caleb Khan, of Caernarfon, said: "Adra has given me a fantastic opportunity to develop my skills as an apprentice, working with an experienced painter and decorator at Adra's homes. I'm extremely grateful for this chance and would like to thank Adra for their support."

# Community Regeneration Programme

## The Community Impact Initiative CIC



### Statement of support

Whilst some find their lives returning to normal after the pandemic, disadvantaged communities in South Wales continue to suffer the lasting social and financial effects of Covid-19. The unemployment rate in Wales overall has made a recovery, currently sitting at 3% but in many areas of South Wales, for example in Swansea (10.3%) and The Vale of Glamorgan (5.1%) the story is very different. Just as the pandemic itself hit disadvantaged communities the hardest, so too will the economic consequences, which have been forecast to last many years. In South Wales approximately 9.5% of people have no qualifications, making obtaining employment more difficult.

These financial and job-related issues are well known to negatively affect mental health, causing severe stress and uncertainty. In January 2021, 43% of unemployed people had poor mental health. This was greater than for people in employment (27%) and for people who were on furlough (34%). This can lead to related issues such as social isolation and substance misuse. The Community Impact Initiative CIC (Cii) has experienced first-hand how the lack of opportunities has affected disadvantaged communities across South Wales and has been working hard to combat this issue.

The core objective of The Cii is to support disadvantaged people across South Wales to gain skills, qualifications and improve their wellbeing in a safe environment. A programme of core community regeneration projects is at the heart of The Cii's work. Every six months, The Cii identify a community in South Wales that needs support and purchases a

local disused property. They then use the renovation process to support disadvantaged community members to learn practical skills from our expert tutors, gain three foundational qualifications (the Emergency 1st Aid in the Workplace qualification, CITB Health & Safety Awareness training, and the CSCS card) and build on their confidence, self-esteem and community relationships. The property is then sold as energy-efficient, affordable housing and all the profits are reinvested into the next house, continuing the cycle of community growth.

The Cii works with several partner organisations that provide support during every stage of a six-month project. First of all, the organisation partners with a number of referral organisations to ensure that those most in need of support are reached. These partners include CRC Probation, The Job Centre Plus and Communities for Work Neath, amongst others. The Cii also work with organisations that can support the wellbeing of participants and liaise with these organisations to help participants access specialist support. These partners include Shelter Cymru, The Care Collective, NPT Mind and The Wallich. Finally, The Cii work with local organisations that provide progression pathways for participants. These partners include Cyfle Cymru, FP Hurley, Travis Perkins and Hale Construction.

One of the key ways in which The Cii measure impact is through participant and stakeholder feedback. Here is some of the feedback received recently:

"The Cii benefits local communities by turning empty, run-down properties into homes and give individuals new skills, which they can carry with them throughout their life." - Julie James MS Minister for Housing and Local Government

"If it wasn't for you helping me out, I'd never have been able to do the CSCS test. Thank you for everything you've done for me. I'm buzzing - now I can get a job" - Participant

"During the time spent with yourselves, Chris's confidence and motivation increased so dramatically, that he has now moved on from us into a Gorwellian flat with very little support needs. It was a really positive experience for him and his wellbeing." - Housing Support Officer, The Wallich

## Outcomes and achievements

To date, the community regeneration programme has achieved the following outcomes:

- **Repurposed Resources:** Despite families in temporary accommodation increasing by 60% in Wales over the past 12 months, approximately 30,000 Welsh homes sit empty. Many of these homes are derelict due to the high cost of renovation, with the majority of developers choosing to build new homes rather than using the resources already at their disposal. To date, The Cii has successfully renovated and sold six properties as energy-efficient and affordable housing.
- **Improved Health and Wellbeing:** The Cii supports community members to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing, leading to a happier, more active community. 91% of participants (18/20 per project) report improvement, including improved mental health and self-esteem.
- **Better prospects:** Participants develop skills with us that lead to enhanced and more diverse employment prospects. 73% of participants (15/20 per project) achieve accredited qualifications and 55% (11/20 per project) progress into employment.
- **Supporting the wider community:** The Cii's work in wellbeing benefits the wider community by taking pressure off local services and supporting local people into employment, thus improving the economy

## The Bridging Project

**Lead organisation: Neath Port Talbot Social Services**

**Partner organisation: The Wallich**



### Statement of support

Preventing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) homelessness in Neath Port Talbot (NPT)

The Wallich is a leading Welsh charity which works to prevent all types of homelessness. This includes working with harder to reach communities to prevent and tackle hidden homelessness. In Neath Port Talbot, we have a dedicated service which addresses the needs of people from the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities, of which we estimate around 250 individuals. Spearheaded by Neath Port Talbot Social Services, the 'Bridging Project' was formed in 2020.

With the community being typically reserved and private, the project has found a culture of distrust of institutions and services, making relationship building paramount to this service. Withholding from accessing services has been found to have a detriment on the community's quality of life and made them vulnerable to financial and housing issues. The Wallich's involvement in the project has found the communities

needed:

-Support to address rent arrears - in housing and on sites.

-Homeless referrals to Housing Options and to access emergency accommodation after fleeing domestic violence on sites.

-Application support for grants and funds to address shortfalls with living costs.

-Access to mental health support - GP, Swansea Bay Mental Health Service, Wallich Reflections Network Counselling.

-Conflict resolution and breaking stigma - amongst family and onsite.

-Support with independent living e.g. accessibility adaptations, mobility aids, Community Occupational Therapy Service and Social Services Gateway Team.

-Challenging barriers and discrimination from outside the communities.

Christine Griffiths is The Wallich's dedicated GRT Senior Support Worker, who has worked tirelessly to find innovative ways to address issues in the community. Working in partnership and developing relationships between institutions and residents has been paramount. The Wallich has facilitated better communication between site residents and the NPT Estates Department, Local Area Coordinators, GPs and surgeries, NPT Social Services, Public Defenders Service, Occupational Therapy and more. The GRT community now has a designated Welfare Rights Officer at the NPT Welfare Rights Unit for The Wallich and others to refer into.

The Wallich works closely with Ian Rees, Consultant Social Worker with Neath Port Talbot Social Services, and current chair of the Gypsy Traveller Working Party. He said:

"This has been a multi-agency project, and alongside The Wallich, we now have partner agencies from health, Swansea University, Community Cohesion, and Traveller Ahead an all-Wales Gypsy Traveller advocacy service.

"Christine has been supporting the community for over two years now, and is a much-welcomed guest on the sites. They value not only her benefits support, but also her cheery smile and friendly chats. Her work also covers finding support for Caravan adaptations for our growing elderly population and for those with disabilities.

"Even during the pandemic, when services were largely in lockdown, The Wallich was able to offer significant support. Christine was also part of the team that promoted good COVID advice and the uptake of the COVID inoculation. Good and accurate advice was

effectively shared with the community."

The NPT Vulnerable Learners Service said:

"Partnership working with agencies such as The Wallich has been invaluable in ensuring that the Traveller community has been supported at the most challenging of times.

She [Christine] has an unparalleled record of success with accessing resources and services for the community.

It is vital that the nature and level of support provided by The Wallich continues in order to support what is by all measures the most marginalised community in Neath and Port Talbot."

## Outcomes and achievements

From July 2020 - August 2022, we supported 50 families on local authority run caravan sites and 18 families in bricks and mortar homes. Plus 55 other people from GRT communities at our drop-in service.

We supported benefits claims to the value of £101,004 (yearly total) and assisted payment of £15,729 backdated benefits.

We assisted with the application of eligible funds and secured 272 household items such as washing machines, cookers, beds, sofas.

We secured £15,752 to help with the cost of living including fuel, school supplies and support for carers.

This investment in the community will help reduce risk

of homelessness and help people live safer, happier and more independent lives.

Case study: RM (52F) experienced depression, anxiety and panic attacks, resulting from traumatic childhood events. RM was isolated and struggling to cope financially. She was in an abusive and controlling relationship with her estranged husband.

RM was supported to leave, make a homeless referral and move into emergency accommodation until a suitable flat became available.

She was then supported with resettlement including a grant and donations to furnish her new property and supported to apply for eligible welfare to maximise income and ensure a sustainable tenancy.

## Tŷ Pantri

**Lead organisation: Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association**

**Partner organisation: H Factor**



### Statement of support

Tŷ Pantri was MTHA's reaction to the pandemic and ensuring that not only tenants, but the wider population of Merthyr Tydfil had affordable access to food. Combining the traditional Food Coop

principle with the widely emerging Pantry models across Wales, Tŷ Pantri was a way in which the community could affordably purchase dried and tinned goods, alongside fresh fruit, and vegetables. Through consultation with tenants and the wider community, we understood that many were struggling to affordably feed their families, especially those who were shielding. With the big giant supermarket chains insisting on a minimum order of £30 for delivery, many who we engaged with, told us that they simply could not afford this. Tŷ Pantri is a door-to-door service that brings food straight to the customer. Our Essential Boxes are just £5 where you get tinned vegetables, meats, deserts, pasta's, sauces, cereal, and long-life milk that would typically cost £40 in the supermarket, and our fresh fruit and vegetable boxes are just £4.

Working with a local trusted partner, the H Factor, we have linked up with their Kick Start employees, to provide this door-to-door service. Furthermore, it has enabled us to support the community of Merthyr Tydfil through the pandemic and beyond. Now, as we

face another unprecedented time with the cost-of-living crisis, Tŷ Pantri is providing an affordable way to shop and help maximise income, so that the people of Merthyr Tydfil are not forced to choose between heating or eating.

“The service that you are providing is helping us significantly as a family. Even though I am not your tenant, you treat me as I am and help me so much with this. As a house, we have never been in this position before, where we are both now out of work, and how this has hit our family finances. This pantry is a Godsend to us. Through you and Hope, we can afford to eat and have a balanced diet with it. We get better

value for money with you because we have a greater choice with your essential boxes, and of course, your fruit and veg is fresh on the day. If ever I can volunteer to help make the project happen please let me know.” Customer 1

“The above just rang to order another cupboard essential box for this week and she wanted to ‘thank you’ and tell you how much these hampers are helping her each week. She said that they are a ‘godsend’ to her and even allowing her to have her grandchildren a couple of days now through the holidays too. They are making a huge difference to her life, and she is so grateful.” Customer 2

## Outcomes and achievements

- Just using our tenant’s engagement as an example since April this year we have been able to support them to save more regularly. Through using the HACT tool kit, this has shown that these customers alone, have generated a social value of £22,508. Furthermore, we have been in the position to further engage with them and support them in other aspects of their lives and tenancy.
- We are averaging 20 deliveries a week.
- We are supporting the kick start scheme through partnership working with the H Factor and providing valuable community engagement and work experience for the young people supporting the project.
- We have been successful in obtaining over £11,000 in funding since April 2021 to support the project.
- Working in partnership with a local butcher, we have established a Christmas savings club for Christmas 2022, where Tŷ Pantri customers can save to purchase veg hamper and a meat hamper, to spread out the cost of Christmas.

# Working Families

**Lead organisation: United Welsh**

**Partner organisations: Newport City Homes, Tai Calon, Linc Cymru, Monmouthshire Housing Association, Pobl**



## Statement of support

Working Families is a Lottery funded project setup to support working families in Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire to improve their quality of life.

Achieving a healthy balance is difficult for working families, who are often juggling different priorities to keep things afloat at home. Finding the time and money to help your family thrive can be hard. This is particularly true now with the rising cost of living. The

project works with groups of families and community partners, to identify issues affecting them and support them, through coproduction, to develop solutions to improve things for them and other local families.

Key activities of the project are:

- Biscuit Club community group, supported in partnership with Save the Children, is a regular coffee morning helping tackle isolation for parents in Newport, building a peer support network and improving the confidence of members, through training and activities. Sessions such as keeping children safe online, budgeting, sustainable cooking, level 2 food hygiene and circle of security have contributed to the growing confidence of members.
- Sustainable You, Sustainable Me, a group supported in partnership with Monmouthshire Housing Association, to help tackle period poverty and normalise the use of sustainable sanitary products.
- Gelligaer sustainable cooking initiative, working with parents at Gelligaer Primary to deliver a 5-week sustainable cooking course.
- Working Wardrobe, working with Moxie People and Platform, to support volunteers to provide community members with access to appropriate interview and work clothing for free.

- Lliswerry Primary and St Andrew's Primary, working with parents to create co-productive parent engagement groups, to help the school to develop into community hubs that are responsive to the needs of the families that they support. In Lliswerry this links to the Children in Wales Price of Pupil Poverty project, supported by Linc Cymru and Newport City Homes as well as Working Families.
- Bridging Group work with Working Families and identified issues around the affordability of school uniform in Caerphilly. In response, they run pre-loved uniform exchange events in partnership with Working Families, local schools and Caerphilly Parent Network.
- IT lending library, providing access to IT equipment for digitally excluded community members, to help them access employment and training.
- Grant Start training, providing community groups with training to better access funding. One such group was Cwtch Angels, who fed back that the training had "clarified their approach and improved their confidence in putting funding applications together."

Emma Young (Biscuit Club): "My mental health has improved, as I had no-one, I knew on Bettws, as I'm

not from the area. It's given me a support network and helped get my confidence back. Doing courses to help me gain employment has also been a great help."

Jade Jenkins (Biscuit Club): "I feel the project has helped in a lot of ways. It's hard to put into words. The social contact with other parents and a break from the house has been important. Making new friends has helped me build a local support network. My confidence has definitely improved."

Julie Rees from Platform (Working Wardrobe): "We have been successfully working with... the Working Families Team over the past 18 months, with the support of their team we have been able to establish the First Working Wardrobe Hub in Southeast Wales in challenging times... we have been able to work closely with individuals to achieve success in gaining work-based opportunities such as employment and training.

With their support we have been able to develop and maintain volunteers to help support this initiative, greater connections within their local communities, reduce isolations, raise community involvement and participation.

The Working with Families team have provided excellent support..."

## Outcomes and achievements

Project outcomes:

Biscuit Club supported parents to overcome isolation and, in recent feedback, 100% of members said that their self-confidence had improved as a result. Following on from this, 2 group members obtained jobs and 5 successfully undertook level 2 food hygiene training.

The Bridging Groups' first uniform event supported 56 families, with an average saving per family of £39, totalling savings of £2,184. This was not the only impact, with comments around it 'being a weight off' and now 'being able to spend that money on other things we need' has a tremendous impact on wellbeing.

By end of March 2022, Working Wardrobe provided work clothes to 19 people. One service user said:

"Initially, I was nervous about coming down... I felt instantly at ease from the moment I walked in. No-one judged me... I know I will look good in my new clothes. Thank you all, you don't know how much this means to me."

Sustainable You Sustainable Me engaged with 40+ families during February ½ term, 62% of whom, wanted further involvement. The project itself, signed up 20 people and gave out 80 free products to families - reducing the amount of disposable products heading for landfill.

Working Families continues to support communities to develop new solutions to the issues they face through coproduction and strength-based approaches to community development.

# Working wardrobe

**Lead organisation: Moxie People**

**Partner organisations: Bluegg, CCHA, Tramshed Tech, Tai Calon, Cadwyn Housing, Newydd Housing, United Welsh**



## Statement of support

About the Working Wardrobe

Moxie People is the specialist social housing recruitment agency with a human-centred approach, partnering with Housing Associations and charities to bring the best talent in to the sector through a robust recruitment and onboarding process.

When recruitment ground to a halt during the pandemic, Moxie continued supporting the housing sector, as it looked for ways to support some of society's most vulnerable people during a particularly difficult time. To play our part in alleviating the pressure of finding work, in June 2021 Moxie launched the Working Wardrobe (WW). Our co-production initiative (with Bluegg, CCHA, Tramshed Tech, Tai Calon Community Housing, Cadwyn Housing, Newydd Housing, United Welsh, Working Families, Communities for Work and Platform), redistributes donated interview clothing (new and lightly used) to job seekers across Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. With interest and talks already in place to launch hubs in Newport, Torfaen, and Monmouthshire in 2022/23.

Through the involvement of local businesses, education providers, volunteers and community centres, WW develops the community economy - moving closer to a circular economy. Moreover, by redistributing used interview attire, WW will help reduce the 300,000 tones of clothing needlessly sent to landfill in the UK every year.

Our key aims

By promoting co-production and sustainability, we aim to empower over 200 individuals every year facing financial hardship to boost their morale and reach their full potential, because when you're dressed for success... you can take on the world!

A Prosperous Wales

WW strives to get more people into work by ensuring that access to appropriate clothing is no longer a barrier to attending interviews or remaining in employment. More people in work equates to a more robust Welsh economy.

A More Equal Wales

WW supports people living on the fringes of society. The project helps to remove barriers to employment for people in our communities of all cultural, financial and social backgrounds. Our project has helped people seeking work, as well as those who need good quality clothing to remain in their jobs. Poverty isn't just felt by those who struggle to find sustainable employment, it is also an increasing issue for low-income households and asylum seekers. WW has helped individuals fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, who have come to the UK with very little clothing, providing them with nearly new attire that they would be unable to afford otherwise.

A Healthier Wales

According to Health.org.uk, by the end of 2021, over 800,000 people facing unemployment would also feel the impact of poor mental health. The correlation between finding work, especially work that feels meaningful to the employee and mental health is clear to see. We can support this by assisting with work appropriate clothing, that builds confidence and eases the financial pressure on individuals who simply cannot afford new clothing before securing sustainable employment.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

WW would not be possible without our community partners. Each and every one of them plays a vital role in bringing the programme to life and it reminds us, every day, of the power of a cohesive community.

Reducing Unemployment

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research has forecast that between 2021-2023, unemployment in Wales will reach 6% or more, compared to a UK average of 5.2%. Coupled with UK inflation - which continues to rise - hitting a 40 year high in April 2022 (according to the Office for National Statistics), it is paramount that we do everything we can to help people navigate these challenging times.

Reducing Waste and reliance on fast fashion

by redistributing used interview attire, WW will help reduce the 300,000 tones - and 50% of the average wardrobe which needlessly gets sent to landfill in the UK every year.

## Outcomes and achievements

### Benefits of the WW

The Working Wardrobe project hubs are delivered in the most deprived areas of Wales, where unemployment is one of the main causes of poverty. 700,000 people are living financially precarious lives in Wales: that's a quarter of the population. This financial turmoil can lead to physical and mental health challenges, high mortality rates and below the Welsh average of academic attainment. All of these factors are then barriers that our residents face in getting into employment and improving their circumstances.

The project takes on, trains and up-skills volunteers from within the community itself. Exposing them to a working environment. Volunteers can develop tangible skills in customer service, basic administration and stock management, while simultaneously building soft skills like effective communication and problem-solving.

Bringing people together like this also creates a sense of togetherness, interactions between people who may never have met increases mental well-being and allows individuals to empathise and connect. Working together builds bridges and improves lives.

# DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY HOMES

This award recognises organisations involved in building new social and affordable homes across Wales. It celebrates homes at the cutting edge of innovation that, through their construction, have not only helped meet housing needs but, in the process, have delivered multiple benefits for the local communities in which they're situated.

## Cwrt Canna

**Lead organisation: Newydd Housing Association**

**Partner organisation: Canna Developments using the Beattie Passive Build System**



### Statement of support

Cwrt Canna is a development of 13 highly energy efficient, sustainable and affordable homes, developed by Newydd Housing Association using private and Welsh Government Innovative Housing Programme funding and Social Housing Grant.

The homes and their environs are visually attractive as a result of intelligent space planning and exceptional architectural design. Cwrt Canna ticks all the boxes for a 'beautiful' social housing scheme and then goes further still to achieve Passivhaus standards of quality, thermal comfort and energy efficiency - cutting fuel bills and curtailing carbon emissions. As the number of people living in fuel poverty increases and climate concerns intensify, these considerations are critical.

Newydd Housing Association should be commended for its unwavering commitment to innovation, tenant wellbeing and sustainability. Cwrt Canna was built by local contractor Canna Developments using innovative Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). Designed and modelled in the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) and constructed around a sustainable timber frame, using the patented Beattie Passive build system, the homes maximise airtightness and minimise

thermal bridging to significantly reduce energy demand and, in turn, cut carbon emissions.

The homes are extraordinarily energy efficient. What's more, the quality of the accommodation is second to none. Passivhaus raises living standards, banishes damp and mould, and provides healthy ventilation that is free from airborne pollutants and allergens. Occupants will enjoy warm surfaces and comfortable temperatures throughout the year, with no cold spots, draughts or condensation in the winter, and no excessive heat or oppressive humidity in the summer.

The homes at Cwrt Canna are occupied. Amber, who had up until recently been sleeping on her mother's sofa, and her daughter Aria, recently moved into their new home. Amber said: "I feel so grateful, it's not such a strain anymore. I was over the moon and started crying when I found out I'd be moving here, just getting more stability for us both is a relief. I'm just so happy we can now begin to build a future".

Across the courtyard, another tenant, named Alex, has also just moved in with her young family. Alex said, "Moving into this home has made such a difference with the prices of energy as they are. Having an eco-home which is light, airy and with high ceilings is so beneficial... it's been remarkable, the improvement in our mood and wellbeing."

Social value was a hugely important part of the project. The proposals included a prisoner rehabilitation scheme, delivered alongside contractors Canna Developments - a Beattie Passive Flying Factory Partner. A total of eight prisoners at HMP Parc were employed to fabricate timber modules and, over the course of the build, twelve prisoners from HMP Prescoed were also employed. Of these individuals, three were employed with Canna Developments upon their release from prison. Two of these individuals continue to work with the contractor full time and the other has been appointed as a site foreman - a fantastic achievement!

Furthermore, as of March 2022, 298 apprenticeship weeks had been completed by 6 apprentices. Of these, one continues to work as an apprentice and three have found full time employment. The apprentices were secured by utilising Y Prentis, a construction-based shared apprenticeship scheme operating across southeast Wales. Opportunity Knocks, an employability programme operating in the Vale of Glamorgan, also supported one individual

in gaining his apprenticeship by offering training courses.

Cwrt Canna was a hugely ambitious project, but it has been a resounding success due to the exceptional endeavours of everyone involved. It was an effective partnership that delivered energy efficient, sustainable housing, together with a host of positive community and social benefits.

## Outcomes and achievements

Newydd Housing Association's ambition was to deliver an affordable social housing scheme that would not only achieve architectural excellence in terms of aesthetic appeal but would also deliver outstanding levels of energy efficiency with a very low carbon footprint.

Social value was an integral part of the project and the scheme has been successful in creating new employment opportunities through its prisoner rehabilitation and apprenticeship programmes.

The vision was to rethink how a social housing scheme should be approached, how it should be constructed, how it should look, how it could lessen the environmental impact, and how it should benefit

tenants in terms of health, wellbeing and total cost of tenure. It has been a highly successful scheme.

Designed and modelled in the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) and constructed by Canna Developments using the innovative Beattie Passive timber frame build system, the homes at Cwrt Canna maximise airtightness and minimise thermal bridging to significantly reduce energy demand by up to 90%.

The scheme ticks all the boxes for a contemporary housing scheme and then goes further still to attain Passivhaus standards of build quality, comfort and energy efficiency - cutting fuel bills and curtailing carbon emissions.

# Awel y Dyffryn

**Lead organisation: Grŵp Cynefin**

**Partner organisation: Denbighshire County Council**



## Statement of support

### Background

Grŵp Cynefin was appointed in 2016 as the preferred partner of Denbighshire County Council to deliver a new extra care housing and supported living development on the site of the old Middle Lane school in the heart of Denbigh. The Council was looking to develop a new facility to meet the changing needs of older people and vulnerable adults in the county.

This £12m scheme (funded in partnership by Welsh Government and Grŵp Cynefin) was developed

through innovative and positive partnership working between Grŵp Cynefin, Denbighshire County Council and Welsh Government to jointly develop a brief for a sustainable scheme which addressed the long term additional needs of residents.

### Scheme

Awel y Dyffryn comprises of 66 one and two bedroom self-contained extra care apartments offering a housing option for older people to live independently, and to 'age well'. Specifically designed as a Dementia-Friendly zone, people with dementia can gain confidence and familiarity when moving in, or as dementia develops over time.

As the setting is within Denbigh's Conservation Area, CADW and Denbighshire's Conservation Officer were consulted from the outset and an appropriate building response was developed that harmonised with its surroundings while providing both a modern and highly accessible building. Part of this process involved recycling much of the original stone and using many decorative features from the former school building - which many of the residents attended. This included reinstating an ornate lead weathervane and cherished stone elements from the school entrance which were carefully restored and incorporated into the new building.

Communal areas feature local and historical artwork to encourage nostalgia and opportunities to reminisce.

The restaurant offers a sociable daily lunch, and other activities to promote healthy living and prevent loneliness and isolation.

The scheme also consists of 5 supported living units aimed specifically at local people requiring accommodation with more complex needs, with tailored support and care services provided by Cartref Ni.

Cllr Bobby Feeley, said: "We are extremely proud to have worked in partnership on this important project for our residents with Grŵp Cynefin. Awel y Dyffryn will provide a range of facilities and support which will help older Denbighshire residents maintain and improve their independence, while also supporting our communities to be more resilient."

Energy efficient design and layout

Whilst being a state of the art, future proof building, with low-energy and high technology facilities, it also offers comfort and homeliness for its older residents. The building wraps around the main landscaped gardens with a series of smaller sheltered and open courtyards offering peaceful outside areas despite being a stone's throw of the town's amenities.

The scheme was designed to be as sustainable and energy-efficient as possible to reduce residents fuel

bills and running costs. Site orientation, micro-climate, intelligent building services were considered from the outset with the scheme benefiting from passive solar gain, natural light and wind protection, helping to reduce energy demand. One of the main objectives for the 'Supported Living Village' concept was to provide a low carbon development which generates electricity on site, utilising renewables in tandem with a robust and highly insulated building, placing lower demands on the services infrastructure in the surrounding area.

A 'fabric first' approach was taken with high levels of thermal insulation with BREEAM excellent principles applied from design to construction stages.

- Efficient community heating system
- Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery to reduce space heating
- Low energy extract systems in kitchens and wet rooms
- Efficient LED lighting incorporating daylight controls in communal areas
- Natural ventilation that provides covid friendly design
- Low and zero carbon technology - Photovoltaics allows battery storage when it becomes more viable

## Outcomes and achievements

Positive partnership working with Denbighshire County Council has been a key theme throughout this project, with positive relationships being formed which has ensured that an exemplar, high quality scheme has been developed.

Allocations have been carefully evaluated in partnership with the local authority, health board, the care provider and Grŵp Cynefin, to ensure all needs are considered. This provides residents with the peace of mind that they are able to enjoy continued independence, but with the assurance that if their needs increase, these can be met without having to move to a residential care home.

Benefits to the local economy

The scheme provided the following benefits and opportunities to the local supply chain, subcontractors and apprenticeships:

- 573 apprentice weeks on site
- 148 weeks of work experience on site
- 136 weeks of employee training
- 35 weeks of subcontractors training
- 88% value of work given to subcontractors based in Wales
- 50% subcontractors were based 30 miles from site
- 65% subcontractors were based in Wales

The building contract also included for a community benefit sum which was reinvested with match funding to purchase a disused building in Denbigh which will be developed into a vibrant community asset.

# Building Better Homes

**Lead organisation: Swansea Council**

**Partner organisation: Welsh School of Architecture (WSA)**



## Statement of support

Swansea Council has completed its latest new build scheme in Clase; as part of a regeneration project which includes 25 x 3 Bed Houses; a new Welsh School and an enhanced playground area adjacent to the new estate.

There is high demand for social housing across Swansea with a particular shortage of large family homes. The mix of housing was carefully chosen by analysing the needs register and local housing market assessment.

The Council developed its own Swansea Standard for new build, which can be combined with these technologies to create Homes as Power Stations.

The Swansea Standard is a Fabric First approach, using key principles of passivhaus design, is a 25% improvement on current building regulations, maximizes solar gain through orientation, incorporating high performance triple glazed windows, high levels of mass insulation, no thermal bridging, and extremely high levels of airtightness with a target of 4 air changes per minute. The Swansea Standard has been combined with innovative and renewable technologies to produce Homes as Power Stations that can generate and store their own power and includes Ground Source Heat Pumps, PV solar roofs, battery storage and Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery Systems.

The performance of each home is being monitored in partnership with the Welsh School of Architecture (WSA). The evaluation will focus on the performance of the buildings, and tenant feedback on what the

property is like to live in as a home. The aim is to deliver high quality, low carbon, high energy efficient housing at scale and pace. The user feedback to assess how comfortable the homes are to live in, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the buildings performance is critical to appraise how this technology works in the social housing sector.

WSA have installed remote monitoring kit to collect temperature and energy use without inconveniencing the households. This information will be used to ensure that tenants get the maximum benefit and reduce fuel poverty. The tenants have access to the Tesla App giving real time data at their fingertips; showing what solar energy is being generated; how much is stored in the battery and how much energy they are drawing from the grid. The App helps to promote engagement and enables the tenant to make informed decisions on how and when they use energy.

Swansea Council has a strong commitment to low carbon or zero carbon homes and eliminating fuel poverty is a key driver for new housing developments. This project gives an opportunity as a test bed site for the Swansea Standard and the next generation of Council Homes as Power Stations.

These homes are designed in-house and have been built by the Council's in-house contractor, Building Services. This innovative procurement method, designed and delivered by the team has focussed on training, upskilling, local supply chains and employment

This project is a key pathfinder of the City Deal Homes as Power Stations project. This technical innovation looks at how the region can grow the supply chain and the market for innovative low carbon homes, to make Wales a leader in low or zero carbon housing construction. The project will provide learning and evaluation, to support this technology and keep testing standards as active solar and storage technology improves.

These schemes built by Swansea Council have delivered sustainable, highly energy efficient homes and achieved good space, as well as creating jobs and local investment. The Council promotes well-designed communities, which play an important role in supporting health and wellbeing, and key place making principles of providing green infrastructure, cycle routes and local facilities/services, never more relevant in terms of a post-Covid future.

## Outcomes and achievements

Swansea is committed to reducing fuel poverty for tenants whilst delivering low carbon housing.

With an A EPC rating the properties daily energy consumption at 18.1kWh; of which 10.6kWh is imported from the grid. The remaining energy is provided from the PV panels directly and from the battery. The energy consumed by the Swansea Standard homes is 62% lower and imported energy (paid) is 78% lower when compared to an average UK house of a similar size. On average the occupants in these houses will pay approximately 20% of the energy that an occupant in an average house would pay. In addition to the energy performance, the homes

have a superior comfort performance; with early anecdotal evidence suggesting tenants are sleeping better and noticing increased energy levels compared to their previous homes.

As well as limiting the need for heating, and helping Swansea meet carbon emission reduction targets, this development is also boosting skills and employment in Swansea. The Council's own Building Services team managed the project, with its own staff carrying out the construction work and the local supply chain being used wherever possible. For the project we can demonstrate about 90-95% goods/services procured within a 50-mile radius.

# COMMUNITY FOCUSSED CONTRACTOR

Sponsored by:



This award recognises the contribution that contractors can make towards the local community and economy.

## 50 Days to Make a Difference

### Lovell



### Statement of support

Lovell is a partnership housing developer that not only delivers high-quality homes but goes over and above what is required to provide added value and go the extra mile when it comes to contributing to the local community and economy. We have over 50 years' experience in building large, mixed-tenure sustainable communities which create a sense of place and enable people to want to live, thrive and be a part of that community.

In 2021, Lovell celebrated its 50th Anniversary and to celebrate we wanted to give back to local communities by launching the 'Big Lovell 50 Challenge'. This initiative was designed to support the business to give back to the communities it has helped create. The initiative focused on two programmes, 'The 50 Day Difference' - a volunteering initiative which required each region to provide 50 days of volunteering to local communities. Lovell South Wales exceeded its target of 50 days by contributing a staggering 75 days of volunteering between August - December 2021 across 6 initiatives across Wales, which included:

September - staff from Lovell teamed up with Pobl Group to give a well-loved community hall in Maindee, Newport a makeover. Both teams combined their skills to refurbish the Community House hall by preparing, plastering, painting the walls, replacing the skirting on one wall and fitting a new floor. Lovell kindly donated staff, time, and materials to help make the project a reality in 5 days.

Ingrid Wilson, Chair of Trustees at the Community House, said: "We are absolutely thrilled with the dedication shown to us by volunteers and staff alike to assist the local community of Maindee, with all of its deprivations, feel so important. On behalf of all the Trustees, saying 'thank you' does not go nearly far enough for how grateful we all feel. We will not forget this generosity in a very long time"

October - Lovell teamed up with Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association to clear an overgrown bank and then plant wildflowers next to a block of age-restricted flats in Merthyr in order to create a tidier and more enjoyable outdoor space for residents to enjoy. Volunteers from Lovell, alongside volunteers from MTHA, battled the rain to help cut back overgrown trees and shrubs, clean up the area, and plant a variety of plants over two days.

November - Lovell partnered with Newport City Homes and Keep Wales Tidy to level an area in Alway Gardens and install a large concrete base for a 6x6 greenhouse and a 5x4ft shed to sit on. The inspiration for building the garden in that specific area came from Newport City Homes, who advised that the site was historically a location which suffered low-level fly-tipping and the neighbouring properties sometimes complained of overgrowth from the site. All of the materials involved were donated by Lovell.

December - 12 Lovell volunteers, 2 volunteers from Cadwyn and a group of local volunteers picked litter around The Mill housing development in Cardiff, collecting 24 bags of rubbish in just a few hours.

December - 6 Lovell volunteers teamed up with other volunteers from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and the local wildlife trust to help clear and build a natural weave barrier at Sirhowy Hill

Woodlands, a space for the local community to enjoy and learn about bushcraft in Tredegar.

December - Lovell joined forces with Melin Homes and had 6 volunteers clear a woodland area and built an outside classroom at Castle Park Primary School in Caldicot.

## Outcomes and achievements

"Our Big 50 Challenge has been a huge success, and we are very proud of our staff who have worked so hard on the projects involved, enabling us to continue to help out the communities which surround our homes. Giving back to the communities we have helped to build is a big part of our Lovell values, and to celebrate the anniversary of our first partnership." Gemma Clissett, Partnerships Director - Lovell.

The second initiative focused on '50 miles to change a life' - which also saw Lovell team members either walk, run, cycle or swim a minimum of 50 miles each to raise money for a national youth homelessness charity, Centrepoint. The Big Lovell 50 Challenge did just that by raising £5,000 for the charity.

In addition, the Lovell South Wales team have signed contracts on the following affordable housing

schemes which are delivering apprenticeship placements with its partners including:

- Chartist Garden Village, Pontllanfraith with Pobl - 6 apprentices
- Crick Road, Portskewett with Melin Homes & Monmouthshire Council - 16 apprentices
- Royal Victoria Court, Newport with Tirion - 20 apprentices
- Locke Gardens, Newport with Pobl - 10 apprentices
- Ringland Regeneration, Newport with Newport City Homes- 16 apprentices
- Lansdowne Hospital, Cardiff with Hafod - 10 apprentices

# POSITIVE PLACEMAKING

This award acknowledges the critical importance of a range of bodies, organisations and local groups in revitalising and regenerating local communities and neighbourhoods. It also recognises that physical improvements go hand in hand with social and economic developments to make a real difference to people's lives.

It recognises activity that aims to create places that are healthier, wealthier, fairer, smarter, stronger and greener.

## Anglesey Community Growing Project

**Lead organisation: Isle of Anglesey County Council**

**Partner organisation: The Wallich**



### Statement of support

This is a multi agency project that is in place to enhance and support a wide range of individuals across Anglesey.

The land has been provided by CareLink. The main partner project organisation is The Wallich alongside Isle of Anglesey County Council Housing Services.

We have made use of derelict land in Llangefni in order to grow fresh fruit and veg. Funding was provided by Welsh Government food poverty and

insecurity funding. The site was developed by Wild Elements and is now in situ. The site will be maintained and supported by individuals receiving housing-related support through The Wallich. This would include individuals that are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Once the site starts harvesting, the food grown will be given to both our food banks and Bwyd Da Môn, which is a food waste reduction project.

From the outset, the work has been client led. Ideas, consultation and suggestions driven by clients.

The issue is recognised through the substantial increased demand on our food banks. The cost of living crisis. The impact of Covid and poverty on wellbeing. The fact we have the same amount of money to last the same amount of time, however can purchase less due to substantial increased costs.

This approach not only supports the Wallich clients through community integration, wellbeing and feeling a part of something positive, it ensures more access to healthy, home grown nutritious fruit and veg that will be distributed and consumed by a lot of Anglesey residents.

This project is led by Isle of Anglesey Housing Services.

## Outcomes and achievements

Site achieved

Wild Elements have installed and developed the site

The site is being expanded by smaller projects run by the Wallich, including the development of a bench for clients to sit and enjoy the peace and tranquility.

The open day has occurred, inviting the food banks and Bwyd Da Mon,

First harvest is expected August to which the food will be utilised by the Wallich clients, two food banks and Bwyd Da Môn.

# Neighbourhood Learning Centre

**Lead organisation: Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council**

**Partner organisation: Merthyr Valleys Homes**



## Statement of support

The project is innovative and collaborative, developed in partnership with Local Authority Housing Teams, Childrens Services, Employability, and partner RSL - Merthyr Valleys Homes to develop a much-needed supported accommodation for young people who are care experienced or leaving care and / or at risk of homelessness.

Utilising an existing training block (1 of 3) we were able to obtain funding from the Authority and the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) Capital fund from Welsh Government to develop an existing underutilised building to provide 5 units of one and two bed self-contained accommodation. This accommodation will be for the periods on leaving foster care or corporate parenting residential care accommodation.

Located in the Gurnos estate in Merthyr Tydfil, the building currently acts and is known as a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) and plays a key role in supporting unemployed youths and adults access training with the aim of increasing their access to employment opportunities. The site currently comprises 4 buildings (3 blocks and a retail unit), which offer a range of vocational training, where experiential learning can take place. There are carpentry workshops, plumbing/metal and other construction style workshop areas; a hair dressing unit with professional hair salon equipment, a potters kiln and ceramic workshop to name a few, along with staff office accommodation and currently empty unused existing flats.

The capital scheme underway is refurbishing one building (Block 2) into 5 self-contained flats which will be staffed 24/7 by a support provider, and to re-locate existing workshops into the remaining buildings, resulting in minor adaptation, allowing part of the learning centre to remain open to the young people. The intention is to create a unique accommodation centre where young people have direct access to suitable modern, safe accommodation, whilst also providing them with access to onsite training, that could lead to higher education by attending their local college and/or future employment.

This allows for a young person to feel supported to live independently, have housing related support in the management of a household, managing their own finances, food/nutrition/cooking, self-care, and household hygiene, whilst being supported with staff on site. This will be seen as a step-up approach to more independent living in their own accommodation, limiting the need for further support and preventing any escalation of needs. It is hoped that with this staff support and training on site, many young people will go on to attend the local college, and or take part in employment schemes, as necessary.

The whole facility will have a revamp to attract the young people to not only the great quality accommodation but the fantastic training and skills offering to help grow and create a brighter future. The whole project will have a fantastic effect on placemaking, regenerating not just the underutilised and tired looking building for accommodation, but all buildings and the surrounding areas, making this a vibrant and attractive place to live, visit and gain skills and training to lead to employability.

The project will create local jobs in the construction element, as well as the ongoing support and provisions at the site.

The area will be landscaped and finished to a high standard and attract more people from the local community to use the services that will be available at the two buildings on site and engage in social and educational activities that will enhance wellbeing.

The project will not only prevent homelessness but enhance :

- Health including mental health
- Well-Being

- Life Skills
- Engagement in education
- Employment
- Social Inclusion

## Outcomes and achievements

This project places a big emphasis on prevention and early intervention for young people (aged 16 – 24 years) who have been in the care system and deemed as Children Looked after (CLA), children leaving foster care.

The provision of accommodation for young people, alongside support and access training will provide positive outcomes.

The project not only improves the visible attributes of the buildings but the surrounding area and

community through landscaping, improved walkways, access, etc.

As well as creating more accommodation to meet a vast need, we have created jobs through ongoing housing related support to be delivered at the centre.

The community will also benefit from a community space in which to improve wellbeing, social inclusion, employability and skills to create better sustainable futures and regenerate the area to be more attractive and inviting.

# The Mill, Canton

**Lead organisation: Lovell**

**Partner organisations: Tirion Homes, Cadwyn Housing Association, Principality Building Society & Welsh Government**



## Statement of support

Situated at the site of the former Arjo Wiggins Paper Mill at Ely Bridge in Cardiff - The Mill transforms the derelict 53 acre, brownfield site into one of Cardiff's most attractive, sustainable residential communities.

Partners Lovell, Tirion Group, Cadwyn Housing Association, with support from Welsh Government and financial-backing from Principality Building Society are developing Wales' largest ever urban regeneration programme at The Mill with 800 new mixed-tenure homes.

Addressing the need for affordable housing, over half of the homes (442) are being delivered for discounted/social rent with Tirion Homes, managed by Cadwyn Housing Association. The remaining homes (358) were delivered as open market homes by Lovell.

To date the project has successfully delivered the 358 homes for open market sale, which sold out a year ahead of programme and 180 affordable homes

across 2 phases. Work is underway on the final phase (Phase D) of the programme, which will see a further 262 affordable homes delivered for rent through Tirion Homes and Cadwyn Housing Association, as well as five retail units.

The Mill is most certainly a complex scheme that goes way beyond just the building of new homes. The scheme also includes a community building, parks and beautiful tree-lined avenues.

The masterplan was developed through 6 guiding principles:

- The recovery of the Ely river landscape
- The location of the new sustainable community
- The making of 'place' rooted to the landscape
- The creation of a community based on a network of streets that favour pedestrians, cycling and public transport.
- The provision of a mix of housing, commercial and community uses
- Quality and distinctiveness of design.

The first phases are set into the legibility set out the masterplan, informed by the constraints and opportunities afforded by the site. Notably:

- Entrance along the Neighbourhood Spine running East to West
- Connection to the Riverside Park via the Green Streets running North to South
- Shared spaces as the focus for the development parcels to create distinct neighbourhoods.

From the outset the vision for The Mill was to provide high quality, flexible, sustainable homes within the framework of the masterplan that had 'place making'

as its principle driver. Homes based around a network of legible, high quality shared spaces with a strong landscape infrastructure to foster the development of a new community. We are proud to be creating a place where people can live and thrive and to make connections between the rich and vibrant history of the area, the present and its future.

The redevelopment of The Mill now provides the vital missing link in the picturesque Ely trail enabling people to appreciate the rich biodiversity and varying habitats along the river from St Fagans to Cardiff Bay. The river Ely / Afon Elái was an essential part of the area's history, and the Mill's success. The rich biodiversity of the area will be protected and enhanced so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

The partnership team have engaged directly with the local community and have carried out many community initiatives. In particular 'Our Memories of The Mill' project which aims to bring together people who worked at the Arjo Wiggins Mill, to share their memories and create a legacy for the future. The project will continue throughout the development as we celebrate The Mill's heritage throughout the site - particularly in the riverside park and the village centre.

The Mill not only provides a fantastic regeneration opportunity in terms of brownfield development, it will also provide a much-needed stimulus to the local construction industry through its commitment to using skilled workers from the local community to be involved in the development.

## Outcomes and achievements

- Refurbished the changing rooms at the Jubilee Park rugby club in Canton. The improvements have totally transformed the building including installation of a new kitchen, shower room and boilers as well as new lighting and a new roof. In addition a new kit room was created, ceilings replaced, toilet facilities refurbished and club redecorated.
- Provided fencing for an allotment run by a Cardiff-based veterans organisation. The Welsh Veterans Partnership's network includes partners from the private sector, local authorities, education facilities and housing associations, all of which contribute to the wellbeing of hundreds of veterans and service leavers, as well as service families.
- Created a bike shed to securely store all the school's bikes at Ysgol Gymraeg Treganna on Sanatorium Road, tarmacked a new walkway for the safety of parents and guardians as they collect their children and challenged the pupils with a project to name one of the streets on the development.
- NHBC Pride in the Job Quality Award 2022
- NHBC Pride in the Job Quality Award 2020
- Insider Property Awards - Development of the Year Award 2019
- NHBC Pride in the Job 2018 Quality Award
- NHBC - Seal of Excellence Award 2018
- First Time Buyer Readers' Awards - Best First Time Buyer Family Home 2018

# SUPPORTING ACTIVE LIVING

This award celebrates landlords who have played a vital part in providing housing-related support to a wide range of people. Projects work directly with individuals, families and carers to empower people to live a desirable quality of life, supporting their goals, ambitions and aspirations through providing a high-quality housing and support environment.

## Older Peoples Activities

### Grŵp Cynefin



#### Statement of support

Grŵp Cynefin is the only housing association with homes in each of the six counties in North Wales and north Powys, as part of their stock Grŵp Cynefin have 7 Extra Care and Sheltered accommodation Schemes across North Wales.

Following the pandemic, it was decided to create 'Cymdeithas Cynefin' with the aim to restart face-to-face activities across the older peoples schemes in a safe way to enjoy together to reduce social isolation and loneliness. Over 60 sessions were held up until end of March 2022. Activities included historical talks, gardening sessions, flower arranging, concerts, Wimbledon and Strawberries, and much more.

Funding was secured to provide large outdoor screens, projectors and speakers for the schemes to be able to enjoy activities virtually and digitally. Equipment was also set up so tenants could contact friends and family via zoom in the custom made 'Zoom Rooms'. Grŵp Cynefin partnered with Digital Communities Wales who offer devices on loan for tenants to improve their digital skills.

Other activities included:

Book clubs - these were extremely popular with 26 tenants taking part, Grŵp Cynefin partnered with local libraries enabling tenants to choose between them a new book every month, they then met to discuss the book.

Adult Education Wales provided 4 sessions in 2 schemes of Art and Craft and Creative Writing, 16 tenants attended and of those 15 noted they were keen to attend another course, this is now being expanded to all tenants with more on offer.

Musical sessions - Ensemble Cymru, Canolfan William Mathias, Community Music Wales and Denbighshire Active Communities have provided musical sessions for tenants, from performances, sing along sessions and memories with music. 15 tenants attend for each of the 3 sessions, Grŵp Cynefin are looking to secure funding to continue these sessions.

St David's Day Afternoon Tea - 140 tenants attended these events across the schemes and £273.28 was raised for Marie Curie. Tenants also held coffee mornings to support 'The Big Tea' and raised £406.80 for the NHS.

Armchair Exercises - Dementia Go and Re-engage provided online Armchair Exercise Classes and Mindfulness sessions to tenants, these were held virtually and were accessed via the large screens. Tenants noted they were passionate about keeping their independence and wanted to ensure exercise was a regular part of their week.

During 2021 a new extra care scheme opened in Denbigh, Awel y Dyffryn, with 66 flats. The Community Initiatives team worked with the tenants to develop a schedule of activities. A full calendar of sessions for all tenants was created to ensure all tenants felt welcomed in their new homes and to create their

own community within the scheme. Sessions with Denbighshire Active Communities were held with sessions such as Arts and Crafts, Sing and Chat and Coffee mornings all extremely successful.

Since the pandemic the need for partnership working become even more important, and by working

together Grŵp Cynefin were able to deliver more than ever to older tenants at a time where it was really needed. 9 strong connections were made allowing for a wide range of activities to take place, this enabled Grŵp Cynefin's older tenants to live independently, learn a new skill and live happy and healthy lives.

### Outcomes and achievements

Tenants have noted that they thoroughly enjoyed the sessions held, they learnt new skills as well as gave them a purpose to get out of their flats at a time they were feeling quite scared about the pandemic and how their futures would be.

"The activities of Cymdeithas Cynefin are very important. Learning different things is fun and keeps the brain working. Sometimes I fear we are becoming

a bit institutional. The only complaint I have is that it only happens once a month. More often, please?" Hafod y Gest Tenant

"Helpful, interesting and inspiring. Looking forward to further sessions" Maes y Mor Tenant, Arts and Craft

"Would like more if it's like this one. I'm a useless artist but Jane made me feel like Rembrandt by the time I'd finished!!" Awel y Coleg Tenant, Arts and Craft.

## Maes Y More extra care's happy health living project

### Wales & West Housing



### Statement of support

Maes y Mor extra care scheme in Aberystwyth has delivered housing-related support which has transformed the lives of its residents. It was developed in partnership with Ceredigion County Council to provide a new option for independent living in Aberystwyth.

The 56-apartment facility is home to individuals of different ages with a range of support needs and offers much more than just a roof over their heads. Care and support is provided by Castell Ventures, a Wales & West Housing Group company, ensuring an integrated and high-quality housing and support environment.

There is a 'street scene' feel to the design of the building, with windows in each apartment overlooking a central corridor to help prevent feelings of isolation. All apartments are accessible and have their own bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room - so residents maintain the independence of having their

own home, but with the peace of mind of access to additional support on site. Corridors are wide to provide ease of movement for residents, many who use mobility scooters and walking aids.

The layout of the scheme was designed to maximise its spectacular location; the restaurant and many apartments have outstanding sea views.

From the outset a person-centred approach has been taken. Home visits form a key part of the application process. Staff from Wales & West Housing and Ceredigion County Council visit applicants in their home to understand their needs, what matters to them and how extra care could help them live a more active life.

The scheme has a Wellbeing Officer based in the building. The purpose of the role is to support residents to lead full, active, happy, and healthy lives by creating the best possible environment for them to live independently and maximise their potential. Activities are organised on-site, including quizzes, games, and music events. They also manage regular days out for residents to local attractions, including seaside resorts and the theatre.

Rempods have been installed to improve the quality of life for people with dementia. They create the authentic feel of a train carriage and provide immersive train journeys through the countryside from the comfort of a communal lounge in the scheme.

Residents have also been empowered and supported to design and create new gardens in partnership with Ian Williams Ltd, one of Wales & West Housing's contractors.

To support residents to participate in the activities they would want, but may struggle to access, the team have arranged for regular visits from a church group, a village shop, hairdresser, masseuse/reflexologist, and a chiroprapist.

One of the most enjoyed active sessions at the scheme is Chair Yoga. The team supported the residents to secure funding for regular sessions. Providing

residents with an excellent source of exercise and a welcome source of relaxation.

Peter and Doris Wintle's former home was no longer suitable for their needs. "Moving to Maes y Môr has marked a wonderful new turn in our lives. We have met new people and we have more friends now than ever before."

## Outcomes and achievements

Residents aged 22-95 are provided with a bespoke package of care according to their needs.

Overall satisfaction score of 8.6/10 in recent survey (29 residents). 11 residents rated Maes y Mor as 10/10.

The partnership approach between Wales & West Housing, Ceredigion County Council and Castell Ventures has ensured Maes y Mor is delivering the best outcomes for people as evidenced by testimonials from residents

The scheme has played a significant role in reducing loneliness and isolation. Resident Jean Aldridge said:

"Before moving here I was unable to have a bath or shower as we did not have the facilities. I am very deaf and we had to give up our car, which was so isolating. As soon as I arrived at Maes y Môr I felt safe, life is a lot easier now than before."

Care leaver Brodie Gadsby has made a fresh start, securing a new job as well as a new home when he moved to Maes y Môr. "I moved around a lot after I left foster care - I have often been very lonely and I found it all difficult. I'm very happy with the new friends I've made here - they are like family to me."

# SUSTAINABILITY IN HOUSING

Sponsored by: **BLAKE MORGAN**

The housing sector, like many others, is faced with the challenge of cutting carbon emissions to achieve the Welsh Governments' net-zero targets by 2050.

This award celebrates organisations that can demonstrate they have overcome some of the significant challenges in cutting carbon emissions.

## Whole house energy retrofit of 6 terraced bungalows in Swansea driving towards zero carbon targets

**Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE), Welsh School of Architecture**



### Statement of support

Six bungalows in the greater area of Swansea have been retrofitted with an innovative whole house energy system as part of a collaboration between the Low Carbon Built Environment team at the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University and Swansea Council, supported by the Welsh European Funding Office. The bungalows are off the mains gas grid and each one has a floor area of 68 m<sup>2</sup>.

The homes are representative of typical Welsh homes, and they were very expensive to heat, with damp and mould problems, and very low SAP ratings (as low as 12). The objectives were to aim towards zero carbon by reducing the energy demand, to be met as much

as possible with renewable supply and storage whilst ensuring comfortable and affordable homes for the residents.

The innovation in this project was for the team at Swansea Council (the owners and construction manager) to work with the Welsh School of Architecture together with the residents and the supply chain to plan, design and install a whole house deep retrofit that was efficient and a replicable solution for this type of home to move rapidly towards zero carbon target.

The measures to reduce energy demand included external wall and loft insulation, double glazed windows, replacement of poorly insulated PVC window frames as well as Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) and LED lighting. Technologies to meet demand with renewable energy include photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, lithium ion battery storage and a Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP). Supportive electrical works were completed to integrate these technologies as a whole house energy system.

The process of designing the project, was supported by pre-retrofit monitoring as well as thermal and energy modelling to analyse the performance of the buildings and ensure that decisions were well informed. Following the completion of the construction stage, a comprehensive monitoring campaign continued to quantify the outcomes of

the project. This invaluable information has provided valuable evidence on how the objectives have been met. The original fossil fuel heating sources have been replaced by Ground Source Heat Pumps and radiators have been replaced by new more efficient radiators providing a more efficient central heating system, which is sufficient to heat the house following the fabric improvements. These changes combined with the PV and battery enable this significant improvement.

The level of coordination and management required to achieve a whole house deep retrofit is high. The supply chain still requires significant guidance to be able to collaborate and communicate effectively to deliver a successful retrofit. The residents remained in the homes whilst the work was carried out, this added extra complexity but would have added extra cost and disruption for the resident if they had had to have decanted. Based on that constraint, the project was

planned in two phases, firstly fabric improvements and then installation of supply and storage technologies. The works were carefully managed to minimise disturbance and residents were kept informed about the schedule of works. The team worked hard to demonstrate that a whole house retrofit can be successfully delivered in homes occupied by older, vulnerable residents with clear communication channels.

The installation of building integrated PV solar panels is innovative, however, it was identified that a competent roofing company should work directly with the PV installer to ensure a high quality installation of both. The implementation of this whole-house retrofit project provides evidence for the Welsh retrofit sector with transferable knowledge as the project is replicable and the results generated highlight the benefits for the local sector in the move towards decarbonisation of the existing building stock.

## Outcomes and achievements

The Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) improved from EPC G to A, with SAP ratings increasing from 12 to 95. The average annual energy consumption of each home was 5MWh compared to the UK average of 15MWh per home - a 66% reduction. Of the total 5MWh used, 2.8MWh was provided by the PV solar panels and lithium ion battery with only 2.2MWh from the national grid. During the summer months an excess of 2MWh is generated which can be sold back to the grid, providing financial income for the residents.

Before the retrofits operational carbon emissions were very high, 3,312 Kg CO<sub>2</sub>e per year, as residents used oil and LPG for heating and hot water which reduced to 197 Kg CO<sub>2</sub>e - a 95% reduction.

The embodied carbon of the house increased due to the new construction materials, and equipment installed during the retrofit. The increase of embodied carbon due to the retrofit was calculated at 23 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per house. However, annual carbon savings have been monitored at 3.1 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e/year per house, so the carbon payback period is estimated at 7.4 years. Following the assumption that the average life expectancy of the technologies is 20 years, the whole-life cycle carbon savings (including embodied and operational carbon emissions) reach 39 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per house, or 234 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e for the whole project.

# Sustainable Energy Centre - Collaboration and Skills Project

Robert Price Builders Merchants Ltd



## Statement of support

“Sustainability in Housing” award submission put forward by the Energy team at the Robert Price Sustainable Energy Centre.

The Sustainable Energy Centre

Government legislation and the increasing demand for environmental change has brought sustainability products firmly to the front of the Welsh housing agenda. In response to the public sector net-zero targets, Robert Price created the Sustainable Energy Centre.

Although there were innovative technologies and solutions available, the market was showing a lack of awareness and understanding of how they could use them and take the journey to net-zero by 2030. The Centre was designed to make these innovative solutions accessible to the housing market from retrofit renovations to new build projects.

The lack of awareness and understanding highlighted a second barrier: the net-zero carbon skills shortage. Half of the current construction workforce will need training or retraining in one form or another, according to the Construction Industry Training Board’s Skills for Net Zero Report and with the push for a net-zero public sector by 2030, this has become an increasingly important issue. The Centre was created to offer solutions and training, combatting these issues through offering in-house accredited installation training for the products supplied.

What does the Sustainable Energy Centre do?

The Sustainable Energy Centre is an innovative and unique approach to providing sustainable housing solutions. The Centre has made a real difference in the lives of tenants and customers, helping the housing industry on their journey to net-zero by educating the industry on decarbonisation.

The Centre comprises a dedicated showroom and an accredited training academy, created to inform customers on a wide range of sustainability products and renewable technologies within the construction sector. It has been designed for registered social landlords, contractors, and tenants alike as the team understands how education throughout the supply chain is important to reaching net-zero. The Energy team has nurtured an environment where clients can collaborate and share successes and lessons learnt, allowing the industry to confidently step forward towards building a carbon neutral future.

Better homes, better lives

To the Energy team, sustainability in housing is not just important for meeting government targets; it is important for improving the lives of the people living in these homes. Working closely with Housing Associations and local Councils to provide low carbon energy solutions for their housing stock, the team not only promoted the decarbonisation effects of technologies but also how they can actively have a positive effect on the lives of residents and tenants.

The use of sustainable and renewable energy solutions in the home can have countless benefits besides the reduction of carbon for residents. As their homes are better insulated and heated more efficiently, bills are cheaper. This is now, more than ever before, a high priority for tenants and residents due to the rising energy prices. As well as this, a well-insulated and ventilated home provide a safe and healthy living environment. The technologies showcased at the Centre are highly innovative and are designed to reduce and remove issues such as condensation and damp in the home that can cause health issues. Educating people on the multiple benefits of sustainable products has helped encourage those wary of new technologies as well as support the housing industry’s duty of care to their residents.

## Outcomes and achievements

- Engaged with a third-party training provider, delivering over 6000 hours of green skills training in the dedicated training academy so far.
- Collaborated with TPAS Cymru to host a NetZero Engagement Club, involving a “tour of a Net Zero technology centre, followed by a round table discussion with like-minded social housing staff who have an interest in net-zero. This is perfect for those who want to see and learn more about net-zero technology and its role in the new WHQS2 objectives.”
- The Centre has attracted visits from the likes of the Active Building Centre, Trustmark, and Optimised Retrofit skills programme, with the aim of collaboration to help the industry achieve net-zero in housing by 2030.
- The Energy team actively reaches out to social housing, offering everything from roadshows to in-house ‘innovation weeks’.
- The Energy team has reached out and engaged with over 30 social landlords and, so far, delivering over 1500 hours of product education awareness training.

# Retrofit project at Glannant, Pembrokeshire

**Lead organisation: Wales & West Housing**

**Partner organisation: Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE) team at the Welsh School of Architecture**



## Statement of support

Wales & West Housing always strives to ‘do the right thing.’ Welsh Government has declared a climate emergency and we face a cost-of-living crisis leaving some people to have to make decisions about putting food on the table or heating their home. WWH is determined to make a difference and make changes that will deliver the best outcomes for residents.

WWH owns almost 13,000 homes across Wales, from older stone-built terraced housing to semis built in the 1980s and 1990s, up to new Passivhaus homes. Some are in remote rural areas and rely on solid fuel or oil tanks for heating. WWH is looking to incorporate low carbon, energy-saving technologies into properties to help reduce residents’ bills, reduce carbon emissions, and deliver Welsh Government’s net zero ambitions. Working with the Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE) team at the Welsh School of Architecture, WWH has been working to plan, design, procure, install, and commission whole house energy systems for a range of properties and carry out monitoring to evaluate performance, practicality, and value for money.

## Challenges

A lot of WWH’s stock was built in the 1990s, therefore the challenge was how to retrofit these homes at scale.

The team chose a street of 6 homes at Glannant, Pembrokeshire to trial the most efficient ways to reduce heat loss and reduce carbon emissions, through retrofit work.

The homes were chosen due to the high heat loss through the building fabric, making them draughty and expensive to heat.

Although the 6 properties looked the same, each was different, so the project team took an individual approach to design a package of measures in response to the needs of each home and the residents living in them. The households were made up of young families and retired couples. Whilst 4 properties had already been upgraded to air source heat pumps for their heating and hot water, one home remained on oil and one on solid fuel for their heating and hot water.

Before retrofitting the LCBE team monitored the homes by measuring air tightness using blower door tests and thermal and heat loss using heat flux plates and a thermal camera to better understand how the homes were used and diagnose existing performance issues.

## Whole house approach

The team took a whole house energy approach combining different technologies to best suit the homes and residents. They worked with the residents from the design stage, through installation, to completion and monitoring. A pre-retrofit questionnaire helped identify how the residents used their homes and their comfort levels.

The homes benefited from:

An upgrade to the building fabric including

replacement windows and doors, external wall insulation (EWI) to retain heat in the home and increased loft insulation

Positive Input Ventilation Systems, which work by encouraging the movement of air from inside to outside from a unit installed in the loft to reduce or eliminate condensation by replacing humid air with fresh filtered air.

Solar PV panels on the roofs with battery storage systems located externally. When the solar panels are

generating during the day, they reduce the energy consumption of electrical appliances being used and the battery will store any excess energy not used which can then be used in the evening when the panels are not generating.

In a further step to drive the retrofit agenda forward WWH has fitted out a vacant semi-detached property in Bridgend as a "a whole house energy show home." The property will remain empty for 6 months to demonstrate the technologies and share knowledge with others as we strive towards net zero by 2050.

## Outcomes and achievements

By taking an approach to insulation of the fabric of the homes and providing energy generation storage, WWH has managed to reduce carbon emissions and make homes comfortable and cheaper to heat.

Monitoring data shows on average, each PV system generates 3,690 kWh a year. 1,560 kWh is used by the occupants directly from the photovoltaic solar panels, 1,466 kWh can be stored and used on site.

Reduction in carbon emissions for the scheme is 789 kgCO<sub>2</sub>.

EPC rating increased D - B.

Residents are highly satisfied with the works and that the indoor air temperature is comfortable and reaches the heat settings required.

EWI has improved the external appearance.

The team has developed the Practical Retrofit Early Stage Survey to quickly gather information about each house at planning stage and a householder user guide, prepared with residents, to ensure the whole house energy system is used effectively.

"Since the PV panels and battery have been installed, we have seen significant savings in our electricity bills. The EWI, new windows and doors have been amazing too. It has made a difference keeping the house warm." Mr & Mrs Maskell, residents.

It is hoped learning from this project can be replicated across similar stock.

# HOUSING TEAM OF THE YEAR

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This award is for a team who have delivered an outstanding contribution to their organisation and to the housing sector. It is designed to recognise the achievement of something special, as part of developing new services, dealing with difficult situations or delivering the best services.

## Living Well team

United Welsh



### Statement of support

United Welsh's Living Well team provides specialist accommodation and services for people aged over 55 living in apartments, bungalows, sheltered accommodation and extra care facilities across South Wales.

The team comprises of Housing Coordinators, Connect Facilitators and the leadership team. They use a person-centred approach to support independent living, improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness. Their aspiration is for everyone to live fulfilled lives in Living Well homes.

Housing Coordinators are the main point of contact for residents, delivering regular housing surgeries and being on hand when needed. They build relationships with residents to understand their needs, wants and aspirations, working flexibly to assist the maximum number of residents and provide excellent customer service.

2021/22 Living Well customer feedback gathered independently from research provider Acuity reported that:

- 96% satisfied with their home
- 88% satisfied with repairs
- 90% satisfied with their neighbourhood

Here are testimonials:

- Anne from George Parry Court: <https://bit.ly/3Rm9eFt>
- Joan from Plas Hyfryd: <https://bit.ly/3Qnti93>

The Living Well Forum is our resident engagement and scrutiny panel for Living Well services. To continue the forum during the pandemic, all members received iPads and had socially-distanced / phone training to help more people join in.

This initial training has rolled out wider since the pandemic, with forum members now coaching other residents to improve their skills. A communal Wi-Fi programme has also launched to give more residents online access. To date, 13 schemes now have communal Wi-Fi and this will increase.

The Living Well team deliver the Connect project, recruiting and supporting community and residential volunteers to provide activities for residents to try new things, meet new people and build relationships.

The activities are developed in consultation with people living at the accommodation where they are held.

Some examples are:

- An intergenerational choir which on BBC's Comic Relief: <https://bit.ly/3AYgjVo>
- Communal gardening projects (resident Paul said this has been life-changing for him: <https://bit.ly/3Bm1a1U>)
- Group baking and cooking sessions (read about Cary: <https://bit.ly/3D3k53z>)
- Knitting groups which raise money for schools and local charities
- Arts and crafts groups
- Intergenerational digital help sessions

The Living Well team work hard to recruit and support Connect volunteers, of which there are currently 59. 155 older residents are involved with Connect, participating in activities every week.

The Living Well team also regularly work with other organisations to achieve better outcomes for residents. For example, they work with environmental charity Keep Wales Tidy to deliver gardening sessions across our schemes, and Caerphilly Miners community volunteers to deliver activities including art classes, exercise sessions and digital learning.

Living Well are also proactive in identifying new partnerships. They recently secured assistive technology funding from the Torfaen Voluntary

Alliance to encourage residents to walk and be more active. Residents have been gifted fitbits and invited to take part in a Fitbit challenge across our sheltered housing schemes and Extra Care accommodation to increase their steps, exercise and overall fitness. The next step will be to set challenges across the schemes to provide links with other residents and forge new friendships.

As well as enriching the lives of residents, the Living Well team improve United Welsh's performance overall.

Empty homes built up during the pandemic. Living Well launched a re-let programme, which included a dedicated colleague finding new residents and acting as first point of contact for re-lets; ensuring applicants were well-informed and supporting people to overcome barriers to moving. This person-centred approach resulted in the re-let of a significant number of long-term empty properties, with 14 lets in a 60 day period since April (70% of which were long term voids).

In 2022/23, the Living Well team are focusing on improving the inclusivity of our services, widening the offer of Connect and raising awareness of healthy relationships to combat elder abuse.

Ultimately, they want all residents to feel as welcome and as happy living with us as Anne at George Parry Court: "Life is good again and I'm enjoying my life at the moment."

## Outcomes and achievements

United Welsh's Living Well team provides specialist accommodation and services for people aged over 55 living in apartments, bungalows, sheltered accommodation and extra care facilities across South Wales.

Their aspiration is for everyone to live fulfilled lives in Living Well homes, using a person-centred approach to support independent living, wellbeing and to reduce loneliness and isolation.

Feedback from residents shows how much services provided by the Living Well team are appreciated, and in some cases, life-changing.

The Connect project delivered by Living Well also continues to thrive. 155 residents are currently involved in Connect activities, and 59 residential and community volunteers are being supported by the team to deliver activities.

2021/22 Living Well customer feedback gathered independently from research provider Acuity reported that:

- 96% satisfied with their home
- 88% satisfied with repairs
- 90% satisfied with their neighbourhood

The Living Well team are proactive in their approach to enriching the lives of residents and improving United Welsh's performance overall. Their re-let programme successfully reduced empty properties during a difficult time and their wellbeing work has encouraged new skills development, peer-to-peer learning, intergenerational friendships and new partnerships.

Resident Paul Pitcher said that moving into Llys Nant Y Mynydd (a United Welsh extra care scheme) and volunteering with the team has "changed his life."

# Caerphilly Tenancy Support Team

Caerphilly County Borough Council



## Statement of support

Caerphilly County Borough Council's Tenancy Support Team does its utmost to deliver a person-centred service which delivers maximum outcomes for some of our most vulnerable residents.

The service is based upon the Council's 'Caerphilly Cares' ethos; which aims to change the relationship between the organisation and its residents and communities. The team takes the time to make sure that every contact counts, by building relationships and having the 'what matters' conversation with residents to identify what support they require, to promote their independence and increase control over their own lives.

This service has become even more important since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and amidst the current cost of living crisis. The service model focuses on maximising residents' income, whilst also providing support to sustain tenancies across all tenures and prevent homelessness.

The team regularly goes over and above to help residents who may otherwise have been overlooked as requiring support. The following case studies are two recent examples of the support provided by the team.

### Resident 1

Tenant rang to query the balance on their rent account. The member of staff who spoke to the tenant spent time having a more in-depth conversation with the tenant and, due to their empathetic approach quickly built trust, which led to an understanding that the household was experiencing financial hardship;

with rent payments being made at the expense of adequate food and heating. A food bank parcel was immediately arranged, and an application made for an emergency assistance payment. In addition, a specialist benefits officer within the team assisted with an attendance allowance application and a pension credit claim.

As a result of the holistic approach provided by the team, the tenant received increased benefits of £155 per week.

If this call had been dealt with as a simple transactional interaction the support need would not have been recognized, as the rent account was up to date, and this tenant could have potentially moved to crisis.

### Resident 2

Tenant rang the team concerned about the benefit cap and was not managing their rent payments, with arrears building up. A discretionary housing application was completed to assist with the shortfall whilst income was maximised.

Conversation broadened to the tenant's child's mental health issues and the daily struggles; a child DLA form was completed and subsequently awarded leading to the removal of the benefit cap. An on-line carers allowance application form completed. The team also acted on behalf of the tenant to successfully enable them to receive the disabled child element of tax credits.

Tenant went on to explain her mental health struggles which resulted in the completion of a PIP application and successful a lump sum of £1200 backdate was awarded.

In total the team successfully supported the tenant to receive additional income of £15,000 a year.

The tenant said "You've helped me with everything... forms, calls, when I've been upset, and in need of reassuring...anything to do with my rent and worries I've had. I could not have done any of it without your continued support. Receiving PIP is literally life changing for me and my children and I can't express how grateful I am. I really hope you get to continue to help people, your exceptionally good at it. I couldn't have done any of the forms or deal with the calls I've had if it wasn't for you; thank you."

## Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes during 21/22 financial year:

- £3.2m additional income generated for residents during 21/22 financial year
- 800 successful applications for discretionary housing payments
- Energy advice to 249 tenants (staff trained to City and Guilds level 3 energy advice)
- 350 referrals to CAB for debt and money advice
- Supported 1000 residents apply for the £200 Winter fuel grant from the Welsh government. Many of these residents were digitally excluded and would not have applied for the grant without our help

- 300 food parcels arranged

46% of residents were identified through our proactive financial modelling - i.e. using data to identify residents not claiming their full entitlement and our team contacting them to discuss.

54% of residents supported were reactive, i.e. residents contact our team or via the central Caerphilly Cares triage support service as they were facing financial hardship/threat of homelessness and were in crisis.

# Housing Rents Team

Swansea Council



## Statement of support

As one of the largest social housing providers in Wales, Swansea Council's Housing Service manages more than 13,600 Council homes located over a broad geographical area comprising a diverse range of communities. All Council tenants are liable to pay rent for the homes in which they live as part of the conditions of tenancy. The specialist Rents Team deliver an income collection, rent arrears recovery and support/advice service to all Council tenants.

The Housing Service has long held a commitment to sustaining tenancies and preventing eviction. Work to reduce the impact of the underlying causes of eviction on Council tenants had been effective however it remained the case that rent arrears were the predominant cause for a tenancy to end in eviction. An innovative approach was needed to change this.

Modernising the service so that it was sustainable for the future and would meet the needs of service users was key. The Rents Team wanted to develop an innovative initiative with the aim to ensure that tenancy sustainment was at the core of the work and eviction due to rent arrears a last resort. The

environment within which the initiative was developed was challenging. Key challenges included poverty, engagement and support.

The initiative aimed to develop the team's underpinning approach to ensure a focus on prevention, early intervention and support. To achieve this, Rents Officers would provide accessible services tailored to the individual, (using psychologically informed environments in their approach); working proactively to avoid rent arrears occurring and ensuring a balance between support and enforcement regarding rent arrears recovery. Tenants were encouraged to make early contact with the Rents Team if they were concerned about arrears, and the Team contacted tenants in arrears by phone, text and email in the first instance. Flexible payment services were developed for tenants to pay their rent and arrears along with the delivery of increased public PC and internet access at several Area Housing Offices.

The Rents Team would be more visible to tenants. Attendance at signings for tenancies, establishing 'Rents Surgeries' based in Area Housing Offices and mobile working to support tenants in their homes were implemented.

Welfare Reform Awareness Campaigns were targeted at Council tenants, and officers were upskilled in the provision of welfare benefits, income maximisation and financial inclusion support and advice. Effective partnership working with other Housing Services such as the Area Housing Offices, Tenancy Support Unit and Housing Options was established including utilisation of the Homelessness Prevention Fund to assist those at risk of eviction and homelessness due to rent arrears. New working relationships were developed with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) - particularly at local level, including shadowing between Job Centre Staff and the Rents Team, presentations to

Job Centre staff in relation to rent and rent arrears, close links built and regular liaison with relevant DWP representatives.

The Rents Team took on this challenge and by working together the benefits of the initiative to tenants and the Council have been significant. Council tenants have been supported to sustain their tenancies and eviction has been prevented. The initiative has reduced the associated costs of eviction, including

the impact on homelessness services, the wider social-economic costs and void loss. The initiative has supported the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities in respect of safeguarding and tackling poverty and has delivered towards the national well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

## Outcomes and achievements

The desired outcomes were almost immediate, shown in the 32% reduction in evictions for rent arrears between 2018/19 and 2019/20. Furthermore, following the Covid 19 pandemic, despite the return to previous legislation and the end to the stay on evictions, to date, only one eviction due to rent arrears has happened since March 2020.

The benefits of the initiative are significant. Tenants are supported to sustain their tenancies preventing eviction. It has reduced the associated costs of eviction, including the void property costs, impact on homelessness services and wider socio-economic costs. It has supported the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities of safeguarding and tackling

poverty and has delivered towards the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

The Rents Team are committed to ensuring that tenancies are sustained, and eviction remains a last resort. To support this the Housing Rents Management Strategy 2022-2026 has been published setting out the guiding principles for the development and delivery of the Housing Rents Management Service. This Strategy and Action Plan have been developed following consultation with service users and stakeholders to ensure it captures the needs of Council tenants, the Housing Service and all those involved with the Housing Rents Management Service.

# Housing Team

## Grŵp Cynefin



### Statement of support

As a result of a very difficult year, at the end of December 2020 Grŵp Cynefin's arrears had reach a record high, with debt of over £900,000 outstanding.

During the early days of Covid the Housing team contacted every single tenant individually, over 3500 calls, to verify their wellbeing and offer tailored support. They identified several tenants being made redundant or on furlough from work and needing additional support. Staff adapted well to new unfamiliar working environments, facing challenges such as children and dependants at home and several lock downs.

By January 2021, Grŵp Cynefin had over 2000 tenants with gross rent arrears which was posing a risk for those individual households as well as the business. Grŵp Cynefin's core aims is to support their tenants and they are committed to help tenants sustain their tenancies and saw the need to introduce changes. In discussion with their housing management team it was agreed that focus was needed on rent collection and a pilot scheme was set up quickly.

Generic Housing Officers were offered to select which part of their housing management roles they chose to concentrate on and 5 volunteered on rent collection. Consequently the remainder of the team continued to lead on reletting properties and managing anti social behaviour and other housing management responsibilities.

Through this collaborative working within the team the Income Collection Officers focused on supporting those tenants in need to ensure they could pay their rent and reduce arrears. All avenues of internal and external support for their tenants was utilised, from maximising income via their own Welfare Officers, applying for discretionary housing payments from housing benefits and applying for specialist grants from charities. They worked in partnership with other agencies such as the DWP, and Grwp Cynefin were the first landlord in North Wales to offer a budgeting course for tenants commissioned by the DWP.

Staff shared management's vision and searched for good practice from other organisations. In November 2021 this resulted in implementing automated telephony by Voicescape to improve efficiencies and engage with more tenants. The results helped the team avoid the historical huge rent increases over the Christmas period.

The results of the pilot was evaluated in early 2022 and following consultation with staff and tenants the business case was approved to keep the specialised roles within the team and these roles would become permanent. By the end of March 2022 the rent arrears had reduced to under £500,000, but vitally as important the number of tenants in arrears had reduced by 900 to 1110.

All this was achieved through joint working within the team as some Housing Officers concentrated on

letting properties, new and relets, and supporting tenants and neighbours with challenging anti social behaviour cases whilst the Income Collection Officers focussed on rent collection. In addition, the generic housing officers utilising their previous wealth of knowledge in income management continued to assist tenants at the start of tenancies, such as with universal credit claims, and ensured that tenants' rent accounts were set up effectively to avoid any unnecessary rent arrears and to have the best possible start.

Feedback from Grŵp Cynefin's tenants regarding the new arrangement has been positive and all the officers, housing, income and welfare, are continuing to support their tenants as necessary. As one tenant from Flintshire said "It can be a difficult and scary thing to admit you need help, but they listen to you and understand. I don't know what I would have done without them."

## Outcomes and achievements

The great achievement of the team is the result of joint working and is evident in the data. A huge reduction in arrears, over £400,000 in a short period of time and over 900 less tenants in arrears, without evicting anyone to achieve the results.

Engaging with customers is of vital importance to the organisation and Grŵp Cynefin is the first and only organisation in Wales to introduce Voicescape bilingually. This resulted in over 12,000 bilingual activities through this system alone since introducing it last November. One tenant commented recently "Thank you, it's useful and I appreciate the contact".

Grŵp Cynefin's housing staff identify tenants needing additional support has resulted in the team's Welfare Officers supporting over 1,000 tenants giving a financial gain of over a £1,000,000 in 2021-22, and a further £600,000 between April and August 2022. The feedback from one tenant from Gwynedd was "I'm amazed by the support I received, while in a difficult time. I feel they went above and beyond and really helped".

Another Grŵp Cynefin tenant from Chirk said "I'm so happy, I've never been in credit and I'll definitely keep on top of my rent, this has bought me great peace of mind"

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# Afghan Resettlement Support Team

## Taff Housing Association



### Statement of support

This team came together to support the resettlement of Afghan refugees, who were airlifted from Kabul following the Taliban seizure of power in August 2021.

Now a now team of twelve, many of whom have their own experience of seeking asylum, they have directly supported over 100 families who have arrived at

bridging accommodation in Cardiff.

Families and individuals arrived scared and traumatised. Many had been separated from other close family members in the chaos at Kabul.

From the outset the support team have been available to provide, not only practical support, but also much needed emotional support and care.

The team have really brought to life the clear pledge made in Wales to be a nation of sanctuary. Time and time again the team have gone the extra mile to make sure the individuals who served our country, and their families, receive the support they need to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education and integrate into local communities. It has been a stunning display of compassion and kindness, alongside skilled partnership working.

The team have shown grit and determination with no limits to their ingenuity, creativity, and tenacity as they support people in their time of greatest need.

Some of the initiatives devised and implemented by colleagues in Taff have included:

**Cultural Orientation:** Taff devised and delivered weekly session introducing families to all aspect of Welsh life.

**Emotional Support:** staff lend their time to listen, engage and work towards solutions with each person on the scheme, and a great deal of trust and rapport has resulted from this.

**Gender Equality and child-rearing:** Gently and sensitively, families have been introduced to the legislative underpinnings, as well as cultural norms that are acceptable in Wales. The team arranged for the women and children to go on a day trip to Barry Island. For many of the women this was the first time they had travelled independently without a male presence. It was the first time many had ever seen the sea! Not only was a great time had by all, it was an opportunity to develop confidence and independence. The trip was so successful many have returned to enjoy days out!

**Working in collaboration with the Police:** Taff invited SW Police to present around role of the Police; Hate Crime - what it is and reporting; opportunities to work within the Force (many Afghans were Police in their former jobs).

**Managing Housing expectations:** Across England many families have refused accommodation offers, causing quite some difficulty. This has not happened in Wales. Taff have been very proactive in managing move-on expectations as well as 'acclimatizing' families before their move (looking at google maps for the location, using Street View to 'see' the area and understand that all essential amenities will be nearby for them - and this has been very successful in helping with what might otherwise be a traumatic move away from Cardiff. Team members travel with families to their new homes to ensure the move on has the best possible start.

**Bank Accounts:** Taff's role has been pivotal in exploring with Lloyds Bank to successfully

open accounts for everyone without the normal documentation and evidence required.

Whilst supporting the families there have been occasions to celebrate:

Two Welsh-born Afghans have been welcomed into the scheme.

One lady and here 4 children who had become separated from her husband travelled five days through the mountains (main roads were blocked by Taliban) to get to the British Embassy in Pakistan. Along the way in the mountains, she had to get out of the car to deliver her baby on the roadside, then got back in and completed the journey. The team supported the reunion between husband and family once they finally managed to arrive here in Wales. They named the baby Safaa - which means 'Journey'.

A large group of women and men attended a Wales international rugby match, thanks to tickets donated by the MOD. LFT Covid Passes took almost a day to take and register - but it was worth it!

Taff staff and volunteers from CCC and Oasis wrapped 150 presents for the Christmas Party's children at the Novotel. The kids loved them!

Taff staff arranged alongside the Novotel a Christmas buffet which went down very well. Afghan music and videos were played on the big screen, and afterwards the men voluntarily left the room so that the women could dance. The team worked alongside the hotel staff to design and source ingredients for an authentic Afghan feast to be served. It was a wonderful celebration reminding all that as much as the families want to look to the future they should not forget the traditions they have had to leave behind.

It's hard to convey just how far the team have gone and continue to go to give the refugees the best possible start here in Wales. Their energy, enthusiasm and resilience in the face of what can often feel like insurmountable hurdle and hurdle is inspiring. Not only to they support the refugees but they support each other, living up to our Taff values of Trust, Ambition, Learning and Kindness every single day!

## Outcomes and achievements

As of today, over 70 Afghan families (468 individuals) have been received into Cardiff Bridging Accommodation. Of these over 30 families have already been successfully moved on to privately rented accommodation in participating local authority areas across Wales.

8 families are to remain in Cardiff, and 6 are already in their homes, many of these have already found employment.

A further 3 individuals have been successful in becoming Taff employees working on the scheme, now able to provide the same support they received.

The partnership between agencies has been tremendously successful in delivering the best outcome for the families in what was dubbed 'Welcome Wales' - a project that managed to extract all the families that had connections with the Welsh Regiments out of Afghanistan, and to extend the warmest introduction to Welsh life.

# Project Impact

## Wrexham County Borough Council



### Statement of support

We identified a particular area of the borough (which has been identified in a WIMD report as being the 9th most deprived area of Wales) required more intensive support in sustaining tenancies. 177 of the 319 tenancies in this area were in receipt of benefits and demand for this area was lower than other areas of the borough due to condition of the area. The aim of the project is to provide intense support and work with tenants to help reduce rent arrears, reduce the turnover of the properties and improve the condition of the area for the tenants.

The project has had a huge impact on tenants' financial, physical and mental health and wellbeing. By working with tenants to resolve neighbor issues and anti-social behavior, officers have helped to sustain tenancies and make to community more cohesive by promoting understanding and tolerance for each other. The team worked hard to improve the condition of the areas, working with tenants to clean the communal areas of the blocks of flats, encourage more recycling and encourage them to take responsibility

and pride in their area. The impact of this is that they have managed to sign up an addition 14 tenants.

By being based in the heart of this community and working Tuesday - Saturday the team are on hand immediately to support tenants, including those with week day commitments and have built up trust with tenants, where they feel they can open up to officers and be supported without judgement. One case in point is when financial abuse was identified as the tenant felt comfortable to confide in officers as she had repeatedly met them in her community and built up a rapport.

By arranging coffee mornings in a local community café tenants have met their neighbours and have been introduced to events and activities they would not otherwise have engaged in, reducing their social isolation. The team worked with partner agencies and local social enterprises to create confidence and cohesion with the tenants and this included introductions to Communities for Work to support them getting into employment.

Anti-social behavior in the area has dropped, as officers have built up trust with residents and worked with them to resolve issues.

It is important to note that we do not want to create dependency on the team but enable tenants to take control of their tenancies themselves and take control of their community. By providing this support from pre-tenancy until the tenancy is established has worked well. It is felt that this type of intensive support could be rolled out to other areas identified as needing additional support. The project received funding secured from a grant and was staffed by existing estate office personnel.

### Outcomes and achievements

The project has had a huge impact on tenants' financial, physical and mental health and wellbeing. They have assisted tenants in obtaining grant to help furnish their homes and by working with tenants to resolve neighbour issues and anti-social behaviour, officers have helped to sustain tenancies and make to community more cohesive by promoting understanding and tolerance for each other. The team worked hard to improve the condition of the areas, working with tenants to clean the communal areas of the blocks of flats, encourage more recycling and encourage them to take responsibility and pride in their area. The impact of this is that they have

managed to sign up an additional 14 tenants.

The team have built up trust with tenants, where they feel they can open up to officers and be supported without judgement. One case in point is when financial abuse was identified as the tenant felt comfortable to confide in officers as she had repeatedly met them in her community and built up a rapport.

The team worked hard to assist tenants in improving their mental, physical and financial wellbeing and to sustain tenancies and help create a more cohesive community.

# BEST HOUSING STORY

The award celebrates success stories in our sector over the past year.

## More Homes Team

Swansea Council



### Statement of support

In the summer of 2020, Welsh Government issued new guidance to local authorities setting a requirement to produce “Phase 2 Transition Plans”. The fundamental aim was to ensure that everyone brought into emergency temporary accommodation during the pandemic was supported into long-term self-contained accommodation. This ultimately led to the development of an innovative model for rapid rehousing.

The focus was on the provision of one bed accommodation that could be provided as quickly as possible, and there was a strong focus on using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). Swansea Council Housing team quickly assessed a range of options, looking for buildings to acquire and convert, and sites that could accommodate factory made pods, as this was deemed to be the fastest approach to providing the much-needed accommodation. Bryn House was an empty disused former education centre, and the Team quickly acquired the site with the view of converting the main house into four flats and creating additional temporary accommodation using the factory made eco-conscious passivhaus pods on the site of a demountable building in the grounds.

Welsh Government in response to the pandemic, issued emergency powers for Permitted Development Rights to be used for this purpose on land owned or leased by the Council. Using these powers, the conversion work was able to start straight away, using Swansea Council’s internal workforce for design and construction. The house conversion started to take place and the old demountable building was demolished to make way for the new energy efficient passivhaus pods.

Partnership working was crucial. The pods were purchased from Beattie Passive and constructed in their Norwich factory. They were brought to site fully constructed, including pre-fitted kitchens and bathrooms and craned in.

The scheme was enabled with the help of Welsh Government funding. It is an example of an innovative approach bringing an empty building back into use for housing, alongside the use of modern construction methods.

Delivering this scheme as an emergency response to the pandemic was a huge challenge in overcoming obstacles and a remarkable example of what can be achieved by working differently, working in partnerships, pulling together and being able to operate outside of the normal planning constraints and timescales. It was a project that involved officers working at risk in some cases, with many working beyond the requirements of their role. They showed dedication and a positive attitude in the commitment to supporting others to get the project completed. Due to the innovative nature of this project, officers were encouraged to work in this way, without fear of blame if things went wrong. The emergency nature of this project meant it was mobilized quickly, moving and prioritizing staff resources to ensure delivery. The team worked closely with the Planning officer to ensure that the scheme was not contrary to any planning or placemaking policy, and they knew that full planning permission would be required 12 months after occupancy.

People experiencing homelessness have reported that extended periods in temporary accommodation, especially Bed and Breakfast accommodation has a negative effect on their health and wellbeing and leads to escalating needs and negative outcomes. This development brings clear benefits to the community. One resident referred through the Rapid Rehousing

route and offered a tenancy at Bryn House stated that the difference it has made to him by having a safe and secure home in a property he can be proud of has been profound. It has given him the stability he needed to move forward and start to look for work again.

## Outcomes and achievements

The scheme is now complete and is fully occupied. The main house conversion was completed in December 2021 and comprises two ground floor accessible flats, and two first floor flats, which have been used to house people from temporary accommodation.

The pods are used to move people out of Bed and Breakfast accommodation, into more suitable temporary accommodation, where their needs can be assessed before moving into permanent accommodation. An additional pod was purchased and used as an office and a space for residents to

meet support workers or other agencies where they can access timely support. This can also be used as an additional accommodation unit if required.

The main house is a modern, bright and spacious development and the grounds have been landscaped to provide much needed outdoor space. The patio and flats have views over Swansea Bay and the garden area can be accessed via a ramp. The house has two 'swift bricks' to encourage nesting birds.

The project has been a major success in terms of providing a defined housing need using innovative methods to create a benefit for the local community.



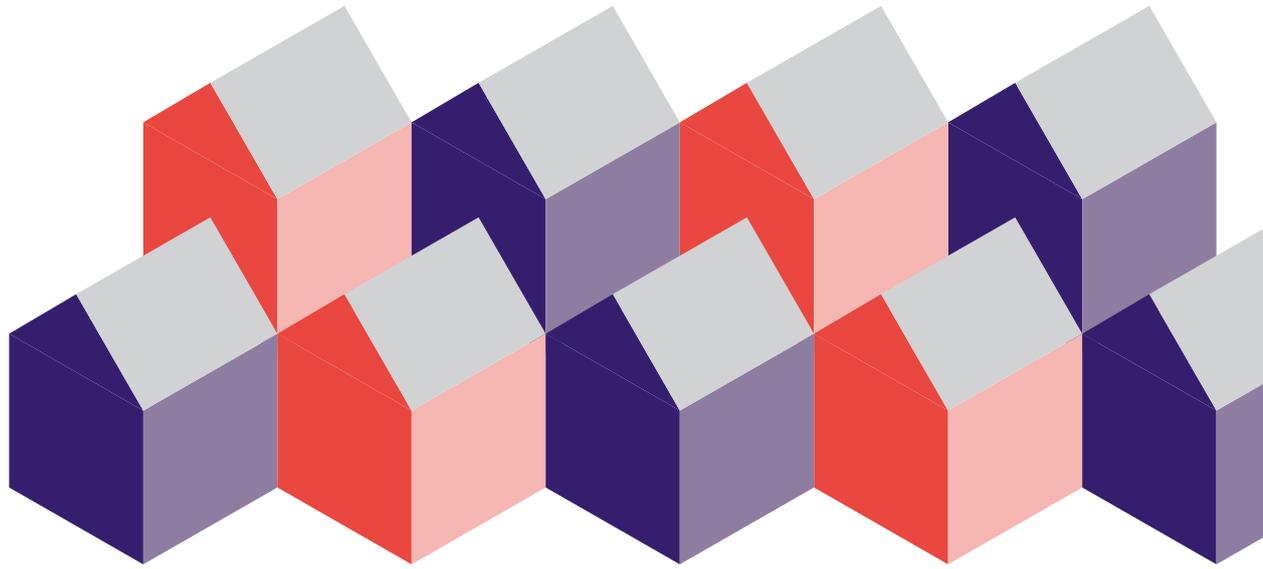
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