



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Cymru

WELSH HOUSING AWARDS 2023

Good Practice Compendium

Sharing the lessons learnt from the
Welsh Housing Awards 2023

HEADLINE SPONSOR:



Welcome

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!

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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.

EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Sponsored by:



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 truly outstanding customer service.

Using customer feedback to develop new approaches to managing anti-social behaviour

Bron Afon Community Housing



Statement of support

Bron Afon's Community Housing team, provide a person focused, holistic housing management service, dealing with everything from new tenancy sign ups, mutual exchanges, managing rent income and anti-social behaviour.

The team have made improvements to how they manage reports of anti-social behaviour in their communities, with a strong focus on Bron Afon's vision of being trusted to help build safe and strong communities, where everyone has a place they are proud to call home.

Bron Afon's customers say that dealing with ASB is important to them and the Community Housing team have been listening. One of its strategic aims is to listen, understand and act, so we increase our customers' trust and satisfaction.

Customer feedback is gathered from a variety of sources, including trust and satisfaction surveys, formal complaints, transactional satisfaction surveys, the 'Your Voice' platform and ASB case audits. Customer feedback as Bron Afon's customer voice is key to helping develop and to improve services and make sure they are being delivered in a way that meets the

needs and demands of those using the services.

The organisations anti-social behaviour policy and procedure has been reviewed and updated to reflect the customer feedback and trends identified, this has led to some changes in key areas, including communication, restorative practices, partnership working and visibility.

Community Housing Officers are trained in restorative practices and this has been included as a key part of the procedure. Restorative practices place focus on building and maintaining relationships with individuals and communities, working together to reduce conflict and resolve issues together. Officers have conversations with those impacted by anti-social behaviour and those who may be responsible, with the aim of building open and honest relationships to help us manage ASB more effectively. More face to face conversations have been built into the process to ensure officers can fully understand the impact on individuals throughout the course of the complaint.

More in depth conversations held in person has meant that support needs or other concerns impacting the situation are identified, allowing the customer and community housing officer to work through the case more effectively. These interactions allow relationships to develop and trust to be formed early on.

The new ASB approach focuses on establishing an agreement with customers from the start on how and when their community housing officer will contact them. This means everyone knows and understands how they will work together. Action plans have been introduced, which help to set out the next steps and give clear expectations for the responsibility of any actions, both for the customer and the officer managing the case. The plans help to manage expectations by clearly setting out the actions that may be taken and the tools that can be used.

More comprehensive information has been added to Bron Afon's website to help support those experiencing ASB, with an initial focus on individuals having conversations with their neighbour themselves.

Customers have provided positive feedback through the Rant & Rave feedback platform, including -

'She listened to what our issues were and has told us how we can move forward and she is keeping in touch every two weeks to keep us updated.'

'Very professional, kept me informed at all stages.'

'Always interested in my concerns, always polite and a proactive response.'

Colleagues are feeling the benefit of the new approaches, with a community housing manager saying, "The confidence of my team when dealing with ASB has increased substantially. By placing emphasis on restorative practices and the root cause of the ASB, we are able to understand the nuisance and offer relevant support."

Outcomes and achievements

- Customer satisfaction measured through the annual Trust and Satisfaction survey showed a 22% increase in satisfaction with how Bron Afon deals with anti-social behaviour in June 2023 compared with June 2022.
- There has been a reduction of 129 open ASB cases from July 2022 to July 2023. Community Housing Officers say that they feel the reason for this is because they know their community and customers and they are dealing with things proactively out in the community.
- In June 2023 we saw an 8% increase in successful case audits compared to June 2022. Every month Housing managers audit every open ASB case, reviewing areas such as keeping in contact, following process, involving partners and having restorative conversations.

Monmouthshire Homesearch - Customer Excellence in a Digital Age

Monmouthshire Housing Association



Statement of support

Monmouthshire Homesearch is a partnership between the Local Authority and Monmouthshire's Community Landlords, administered by MHA. The choice-based scheme is the single point of access for affordable housing under a Common Allocations Policy meaning that all social housing is allocated using the same criteria regardless of landlord. The team is comprised of 4 staff members who provide an exemplary service to its 3,800 applicants, aiming to provide the best customer experience of a housing waiting list in Wales.

Since the launch of Homesearch in 2013, the team have validated 25,000 applications, providing 3,800

high quality homes to applicants in housing need. Homesearch's commitment to providing exceptional customer service is driven by a deep understanding of the challenges individuals face in the current housing crisis and their determination to create meaningful solutions. This has been extremely challenging given the explosion of homeless households in the County although Homesearch have responded by prioritising available social housing for homeless households.

During a comprehensive review of the service in 2021/22, Homesearch engaged directly with applicants to gather insights into their needs as per the Hearing the Tenants Voice report (listen, act and learn). Responding to this feedback, the team went above and beyond to re-design an innovative and intuitive service, meeting expectations and streamlining interactions with applicants. Applicants principally told us they wanted:

- Improved on-line guidance
- Consistent and open information about adverts & allocations
- Easier access to setup and manage accounts

A total of 59 recommendations for changes to the service were implemented including:

- Property advert information being dramatically improved.

- Application form made easier to complete:
 - Reduction in the length of the form to minimise the time to complete.
 - Re-formatted into a responsive & familiar design.
 - Included applications for properties 'to buy' and 'to rent' in one application form.
- The number of housing need bands reduced from 7 to 4 to simplify the scheme.
- A new website that not only addresses applicants concerns but also offers a seamless and user-friendly experience including a portal for applicants to update circumstances, bid and check the status of bids, enabling applicants to self-serve, allowing the team to focus on those requiring additional support and advice.

In the face of the ongoing housing crisis and the scarcity of affordable housing, the team recognised the importance of managing customer expectations. They are dedicated to ensuring that applicants receive transparent and accurate information about their housing options. By setting realistic expectations, they build trust and understanding, both directly with applicants and via:

- An interactive website map, indicating waiting times by band/area/property type
- A tailored 'action plan' digitally created for all new applicants, advising on all housing options to be explored

Homesearch have a commitment to support applicants with unique housing or additional needs including:

- Coordinating and advocating for solutions to complex and bespoke adapted housing needs with The Council & partner landlords
- Assisted in-person/telephone bidding & application service for individuals who are unable to engage with technology independently
- Hosting quarterly meetings with Occupational Therapy teams & coordinating case reviews to ensure complex needs and bespoke adaptations requirements are responded to

To empower applicants, Homesearch have created a suite of short, informative videos that elucidate various aspects of Homesearch's processes. These videos serve as valuable resources, helping applicants make informed decisions and engage confidently with the service.

Homesearch's communication channels accommodate diverse preferences; applicants can now connect via Phone, email and live chat, or send documents directly via the website's document uploader. This multi-channel approach ensures individuals can reach out in the manner and time that suits them, fostering effective and efficient interactions.

likelihood of a fire spreading.

The Fire Safety Team also held approximately 30 engagement events in 2022 with our customers in our communities to promote fire safety and provide advice to our customers.

Outcomes and achievements

During the last financial year:

95% of new tenants stated they were very satisfied with Homesearch

Phone calls were answered on average in 23 seconds.

95% of all calls presented were answered.

99.4% of applications were validated within the 10 day target.

Testimonials from our customers during 2022/23 include:

Excellent staff with a great attitude

Great and straight to the point!

Really quick and easy, answered everything I needed

Very helpful and considerate, explained things very well

Very prompt and good advice!

Excellent customer service

Kristina was amazing help and was honestly so polite and helpful. Wonderful human being.

Lisa was amazing and helpful. She understood what I needed help with and gave me the top answer thank you so much.

Professional and polite

Great advice and explained my question leaving me clear and up to date. Thankyou great service.

Cerys gets a 5/5. She was both knowledgeable and helpful. Thankyou

Katie went out of her way to help and gave me the correct advice.

Because it was straightforward and helpful.

I couldn't think of a word better than excellent to describe the service. They've always been very helpful to me.

EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This award is for organisations who have demonstrated excellence in their approach to the health and wellbeing of staff and / or residents over the past year. We are looking to hear about new projects or initiatives which have improved health and wellbeing outcomes for the people connected to your organisation.

RHA Wales (Hapus & BeActive RCT)

RHA Wales



Statement of support

RHA is committed to ensuring its tenants, staff and local communities are supported to maintain and improve good health and wellbeing. Underpinning this commitment are 2 key areas of work which are managed by our core funded Wellbeing Champion who:

- Facilitates our internal staff wellbeing programme - Hapus
- Delivers our tenant and community wellbeing programme - BeActive

BeActive was initially grant funded and has supported over 850 people to improve their health, we now core fund this service to ensure tenants are supported in continuing to improve their health through one-to-one support with nutrition, exercise, and confidence building.

The wider community are supported through free and accessible wellbeing opportunities such as yoga, walking groups and mental wellbeing sessions, both in person and online.

With a permanent staff resource available to support both staff, tenants and communities with their health and wellbeing, we have already achieved the following positive outcomes in less than twelve months:

- 15 Staff members and four tenants completed a 21-mile sponsored walk in July, to raise funds for those in food poverty.
- 5 Staff members attend regular yoga classes and have reported improvement in sleep and mood.
- 1 tenant has returned to fulltime employment.
- 1 tenant has significantly reduced their medication for a long-term health condition.
- 1 tenant who was isolated for many years is now interacting with social groups and volunteering.
- Lunchtime staff wellbeing drop-in sessions and 1 to 1 support offered.
- Monthly health walks and pet therapy sessions
- Pause4thought and Hot Flash Café - Menopause Support Groups
- Ask Twice - Men's Mental Health Support groups and activities.

All RHA/BeActive participants reported improvements in their health, emotional state, and confidence levels. One young tenant said:

'Chair exercise has made me feel fitter and happier, it's helped with pain in my neck as I've learned how to stretch the muscles around my spine, breathing exercises have helped me relax and sleep. I was lonely and have better mental health now as I'm meeting people and learning to live better. I no longer need medication for my diabetes and gained my independence'.

We first developed our Hapus programme in 2016, to look after our colleagues because healthy staff are happy staff, and happy staff perform better - so enhancing our existing wellbeing offer for staff was imperative. More recently, as part of our programme, we consulted staff on what support they would like RHA to offer, and this has been effective in identifying wellbeing needs and has enabled us to be flexible and holistic in our wellbeing offer. It's helped us increase staff involvement in strategic decision making and determining their new working environment due to changes following the pandemic. We created a new work environment at our offices and totally refurbished the office and developed innovative working spaces and meeting rooms following staff feedback.

Hapus has supported colleagues to become more active, get fitter, eat healthily, educate themselves &

their families, and reduce stress whilst also connecting more with one another. Now Hapus is led by our dedicated wellbeing officer we have a greater focus and increased activities to support mental wellbeing, equality, diversity & inclusion, and physical activity.

Our person-centered approach has also seen staff and tenants coming together for events such as our menopause sessions called Hot Flash Cafes.

Jacqueline: I would like to thank you for a wonderfully excellently presented 'first' of many to come - menopause café. Thank you - as always, your open hearted kind and professional and hugely respectful manner. Lovely to meet other RHA colleagues too and share experiences. This support is pivotal and essential to the lives of so many.

Outcomes and achievements

HAPUS

- 160 wellbeing packages provided to colleagues.
- Staff feel listened too and we've improved satisfaction levels
- Our 9-day fortnight has improved performance alongside reducing sickness levels
- Hapus wellbeing intranet allows access to resources for all staff confidentiality.
- Equality and Diversity events improved inclusion, e.g., Black History month speakers, Pride events and tenants "Walk In MY Shoes" - transgender story
- Hot Flash Café & Pause for Thought (menopause) groups.
- Mental wellness events with BITC Cymru and Time to Change Wales
- Staff ambassadors who have spoken of our good practice at networking events

BEACTIVE

- 850 participating in wellbeing sessions and fitness programmes, which we sustained through core funding.
- Yoga and mindfulness sessions delivered in schools.
- Supported 15 community groups reducing health inequality in RCT
- Online wellbeing and self-help video library accessed by over 900 individuals.
- Over 1000 followers on our social media BeActive wellbeing group

Elizabeth:

'By participating, I realised that I was smiling and laughing again. I met people and we connected and shared experiences. This helped me feel better and less alone - I started to feel much better in myself physically, and the walks and yoga were brilliant BeActive helped me to feel fitter and stronger and I'm challenging myself.'

Organisational Development Team

Tai Tarian



Statement of support

Tai Tarian always puts Health & Wellbeing at the top of the agenda. The Organisation Development team provides holistic support for employees to help in all areas of life, as we appreciate that work and life cannot always be separated.

In addition to standard wellbeing policies and practices, the last 12 months Tai Tarian as facilitated the following in response to asking employees what they wanted to see: -

- Mates in Mind sponsorship to support our male remote workers who are generally hard to reach and engage in wellbeing support. This includes a texting service for those not confident to talk.
- Focus on Men's Health Week, including health MOT's, health screening and stress management workshops.
- EMPOIWER workshop with external guest speaker to motivate and inspire staff. (Energy, Motivation, Physical Activity, Optimism, Wellbeing, Emotional Intelligence & Resilience).
- Menopause campaign including training for employees and managers, staff survey, and promotion of the Health&Her App to support staff. This campaign was for all staff, as menopause indirectly affects everyone, whether as a family member, friend, or colleague.
- Financial Wellbeing workshops supporting staff through the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The internal universal credit team provides support and tips on how to make money go further and access support.
- Tai Tarian provided £500 to each employee in December 2022 to support high energy bills, funded by reducing the office refurbishment plan for hybrid working.
- Help@Hand App provided to all staff to access a remote GP, Second Opinion, counselling, and other wellbeing support to make it easier for staff to access the support they may need immediately.
- Nutrition Workshops, 1:2:1 coaching, blogs and videos to support staff with nutrition and associated health issues such as obesity. Content included eating for less, supporting better energy and sleep, eating for hormones to support the menopause campaign, and creating good habits when working remotely.
- Accredited i-act Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing training is available to all employees delivered by our internal accredited trainer. Over 350 employees have been trained to date, providing them with the tools to look after themselves, improve resilience and support others.
- Regular health screening is provided for staff via our Occupational Health Provider.
- Team workshops around resilience and self-awareness. This supports teams with knowing how each other work, what makes them tick and how they can work best together through navigating and supporting through work stressors.
- Launch of Let's Talk App which provides a platform for meaningful discussions including Wellbeing.
- Specific wellbeing communication channel for staff to directly engage in wellbeing activities such as lunch time keep fit classes, walks, choir, and other activities.
- Launched our Your Life, Your Story campaign for staff to share their stories and more importantly journey to recovery to support others.

In terms of our community Benefits -

- Tai Tarian has an act of kindness fund, dual funded by staff and the organisation. Last year over £12500 was invested in the community to support those in need, such as food banks or funding uniform for a low-income family, and a bike to support a work commute.
- Two Biodiversity projects enabling tenants and community members to take part, socialise and learn new skills. Local school children supported our tenants to bring their gardens to life.
- Sport equipment donated to various sporting teams of all ages and abilities.
- Variety of Arts & Crafts equipment donated to numerous community groups.
- Committed to donate to foodbanks throughout Neath Port Talbot on a monthly basis.
- During school holidays provided over 400 packed lunches and donated ingredients for 130 children for cooking classes.
- Annual garden competition for our tenants (best grow your own, best wildlife garden, best overall garden)

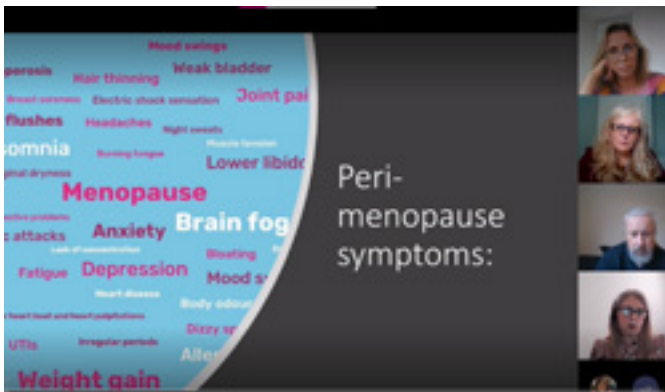
Outcomes and achievements

The benefits the wellbeing programme has delivered:-

- A shift in the culture where employees openly talking about mental health. The Your Life, Your Story campaign was powerful in creating a safe environment, encouraging employees to talk and seek support, knowing they are not alone.
- Financial workshops helped an employee access benefits they were not aware of, enabling them to become financially independent, secure employment and accommodation, transforming their life.
- Tai Tarian has saved lives through providing support, tools and conversational tips to engage with those who have expressed suicidal thoughts, through creating an environment where suicide is not taboo and important to explore, to obtain the right support quickly.
- The i-act training enabled staff to support families and customers using the training resources provided, reducing their personal stressors, and increasing resilience.
- Employees accessed GP Support outside of working hours quickly, preventing conditions from worsening.
- Employees are more resilient and open to engage in support, reducing absences and enabling a supported return to work, or in cases supporting staff to remain in work.
- An improvement on staff retention, as employees value the wellbeing programme on offer.
- Our communities are more engaged supporting one of our aims of A Healthier Wales.

Menopause support at United Welsh

United Welsh



Statement of support

Women over the age of 50 are the fastest growing segment of the workforce, and most women, trans and non-binary people will go through the menopause transition during their working lives. Perimenopause starts in the mid to late 40s, but for some, it can start as early as late 30s.

A 2019 study by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development found that three in five menopausal women were negatively affected at work. The study also found that nearly a third of women said the menopause had a negative impact on them at work. In addition, BUPA revealed that almost 900,000 women in the UK had left their jobs due to menopausal symptoms.

When going through menopause herself, Rebekah Drobac, a Neighbourhood Officer at United Welsh, had the idea of raising awareness at work and creating a support group. Rebekah realised that we learn how

to manage our health during our teenage years and during pregnancy, but education stops when it gets to menopause years. She wanted to create a space for women and family members to share experiences, give ideas and help each other along the way.

Rebekah started by speaking to United Welsh's Executive team to discuss how we could raise awareness of menopause and what the business could practically implement to support staff. We recognised the value these ideas could create in improving the health and wellbeing of people who are experiencing it or affected by it.

A support group was set up, inviting women and family members to come together and talk openly about menopause and how it's affecting them. The group provides 35 people with direct support, and in a recent staff survey (August 2023), 86% of United Welsh staff said they felt that the work of Rebekah and the menopause group has benefited them and/or their partners, with 98% having full awareness of symptoms.

United Welsh has also been working to become a more menopause-friendly workplace over the last two years, and has now:

- Set up an e-learning course on our intranet, covering health information, signposting and assessment materials
- Provided menopause information to staff through posters, emails, and presentations at company-wide meetings
- Ensured sanitary products were available in all toilets, including gender-neutral toilets
- Ran monthly menopause support group meetings

- Created menopause guidance documents and a menopause risk assessment for managers and staff to access
- Updated our sickness policy to include perimenopause and menopause symptoms to break the stigma and encourage open conversations
- Brought colleagues together to sign a United Welsh menopause pledge

Menopause has a big impact on women in the workforce, particularly in terms of wellbeing,

productivity, and staff retention. There is a growing need for it to be prioritised by organisations, developing a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Thanks to Rebekah and support from colleagues across United Welsh, talking about menopause at work is a normal thing for us. Our work has helped more people to understand how peri/menopause can impact individuals and has enabled the organisation to make better adjustments for staff.

Outcomes and achievements

The passion of Neighbourhood Officer Rebekah Drobac started a wave of positive work to support United Welsh staff who are experiencing or affected by peri/menopause:

- Our menopause group directly supports over 35 women and family members
- 98% of staff have full awareness of perimenopause and menopause symptoms
- 86% of staff felt supported by the actions taken to raise menopause awareness
- Staff rated support available 4.4 out of 5
- HR policies have been reviewed and updated to support those affected by menopause

- United Welsh is working towards the Level 2 Menopause Friendly accreditation.

Amanda Oliver, who is part of the menopause group at United Welsh said: "The group empowered me to have the confidence to insist on being heard and get my symptoms to be taken seriously, as opposed to just accepting and suffering.

"I've now been prescribed HRT for my perimenopause symptoms, and it's been life-changing. I wouldn't have had the knowledge or confidence to approach my GP without the support I've gained from Rebekah and the group. Every organisation needs a menopause support group and deserves to have the knowledge and confidence to understand what's happening to their bodies and get the help they need."

EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING INNOVATION

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

Coleshill Terrace

Lead organisation: Carmarthenshire County Council

Partner organisations: Local authority, health board, third sector and local community



Statement of support

Carmarthenshire County Council has purchased a former registrar building in the town of Llanelli. The development of this site has created a purpose built supported accommodation setting for 8 individuals who have a learning disability. Partnership working has been key to the development of this setting whereby key stakeholders such as the tenants and their families, Local Authority, Health Board, 3rd Sector and local Community have been involved in the planning and implementation of the setting.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Housing Department is the registered Landlord of the property and is responsible for all the landlord functions. A 3rd sector organisation has been commissioned to deliver the care and support for the individuals living in the property.

The key principles that underpin the commissioning and delivery of this model are:

Promoting well-being focuses on helping people to manage their health and well-being and the prevention of illness.

Promoting independence encourages people to have choice and control over their lives and support them to achieve their personal goals and outcomes.

Supporting Independence provides the right level of support to ensure that individuals can live in their own homes, maintain their tenancies and stay connected with their wider support network / family / community of interest.

The overarching objective is to ensure that through an asset-based approach individuals are empowered to maintain healthy and independent lives in the security and comfort of their own home. The accommodation has been co designed with tenants to create a living environment that supports people to live independently.

Shared accommodation is designed to be a specialist setting for adults who are considered to have medium to high needs. Comprising of; 2 floors, with 4 bedrooms, each with their own bathroom. There are 2 occupants' downstairs and 2 upstairs with access to a communal living area and shared kitchen.

Independent self-contained flats which consist of 4 flats that contain bedroom, Lounge/dining/kitchenette, and bathroom. The needs of the individuals within the self-contained flats are low to medium needs. The model for the self-contained flats is designed to support individuals to progress to more independent living when appropriate.

Each individual's living space is decorated to their preference and style.

Within the design we have committed to providing a home that has low annual running costs, improves energy efficiency of the building, reduces the carbon footprint by using cleaner energy and provides a health living environment.

We have included the latest innovative technologies that allows the home to generate and store its own energy, meaning individual's are more in control of how much energy is used, lowering fuel bills and

carbon footprint by taking less energy from the energy grid. The extension has a high performance timber frame construction to reduce heat loss. Externally the building benefits from PV Solar Panels, triple glazed windows and external doors to reduce heat loss.

By making the energy cleaner through installing electrical heating sources and significantly reducing the heat loss for these buildings there will be a significant saving in carbon emissions. Materials for the design were sourced locally, for example, timber so that it reduces the carbon footprint.

Outcomes and achievements

The Scheme provides a fantastic opportunity for us to learn more about how we provide low cost, low carbon, energy efficient homes as well as provide safe and appropriate accommodation for our most vulnerable client groups. We hope that its success can be replicated across our wider housing stock and the service in general.

Pen Y Dre Apartments/Compass Community Hub

Lead organisation: Merthyr Tydfil CBC

Partner organisations: Merthyr Valley Homes



Statement of support

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is committed to developing appropriate models of support for our young people, guided by our clear vision. As part of our corporate parenting strategy, we recognise the importance of establishing a robust tiered system of housing options to empower and enable our young people to achieve their full potential. In line with Section 79 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, we are dedicated to meeting our sufficiency duty and ensuring sufficient accommodation for all types of children who are looked after.

In 2020/21, MTCBC successfully obtained £1,129,174 of ICF (Integrated Care Fund) funding to address the accommodation needs of 16-24 year olds in Merthyr Tydfil. The funding was allocated to refurbish a council-owned building located in the Gurnos estate, creating five units of one and two-bedroom self-

contained accommodation. These units are specifically designed to cater to young people transitioning from foster care or corporate parenting residential care accommodation, as well as those in this age group presenting as homeless.

The chosen building, currently known as a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC), plays a vital role in supporting unemployed youths and adults in accessing training programs aimed at enhancing their employability. It comprises of three buildings, offering a range of vocational training opportunities and experiential learning environments. The workshops include carpentry, plumbing, metal work and construction-style areas, a professional hair salon, and a ceramics workshop, among others. In order to create the self-contained flats, the approved capital scheme involved refurbishing one building (Block 2) and relocating existing workshops to the remaining buildings with minor adaptations. This strategic plan ensured that part of the learning centre remained operational and accessible to young people.

The integration of housing support and vocational training provides a unique opportunity for young individuals to have direct access to modern, safe housing while simultaneously benefiting from onsite training. This integrated approach enhances their social integration, reduces the risk of isolation, and discourages engagement in anti-social behaviours. By combining accommodation and support with vocational training opportunities, we are not only providing a place to live but also equipping young people with the skills and education necessary to pursue higher education or employment, thereby increasing their chances of long-term success.

Our project places a large emphasis on prevention and early intervention for young people aged 16-24 who have been in the care system. By intervening at this critical stage, we are proactively addressing their needs and increasing their chances of successful independence. The project supports our young people in meeting their aspirations by providing them with a stable and supportive housing environment, empowering them to achieve their goals. It also improves transitions between children's services and adult services, ensuring a seamless and continuous support system.

By furnishing the self-contained flats, we aim to provide our young people with the best possible start to their tenancies. This approach fosters a sense of

ownership, belonging, and importance among the residents. By having access to essential physical items necessary for sustainable living, our young people can thrive and feel invested in their new homes. This, in turn, enhances their overall well-being, independence, and satisfaction with the housing services provided.

We have received positive feedback and testimonials from both residents and the organisations we have collaborated with, highlighting the impact of our housing and support services on their independence, well-being, and overall satisfaction. The project has also garnered recognition for its innovative approach to supporting young people's transition to independent living.

Outcomes and achievements

The works were completed at the end of December 2022 with 5 x units of accommodation furnished and ready for occupation mid-January 2023. All 5 units of accommodation are now occupied and young people are receiving support to achieve their goals. The service will provide supported accommodation which is staffed 24 hours for young people with low-level support needs and young Care Leavers aged 16-24 in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

The support which the young people will receive is trauma informed and person centred and will work towards the young people's individual aspirations and towards independent living. Support will include budgeting and finance, employment and training, wellbeing and life skills.

Young people will be supported to achieve their personal outcomes guided by the Housing Support Grant framework. Young people residing at Pen y Dre apartments are expected to achieve primary outcome 3 - people can access and sustain a settled home, "I have settled accommodation which meets my needs and is likely to last six months or more" as well as various secondary outcomes dependent on their personal aspirations.

Once the young people are ready to move on from Pen Y Dre, they will be supported in their next steps towards securing an independent tenancy, then through the process of moving to their new home and also while they settle in and establish themselves in their new home.

Celtic Offsite

United Welsh



Statement of support

There is a lack of affordable housing in Wales, and United Welsh is determined to play its part in providing more. We have committed to delivering 1,300 more homes in the next five years, and all new homes built by our organisation will be off-gas with a low environmental impact.

United Welsh provides homes for people in need of affordable housing. To ensure homes are as affordable as possible beyond rent payments, it's important that they are built to maximise energy efficiency to reduce bill costs for residents.

Our responsibility to reduce our carbon footprint to tackle the climate crisis is also a key consideration in our development plans.

To address the affordable housing shortage, the need for decarbonisation, and support for people on low incomes, United Welsh decided to create its own development facility to take full advantage of both timber frame and offsite manufacturing techniques to build low carbon homes.

Celtic Offsite, United Welsh's new social enterprise, is a manufacturing facility with capacity to build high quality timber frame structures with factory fitted insulation and windows for low carbon homes.

Production at the factory in Caerphilly is now underway and in the last 12 months, Celtic Offsite has delivered its first homes on site.

This has included:

- Min-Y-Coed apartments – family homelessness accommodation in Cardiff working with United Welsh, Cardiff Council and Hale Construction
- Acer House – supported housing accommodation comprising five apartments, communal and staff space in Brynmawr, delivered with United Welsh, ABUHB and Kingfisher Developments Ltd

There are 36 registered social landlords in Wales. Many are experiencing the same development and sustainability challenges as United Welsh, as are local authorities.

Most homes built by the community housing sector are for people at risk of homelessness, or those in settings that are inappropriate for their needs. Speed of build, maintenance and longevity are essential for affordable housing developments to be viable and successful long-term, from the initial build through to lived-in property care and resident affordability.

Timber frame homes are fast to build in a factory setting (on average eight weeks faster than traditional methods) and unaffected by bad weather conditions on site.

There is also less waste and better health and safety conditions.

Timber is also considered the most sustainable building material with the lowest embodied carbon, and as a thermally efficient material, it helps to reduce residents' heating bills long-term.

We recognised that a timber frame construction facility would also help partners to achieve their shared ambitions for development and decarbonisation.

Celtic Offsite has recently worked on timber frame projects for two other community landlords - Pobl Group and RHA Wales. The current partnership developments we have on-site are:

- The former Royal Mail sorting office in Treorchy – nine apartments for affordable rent for RHA Wales, working with Kingfisher Developments Ltd
- Croespenmaen – 60 homes for affordable rent for Pobl Group, working with M&J Cosgrove.

Celtic Offsite was also designed to support the local economy to thrive.

There is an on-site training suite to provide skills, development and apprenticeships for green construction jobs, and over 60% of staff are United Welsh residents.

Bex Whitcombe, Celtic Offsite Factory Operative said:

“As a United Welsh tenant it is absolutely amazing. I’m a single mum of four kids, I never thought I would be able to work like this.”

Achieving high levels of customer satisfaction is also of the utmost importance to us.

We have achieved the following customer satisfaction scores from on-site teams to date:

- Acer House: 97%
- Min-Y-Coed: 81%
- Former sorting office, Treorchy: 97%

Neil Francis, Site Manager for Kingfisher said:

“The service I received from Celtic Offsite was exceptional, from the initial delivery of the soleplates to the final commissioning of the windows. The entire team took a very professional approach to the programme, including planning, communications, quality, and health and safety, allowing the whole project to run smoothly.

“I look forward to working with them on future projects.”

Outcomes and achievements

Celtic Offsite has delivered its first homes on site, helping United Welsh and partners to fulfil their sustainable development and decarbonisation plans.

As a new social enterprise within the United Welsh Group, Celtic Offsite is a Caerphilly-based manufacturing facility, which builds high quality timber frame structures with factory fitted insulation and windows for low carbon homes.

United Welsh established Celtic Offsite as an innovative way to build energy efficient homes at scale and pace; addressing the affordable housing shortage and the need for decarbonisation.

With a dedicated factory unit of 28,000 sq. ft, comprising state of the art timber cutting equipment,

the factory is organised to meet the demands and expectations of contractors and clients.

In addition to supplying homes, Celtic Offsite is committed to providing green skills development and apprenticeships to United Welsh residents and local people.

The factory has an on-site training suite and over 60% of staff are United Welsh residents.

Their average customer satisfaction score rating stands at 92%.

All profits from Celtic Offsite are reinvested into providing more affordable homes and services, including United Welsh's decarbonisation programme.

The Hill Street House

Lead organisation: ZED PODS Limited

Partner organisations: Linc Cymru Housing Association and Newport City Council



Statement of support

Newport City Council (NCC) is facing an acute supply crisis of affordable housing with over 9,000 households on their housing register & over 369 households staying in temporary accommodations (TA). NCC identified several sites to build social-tenanted homes and Hill Street was chosen due to its urban-centric location, although the site with steep slopes is located in Conservation Area. The narrow site access made it undevelopable through traditional construction methodology. However, NCC wanted to build these homes rapidly.

By working closely with Linc Cymru and NCC, we designed and built this ultra-low carbon, social-tenanted housing scheme "Hill Street House". The project has provided high-quality, pleasant, and secure accommodation for 12 single people who have been staying in TA after experiencing homelessness, and subsequently helping them to turn their lives around. We used innovative volumetric modular construction methodology combined with flexible grid-based design, lean manufacturing technique and innovative logistics strategy to overcome the design challenges & site constraints. The project was built in line with Welsh Government Decarbonisation Programme, and was the first completed scheme to receive funding from the Welsh Government Phase 2 Homelessness grant.

The scheme is UK's first ultra-low carbon, social-tenanted, modular (Cat 1) housing scheme in a conservation Area. This scheme re-uses surplus space on a council-owned car park, avoid the need for demolition and lengthy CPO processes. Our innovations followed seven WFGA (Well-being of Future Generation Wales Act 2015) goals with focus on CO₂, Capital, and Energy. The development met all the 'MUST' building development principle (Minimize, Use, Substitute, and Treat).

Innovative technology

Our volumetric modular system, developed and tested at the Building Research Establishments, ensures special considerations from fire, quality, noise, air quality, utilities. Fully structurally engineered system & foundations, CDM, efficient built process & installation with minimal on-site disruption, these homes exceed the quality of conventionally built homes.

The flats are super insulated with no gas connections. They consume extremely low levels of energy, solar panels generate daytime electricity and low energy water and heating systems contribute to the development having one of the best energy performance levels in social housing in the UK, in line with the Welsh Government Decarbonisation Programme.

Ultra-Low Carbon Development and Superior Energy Efficiency

Our inhouse design team designed the building for energy efficiency, material choice to provide the best performance and safety, glazing choice and reducing thermal bridging. In addition, they provided enhanced greenery, rainwater garden, permeable paving as part of Sustainable Drainage strategy. We sourced up to 65% of materials locally to minimise environmental impact and used local supply chain partners at every stage of the building lifecycle. Built with 'fabric first' approach in the controlled factory environment, these self-contained flats are super-insulated and airtightness level (as built) measured below 1 m³/m²/hr against as designed performance level of 2 m³/m²/hr @50Pa, and improvement of 80%+ on the National Compliance.

Low-carbon Living and lifestyle

The development promotes "active-travel" and is completely car-free, being situated close to shops, train station and other amenities. Secured cycle storage is provided to encourage sustainable forms of transport. Pre-owned furniture and cookeries were given to tenants as they moved in. Easy-to-understand "Residents Guide" helped tenants to adapt low-carbon technologies and lifestyle.

Savings:

Around 10 Tonnes of Carbon Savings and 43 kilo litre of water savings per year .

Sian Diaz, Development Director, Linc Cymru:

"The Hill Street project has seen us deliver on our purpose of creating the right environment for people to flourish. Not only does the scheme mean a reduction in temporary accommodation costs for the Council, but it also sees 12 people provided with a safe, secure, comfortable place to live."

Outcomes and achievements

Innovative outcomes:

1. UK's first ultra-low carbon, social-rented, modular (Cat 1) scheme in a Conservation Area.
2. Use of Wales Government's newly introduced Permitted Development Rights to expedite new homes especially under pandemic.
3. Offsite volumetric MMC with zero waste to landfill during manufacturing.
4. Only 3-day on site installation time reducing local disruption, noise and waste.
5. Achieved A-rated EPCs and negative Dwelling Emission Rates, SAP A-ratings of over 92+.
6. Super-insulated, airtightness construction with 0.87 to 0.98 m³/h/m² air changes per hour @50 PA (80%+ better than the National Compliance level of 5 m³/h/m²)
7. Circa 1.1 kW peak grid-connected solar panels generate electricity.
8. Low-energy mechanical ventilation with 93% heat recovery
9. Est over 297* tonnes of carbon emissions over 30 years will be saved compared to a Part-L Complaint new build (*Based on SAP DER rates for Regulated Energy Consumption (Does not include unregulated demands)
10. Positive Perception: HRH Prince William visited the scheme as part of Homewards Initiative aimed at ending homelessness. Also, featured on the BBC One Show as an exemplar MMC-led sustainable social homes
11. Restore Project: The residents received pre-owned furniture and donated crockeries to help them settle in.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Sponsored by: **LOVELL**

This award will celebrate partnership and collaboration across the housing spectrum. If your organisation has developed, delivered or driven progress through working in partnership with organisations in and outside of housing, we'd like to hear from you.

Working together to reduce the risk of homelessness

Lead organisation: Torfaen County Borough Council

Partner organisations: Bron Afon, Hafod Cymru, Linc-Cymru, Melin Homes, United Welsh, Pobl



Statement of support

A group of registered social landlords (RSLs) together with Torfaen County Borough Council's Housing team recognised that high level rent arrears were increasing within the borough. They identified a risk of more households losing their homes, which would mean an increase in homelessness and large demand being placed on services within Torfaen as a result.

They found that customers were only engaging with the Housing team when they had received a court or eviction date, which led to additional costs. The main impact of this was the stress of a potential court or eviction date, which increased pressure on households. It also led to strained relationships between the customer and the RSLs. The Housing team had less time to work with customers to find a solution. It meant only addressing the immediate risk

rather than working on the root cause and putting supportive measures in place much earlier.

It was agreed to implement a prevention project, where the RSL's highest arrears cases at risk of court action were passed to the Housing team. They would visit and engage with the customer to set up payment plans, offer specialist financial support, refer for any other support needs and link in with employability. For those cases not engaging with the RSL, they would set up joint visits and appointments with their teams to rebuild relationships and trust. After a period of time, if the customer was working with services and had maintained a payment agreement, the Housing team would pay an amount off the arrears to help remove the risk of homelessness and further stabilise the tenancy and accommodation.

Fortnightly meetings were held to review the cases that had been highlighted to ensure customers were engaging with services, payments were maintained and to discuss any other issues within the household. This could include property conditions, repairs, employability and vulnerabilities. Joint appointments at RSL offices were arranged for customers and officers to rebuild trust, ensuring customers had greater connection with the organisation and had more confidence in the relationship with their RSL.

Following the success of the project and the lessons learned, some of the RSL's arrears recovery process have been updated to ensure they are aligned. Any cases that are at risk of court action are now referred to the Housing team, providing opportunities for earlier interventions, addressing key issues early in the process and collaborating to achieve better outcomes. This multi-agency approach

allows Bron Afon to get the right support in place for customers and puts less strain on services in the community by being pro-active rather than re-active. Partnership working with a range of agencies makes it easier to tackle issues faced by residents at the earliest opportunity.

RSLs involved are Bron Afon Community Housing, Hafod Cymru, Linc-Cymru, Melin Homes, United Welsh and Pobl Housing.

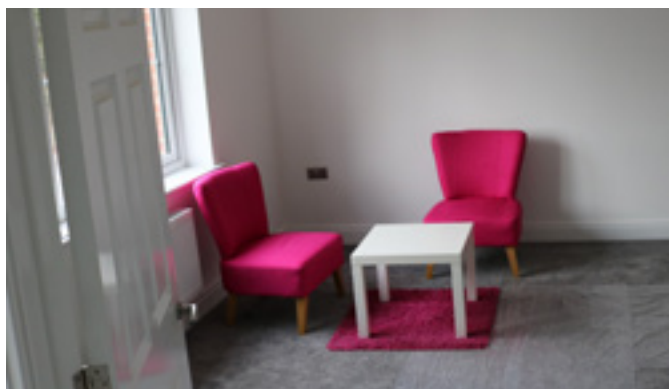
Outcomes and achievements

- Of the 40-accounts referred in, 38 engaged with the project and arrears were reduced by £60,000 due to payments from the Housing Team and payments by the customer.
- Of the 40, 8 were referred for specialist debt support with Citizens Advice Bureau and 5 increased their hours in work thanks to support from Torfaen Employability.
- None of the accounts were progressed for court action and payments have been maintained by the customers. This means that tenancies have been sustained and customers have remained in their homes.
- This approach has been rolled out within recovery processes and we continue to see the same levels of success and engagement.

STAR housing model

Lead organisation: United Welsh and Caerphilly Council

Partner organisations: Platform



Statement of support

The STAR flats project is a partnership between United Welsh, Caerphilly Council's Supporting People team and Platform. STAR flats - Starter, Transitional and Resettlement - are a route of re-housing for individuals leaving temporary accommodation who require lessening levels of support, but aren't quite ready for independent living.

The project was initially set up to support people on the local authority waiting list who require 'step-down' accommodation to support them with building the skills needed to hold a housing contract independently. Previously, United Welsh would work with the Supporting People team to allocate a property to these individuals, with support tailored to their needs. Once they were able to manage with minimal or no support, the person would leave a STAR flat and move into a rented "general needs" home.

Recognising that these individuals have likely experienced trauma in their lives, and have already moved around numerous properties, the project

acknowledged the need to provide long-term accommodation from the beginning, rather than a process which essentially required people to move at least twice after leaving supported accommodation.

United Welsh worked with the Supporting People team and external support providers to best match individuals to each property as a long-term solution. This meant that once the person was ready to lower or stop the level of support, the home would automatically become a general needs property and the resident could remain living there instead of moving again. United Welsh then finds another property to become a STAR home elsewhere for someone else starting the process.

This partnership between United Welsh and the Caerphilly Supporting People team has meant that individuals coming from supported accommodation are provided a long-term home that is suitable for them, allowing for an easier transition and helping them to become settled more quickly.

Shelly Jones, Supporting People Manager at Caerphilly Council said: "The STAR model has provided us with a unique yet simple answer to a complex situation in Caerphilly. We have many people who no longer need full-time supported accommodation but aren't ready to complete their journey into independent housing.

"This project gives the individual reassurance and the time to build confidence until they're ready to manage a home. Our relationship with United Welsh allows us to best match individuals to properties that are set up to be their long-term homes, giving residents a sense of stability and a safe place to flourish. It's been life-changing for the people we support."

Kirsty Crocker, Service Manager at Platform which provides support for STAR residents, said:

"The project provides individuals will intensive resettlement support, with residents being able

to access support from us whilst still gaining independence and learning how to manage a tenancy. It's been brilliant for us to see people who have been

in supported accommodation for a long time be allocated a STAR property and start to feel part of a community and really flourish."

Outcomes and achievements

There are currently 12 STAR flats across the Caerphilly borough, with three having transitioned into general needs properties with ease. The STAR project allowed those residents to settle into their new home following temporary accommodation, gaining the confidence and skills to manage their homes independently without having to move again after the support had ended.

The project is committed to providing a smooth, supportive, and sustainable transition for residents. Two residents developed a close friendship after living

in the same temporary accommodation, so to help them with the next phase of their journey, they were placed in STAR flats in the same apartment building.

United Welsh will now ensure there is one STAR flat on each new development site, as well as continuing to source suitable properties among our existing homes. The aim is to increase the amount of STAR flats and houses while ensuring the amount of general needs homes let through the Common Housing Register isn't compromised.

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. Applicants may consider new developments, retrofit projects or any other initiatives that has helped reduce carbon emissions.

Thornhill Decarb Project

Lead organisation: Hafod

Partner organisations: SERS Ltd



Statement of support

While Hafod's new homes are built with sustainability as a priority, the decarbonisation of existing, older homes is an ongoing challenge.

Keen to carry out extensive retrofit works that would benefit the planet, and customers, Hafod set out to complete effective decarbonisation works while customers lived in their homes, as opposed to works that could only be carried out on voids.

78 houses and 4 blocks of flats in Thornhill, Cwmbran, have been retrofitted with extensive external upgrades. The project, which was funded directly by Hafod, began in July 2021 and work finished in August 2023.

Hafod believes in building communities and making connections, and this approach is critical in driving forward their retrofit agenda. Progress in this area is only possible if the community connects with the importance of sustainability.

Innovation and improvement:

The homes, which were built between 1976 and 1982, were surveyed to gain technical information on heat loss, and customer consultation took place to understand their experiences and get to grips with any 'bugbears'.

- The team designed new roofs to incorporate new external wall insulation. This then sat underneath the new soffits and consequently looked original.
- The location, high up in Cwmbran, meant enveloping the homes in insulation was key. Hafod and contractor SERS, worked together to carry out the work in a non-invasive way. Insulation was fitted to the outside of the homes and brick render was applied on top. This meant little to no disruption to the inside of customers' homes.
- Fitting new windows was always part of the plan at Thornhill. But the team went one step further and considered how the old design could be improved to reduce cold spots. This included changing the back door (which previously had some adjacent, unnecessary PVC), blocking up this section to prevent a cold spot and updating the back door to a better quality.
- Making the homes more airtight was a priority, and whole house ventilation systems were fitted.

Overcoming challenges:

As Sarah Hancock, Head of Assets at Hafod shares, "The Thornhill project team are experts in approaching challenges as opportunities. Their positive attitude and commitment to our decarb agenda meant that this project was a huge success."

The work taking place meant that communicating with customers effectively was key. They addressed this head-on with John and Hannah, the project leads, spending time with customers on a weekly basis. By doing this, they also strengthened Hafod's relationship with customers in Thornhill.

One of the biggest challenges came halfway through the project when global events caused material shortages. The insulation needed to be covered in an aesthetically pleasing way. To do this, the team began with brick slips, but these became impossible to get hold of.

Once again, the passion for driving sustainability turned this material challenge into a positive change. Brick render quickly became an effective technique. With contractor SERS even inventing their own tool to improve efficiency. This new technique meant one side of a house could be brick rendered in just one day and the project team is clear that it's a technique they would use again.

Investing in communities:

When SERS were asked about their workforce, the commitment to the local community was clear, 'They're

all from Cwmbran, I can even point to some of their houses from here!'

Customers were able to talk openly with the contractor, and the project quickly became a team effort between Hafod, SERS and customers.

Community benefits were also included, and the end of the project was celebrated with an event for customers, colleagues, and contractors to celebrate their achievement.

Future benefits:

Following the project's success, Hafod has pushed forward with its retrofit agenda, recently applying for funding to carry out two more retrofit projects, using what they have learned from Thornhill.

Sustainability was the driving force behind the project, but creating healthy homes for customers will also ensure ongoing benefits.

The team will continue to work alongside Thornhill customers to monitor their bills and energy usage over the winter months.

Outcomes and achievements

When we asked John and Hannah, the project leads, what they feel made the project a success, they responded unitedly, "the customers".

The community support for this project and the benefits it would bring has been significant. Customers worked alongside Hafod colleagues and contractors, paying great attention to new techniques being used and showing patience when homes were undergoing the work. Their support, and the encouragement they gave to their neighbours, has helped drive forward the retrofit agenda in the area.

Dean, who has lived in Thornhill for 7 years, said:

"My house was reasonably cold. I mean, I would get up in the morning and temperatures are like

6 degrees in the house, all the way through. I was having to put the heating up full, and the heat wasn't holding...

"Then we had the new windows and insulation, and I've noticed the difference. You know how cold Wales can get! My house has been a lot more energy efficient since the work has been done. It's been fantastic, I would recommend it!"

The passion of Hafod's Assets team also made the project a success. That the work they have done has contributed to Hafod's decarbonisation agenda, as well as creating healthier homes for customers, proves that sustainability projects can be carried out effectively, with customer support and benefits for all involved.

EXCELLENCE IN CHAMPIONING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

This award will recognise organisations who are leading on promoting equality and diversity in their businesses. We want to hear about organisations who are driving positive, meaningful change and who are contributing to building a truly inclusive community.

Equality Matters

Newydd Housing Association



Statement of support

In 2021, Newydd established a dedicated working group to take on Tai Pawb's prestigious QED quality mark which provided a comprehensive Wales specific framework for reviewing, improving, and transforming the equality and diversity impact across governance, services, access, involvement, and culture. We were absolutely delighted to attain this accreditation in March 2022.

Various initiatives and changes to working practices have made a significant impact, namely:

- We developed an inclusivity calendar to schedule information to share with staff/tenants and guest speakers to talk at staff briefings to improve understanding, raise awareness, and celebrate the protected characteristics e.g. Lisa Power MBE, a Sexual Health/LGBT rights campaigner spoke about LGBTQ+ history; a speaker spoke about the Rwandan genocide; guest tenants have spoken about disabled adaptations; their transgender experience; and Diwali. Information shared on

social media/Yammer (our staff e-noticeboard) is tagged #equalitymatters

- ReciteMe software was installed on our websites to improve accessibility
- Strategies/policies undergo equality impact assessments to ensure services are fair and inclusive
- Our hate crime policy/procedure was strengthened, and Safer Communities Officers worked with South Wales Police to raise awareness of hate/mate/online crime
- Newydd's Equality And Diversity Subgroup (NEADS) co-produced, 4 charters which included EDI considerations. These were published on our website after being approved by our Tenant Reading Panel (Safety First, Reasonable Adjustments, Customer Service, and Contractor Code of Conduct)
- We improved EDI practices with Board recruitment, induction, and training and reviewed Board job specifications/code of conduct
- An equality impact section is now included in board reports
- Equality Impact Assessment training was provided to Board/Managers to increase scrutiny of equality matters
- A detailed annual EDI report is compiled for board which includes performance analysis of key areas of service delivery by protected characteristic
- In depth analysis of data/complaints is undertaken to identify trends and ensure no individual or group is being treated unfairly

- To address the under-representation of people from ethnic minorities, we adopted the Rooney Rule
- Tenant profiling data is continually monitored/ updated so we can effectively tailor services to meet diverse needs
- We adopted a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate behaviour/language
- We developed accessibility guidelines for our communication
- We produce monthly tenant e-newsletters to share service updates; outcomes/achievements; and upcoming influencing opportunities
- To increase our visibility and enable tenants to talk to us face to face, we facilitate regular community pop ups
- Our Digital Inclusion Team provided tenants with free SIMS and 1-2-1 support and installed Smart Speakers in independent living schemes' communal lounges
- Board/staff received EDI/Unconscious Bias training
- We worked with Marie Curie/Alzheimer's Society to develop a Dementia Friends Action Plan and developed a joint Deeds Not Words/Anti Racist Wales Action Plan to further progress our commitment to inclusivity

Tai Pawb Testimonial

"Newydd provided comprehensive evidence, including several good practice examples, which showcases their work and how it is advancing equality for their colleagues, tenants, and the wider community. There is a clear commitment to continual improvement in equality, diversity, and inclusion within the organisation"

Staff testimonials

"As a person of colour, it made sense that I join the QED group and contribute to the great collective work being done. I have always been thankful and grateful of the support Newydd has provided me"

"We are a fantastically inclusive company that I am proud to work for"

"The knowledge I have gained from the QED group has been invaluable and I am confident that the things I've learned will shape my professional path for years to come"

"I am proud to be part of the QED group and I hope the work we do will ensure that everyone feels welcomed, included, respected, and valued in the workplace and beyond!"

Outcomes and achievements

This year 129 staff responded to our annual QED survey. Results showed 95% were aware of our EDI strategy (+9% from last year); 78% thought the strategy was applied very well (+10%); 76% felt able to be open about their personal circumstances at work (+5%); and 67% felt Newydd were doing more on EDI that before undertaking QED.

Tai Pawb highlighted our Accessibility Checklist; annual EDI board report; Reasonable Adjustments Charter; and Inclusivity Calendar as best practice. They loved the inclusivity calendar so much they adopted it themselves and felt our EDI report was a sector leader.

We successfully attained the Dementia Friends accreditation.

We were the first in Wales to successfully complete TPAS Cymru's TESA (Tenant Engagement Standards Assessment) which provided assurance that our new Tenant Influencer Strategy included inclusive engagement practices. We were also runner up at their 2023 best practice awards for the 'Tenant Voice' category.

4 of our independent living schemes have attained RNIB Cymru's Platinum Visibly Better Award. The major improvement works increase independence and make life easier for tenants with sight loss.

We successfully recruited a board member from an ethnic minority background after E&D was made an essential criterion on the person specification.

Championing EDI at United Welsh

United Welsh



Statement of support

At United Welsh, we have a long journey of listening, learning and action ahead to truly play our part in reducing inequity. This statement outlines recent work.

EDI learning

EDI and unconscious bias training are mandatory for all staff. Our L&D Business Partner also created an online learning series for continuous organisational learning about the Equality Act protected characteristics.

Nine short voluntary modules were released monthly, at 4-6 minutes length, to encourage participation. For example:

- "Marriage and civil partnerships: What's the difference?"
- "Hidden disabilities"
- "Age in the workplace"

On average, 39% of staff voluntarily completed the modules and rated 4.6 out of 5 for them improving their understanding of EDI matters.

Diverse storytelling

In the last 18 months, our Communications team has shared over 30 stories and educational content pieces to amplify minority voices and share learning, from personal disability-related experiences through to religious celebrations for Eid al-Fitr and Easter.

Colleagues said that seeing others share their personal stories encouraged them to "be brave" and share their own.

Recruitment and retention

We achieved Real Living Wage accreditation in 2020 and the Armed Forces Covenant Bronze award in 2022, solidifying our commitment to fair pay and supporting AF personnel with duties and employment.

We have refreshed our recruitment procedure, introducing the Rooney Rule and enabling EDI-trained colleagues to voluntarily sit on assessment panels. This means a more diverse group shapes assessments and makes decisions based on candidates' values, diversity of thought, and expertise.

Policy and procedures

We have committed to reviewing all HR policies and procedures through an EDI lens. For example, our Shared Parental Leave policy was previously based on statutory pay levels, unlike our Maternity and Adoption Leave pay, which are both enhanced.

Following a staff consultation, it was updated so eligible employees receive an enhanced 18 weeks full pay, including for surrogacy and adoption.

Deeds Not Words

We signed Tai Pawb's Deeds Not Words pledge in 2020 to end racial inequality.. Progressing our actions has helped us in our journey to becoming anti-racist. In a recent staff inclusivity survey, 93% said there had been an improvement in our approach to tackling racism in the past two years. Our latest progress report is here: www.orlo.uk/dnw_snj6e

Living Well LGBTQ+ action plan

Stonewall research found that some older people are returning "to the closet", especially when moving into retirement living. We're delivering an action plan at our older persons' accommodation to develop positive attitudes and encourage LGBTQ+ housing applications. To date, this has involved:

- Awareness talks at schemes, with residents feeding back how much they enjoyed them
- Updated guidance for colleagues/families for LGBTQ+ people living with dementia
- Poster displays to explain different LGBTQ+ communities
- An inclusivity pledge developed with our Residents Forum and displayed at all schemes.

Pride Cymru

We march at Pride to show our commitment to achieving equality for all LGBTQ+ people. We marched in 2022 and 2023 and invited people and organisations to join us to better represent the community housing sector. We were delighted to have residents, families, Tai Pawb, CHC and CCHA join us this year.

'This is Me' events

'This is Me' staff events are a safe space to talk and learn about each other in] an empathetic forum. We occasionally invite speakers to enhance learning and recent topics have included Black History, being transgender, and personal carers responsibilities.

Get Into Housing

Led by CCHA, the project works with people from Minority Ethnic backgrounds to start a career in housing or gain work experience; offering bespoke mentoring, on-the-job experience, and the Real Living Wage.

To date, five people have completed six-month work placements, with three gaining permanent employment with us.

Peri/Menopause

Neighbourhood Officer Rebekah Drobac has been a passionate advocate for peri/menopause support, leading to:

- 35 staff supported through one-to-ones and group sessions
- Guidance and risk assessments created for colleague adjustments
- Learning resources created for staff training
- An updated sickness policy to break the stigma of symptoms.

Outcomes and achievements

United Welsh's goal is for all residents and staff to feel they can be their whole selves and belong in the communities where they live, work and visit.

Our bi-monthly EDI Forum chaired by Jan Bell has an open-door policy and over 20 colleagues regularly attend. Crucially, EDI is not "owned" by one person.

Passionate individuals, teams and working groups across the business have enabled us to collectively:

- Learn more about the different aspects of EDI
- Share more diverse stories; raising awareness and educating
- Improve policies, procedures and risk assessments

- Make our recruitment more inclusive
- Target support for communities where research has indicated they face discrimination
- Provide opportunities for communities to fairly access employment and support.

Inclusion is a guiding principle of United Welsh's 2023/27 Strategy, which outlines our commitment to continuing our work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, including open reporting about our progress and how we are tackling discrimination. We also intend to continue firmly rooting EDI in our policies and practice, removing barriers within our business processes and services.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Sponsored by: **resource**
Sustainable Creativity

This award celebrates projects, initiatives and organisations who have gone above and beyond, working to support their communities during these difficult times. Judges were looking for collaboration and evidence of success.

Academi Adra

Adra



Statement of support

Adra is the largest housing association in North Wales.

But its work is more than bricks and mortar. It is about making sure that their tenants and residents have an opportunity, to access jobs and training opportunities and to live in communities that are prosperous and thriving, a key priority in Adra's Corporate Plan.

Adra has homes across North Wales. It is an area with high deprivation levels in some communities; quality jobs are difficult to find and the local economy is struggling due to the on-going Cost of Living, high fuel and energy costs. The challenge in terms of creating quality jobs has been highlighted in the 'Poverty in Arfon in the 21st Century' report, produced by the Bevan Foundation.

One of Adra's flagship projects is Academi Adra. Established in February 2021, it supports tenants and those living in our communities to develop skills that will increase their employability opportunities. They want to create not only jobs locally but also to maximise their household incomes, especially now

during the cost-of-living crisis.

Academi Adra has worked with a wide range of organisations. Partners include North Wales Housing, Procure Plus, Gwaith Gwynedd, JobCentre Plus, Welsh Contact Centre Forum, Citizens Advice, North Wales Training, Grwp Llandrillo Menai, GISDA, DU Construction Ltd, WF Clayton & Co Ltd, Wynne Construction, North Wales Recovery Communities, Careers Wales, Môn CF, GH James Cyf and Williams Homes.

Through these ground-breaking partnerships, we have been able to offer courses, work experience, placements, apprenticeships, traineeships, volunteering and permanent employment.

A few courses have been held in construction pathways, customer services and supporting people.

Academi Adra is about providing an opportunity for all, and breaking down barriers to ensure that everyone can succeed. Adra recently ran a campaign to encourage more young women to join the construction and housing industry, where 65 girls from Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle, Penygroes had a taste of working in the field of construction as part of an event called 'Not Just for Boys'.

Adra led this event together with Chwarae Teg, a charity that inspires, leads and implements gender equality in Wales. The event was organized to coincide with International Women's Day in March. Adra staff gave presentations about their careers and the challenges and benefits of working in the housing field and the construction field. There was also a visit to our decarbonisation hub where the students received hands-on opportunities to learn about different aspects of the construction industry.

Housing Trainee Scheme: Adra is running its Housing Trainee Scheme for the third year running. The course has been very successful and is going from strength to strength.

The Housing Trainee Scheme gives two people a chance to work with Adra for two years, getting a taste of different departments with the housing sector such as:

- Rent and income
- Lettings
- Affordable homes
- Customer services
- Business development
- Community

Participants study towards a CIH Level 2, at the same time, providing an excellent foundation and provide basic understanding of some of the skills and knowledge they will need to work in housing.

6 people have successfully completed the course over the last 3 years.

Iwan Trefor Jones, Chief Executive of Adra, said:

“Academi Adra has gone from strength to strength and that is reflected in the wide range of businesses that want to work with us. We are making a real difference to people’s lives.

“We want to be a sector leader in this field and feel we have built strong foundations in Academi Adra’s first two years in operation. We cannot wait to continue creating further job and training opportunities in the future”.

Outcomes and achievements

To date:

- 101 individuals have been supported through training and work experience.
- 31 have accessed training.
- 31 supported with apprenticeships.
- 12 have been supported into jobs with Adra or its contractors.
- 8 have gained paid work experience.
- Academi Adra has generated a social value of £ 532,981

Case study

Declan: “I had been living in an Adra property for around 3 years therefore I was aware of the business and the job opportunities that they had on offer. The pandemic and lockdown made it difficult for me to receive the support that I needed from the school and college to look for work and develop a career in the IT sector. I saw the Information Technology (IT) apprenticeship advertised and decided to go for it. The difference in my understanding of IT since I started is astonishing – it’s been great to learn so much about a topic that really interests me. I hope that there will be an opportunity for me to keep following my passion for IT and give something back to the business.”

Community Resilience Team

Cadwyn Housing Association



Statement of support

The community resilience team (CRT) provide a bespoke service to their tenants; Cadwyn is a Cardiff specific Housing Association, so the CRT operate in Wales’ most culturally and ethnically diverse

communities. This service is a holistic service that is centred around the tenants needs, focusing on Restorative Approaches (RA) and Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE). We are one of few RSL’s that provide a high level of specialist support which includes:

- FCA regulated, specialist, Debt Advice - Providing in depth advice and exploring options to overcome debt and improving mental health and wellbeing - Last year successfully writing off almost £50,000.00 in Tenant Debt.
- Specialist Welfare Benefits Advice - Income maximisation, appealing benefit decisions and assisting in making claims thus improving financial health and stability. This in term leads to a dramatic and positive impact on residents physical and mental wellbeing. - Last year alone Resident income was improved by £459,978.52

- Bespoke Employment & Training Support – Supporting residents to take control and learn the skills needed to overcome unemployment and underemployment; access additional learning and formal training such as NVQs in Hair and Beauty and professional licences such as CSCS and SIA - 33 gained employment through the support of the scheme 37 attended courses/training. As a direct result, an estimated, total annual earnings of £437,385.16 has been provided to residents.
- Energy and Fuel Specialist Advice – Preventing disconnections and fuel crisis support through grants, advice and support schemes.
- Supporting volunteering pathways across Cardiff – 14 volunteers
- Digital Inclusion – Assisting those who are digitally excluded to access services

All of this bespoke work goes towards increasing tenant sustainability and reducing rent arrears that allows Cadwyn to invest in additional services and community impact projects which all link to our vision and boosting the financial strength of customers during this unprecedented the cost-of-living crisis. We take pride in working with tenants from the start of their tenancy to provide all support in-house without vulnerable residents having to be passed from pillar to post to tell their story to avoid retraumatising.

We access the Cadwyn NuLife service by offering £250 furniture vouchers to tenant in need.

And worked with CHC to provide a cost of living crisis tool kit and published case studies.

Our service is completely person centered and therefore extremely adaptable to the needs of our residents. We provide support through Welsh Medium as well as utilising various translation tools and services for residents that speak any one of the 100+ community languages within our portfolio and we adapt delivery frequently to respect the needs of those with protected characteristics for example; providing female support workers instead of male for home visits to practicing Muslim female tenants. We also offer to meet tenants at community venues or at their homes to ensure that they are comfortable when meeting one of the staff face to face. Whatever the needs of the individual we are keen to and able to adapt.

Testimonials

'Thank you so much for being there for us. Listening to our problems and helping us to solve it.'

'I am so grateful for everything you have done to help me advance my career.'

"I like the fact that if you've got your own individual needs, whether it's physical or mental health wise, they tailor that to suit around you."

"I am very thankful that you have now cleared all my debts and I do not need to worry when I do pass away, I can pass away peacefully" -

"You have saved me so much money and I can now focus this money on paying the things I couldn't pay before"

Outcomes and achievements

In the last year we can report the following outputs by the CRT

- Total supported : 374
- New referrals: 358
- Total financial gains for tenants: £613,397.76
- Income maximisation gained for our tenants: £459,978.52
- Debt cleared/reduced for our tenants: £48,958.89
- 47 gained employment through the support of the scheme (inc 14 non tenants within out hot spots communities)
- 37 attended courses/training

- 14 volunteered
- Over 200 soft outcomes that includes:
 1. Improved confidence
 2. Increased responsibility taking
 3. Reduced Stress/Anxiety
 4. Improved Money Management
 5. Improved Communication Skills
 6. Improved Digital Skills
 7. Improved Physical Health

Rent arrears at the end of the financial year reduced to 1.4% to pre-pandemic levels

The Restore Project

Lead organisation: Linc Cymru Housing Association

Partner organisations: Pobl Group, Wastesavers, Nulife, Circulate



Statement of support

Linc Cymru have embraced the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act 2015 by delivering an ambitious and innovative approach to new developments. Incorporating the six principles of the placemaking charter, building new homes in sustainable locations, giving emphasis to community cohesion, creating circular economy initiatives, and embedding a social value policy and framework to maximise community benefits.

Linc became increasingly concerned, following the Covid-19 Pandemic, the housing and cost-of-living crisis, of the challenges facing new customers moving into their new homes. After experiencing homelessness or living in temporary accommodation new tenants reported, their experience of sleeping on floors or in unsuitable/unsafe accommodation, being worried about how to afford to furnish their homes, stress of moving and overcoming significant health and wellbeing issues. Meeting their financial priorities was a challenge for many, and Linc needed to find an empowering solution that would assist them to transition and to sustain their new tenancies.

The ReStore Project was funded by The Community Foundation Wales and was delivered by the Social Value Team. It included.

- A 'showroom to doorstep' approach with partners,
- A hassle and stigma-free experience
- A simple and quick referral system for frontline staff
- Organising deliveries to homes and installing the furniture.
- Collaborating to address the Net Zero and Circular Economy
- Reducing good furniture to landfill.

- A package of quality of pre-loved furniture at Re-Use centres
- Display flats and getting buy-in through a 'seeing is believing' approach.
- Social value contract clauses with contractors
- A 'Donate It' Yammer page on the staff intranet for a 'Need and Want' Freecycle service.
- One to one support for those with people who needed it or those without funding for transport.

Case study - In 2022, Linc launched a 100% affordable housing development. It provides high-quality, pleasant, and secure accommodation for 12 single people who were formerly homeless

They were supported through their journey setting up their new homes, including kitting out the flats on tight budgets: "The Re-Store Project was the perfect solution to provide furniture for our new 12 tenants as most of them would be moving into their new home with nothing, or very little."

To demonstrate the use of pre-loved furniture, Linc created a 'show flat' for each person to visit before moving in. "Everything was sourced from Wastesavers and the Tip Shop. Good quality donated/recycled furniture and soft furnishings from our partners was used to show case what can be achieved, nothing was wasted, everything used for 'display' was then chosen by and donated to our tenants.

A new approach from giving standard furniture packs to enabling tenants to hand pick items, using a £200 grant, and working in partnership with frontline housing staff the Re-Use Centres, Circulate, NuLife, Wastesavers and Raven House Trust has delivered outstanding results.

It has continued to develop and evolve with more partners coming on board, greater value-for-money being offered to tenants.

- Wastesavers utilised their Social Fund to lever an additional £80 budget per tenant to offer more items to furnish homes, which was greatly appreciated by tenants.
- Raven House Trust provided tenants with an additional community-based outlet to visit for furniture packs and additional food aid.
- Our contractor J&J Removals provided additional stock from house clearances to over-stretched Re-Use centres, and provided a personalised delivery service to tenants, free of charge.

NuLife provided small electrical goods - kettles and toasters - to new tenants setting up home.

Outcomes and achievements

The project has been successful due to a collaborative approach to support customers, through a customer and community focused circular economy project that contributes to the Net Zero targets

50 customers benefitted

5,648kg of waste diverted from landfill.

Testimonial

Customers received furniture at a cost of £1069. "That's quite amazing really. "The Re-Store project has made a significant difference to people. Some needed a single item of furniture, some needed several items. We are never prescriptive and always encourage people to choose items that they would like, after all, it's their home."

Abbie Prescott-Bird, Wastesavers, Manager

Here are some of the feedback comments from the evaluation.

Q: Has the furniture received made a difference to quality of life

A: "Yes. Tenant was sleeping on the floor whilst 5 months pregnant as her own mattress had springs coming through it which were hurting her back."

B: "Yes. Enabled tenant coming from homelessness to help their house feel more like a home."

Q: What was their experience of the Re-Store project?

C: "They were really pleased. Particularly happy as were not able to access a double bed base via DAF so this was the only way they could get what they needed."

Clyd a Chynnes Cosy and Warm

Lead organisation: Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association

Partner organisations: National Lottery Community Fund, Ffos y Fran. Merthyr CBC, Communities for Work, Keep Wales Tidy



Statement of support

In the summer of 2022 MTHA carried out a consultation with residents to better understand their fears for the forthcoming winter, with rising energy costs and food costs. Our consultation showed that all who responded were worried how they would cope with rising energy costs and food costs, and how they would ensure that their rent was paid. Based on this, we created our Clyd a Chynnes (Cosy and Warm) project that has become a holistic approach in supporting our contract holders through the cost-of-living crisis. Through funding from the Lottery's Community Fund Cost of Living support and Ffos Y Fran, we were able to:

- Provide 300 warm packs to our most vulnerable tenants that included a hot water bottle, fleeced blanket, two packs of cuppa soups, wall thermomotor and information on local support networks within the borough.

- Provide energy top up vouchers for contract holders that are struggling with their heating costs.
- Support contract holders with large utility debts to get these reduced through referring to a partner agency, Riverside.
- Establishing three local Clyd a Chynnes groups across the borough where they are given a free slow cooker, weekly ingredients a free hot meal.
- Support contract holders with essential items such as white goods.
- Essential food and household item support.

As well as tackling the cost-of-living crisis the project has also addressed issues around loneliness and isolation that faced many of our contract holders during the winter months. The three Clyd a Chynnes groups provided an opportunity for people to connect, share ideas, build relationships and unite of a shared interest. The feedback and testimonies that we have had from the sessions in tackling this aspect include:

- "I really enjoyed the social aspect of these sessions and preparing meals together with my neighbours. We always had a great time."
- "It is great to go to these sessions with my neighbours and learn together. I use my slow cooker regularly and I now use my oven much less. Because I use my slow cooker more, I have saved electricity. Today, I have beef curry in my slow cooker."
- "The slow cooking project got me out of the house. During the winter I usually stay put at home so it was really nice to get out and be with others. As well as being with my friends and neighbours I learned new recipes and had free food through the meal that we cooked and tried. It was lovely."

- “I was gutted when the sessions finished for the spring and summer. I met new people in my community, learned how to cook affordably and it gave me something to do. I loved it.”

The project has worked holistically to try and support a range of local and national issues as part of the project. We worked with Communities for Work to support people to access free training and employment support. This helped increase confidence and skills and supported some of the group back into

employment. We also worked in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy and the local authority’s refuse and recycling team. We held swap shop sessions where people could donate and take clothes, books, and toys. As well as reducing the waste going into landfill, it meant that many had the opportunity to have quality clothing at a time when personal budgets were stretched.

Once testimony that sums up our approach is, “This project has been a lifeline for me during these hard winter months.”

Outcomes and achievements

- 88 families supported with egni vouchers from October 2022-August 2023 totalling over £5000.
- 47 Families regularly accessing our Clyd a Chynnes slow cooking sessions.
- 300 Warm packs delivered to our most vulnerable contract holders.
- 14 Discretionary Assistance Fund applications for white goods and energy support totalling £5,462.
- 87 emergency food, toiletry and hygiene parcels issued.
- 31 Food bank vouchers issued.
- HACT social value of £203,530 for the project.
- 88 Families supported with more affordable ways of cooking healthy and nutritious meals in line with PHW nutritional standards guidelines.

Fit and Fed Merthyr Tydfil

Lead organisation: Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association

Partner organisations: Street Games, Merthyr Youth Service, 15 sites that are delivering with us

Statement of support



Before the cost of living crisis, families were finding it very hard to find the additional funds during the school holidays to pay for the extra food needed and disposable income for additional enriching activities. Then cost of living hit us, and this problem intensified tenfold, with all families struggling with increased food costs and energy costs for when their children are home from school. What was once perceived as an underclass problem, effecting those on low incomes or benefits, this issue has now began hitting the middle earners, and for the first time, they have struggled to cope with feeding their children and providing enriching activities for their children during the school holidays. During the pandemic, the Welsh Government committed to providing food vouchers or the money

equivalent, to those families who were on free school meals, to ensure that the additional income was there to support them with the increased food costs of when children were at home. Now this has stopped, and again, there is lack of equity amongst our children and young people with the access that they have to nutritionally rich food, and to be able to engage in enriching activities with their friends and peers.

More so than ever, our Fit and Fed Merthyr Tydfil project has become an extended life line to the many families of Merthyr Tydfil. With 15 sites operational across the borough, 2300 different children and young people have benefited from the project. Additionally, the children and young people taking part in the project have been able to have surfing lessons as part of a Beach Sports Festival, and have been on trips to Ninja Warier, Oakwood, and many more. During times of intense difficulties for the borough of Merthyr Tydfil, the Fit and Fed project has been the consistent project that opens its arms to support all those living in the borough.

“Fit and Fed has supported us to play football, Rugby, Rounders had fun days with a bouncy castle, surf lessons and been introduced to new healthier ways of eating. This project has made a huge impact on the lives of all involved and given them the tools and knowledge of healthy eating and the benefits they give you as well as the benefits of being active.”

“The year has been amazing with young people accessing so many opportunities because of fit and fed. You could see the development of the young people in confidence, communication, and teamwork.

The young people worked hard and gain various qualifications or parts of qualifications.

We had a new cohort of young people attend the centre because of what we were offering from the fit and fed programme. We did so much with the funding from sailing days to sailing residentials, trips to theatres, vertigo, ninja warrior, trip to the big sparkle, walking, beach day and so much more. One of the lovely options for our young people was to attend the borough wide residential run by fit and fed in Dolygair.

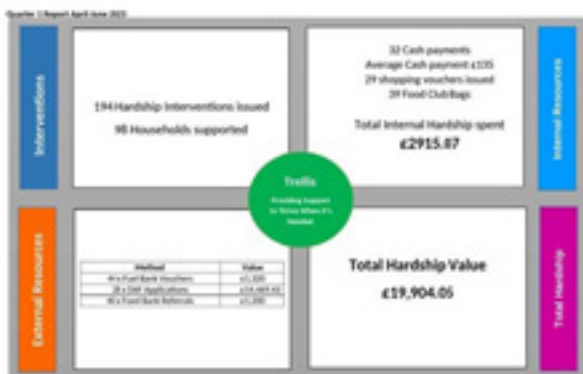
This residential gave young people confidence and developed new friendships with other young people. The young people grew so much and for some of those young people it was their first time to stay away. Overall, the project has been extremely impactful on the young people and the centre. Many of the young people are struggling financially and for those young people having food regularly as part of the fit and fed has allowed the parents to have a little less to worry about."

Outcomes and achievements

- April 2022-March 2023
- 2300 different children and young people accessing the project.
- 219 sessions run.
- 4937 nutritious meals provided
- 54 accreditations gained
- Combined social value of £1,532,061 for the project.
- For each £1 invested it has returned a value of £16.23

Cost of Living Increase group (COLIn) and Trellis

Monmouthshire Housing Association



Statement of support

Our Challenge

In November 2021 staff across MHA met for an extraordinary summit meeting. The session was shaped around a presentation from the Bevan Foundation based on their State of Wales Briefing on Poverty. This session shared data from our income and support services that demonstrated how the Bevan Foundation research was being borne out in the lives of our tenants and communities.

What We Did

A working group and action plan was developed as the financial environment was becoming worse.

The group was renamed Cost of Living Increase support or COLIn. Meeting bi-monthly, the group has a simple objective:

To manage resources, projects and activity to effectively support tenants to manage their increased costs by:

- Sharing ideas, creating deliverable actions in a collaborative space.
- Increasing resources to help tenants and communities maintain their financial wellbeing.
- Nurturing creative partnerships to increase impact.
- Taking individual responsibility for actions that will contribute to our aim.
- Mitigating the impact of increases in cost of living to MHA's revenue and on the wellbeing of our tenants and communities.

MHA's staff volunteering supports community partnership activity, as well as wellbeing calls, creating support packs and coordinating Christmas toy appeals. Also, to support our focus on tenancy sustainment, MHA sought and achieved HQN accreditation in income collection and management. Below is a summary of the activity to date.

For tenant's homes:

- Energy saving lightbulbs sent to all tenants.
- Energy saving videos delivered by building services operatives.
- Sessions community living scheme tenants to plan how to reduce communal costs: eg. timers on communal lighting; reducing thermostat settings.
- Solar panel project at Cwrt Severn scheme providing green energy to communal spaces.
- Gold relet standard: new home is decorated, carpeted, blinds provided.
- Furniture packs for new tenants not eligible for DAF.

Wellbeing:

- Winter packs: including slow cookers, air fryers, blankets, socks etc.
- Wellbeing calls to potentially vulnerable households carried out by back-office teams.
- Services in Wellbeing Hubs.
- Winter Warmer sessions in community living schemes.

Alleviation and Mitigation:

- HQN Maximising Income: Sustaining Tenancies (MIST) accreditation.
- Restructure hardship fund for quicker intervention. Now called Trellis, includes a range of interventions.
- Maximising fuel vouchers and free SIMS.
- Promoting DAF use with training and guidance for all frontline staff.
- Automated foodbank referral process.
- Restructure and rebrand of our employment support to widen remit. Now Financial Wellbeing promoting financial capability, outreach campaigns and supporting tenants into work or to better jobs.
- Promoting self-serve budgeting and better-off calculation tools.
- Cost of the Working Day support.
- Targeted campaigns to alleviate specific areas of financial stress.
- Holiday Snack Attack Packs.

Partnerships:

- Participatory budgeting with MCC.
- Cost of Living area summits.
- Energy Advice SLA with Warm Wales

- Advice for older persons SLA with Care & Repair.
- Partnerships and referral pathways with Disability Advice Project, CAB, Gateway Credit Union and Stepchange.
- Strong partnerships with DWP, Job Centre Plus (including holding surgeries on site) and MCC Shared Benefits Service.
- Partnership with the Working Wardrobe from Moxie People
- Partnerships with benevolent groups and churches access to food hampers and support for more isolated households.

Increased resources:

- Levelling Up: iConnect Digital Inclusion
- Multiply: support for financial capability and numeracy.
- Targeted use of Community Benefits to advice provision.

Community Activity:

- Community Hubs supported by targeted activity from our Engagement Team
- Food clubs, Monmouthshire Masterchef, Masterchef Minis, Games & Grub after school club
- Future Footsteps (Saving the Pounds and the Planet One Step at Time):
 - Sustainable You Sustainable Me sustainable period project (with free period product bundles),
 - Thrift workshops
 - Sustainable fashion shows
 - Pre-loved clothing pop-ups and uniform drives
 - Baby bank

Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes and Impact

- Prevented significant increase in arrears and tenant indebtedness. HQN found performance 'strong' in rent collection and arrears management:

'The offer of advice and support is prominent ...

There is a sense that customers are listened to and involved...We found examples of MHA officers and teams working together to support customers.'

- In 12 months, 53 people supported into work and £673,411 in additional income for tenants
- Levered in resources to add to our own funds (see graphic).

Feedback:

Household in crisis supported to access: PIP, UC, Water Assistance Fund, Uniform Grant, Paint Packs, Christmas Hamper, Toy Appeal, Energy Vouchers. Described help as 'life changing'.

'My cooker and fridge were delivered. It is lovely to cook in my own home and keep things fresh in the fridge.'

Masterchef participant: 'I'm so thankful that I'm now able to keep the appliances... Still blows my mind.'

Fred Weston - MCC Wellbeing Lead

MHA's commitment to partnership working has resulted in the successful implementation of projects aimed at early intervention and prevention. By working closely with community members and other key partners, we have been able to identify and address issues before they escalate into crises, ultimately making a significant difference in the lives of many people.

MHA's ability to transcend traditional organisational barriers and form effective place-based teams is a testament to their commitment to community-oriented values.

NU Life

Cadwyn Housing Association



Statement of support

NU Life is situated in prime location within the Butetown area of Cardiff. Many families in this area are facing on a daily basis issues linked to the cost of living crisis, climate change and the reduced access to affordable furniture and furnishings.

NU Life therefore plays a significant role within the community, addressing the issue of furniture poverty within Cardiff and surrounding areas, as well as reducing the number of items sent to landfills.

We are a non-profit organisation who provides furniture and furnishings to families and individuals leaving hostels, refuge, temporary accommodation and others affected by homelessness at no cost to them. We have recently secured funding from the Principality Bank to help an additional 50 families and individuals with a discretionary fund (this is for families and individuals who are not eligible for other assistance, this includes people who could be working).

The project has a furniture showroom that anyone can purchase furniture at affordable prices. Sustainability is at the core of NU Life's work and the furniture in the showroom is all pre-loved. Many are saved from landfill and then upcycled to give it a new lease of life. We have a team of volunteers who lovingly restore and upcycled furniture that would otherwise end up in landfill.

NU Life currently has 15 volunteers who all live locally, the project would not be sustainable without their support. NU Life has 6 paid members of staff and 4 of whom were volunteers at NU Life before securing employment with us. As a result of the skills gained from volunteering with NU Life, 8 volunteers have also secured paid employment as they have gained valuable work experience with us.

NU Life has also organically developed into a community hub providing not only furniture but courses and workshops within a safe and familiar environment and opportunities to connect/reconnect following the aftermath of covid. We offer a wide range of courses and activities such as:

- Free community craft events
- Repurposing lampshade workshops
- Decoupage workshops
- Weekly craft group
- Live Life To The Full course run by United Welsh and CCHA Housing Association at the end of September
- 6 weeks upcycling2upskill courses which have been a tremendous success

The last course was specifically for a group of local Somali women. "What set this course apart is the culturally and appropriate space which respects the groups religious and cultural values and traditions, enabling the group to learn skills without compromising their religious and cultural beliefs" Zainab.

NU Life has also developed a variety of partnerships to help the community even further:

- Oasis Cardiff, an organisation dedicated to helping refugees and asylum seekers. We provide them with packages of essential kitchenware for refugee families who are moving into empty properties or need essential items
- We are a collection point for "Love Grace x" - an organization that collect handbags and toiletries for women in hospital or in refuge as a result of domestic violence. 'The Love Grace x initiative wouldn't have a presence in our local community without Nu Life. They are amazing in their own rights but integral in what we do and achieve in Cardiff' Debbie Way (Cardiff representative)
- We donate cots and baby items to Cwtch Baby group, they redistribute pre-loved baby items free to vulnerable families in the community.
- We collect Tools for Self-Reliance Cymru they collect and repair tool and send to Africa.
- We work with all the employability services, volunteering organisation within Cardiff, probation, social services, mental health support provisions and drug and alcohol services

Outcomes and achievements

Sometimes the social value of a project is difficult to define; however the amount of people using our services has increased dramatically and keeps on increasing. Here is a summary of our outcomes from April 2022 to March 2023:

Families and individuals supported with free essential furniture and furnishings: 375

Items saved from landfills: 7706

Volunteering hours: 3861

Volunteers who secured employment: 6

Families and individuals helped by discretionary assistance fund: 9

Families and individuals helped at Christmas with presents and food: 16

Number of people who attended upcycle to upskill courses: 36

Due to the cost of living crisis, the number of people looking for affordable furniture has dramatically increased and as a result our Facebook page has now reached 4000 plus followers.

Finally, NU Life is one of six finalists in the UK Reuse Organisation of the Year Award (winner to be announced on October 10th).

Jubilee Crescent Community Action

Valleys to Coast



Statement of support

Jubilee Crescent and Queens Avenue is a small estate, situated in Sarn, Bridgend County. Valleys to Coast Housing own 143 homes on the estate and were contacted by a number of residents unhappy with the fly tipping, high levels of litter and environmental anti-social behaviour. These actions were having a negative impact on many residents' well being, perception of safety and sense of pride in their neighbourhood.

Valleys To Coast Housing spearheaded restorative community action to support residents to find solutions, by producing an estate action plan which aimed to mobilise a collaborative effort from a number of stakeholders.

The estates action plan outlined - community consultation events and timescales identifying organisations and partners who can contribute arranging practical interventions such as arranged skip days with education drives on the benefits of recycling and upcycling as well as environmental implications engagement with the local Primary School, Year 5 class on their perception of litter and waste coordinated litter picking days and a clear communication plan for all residents and stakeholders for a 12 month period.

Planting days

Clothing and toy swap shop events to educate on upcycling with Repair Cafe Wales in conjunction with Keep Wales Tidy Spring Clean Cymru

Over a period of six months, a focussed and extensive action plan was implemented, involving tenants every step of the way.

The skips amnesty events offered tenants the opportunity to dispose of unwanted large items and recycle as much as possible. Valleys to Coasts' Estates Team were on hand to help less able tenants with moving items. Keep Wales Tidy and Bridgend Repair cafe dedicated time throughout the action plan to advise and educate residents on upcycling. Toy swap shops were also introduced, which enabled residents to swap toys in good condition with their neighbours, which ordinarily would have been either fly tipped or sent to landfill.

Demonstrate the impact you've had and the difference you've made to people's lives-

The impact this initiative has had on the local community has been extraordinary. Since the estates action plan was assembled and carried out, a number of follow on initiatives have emerged - Residents are utilising the open spaces across the estate more

Residents are feeling safer and more connected and feel a returned sense of pride in their neighbourhood. One tenant commented " It's lovely that I've got to know my neighbours better and work together to make the place look better, I've made new friends and there is less litter everywhere!"

Residents have taken part in planting trees, assembling bug hotels, and building raised planter beds.

Demonstrate partnership working-

The success of the Jubilee Crescent estate action plan was strengthened by the partnership working with a number of key stakeholders in the community, namely-

PCSOs

Fire Service

Keep Wales Tidy

Community Housing Partners and Community Estates Team

Year 5 Bryncethin Primary School

Repair Cafe Wales

Community Council

Bridgend County Borough Council

Outcomes and achievements

Overall litter across the estate has reduced, and the levels of recycling and waste disposal have improved.

Over 4 tonnes of waste was collected over all of the skip amnesty events.

Residents have reported that they feel they have come together as a community and this has strengthened their feeling of belonging

Residents are feeling more confident to engage with the social landlord about waste collection issues after

being involved in the planning process

Resident engagement has significantly improved and a number of residents are interested in becoming estates ambassadors to work with the social landlord to jointly review issues and find solutions

Environmental anti social behaviour , such as fires on open spaces has significantly reduced, as a direct result of resident and landlord action, and residents acting as natural surveillance on previous asn hot spots.

DEVELOPING HIGH QUALITY HOMES

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

Caerphilly Innovative Housing Pilot

Caerphilly County Borough Council



Statement of support

In 2020 Caerphilly County Borough Council's Cabinet approved ambitious plans to deliver 400 new affordable homes by 2025. Innovation, climate resilience and fabric efficiency lie at the heart of its development programme. In summer 2021 it embarked on an exciting journey to bring new homes to the county borough, with a Innovative Housing Pilot programme delivering 18 one-bedroom apartments across two small brownfield sites.

Caerphilly Council has broken new ground with this project, by being the first local authority in Wales to utilise modern methods of construction and manufacturing techniques to develop modular, steel framed homes to certified Passivhaus standard.

The Council's requirements were ambitious and broad in scope and unlikely to be served by a traditional procurement route. As a result, the SCAPE OJEU compliant, public sector framework was identified as a route that would not only deliver against the requirements, but also through an NEC Contract arrangement bring innovation, collaboration, efficiency, creativity and imagination to the discussions

between Caerphilly Council and Willmott Dixon. The result being a bespoke, game changing, housing solution!

Whilst traditional construction methods have served the industry well, with increasing demand, a skills shortage and climate emergency together with the need to create a more evergreen and sustainable economy to support long term employment opportunities, Modern Methods of Construction offered the perfect solution.

Thanks to £3.1million funding from Welsh Government's Innovative Housing Programme the Council was able to begin bringing its plans to fruition with a pilot project on two sites in the Caerphilly basin area.

Caerphilly's Local Housing Market Assessment and Common Housing Register identified an unmet need for one-bedroom social housing, particularly within the Caerphilly basin area of the county borough. In response the council targeted its first programme in helping to meet this increasing demand.

Rising energy costs and climate concerns are high on the Council's agenda and the Caerphilly Innovative Housing Pilot aims to tackle these, whilst also providing safe and secure homes for those in most need.

Working in partnership with construction expert Willmott Dixon and local steel manufacturer Caledan, Caerphilly Council has developed 18 one-bedroom apartments on sites in the Trecenydd and Trethomas areas of Caerphilly.

Through adopting a fabric first approach the homes include very high levels of insulation, extremely high-performing triple glazed windows with insulated frames, an airtight and non-combustible building fabric and a mechanical heat ventilation system.

This was an ambitious programme, where Caerphilly Council not only faced up to key challenges but also met them head-on and fully embraced the idea of re-imagining social homes provision in Wales.

Outcomes and achievements

Caerphilly's vision was to develop proposals for the pilot project which would act as a catalyst for future development and set the standard for new social rented and affordable homes within the county borough.

Key outcomes and achievements from the Innovative Housing Pilot:

- Tackling climate change and working towards delivery of a zero-carbon borough by 2030.
- Addressing the shortage of social rented homes through the use of Modern Methods of Construction to support local economic activity and seed new manufacturing in Wales to support the growth of a national green economy.
- The provision of safe, attractive and secure homes for those who are most vulnerable and in need.
- Created homes that are flexible, accessible and can accommodate changing requirements.
- Addressing fuel poverty through the provision of energy efficient, climate resilient homes.
- Provided a bespoke and recyclable solution that would help Caerphilly Council deliver future new homes at scale, with pace.
- Create blended, cohesive and beautiful communities.
- Meet the aims and objectives of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015).

Developing High Quality Homes at The Mill

Lead organisation: Lovell

Partner organisations: Tirion Homes, Principality Building Society, Welsh Government



Statement of support

The Mill is Wales' largest regeneration project delivering 800 mixed tenure homes on the former Arjo Wiggins Paper Mill site which closed over 20 years ago taking with it hundreds of jobs. Developed by Lovell in partnership with Tirion Homes, Cadwyn Housing Association, Welsh Government and Principality Building Society the development delivers a mix of 442 high quality affordable homes and 358 homes for sale.

To date 693 high quality homes have been completed and handed over to new residents with 107 homes left to construct and complete by May 2024.

History

The site was home to former Arjo Wiggins Paper Mill which operated from 1830-1990. After it closed it remained dormant for over 20 years. The site was highly contaminated and flooded regularly. There endured a lot of vandalism and anti-social behaviour taking place on the site.

Over the years many private developers tried to find a residential solution to develop the site but unfortunately due to the amount of technical issues and abnormal cost the site was deemed unviable.

Partnership

Welsh Government became a key partner in helping the ambitious project come to life working in partnership with Tirion a non-profit organisation helping deliver more affordable homes in Wales, without social housing grant. Loan funding from Welsh Government along with private funding from Principality Building Society contributed to the remediation, infrastructure and flood defences the site desperately required prior to any construction works taking place. Cadwyn joined the partnership as the RSL managing the affordable homes and Lovell were selected as the partnership developer due to their extensive experience and knowledge of delivering large mixed tenure developments on challenging brownfield sites.

A shared vision

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.

A new community

We are proud to have created a place where people can live and thrive and make connections between the rich and vibrant history of the area, the present and its future. The following principles have been delivered in line with the original masterplan:

- 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 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.

Innovation

The project included piloting some of the affordable homes with low/zero carbon technologies and other improvements as part of a pilot scheme to show the benefits for residents. These homes were also part of the flatline research project, demonstrating domestic demand side response to the grid.

Each of these homes have integrated photovoltaics, battery and thermal storage and heat pumps which having been coordinated through the construction to be intelligently integrated and commissioned by Sero Homes. This ensures a whole home energy system working as one and the capacity of the residents to use the Sero Life platform to effortlessly ensure their comfort.

Testimonials

We are thrilled with our new house at The Mill, it's a great size, light airy and already feels like home. It was great to move into our new home at the same time as our neighbours, it makes getting to know everyone so much easier and builds a lovely community feel. One of the things that attracted us to The Mill was the security renting from Tirion Homes and Cadwyn gives us, which is so important when you have a young family - Vanessa Oldham, Cadwyn Tenant.

Outcomes and achievements

The delivery of this development has brought so many benefits and has over exceeded the targets set for local employment, targeted recruitment and social value. It has also delivered exceptional high-quality homes for a mixed tenure community which is evidenced by the number of National House Building Council (NHBC) Awards that has been achieved in recognition for the exceptional build quality of these homes.

But what we are really proud and excited about is not about buildings and bricks and mortar, it is what those bricks and mortar together create and that is a thriving community. And when we look back in 25 years' time envisaging what will The Mill look like? A whole new community thriving and living happy, healthy lives.

Awards:

- NHBC Wales Regional Winner for Multi-storey Residential Project 2023
- NHBC Pride in the Job Quality Award 2023
- NHBC Pride in the Job Quality Award 2022
- NHBC Pride in the Job Quality Award 2021
- 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

HOUSING TEAM OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by:



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

Here For You team and Rents and Tenancy Support Teams

Adra



Statement of support

This nomination is for Adra's Here for You team, which includes staff from the Rents and Tenancy Support services for their outstanding work in helping Adra tenants during the cost of living crisis.

The cost of living has had a significant impact on families in the region, especially in the Arfon area, with research by the Bevan Foundation - 'Poverty in Arfon' - showing that low pay and insecure work are significant problems in the area.

People in Arfon also face a cost of living premium with households having high housing, energy and travel costs - placing significant pressure on low income families.,

Adra has arranged initiatives and services to support tenants and this reflects Adra's Corporate Plan commitment to help communities and individuals to thrive.

It launched a campaign called 'Here for You' with support being provided directly to tenants. Below is a list of specific activity undertaken by the Rents and Tenancy support teams.

Creating a new Financial Well-being Co-ordinator role to work with teams in supporting tenants with advice and information. They hosted training, attended webinars, shared information, created checklists for staff, and have worked with the communications team and external partners to share useful information and advice with tenants.

A significant Support Fund of £160k was created to help tenants facing financial hardship.

A workshop was held with the Bevan Foundation to help Adra staff to understand poverty, its effects, and to identify priorities on how teams could support tenants to include in Adra's Poverty Plan for the Year.

Adra has established the Gwynedd Cost of Living Crisis Group whose membership includes Adra, Cyngor Gwynedd, Grwp Cynefin, North Wales Housing, Department for Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice Bureau and the Money and Pensions Advice Service. The group has worked on joint campaigns and encouraged partnership working to make sure that help is reaching those who need it.

Adra took part in Cost-of-Living sessions in Gwynedd alongside partners.

Partners across North Wales worked together to provide warm, safe spaces for people who were struggling to cope with rising energy costs. Adra played an active role in the Croeso Cynnes initiative involving partners including Cyngor Gwynedd,

Menter Môn, Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn, Mantell Gwynedd, Cymdeithas Elusennol Ynys Môn, Medrwn Môn, and many organisations as part of the 2025 Movement.

Affordability assessments are carried out with all prospective tenants to ensure they sustain the tenancy and identify areas for further support.

Applications made by officers on behalf of tenants to Gwynedd Council's £650k Discretionary Housing Payment fund.

Academi Adra provided opportunities for training, apprenticeships and support for tenants and the wider

community to improve skills and employability.

Sion Hughes, Assistant Director of Customers and Communities, said: "Tenants are at the heart of what we do and our teams have pulled out the stops to provide advice, support and guidance to those that need it.

"We have a strong track record of working in partnerships, especially during this cost-of-living crisis. We have led by example and as an organisation have shown leadership to co-ordinate a response and to bring people from across organisations around the table".

Outcomes and achievements

Adra has a service agreement with three mental health hubs - 70 referrals were made.

122 new referrals for tenancy support with 6,734 hours of support provided.

An agreement with Citizens Advice has provided tenants with support through financial and benefit advice. 162 referrals. £33,101 debt written off. £134,783 received in income gains. £1.96 million of social value generated.

220 customers received support via an Energy Warden referral service, a partnership between housing providers, including support to apply for grants and discounts, support to find the best tariff and advice on energy efficiency.

Adra's applications for Discretionary Assistance Fund support totalled £46k.

£297,529 - total social value generated through Academi Adra.

Gareth's story:

Gareth is one of many tenants accessing the tenancy support service from Adra. He has been complimentary about the service which has supported him through difficult times.

Gareth said: "I was shocked to understand that there was support available as you don't really expect it at my age. Without Adra's help, I wouldn't be anywhere near where I'm at now. It has been a massive struggle for me but I'm getting there thanks to their help."

"The support that's been offered has been easy to access and it's been fantastic."

Denbighshire Team

Adullam Homes Housing Association



Statement of support

The Adullam Denbighshire project offers supported housing and floating support to approximately 90 citizens. Referrals are received from Denbighshire County Council for people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.

Headed by Rebecca Atherton, the team has a further 10 staff members.

Residents supported live in dispersed properties, some owned by Adullam, and some by another registered social landlord that Adullam manages/leases. The team also manages/leases properties owned by private landlords.

Despite the challenges the client group can present, the team goes out of its way to help them achieve stable lives, and gain skills to enable them to live independently.

Vital to providing the support is getting clients to engage. Often those concerned have struggled to connect with service providers in the past, and so this can present quite a challenge.

To be successful the Adullam team needs to be creative, innovative, and resilient, which they are, underlined by successes achieved. In the last financial year the staff helped attain a positive outcome/ exit for 80% of the client group they worked with.

A wide range of locations, activities and approaches are used to encourage involvement, through which vital information is delivered, checks are done, skills gained, and confidence boosted.

Development of the garden at the Adullam offices in Westbourne Avenue, Rhyl has and continues to play an important role in engagement. When the team moved in, in summer 2021, the building had been completed renovated, providing outstanding facilities, but the garden looked like a construction site.

With input from the staff and support from Adullam Social Enterprises, transformation work started.

Clients were involved in every aspect of the work. Many found it rewarding to see the tomatoes, potatoes, squash, courgettes and onions they planted grow. Teaching them how to take care of the plants and how to become self-sufficient are key skills.

The garden also encourages social interaction, often being used as a venue for meetings.

Garden produce features regularly in the ready-steady-cook sessions run by the team. Onion soup has become a surprising favourite.

Showing clients the value of being part of the community is important to the team and interest in cooking generated by the garden has helped with this. The staff all took part in a team-building activity which at the same time supported another project in the area.

Use your Loaf Community Bakery in Rhyl provides free sessions to teach citizens how to bake artisan bread.

Skills learned by the team here have subsequently been shared with clients.

Forum meetings take place in the garden through which valuable feedback is gained. Constructive comments from the most recent included that more clarity is needed about who is who, not just in Adullam, but throughout the whole homelessness experience.

Their comments have been taken on board and additional information has been included in the Association-wide client handbook.

Through building client confidence, staff have also got several to take part in wider forums and conferences. One of the floating support service users, Janet, agreed to attend a Homelessness Forum organised by Cymorth Cymru. At the end, Janet said she felt validated and listened to. A valuable outcome.

Staff too play an active role in the community and sector. Examples include participation in Rhyl carnival and Rebecca Atherton becoming a Provider Representative on the North Wales Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group.

The garden will play an even wider community role too after the team secured funds from the Local Places for Nature - Food Development package operated by Keep Wales Tidy. Tree planters, a greenhouse and various other plants and equipment are being introduced.

Outcomes and achievements

The success of Adullam Homes' Denbighshire Team can be evidenced in several different ways.

The overall aim is to prevent homelessness in Denbighshire. During financial year 2022 - 2023 a total of 216 were supported by the team.

Of the 75 people that exited the service in this year, 25 residents succeeded in moving to permanent, independent addresses of their own and 32 met the objectives they identified in their support plans.

Each of these signify significant achievements, both for the individuals and for the communities in which they live.

What is also important is the number of people supported who take part in sessions and activities

organised by the team; everything from ready-steady-tenancy to volunteering in the garden. These result in new skills being gained (including social interaction), and in individuals becoming more willing to engage with service providers.

Team members will also point to increased confidence and sense of wellbeing as important results of their work. Witnessing, for example, the reactions of clients chosen as "tenant of the month" or hearing positive feedback from increasing numbers attending homelessness conferences, are highly valued.

Adullam's Denbighshire team is exceptional, constantly demonstrating care and commitment, both in and out of the workplace.

Caerphilly Empty Homes Team

Caerphilly County Borough Council



Statement of support

Private sector empty homes pose a significant problem in the Caerphilly borough. Empty properties represent a wasted resource, an ongoing financial expense and, in many cases, a missed opportunity to provide much-needed affordable housing. They can also cause a blight to communities and become a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

Caerphilly County Borough Council's newly created Empty Homes Team was established to tackle the issue of increasing numbers of vacant properties. During its first 18 months of operation, and despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the team has developed a positive reputation locally and nationally, made a lasting difference in local communities and helped provide much needed homes.

Since its inception, the team has developed and implemented a wide range of methods to address the issue of empty homes, forming the basis of its Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan.

The team is creative in its approach, having launched a dedicated 'Caerphilly No Use Empty' website and advice pack to provide resources for owners of empty properties.

They are committed to making a difference and are tenacious in their approach to engaging and supporting homeowners to bring their properties back into use. The team motto is 'doing nothing is not an option' which means that they also sometimes must make difficult decisions and take enforcement action when all else fails.

As well as delivering quantifiable results, with the past year seeing the highest number of empty homes brought back into use in the Caerphilly borough ever, the team's efforts have also helped transform lives. Including sourcing suitable properties to house those fleeing conflict in Ukraine and finding homes for those who would otherwise have found themselves homeless.

Empty property work can often be quite discreet and sometimes it takes a long time to see the benefits. The team's patience and willingness to deal with more complex cases is already having a big impact, e.g. implementing the Council's first enforced sales policy.

Case study

The first property the team enforced the sale was a house in Caerphilly which had been sat empty since at least February 2015.

The property had been left to deteriorate with no liable person identified to care for the property following the death of the occupier in 2012. Social Services involvement when the occupier was alive suggested that the property was owned by 3 siblings that had all passed away. Despite a substantial amount of time and effort, the authority failed to identify any next of kin who were willing to take on the probate of the property. The property was unregistered and, without a liable person, was exempt from council tax revenue.

The property sat empty for over 7 years, deteriorating and causing annoyance to neighbouring properties. The property started to look unloved and unsightly, it also started to attract pests and was often subject to complaints by neighbours and the wider community. Without intervention from the authority, this property would have remained empty and left to further deteriorate.

The team reinvestigated ownership of the property to serve legal notices on the overgrown and waste-filled garden. They tried numerous ways, including paid advertising, to identify someone with an interest in the property, to no avail.

Much to local residents' delight the authority carried out works in default of the notice to clear the garden. This resulted in debt owing to the authority and opened the door for the team to enforce the sale to recover the money. Sale was completed in July and a new owner took over the property.

Outcomes and achievements

- The team successfully brought 104 empty properties back into use last year; the highest annual figure to date for Caerphilly County Borough Council.
- Successful completion of the Council's first 2 enforced sales.
- Local launch and promotion of the National Empty Property Grant.
- Team's approach cited as best practice by Welsh Government.
- Reduced anti-social behaviour.
- Helped to meet local housing needs.

The financial benefit to the authority of the team's work also shouldn't be underestimated. For example, in case study 1 over £55,000 debt to Social Services has been repaid through the sale funds, as well as all cost associated with the garden clearance and enforcing the sale of the property.

Council tax revenue of £1,504.92 per year will also be paid to the authority now there is a liable person. This is a significant amount of lost revenue over the 8 years it's been empty. In addition, the social economical benefit of the property being occupied by householders likely to be working in the local area and shopping at local shops are unquantifiable economic benefits of bringing this empty property back into use.

Social Value Focused Development Team

Linc Cymru Housing Association



Statement of support

Since January 2022, The Linc development team have really embraced the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act 2015 by delivering an ambitious and innovative approach to the delivery of new developments. Incorporating the six principles of the placemaking charter, building new homes in sustainable locations, giving emphasis to community cohesion, creating circular economy initiatives, and embedding a social value policy and framework to maximise community benefits, all intrinsic to this approach.

Siân Diaz, Development Director leads a team which comprises of: Pre-Contract (Land and Planning), Post Contract (Contracts and Construction) and Social Value. Prior to 2022, the Social Value team were part of Housing and Communities, however, late in 2021 the team were relocated to the Development team, as it was considered necessary to revise our strategy to deliver maximum social return on all investments, build sustainable communities, maximise opportunities to create the right environment for people to flourish and contribute to the growth programme through community benefits.

Through this new approach and by collaborating with Linc colleagues and external partners the team

have delivered on their vision to achieve social value and to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of tenants, residents, and the communities in which we work. Meaningful engagement with local communities at an early stage before at acquisition or concept stage and prior to Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) has enabled us to really get to know our communities, to make strong links with local residents, community groups, third sector organisations and local businesses.

We are using development activity as a catalyst to maximise the positive impact on communities and minimise the negative and to create opportunities for local people, local businesses, the environment, and heritage, taking a proactive approach from a very early stage. Whilst satisfying the 7 Goals of the Future Generations Act. As a 'golden thread' in everything we do and by working to deliver these goals, we have been able to connect the different parts of the development process effectively and ensure this works with the wider outcomes of the delivery of new homes to provide positive impacts in our communities.

Our approach involves.

1. Early engagement and feedback pre and post contract
2. In-depth involvement in the development process and embedding social value in all our contracts
3. Taking opportunities to deliver circular economy projects: e.g.: reuse of materials from existing buildings for new build and use for community groups/ initiatives
4. Project management of community benefits/ targeted recruitment and training
5. Creating and managing sustainable long-term partnerships with key stakeholders to deliver projects in communities.

6. Creating, developing, and managing economic, social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing initiatives for new and existing tenants and residents to access

We deliver new homes for the 'right' outcomes which reflect our purpose as an affordable housing provider. We create opportunities for the communities we work in whilst delivering new homes for the people who need them the most. We deliver high quality schemes which are tenure blind, using MMC (Modern Methods of Construction) and off-site manufacture to speed up delivery and reduce negative community and environmental impacts. We have increased the use of

green technology to minimise energy costs and we achieve the highest standards of energy efficiency in line with Welsh Government guidelines. We provide green spaces to improve health and wellbeing and maximise opportunities for biodiversity.

As adopters of the Wales Placemaking Charter, we design homes that create opportunities and ensure that our scheme 'fits' into the existing context and into the existing communities, enabling that sense of place. Our approach connects the existing community with the new residents, providing opportunities to build robust relationships and community cohesion.

Outcomes and achievements

In Neath Port Talbot our team approach to social value has empowered the community to learn about the planning process and given a platform to share with us local knowledge, voice concerns, ask questions, and make suggestions. On one scheme, this has resulted in us relocating an access road, enhancing public footpaths, removing diseased trees, improving site security. We respect the feedback from the community (scale, mass, streetscape, and accessible green space) and have developed a community heritage, arts and circular economy project which reuses materials from the existing building and creates employment, volunteering, training, and apprenticeship opportunities.

Utilising our social value approach and including social value clauses in our contracts since January 2022, we have:

- Secured £121,229.73 through social value clauses, to support our communities and tenants

- Directly funded 31 community groups benefiting over 3100 people in 11 different local authority areas in Wales
- Planted 200 trees
- Invested £10,439,236.08 in the Welsh Economy
- Contributed £3,327,139 to SMEs in Wales
- Created 22 employment and training opportunities
- Delivered 171 weeks of training
- Diverted 1218 tonnes of waste from landfill
- Sponsored £6,632.50 of sporting activities
- Sponsored £18,572.69 of community education activities
- Sponsored £3,800 of cultural activities
- Hosted 13 apprenticeships/traineeships/work trials and work experiences

Neighbourhood Services

Monmouthshire Housing Association



Statement of support

Housing Team of the Year - Prioritising Prevention

MHA's Neighbourhood Services Team is made up of four teams who deliver all elements of Tenancy Management: Income, Neighbourhoods and

Community Safety. Within the last year this has also expanded to include Leasehold and Service Charges and MHA's newly established Cleaning Team. This team manage 3760 properties.

Housing Management and the intricacy of this work has, over the years, been predominantly reactive with work generated transactionally driven by tenant request or work required by other teams. This is due to many of the tasks being compliance-based ranging from the implementation of tenancy management timescales in accordance with the Renting Homes Wales Act, compliance with Fire Regulations and managing communal areas, access to homes to ensure gas and electrical test are completed in time and the timely collection of rent.

The Neighbourhood Services Team set a goal to create a framework of services that enabled a proactive and where possible preventative approach to the delivery of services to ensure that we deliver the MHA vision.

Outstanding Contribution:

Capturing the essence of tenancy management and translating the day-to-day work that has the potential to change lives is not easy to achieve but the outputs delivered by MHA's Neighbourhood Services team speak for themselves (please see photo outcomes on email)

In a context of significant change in housing MHA's Neighbourhood Services team have delivered an exceptional amount which is built around a culture of care and collaboration which ensures that we make the right decisions for tenants.

Collaboration:

The creation of "patch-ups" which take place every two - three weeks take a collaborative and tenant focussed approach to decision making. These include income officers, neighbourhood officers, community safety, tenancy coaches and maintenance officers. Examples of where these conversations have been critical are transfers where a tenant is seeking to downsize for affordability reasons but where they may be a cause for concern with property condition. These teams work in unison to ensure that we enable the best outcome for the tenant, the property and the recovery of rent and other charges as well putting in place safeguards for the settling into a new property.

Delivering the best services:

MHA's Neighbourhoods team have embraced and embedded Renting Homes (Wales) 2016. A review of housing management cases shows 100% compliance with timescales and delivery.

MHA's STAR survey 2021 showed poor tenant satisfaction with general needs cleaning. The decision to create an in-house cleaning team has turned this around with 0 complaints, daily compliments and the ability to deliver routine deep cleans via our new team. This new approach is providing better value for money for the organisation and for tenants as part of their service charge.

The Income Team practise, compassionate collection and as a result there are no non-engagers. The team ended the financial year with 2.2% arrears putting the organisation in a really strong income position. This combined with their practise of trauma informed working and strong internal and external partnerships gained them the first HQN accreditation for maximising income and sustaining tenancies in Wales.

Beyond the day job the Neighbourhood Team used their team building day to create an incredible edible garden for the local high school to alleviate food poverty and support families to access fresh food.

Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes - a story of difference:

A New Home for H

Frequently the role of a frontline officer means engaging with some tenants very regularly as they find themselves in crisis or unable to cope in their home. This can manifest in many ways from the inability or lack of motivation to manage their home, slipping into arrears, neighbour nuisance or an impact on wellbeing.

This was the case for one tenant "H" who had lived in their flat for twenty-seven years. More recently, their health and mobility were starting to deteriorate, and they were in touch with MHA daily unable to manage neighbour relations, cope with changes within the block and becoming part of reciprocal disputes in the block. H had contacted their officer 151 in a short period which was incredibly resource intensive. A timely case conference and reflection on our trauma informed practices prompted us to consider what we might do in this situation. It was agreed that MHA

would support a managed move for the tenant, a decision that is not taken lightly.

H was intensively supported by Officers to facilitate a move that would enable them to be closer to their family and that would support access and wellbeing needs.

One year later and the impact of that well timed decision is clear, we have not heard from H until they sent this email one year after their move.

"I absolutely love it here ...it's totally changed my life. I see family more my grandchildren more, I'm in the garden all the time. The neighbours are all so nice too. I couldn't ask for more. My mum passed away shortly after my move and I don't think I would dealt with it as well as I have without this place. My grandchildren love visiting me now, which they didn't previously. I'm not even exaggerating when I say my whole quality of life has changed even in the most difficult of times I am truly grateful."

Hill Street, Newport development

Linc Cymru Housing Association



Statement of support

Linc Cymru, a registered RSL with over 5000 homes, is a social housing and care provider focused on collaboration with tenants, residents, and stakeholders to create environments where people can flourish. With ambitions to deliver over 1,700 new homes by 2027, they play an active role in eradicating homelessness and addressing housing need whilst also addressing inequality and inequity through place-based partnerships. Linc is committed to reducing negative environmental impacts, improving sustainability standards, and maximising opportunities through their social value policy and framework.

In Newport, over 9,000 households are on the housing register. Over 369 households are living in Temporary Accommodation (TA).

To boost the supply of affordable housing, working with Newport Council, Linc considered several sites, for the delivery of new homes, with funding support from Welsh Government and although the Hill Street site is in a Conservation Area with challenging topography, this underused car park was an ideal urban site to quickly deliver high quality energy efficient homes to house people who had experienced homelessness. One of Linc's drivers was to minimise any negative impacts on the surrounding community and maximise positive outcomes.

Linc worked with a modular homes' specialist contractor ZED PODS to design and build 12 self-contained, low-energy, low-carbon homes using off-site construction methodology. The combined strategy of enhanced building fabric, integrated platform energy efficiency measures, and low-carbon and renewable technologies has a benefit of low-energy bills to the residents.

The scheme met Priority 1 of the Homelessness Strategy and delivered the Welsh Governments Decarbonisation Programme outcomes.

Transitioning from temporary homeless accommodation to a permanent home is challenging, as many people have little or no belongings to make a home.

- We used good quality donated/recycled furniture and soft furnishings from our partners, everything used for display in a show flat was then chosen by and donated to our tenants.
- We arranged for our new tenants to experience a 'viewing appointment' of what would soon become their new permanent home as well as a tour of the 'Show Flat'.
- We had a large selection of recycled kitchen packs (including crockery, cutlery, pots and pans, mugs, glasses, and laundered bedding) and tenants chose whatever they needed and/or liked to take with them. Surplus items were donated to the homeless charity, The Wallich.
- Raven House Trust donated food parcels to every tenant when they moved in
- Tenants were invited to a welcome lunch to meet the contractor, the Linc team and local volunteering partners. They were invited to share their views and suggestions on
 - Moving in experience
 - New Technology
 - Access to green space
 - Safety and security
 - Access to Local Services
- One tenant was supported into training and employment and received a donated and repurposed laptop to keep and to assist with his job search.
- One tenant was supported into volunteering at our partner organisation.

Our ReStore Project (funded by Community Foundation Wales), our community benefit funds and by working in collaboration with partners organisations, our contractors and supply chain, has made this all possible.

This project has inspired others to rethink the use of underutilised sites to deliver innovative sustainable homes whilst addressing the "affordable" housing crisis.

"There is a real community spirit here, it's nice. When I walked in for the first time in September it was completely overwhelming, to go from what I was living into this. I'm so happy here. Private renting was a no-go for me as there is no way I could have afforded it. It was either pay my rent or eat and don't pay the rent."

Sam Lewis, Hill Street House Residents

Outcomes and achievements

1. First ever MMC scheme in the UK built on an underutilised car park located in a Conservation Area.
2. Enhanced greenery, green roofs, trails, rainwater garden and permeable paving as part of Sustainable Drainage Strategy.
3. Every dwelling achieved EPCs with A-ratings of over 92.
4. Airtightness level is 80% better than National standards.
5. Use of renewables e.g. solar panels, low-energy mechanical ventilation to minimise energy bills to residents.
6. Only 3-day on site installation time reducing local disruption and waste.
7. Reduced wet trades for lesser water consumption and high carbon materials.
8. Annual savings of 9.9 tonnes of carbon and 42,945 litre of water.
9. Linc Cymru's Community Benefits Fund supported:
 - £500 donations & £200 vouchers for local primary school
 - A career in construction activity session with year 2/3 children
 - Funded trips to Newport Wetlands for families
 - £500 donations each for Christmas Treats Project, Welsh Yemeni Festival & Pride in the Port event
 - The planting of 200 trees in Newport
10. Featured on the BBC One Show as an exemplar MMC-led social housing project.
11. Visited by HRH Prince William (June 2023) and helped Newport to be one of the 5 cities for his Homeward programme.

COMMUNITY- FOCUSSED CONTRACTOR

This award recognises the contribution that contractors can make towards the local community and economy. Winning organisations will have embedded delivering community benefits into their work programmes.

Pentwyn Drive

Willis Construction Limited



Statement of support

Willis Construction are a local contractor who have been 'building a brighter tomorrow' throughout South Wales for almost 40 Years. With a clear commitment to both environmental and social sustainability, Willis endeavours to employ local people and partnering with local supply chain partners, retaining maximum investment within the communities they operate. Willis works closely with clients to review other ways of benefiting the economy and community through targeted recruitment and training.

Pentwyn Drive is a Partnership project with Linc Cymru, supported by the Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant Programme. It has provided 28 new homes on the site of the former Morrisons Supermarket.

Facilities at the development include a landscaped courtyard providing green space for residents, dedicated refuse storage, onsite parking for four vehicles and a large cycle store for 48 bikes. The homes are close to bus stops to encourage residents to use sustainable transport options. Earlier this year, Cardiff Council agreed to lease the block to house families who have experienced homelessness and were being housed in temporary accommodation,

such as hotels and B&Bs around the city.

The key community legacy projects involved engagement with St. Bernadettes, St. Davids, & Bryn Celyn Primary Schools. The construction phase will no doubt be remembered for its fantastic hoarding which was produced as part of a School Art Project with these schools. This was well respected and protected from damage by the local community.

The project culminated in a legacy mosaic permanently displayed on the building, designed, moulded & fired by pupils from the 3 primary schools. Pupils are already proud of their art as they admire it every day on their way to school. Tiles were also designed and made by local youths who attend 'Ministry of Life' Youth Services Project.

Continuing support of local schools, Willis also donated and installed a new blackboard within an external learning space at St Bernadette's, donated and installed a new polytunnel to St David's.

Further examples of Community Projects include:

- Sports equipment donation to be based at Pentwyn Leisure Centre for other groups to use.
- Youth Activity programme which included quad biking, go karting, skate park trips and a certified food hygiene course.
- Mental Health & Wellbeing courses

Early into the project Willis held Careers Guidance Meetings alongside Linc Cymru with those interested in a construction career. The process identified trainees who have all thrived on their journey at Pentwyn Drive.

Jay Gill had faced bullying in his school environment which affected his mental health and self-esteem resulting in him dropping out. His experience inspired his mother Charmaine develop her 'Just Be You' Intervention Project, which was supported through

the Pentwyn Development. Jay's potential was recognised by Paul Cachia, and he is now enjoying a 3-year plumbing apprenticeship, and his confidence growing with the investment Willis are making to his professional and personal development.

Chelsea Cashman, Apprentice Carpenter not only flourished during her time at Pentwyn, but she also inspired others, even presenting at a CITB Women in Construction event at Cardiff & Vale College. Supported by Training Manager Paul Cachia, she talked about her own journey into the construction industry and outlined career opportunities to Year 7 to 9 girls.

Will Thomas joined the Pentwyn residential development team as a Trainee Site Manager. Will, who has been with the company since leaving school demonstrated a willingness to learn and an aptitude for leadership which was rewarded with the opportunity for progression.

The Project Delivery Team integrated themselves in the Pentwyn community, wholeheartedly embracing the community activities with pride and dedication. This shone through with the response and respect they received from all local stakeholders throughout the build.

Outcomes and achievements

"This is an important development that is going to make such a difference to the lives of so many people. We are proud to have played our part in bringing these new much-needed homes to the city.

Big thanks to Willis Construction for doing a great job building these homes and giving so much on-the-job experiences to the apprentices. Willis employed three apprentices who have excelled in learning their trades on the job and at college. One of these is a Linc resident who lives locally.

These young people will continue their apprenticeships on other developments but always know the part they played in building these new homes."

Jo Yellen, Linc Cymru

Handover of the project was completed on schedule

in September 2023, however Willis's connection with the Pentwyn Community will continue through the legacy their engagement has left, in local schools through the artwork from the hoarding projects and the mosaics as a permanent feature on the building.

Throughout the build the following outcomes were achieved:

- £8,220,587.86 Invested into the Welsh Economy
- £3,148,715 Invested with SME's
- 15 employment/training opportunities (88 hours)
- 3 Apprenticeships (72 weeks)
- 833 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill.
- £11,458 donated in sponsorship in cultural sporting and educational activities

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.

RHA \ Little Shed

RHA Wales



Statement of support

We questioned ourselves around how we can help lead on regenerating the town of Tonypany and support the community to build a strong sense of place and belonging. Previously described as 'Britain's Worst High St' we've always had a presence in the town, with our office located just off the high street, we're connected to the community and knew we had to play our part in shaping its future, and work with the local community to build back what was once a thriving market town.

Despite negative press, there is positivity to be seen, with new businesses opening and footfall increasing following de-pedestrianisation on the High St. We already play a key role in leading this progress as we chair Tonypany Chamber of Trade and provide sponsorship for community events.

We've such belief and commitment in the town that we're embarking on a £20m capital spend there. But we know through our commitment to the Design Commission for Wales Placemaking Charter that we can't only focus on capital activity, so we've opted for a 360 approach to ensure our placemaking plans tackle social, economic, and environmental. Our plans see the largest investment in the town for decades, with

aspiration to be a catalyst in unlocking the potential of Tonypany - creating a place that future generations will be proud of.

Alongside our capital projects, we're working with residents and businesses to ensure we offer spaces that our community needs, for social connection, training, upskilling and a range of other services to tackle social isolation, food poverty and help signpost our tenants and community members to a wider support network.

Our application is for our Placemaking work in Tonypany, specifically 'The Little Shed' Sitting directly on the high street, we've worked with partners to repurpose a former vacant office and utilised community benefit clauses in contracts to refurbish the space creating a vibrant, accessible community space with a focus on building a sense of place and belonging.

A key driver when delivering this project was ensuring training and upskilling was embedded in delivery, to achieve this we worked with Black Sheep (part of ARC Training Group) to offer these opportunities. The Black Sheep project supports young people to learn skills for work in construction. They've put their learning to good use through this renovation, repurposing materials within the space, including creating their own feature wall.

We have provided more than a 'building', creating a place for people in our communities, with people from our local community, that's the difference with our approach, it's the engagement and involvement that sits above any capital project or works.

We've involved tenants and the community in creating the space, and now many are involved in running The Little Shed through volunteering work! To us, that is testament to our commitment to Placemaking in its truest sense. It's easy to see when walking through the town, that the space has grown into a busy community hub that's contributing massively to regeneration

in Tonypandy, as well as supporting community wellbeing.

We're proud that we've created a space where everyone is welcome, a place with heart and connection with the community.

Black Sheep project manager:

"The young people involved were all close to being expelled, some have autism, some ADHD and all were "labelled" and felt they couldn't offer society anything. By tapping into their interests and working with them on their level then they flourished in creating this space and learnt skills for future careers. They felt proud and saw their own personal value in creating the Little Shed with RHA - we can't thank them enough."

Outcomes and achievements

38 young people gained construction skills, completed qualifications, reengaged with their education, and moved on to employment and further education.

Warm Space sessions, established in response to winter cost-of-living concerns, progressing from small coffee mornings of 5 people to Crafty Coffee mornings - supported by 3 volunteers, regularly attended by circa 30 people weekly and continuing to grow.

Since May 2023 we've welcomed almost 800 people which really demonstrates that Little Shed is a valued place within the community. We estimate since opening we've had double that number of visitors and improved their wellbeing and overall health as well as contributing to the wider regeneration of the town.

Other outcomes::

- Food parcel project Grub Hub, in partnership with supermarkets alleviating pressure on our foodbanks.

- Community Fridges in partnership with Hubbub and Coop - reducing food waste going to landfill.
- Period poverty support in partnership with RCTCBC
- Digital skills sessions with Generation Rhondda
- Repair Café's
- Youth drop-in's
- Mental health support groups
- Weekly Warm Space/ Craft Sessions
- Yoga classes
- Hot Flash Café's
- Training and resource hub for tenants on Carbon Literacy
- Recycle station for a community interest company who reuse plastics to fund arts activities.
- Free water Refill Station
- Homegrown cooking sessions

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING

We were looking for a landlord who has played a vital part in providing housing-related support to a wide range of people. Project should 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.

Supported Living

Caredig



Statement of support

At Caredig, we are committed to empowering the people we work with to live flourishing lives. We do this by working in a trauma and ACE informed way that is recovery focussed, non-judgmental and high tolerance.

We know that, due to the nature of our work, we will work with and provide support to people who are currently struggling with a range of challenges. These may include issues such as mental health, social isolation and substance misuse. Many of our residents have long term, enduring mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, bi-polar, personality disorder and co-occurring substance misuse issues.

We already know that the work that we do to support the users of our service has hugely positive effects on their mental, physical, and social wellbeing, however, we are a continuous learning organisation, and we are proactive in exploring innovative ways to support our service users to empower them to lead flourishing lives.

We have developed a bespoke psychological model to support people that access our care and support

services. This is called the 360O model and has four sections which focus on the different stages of people's life journeys when they come into contact with our services, these are:

- Explore: Getting to know what really matters to people, their history, likes and dislikes and what a flourishing life looks like to them personally.
- Engage: Building motivation and developing plans for success
- Enact: Focusing on specific areas of life
- Empower: Developing strengths and connecting to the community

As we carry on our journey, we have utilised the services of an expert trainer and mentor in the ACE/trauma informed and 360 models and we will continue to provide training to all staff to keep their skill set high and learn any new methods that come along. We will keep learning, reflecting, developing, and improving our model so that we become even more effective in transforming people's lives.

Residents are part of this process from the beginning and are actively involved in all aspects of support planning and lead the process to ensure they receive the support that they want and need and feel in control of their lives.

We work closely with other agencies such as the Community Mental Health teams, Substance misuse agencies, Voluntary service such as MIND amongst others to maximise the success of the support.

Most of our residents are care managed and we work closely with them, and they are involved in the care and support planning for their service user and are part of each step of the journey that they make. They are fully on board with the model provision and see great improvements in the quality of life of those they care manage.

Outcomes and achievements

Below are some stakeholder's testimonials and statistics from the Caredig 2022/2023 annual review:

- Enable residents to have the best quality of life and encouraging them to reach their full potential. Treating each person as individuals. Excellent communication with care coordinator and recognising any risk or relapse indicators. Staff know their residents very well. Kind, caring, good at addressing any issues with confidence. Very capable and professional always.
- In my experience, the staff support residents really well, they are invested in their recovery, and wish to support them living in the community. Communication with staff is vital, and I am kept informed of any concerns or changes. Staff will go out of their way (working extra hours in some cases) to accommodate the resident when needed in a crisis.
- In my experience, it was showing a genuine willingness to try things out, share important information and to work jointly with care.
- Relationship is very good with staff information sharing is good and a good collaborative approach to get the best for the resident.

In addition to the above 95% of responders to the survey stated they were very satisfied with the service we provided to their clients and 5% were satisfied. No dissatisfaction with the service was recorded.

Below are some testimonials and statistics from the people who use our services:

- Without the care and support from Caredig my life would not be worth living. That is what it means to me.
- I achieve a lot more now than before.
- I am surprised at how far I have come in a short space of time.
- I feel well most of the time knowing the staff are always here to talk to.
- This project has done wonders for me.
- I am happier and safer.
- Brilliant you are my family and I love you all.

In addition to the above 95% of responders stated they were involved in the care and support services they received, 5% could not remember. 86% felt better because of the care and support they receive and 14% felt the same. No one felt worse as a result.

EXCELLENCE IN PROFESSIONALISM, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This award will recognise organisations who are leading the way in driving professionalism, learning and development while delivery a great service for tenants. We wanted to hear from organisations who are fantastic to work for and drive good outcomes for their staff as part of the day job.

Hafod's Principles and Behaviours Framework

Hafod



Statement of support

In September 2022 Hafod launched their Culture Principles and Behaviours framework. The framework was created to establish a consistent approach to professional standards and expected behaviours across the organisation. Working in support of Hafod's mission of making lives better, the framework ensures that colleagues understand what is expected of them by their peers and their customers. The framework distinguishes between Principles, defined as 'what' Hafod (we) do collectively to make lives better and Behaviours, defined as what colleagues (I) do individually to align to Hafod's principles and mission. The behaviours are then further broken down into effective and less effective indicators for all colleagues, managers and strategic leaders, making expectations clear and ensuring accountability through all levels of the organisation.

The Principles and Behaviours framework has been created in collaboration with colleagues from all areas of the organisation through direct colleague feedback, interviews, culture workshops and a cross departmental culture change group. When designing the framework, Hafod were keen to create behaviours which would be meaningful and clearly applied throughout the colleague lifecycle. The Principles and Behaviours framework was launched through a range of workshops delivered to managers across the organisation who in turn briefed their teams through team meetings and events.

In addition to this, Hafod's Learning and Development team have supported the organisation with over 20 bespoke training sessions to empower teams to identify how the principles and behaviours can be developed, recognised and celebrated. During these sessions, colleagues have had the opportunity to bring the behaviours to life in their teams, identifying strengths and areas for development. Each area of development was then captured in an action plan to be implemented by team managers with the support of the Learning and Development team.

Hafod's eight behaviours form a key component of Hafod's learning and development programme. In addition to ensuring that all colleagues have the technical knowledge to perform their role, Hafod's learning offer looks to develop skills and behaviours such as communication, change management and engaging others through a blended approach of coaching, formal and informal training and self-directed learning resources. Each year, Hafod undertakes an extensive training needs analysis

comprising of a colleague survey, personal development reviews and meetings with Heads of Departments and Executive team members. Development of both principles and behaviours has been a key area of discussion during this process.

Alignment with Hafod's Principles and Behaviours framework is considered through Hafod's recruitment process. Interviews and assessment days for all roles across the organisation are now designed with Hafod's principles and behaviours in mind to attract and select candidates who demonstrate attributes in line with Hafod's behaviours.

Recognition of colleagues demonstrating Hafod's behaviours is encouraged by all through Hafod's monthly colleague recognition 'Shout Out'. This programme enables all colleagues to nominate their peers, direct reports and managers throughout the month for demonstrating or taking action in line with

one of Hafod's eight behaviours. At the end of the month, all colleagues nominated are recognised and celebrated in a monthly round up video which is shared across the association. Nominations regularly involve instances of colleagues going the extra mile to 'make lives better' for the organisation's customers. Since the launch of the colleague recognition scheme in September 2022 up to June 2023, 188 people have nominated a colleague for demonstrating one of Hafod's behaviours. Examples of nominations that have generated great outcomes for tenants include:

- Acting as one team to safeguard tenants in danger.
- Delivering results to source emergency accommodation for tenants facing homelessness
- Enabling change to introduce a pop-up food kitchen in one of Hafod's extra care schemes to support the local community.

Outcomes and achievements

Hafod's Principles and Behaviours framework has been in place for ten months and colleague adoption of the behaviours and engagement with the framework is clear to see. Since the introduction of Hafod's colleague recognition programme in September 2022, 188 colleagues have nominated and recognised a peer for demonstrating one of Hafod's behaviours. The framework was designed to ensure that the customer is at the heart of each principle and behaviour, and it is no surprise that the majority of colleague nominations reflect how our colleagues engage with our customers and strive for excellent outcomes for customers.

A recent example is a colleague working in Hafod's Neighbourhood Coaching team who was nominated for the behaviour of Caring and Supporting:

'They have gone above and beyond regarding a Hafod Contract Holder who found himself in a dire situation in his home. He was at great risk regarding safeguarding and with joint working and quick thinking they found this man alternative accommodation to ensure his safety and welfare.'

The Principles and Behaviours framework provides a standard that our customers can expect from all Hafod colleagues and customers are encouraged to feedback to the Association if colleagues aren't meeting the behavioural standards expected.

YOUNG ACHIEVER IN HOUSING (INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY)

The award celebrates individuals who can demonstrate that they have shown passion, commitment, and flair in delivering services for tenants and residents.

Carys Wiggins

Taff Housing



Statement of support

Carys, supported by our communications partners, has secured a huge increase in our external press coverage with articles on our work featuring in Inside Housing, Wales Online, Cardiff Business Insider and BBC Wales online.

Big increase in our online reach on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Linked In.

Successful communication campaigns helping raise our profile and as share vitally important information with tenants. Campaigns have included Gas Safety, raising awareness around Damp and Mould, inspirational stories including Taff colleagues who arrived in Wales as refugees and an International Women's Day campaign highlighting the impact of our work with homeless women.

Key member of the Critical Incident Team helping ensure appropriate communications take place with tenants and other stakeholders during a building safety emergency.

Supported a successful partnership between Taff and Cardiff and Vale College to help showcase students artwork on our development site hoardings.

Successful relaunch of our tenant newsletter Taff Talks.

Outcomes and achievements

Carys Wiggins is a star.

In 2022, she was receiving her A-level results, now she is leading our work on marketing and communications as part of a sponsored degree with Network75.

Thrown in at the deep end at Taff, she has fearlessly yet humbly grabbed hold of the challenge and is excelling through a five-year undergraduate training programme to achieve her BA Hons in Communication and Marketing, splitting her time between university and work at Taff. Carys has quickly become a highly valued colleague, leaving an indelible positive impression on her peers and our tenants.

From the day she joined Taff Carys has blown us away with her amazing and inspirational approach to delivering tenant focused services. She has made a huge impact not only on tenants, but also on her colleagues and the wider business. From the outset, Carys has been willing to learn, yet not shied away from sharing her own ideas on how we can do things better. Using her initiative, she has delivered communication campaigns on big issues such as gas safety, damp and mould and International Women's Day.

Her positive 'can do' attitude has led to us driving real improvements in how we communicate with tenants and other stakeholders. Although Carys is one of our youngest members of the team at Taff, she is making a big impact. She is creative and recognises that how we communicate is as important as what we communicate. She runs all our social media and is helping us find new and engaging ways to communicate widely to our stakeholders. She is in high demand across Taff, with colleagues seeking to access her expertise and advice.

Working collaboratively and effectively with different colleagues from across all departments, she has led on a number of communication campaigns aimed at making sure we don't only communicate effectively with tenants, but that we encourage real dialogue, openness, engagement and transparency in all we do.

Carys makes sure our tenants have the best experience possible, displaying real empathy and understanding in her approach to communications. Her passion for making positive changes has driven forward many initiatives, benefiting our tenants.

She has shown she can not only work in a proactive way, but is also a real asset during a challenge. She helped deliver effective communications to tenants during a recent building safety emergency and was a key member of the Critical Incident Team throughout.

Carys is proactively getting involved in wider sector communication and PR activity, it's been awesome to see her confidence develop as she steps out of her comfort zone to speak up in networks and other events.

Feedback from peers about Carys has been absolutely first class. Nothing is too much trouble for her. Her willingness to spend time to help other has been above and beyond the call of duty.

Carys is relentlessly positive, hardworking and always looks to help others. She is a quick learner and contributes new ideas that enhance and improve our services. She has become indispensable to every team she has worked with. She is driven and talented and has an amazing career ahead. It's a joy and a privilege to have her here at Taff.

Joe Stockley

Valleys to Coast



Statement of support

Joe has delivered the following outcomes for the business as well as for his personal development:

Compiled a report on embedding of Future Generations best practice in Welsh Housing Associations. Valleys to Coast will consider this as part of our approach to meeting the Future generations goals and ways of working in our organisational change processes.

Compiled a report on engaging customers in decarbonisation work, taking inspiration from Orbit Housing best practice to make recommendations to Valleys to Coast for new ways of involving customers in our ongoing decarbonisation journey.

Conducted research on the Future Generations Act and its practical implementation in Housing Associations

Participation in the recruitment process and member of the interview panel for the Head of Assets and Sustainability role.

Outcomes and achievements

We were delighted to welcome Joe to Valleys to Coast in February 2023, on a placement through the Welsh Government's All Wales Public Services Graduate Scheme run by Academi Wales. We were impressed by Joe's drive and enthusiasm which was clear as he spent time with the various teams throughout the organisation, understanding our business and an overview of the housing industry, before settling with our Sustainability team.

Joe has been instrumental in driving forward a number of our projects and workstreams.

He has coordinated the delivery of the Safe and Happy Sustainable Futures Action plan, facilitating group meetings, taking minutes and ensuring actions are delivered on. This plan sits within Valley to Coast's Safe and Happy Homes Sustainability Strategy, with the aim of delivering on our Net Zero goals.

He has been working to develop sustainable procurement within V2C, supported the development of a sustainable procurement statement, and carried out several reports on procurement within V2C with recommendations to develop delivery, in response to data highlighting the disproportionate impact of procurement on emissions.

He collaborated with our communications team to facilitate delivery of WHQS2 mandated Whole Home Surveys. With the UK Green Building Council stating that 80% of buildings in use today will still be inhabited by 2050, retrofit is becoming ever more

important to housing associations, and Joe has been engaging with other housing associations to develop best practice on customer engagement over decarbonisation.

Joe is working to develop more effective ways to engage customers in green property improvements. He is developing FAQs and troubleshooting information to support customers to identify issues themselves and understand when to involve Valleys to Coast to support them. This will help customers to get the most from their green improvements, and is intended to help Valleys to Coast to address issues proactively, saving the housing association money and time.

Joe has taken up coordination of a project to install a number of batteries across Valleys to Coast properties with solar photovoltaics, liaising with customers, staff and contractors to get the project delivered to time, helping to save customers money on their energy bills in their properties.

Underpinning Joe's drive has been his clear commitment to the Future Generations Act and embedding the lessons it offers within housing to learn from its illustrations of best practice, carrying out research across the Welsh Housing Sector into the practical implications of the act for other housing associations.

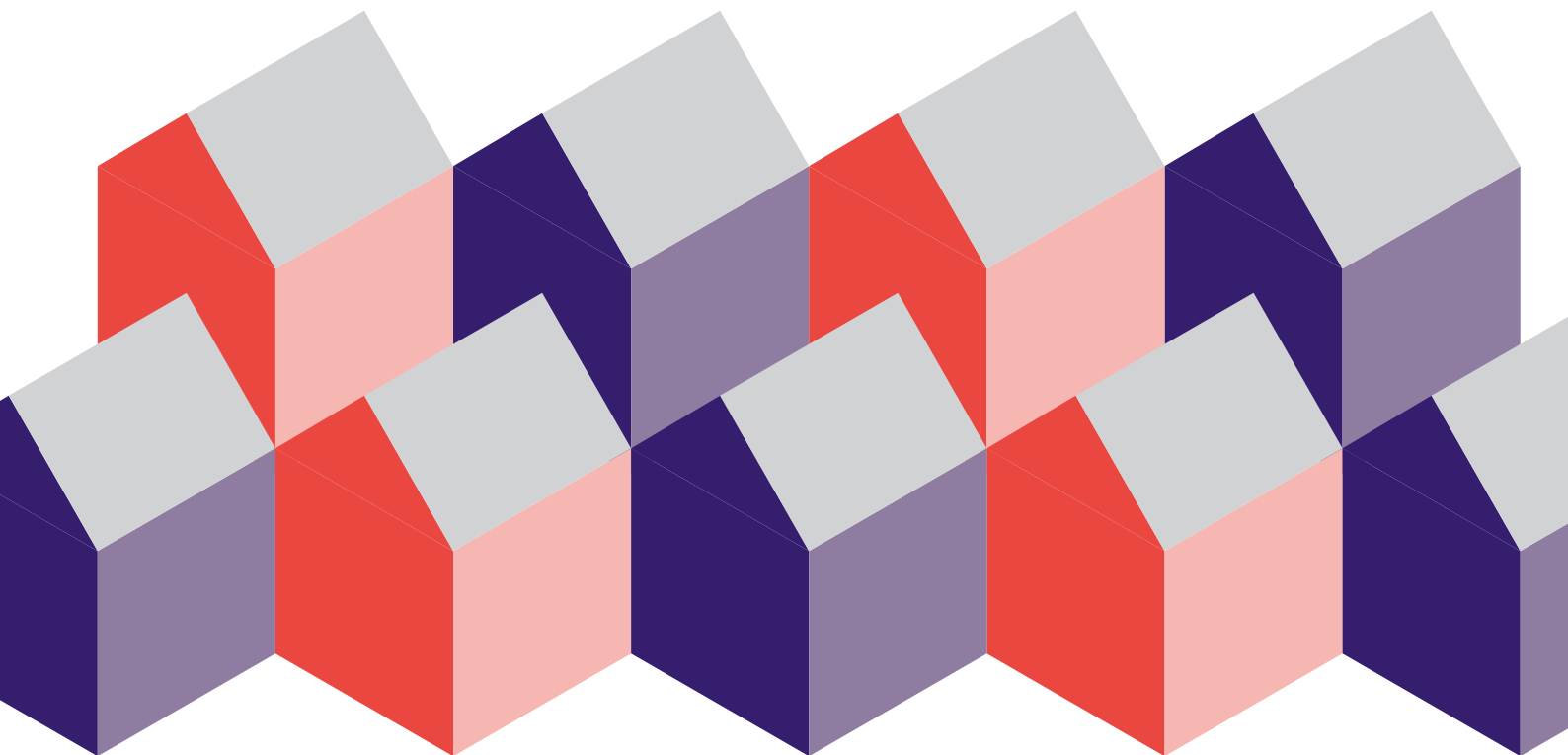


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WELSH HOUSING AWARDS 2023

WINNERS

Excellence in customer service

Winner Project Title: Monmouthshire Homesearch - Customer Excellence in a Digital Age

Winner Organisation: Monmouthshire Housing Association

Sponsored by:



Excellence in health and wellbeing

Winner project title: RHA Wales Hapus & BeActive RCT

Winner organisation: RHA Wales

Excellence in housing innovation

Winner project title: Pen Y Dre Apartments / Compass Community Hub

Winner organisation: Merthyr Tydfil CBC

Partners: Merthyr Valley Homes

Excellence in championing equality and diversity

Winner project title: Equality Matters

Winner organisation: Newydd Housing Association

Working in partnership

Winner project title: STAR Housing Model

Winner organisation: United Welsh and Caerphilly Council

Partners: Platform

Sponsored by:

LOVELL

Positive placemaking

Winner project title: RHA \ Little Shed

Winner organisation: RHA Wales

Supporting communities

Winner project title: NU Life

Winner organisation: Cadwyn Housing Association

Sponsored by:



Developing high quality homes

Winner project title: Developing High Quality Homes at The Mill

Winner organisation: Lovell

Partners: Tirion Homes, Principality Building Society, Welsh Government

Community focussed contractor

Winner project title: Pentwyn Drive

Winner organisation: Willis Construction Limited

Supporting independent living

Winner project title: Supporting independent living

Winner organisation: Caredig

Sustainability in housing

Winner project title: Thornhill Decarb Project

Winner organisation: Hafod

Partners: SERS Ltd

Sponsored by:



Housing team of the year

Winner project title: Caerphilly Empty Homes Team

Winner organisation: Caerphilly County Borough Council

Sponsored by:



Young achiever in housing

Winner: Carys Wiggins

Winner organisation: Taff Housing

Sponsored by:



Excellence in professionalism, learning and development

Winner: Hafod's Principles and Behaviours Framework

Winner organisation: Hafod

Congratulations to all our winners and thank you to our sponsors for supporting the event