

The magazine for residents of Wales & West Housing

FREE

In Touch

SUMMER 2023

**Feeling lonely?
Discover how
local classes can
help you to make
new friends**

**Learn how to
plug the leaks in
your finances**

**Tips on how you can get more
involved in our business**



FLY-TIPPING? NOT UP MY STREET

SEARCH **LOCAL RECYCLING CENTRE** TO FIND
EASY WAYS TO DISPOSE OF YOUR UNWANTED ITEMS.

EASIER THAN YOU THINK.
CHEAPER THAN A FINE.



cadwch keep
gymru'n wales
daclus tidy



ALWAYS CHECK THEY ARE A LICENSED WASTE CARRIER WITH NATURAL RESOURCES WALES.



Contact Us

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Cardiff CF14 5DU

Tel: 0800 052 2526

Text: 07788 310420

Email: contactus@wwha.co.uk Web: www.wwha.co.uk

You can also contact members of staff direct by their email. For example,
joe.bloggs@wwha.co.uk

Other languages and formats

If you would like a copy of this edition of In Touch in Welsh or another language or format, for example, in large print, please let us know and we will help you.

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-  **Facebook**
facebook.com/wwhousing
-  **Twitter**
@wwha
-  **LinkedIn**
linkedin.com/company/wwha
-  **Instagram**
instagram.com/whousing

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication. We would advise residents to check up-to-date information on our website, wwha.co.uk, Government websites and other official and reputable sources.



Welcome to the Summer edition of In Touch.

The warmer weather and lighter days have come as a relief for many who have been struggling with energy costs.

Yet the high costs of everyday items in the supermarkets continues to put pressure on household budgets.

In this edition we focus on personal finances with the help of our Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) who share their advice for spotting 'leaks' in your budget. Their financial support, helping residents to manage their money, and maximise the support available, has been in demand in recent months.

We also look at other services available to help you save money.

Did you know that there's a place where you can go to borrow tools and other costly equipment if you don't have the money to buy them? Check out the nearest Benthgym Cymru Library to you.

Inside we highlight some of the ways that you can get involved in the work we do. The summary of our new resident involvement strategy includes the opportunities you can have to make a difference.

Plus, there's news of some special landmark celebrations in some of our residents' lives, along with the usual puzzles.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please get in touch.

Anne Hinchey
Group Chief Executive

Did you know you can get In Touch delivered to your inbox?

More readers are now choosing to have a digital copy of In Touch emailed to them.

If you would like to receive a digital copy instead of a print copy, please email your details to communications.team@wwha.co.uk and we will update your preferences for future copies.

Key dates

for cost-of-living support



The price of everyday items keeps going up. If you're wondering how to cover the rising costs, our Tenancy Support Officers share the latest information and news on key dates to look for and the support available to you.

Energy price drop

On Thursday May 25 the energy regulator Ofgem announced that the Price Cap will fall by 17 per cent from July 1.

For an average household it would drop from the current £3,280 to £2,074. However this is just an average and could be higher or lower depending on your own energy use.

Roughly this means that for every £100 you pay on energy, you'll likely pay £80 - £85 from July.

This is still nearly double what it was the year before the energy crisis hit in Autumn 2021.

Government Cost of Living Payments 2023 to 2024

If you are one of the eight million households on certain benefits and tax credits, you should have already received the first Cost of Living Payment for this year.

Key dates

The first Government Cost of Living Payments were paid as follows:

£301 paid between **25 April 2023 and 17 May 2023** for most people on DWP benefits

£301 paid between **2 and 9 May 2023** for most people on tax credits and no other low income benefits

£150 – Disability Cost of Living Payment – during **Summer 2023**

£300 – Second Cost of Living Payment – during **Autumn 2023** for most people

£150-£300 – Pensioner Cost of Living Payment – you will get an extra £150 or £300 paid with your normal payment from **November 2023**

£299 – Third Cost of Living Payment – during **Spring 2024** for most people

Who is entitled to payments

You may be entitled to up to three Cost of Living Payments of £301, £300 and £299 if you get certain benefits or tax credits.

If you're eligible you will be paid automatically, and you don't need to apply.

To check if you are eligible for payments, visit [gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment)

Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit payments

If you're getting both Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, you will receive a Cost of Living Payment for Child Tax Credit only, which will be paid by HMRC.

If you're getting tax credits from HMRC and a low income benefit from DWP, you cannot get a Cost of Living Payment from both HMRC and DWP. Usually you will be paid by DWP only.

You may still be eligible

You may still be eligible for a Cost of Living Payment if your benefit is reduced to £0 and one of the following applies:

- money was taken off your benefit for other reasons, such as payments of rent to your landlord or for money that you owe
- you had a hardship payment because you got a sanction and could not pay for rent, heating, food or hygiene needs

Disability Cost of Living Payment

You may be entitled to a Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 if you are claiming certain benefits such as Constant Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment on a certain date.

For eligibility visit:

[gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment)

Pensioner Cost of Living Payment

If you're entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for Winter 2023 to 2024, you will get an extra £150 or £300 paid with your normal payment from November 2023.

You will be sent a letter in October or November telling you how much Winter Fuel Payment you'll get if you're eligible. For more information visit:

[gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment)

Changes to Universal Credit

If you are claiming Tax Credits, the DWP has announced that it plans to start sending migration notices to Tax Credit claimants in Wales from this Winter.

You do not need to make a claim for Universal Credit yet.

Wait until you get your migration letter, then you will have three months to make a claim for Universal Credit. By waiting for your letter you may be

entitled to transitional protection in the changes so you won't be worse off straight away.

If you are concerned please speak with your Tenancy Support Officer who can help you with a benefits check.

Extra adults in your home could affect your benefits

Did you know that if you have a grown-up son or daughter or an elderly relative living with you, it could affect some of your housing support benefits?

Any adult (i.e. anyone over 18

and not in education) who is living with you but is not responsible for paying the rent is classed as a "non-dependant".

It could be an adult child who has moved back in after college or after a relationship break up or an older relative who is now living with you for support.

For example, if you are claiming Universal Credit and have a non-dependant in your home you could lose over £85 per month.

If you think you may be affected, visit www.entitledto.co.uk/help/non-dependants for more information. You can also speak with your local Tenancy Support Officer.

**Dŵr Cymru
Welsh Water**

Did you know?

If you have had or are due to get the next cost of living payment of £301 from the Government, you may also be entitled to savings of up to £200 on your annual water bill.

You could get up to £200 off your annual water bill

Don't miss out!

We're here to help

Call us to talk through your options:
0800 052 0145

Visit us online for more information:
[dwrcymru.com/supportwithbills](https://www.dwrcymru.com/supportwithbills)

Need help?

Here are some websites that provide support and information to help with the cost of living.

Money Helper

Impartial guidance that can help cut through the complexities of finances, benefits, and pensions. It's backed by the Government and gives free and clear money help from benefits to everyday budgeting. It has free tools to help with budgeting and claiming support and benefits. You can also chat live or phone on **0800 011 3797**.

www.moneyhelper.org.uk



Age Cymru

The national charity for older people in Wales has lots of useful information that may help you stay on top of your increasing costs. Areas covered include welfare benefits, social care, pensions, rights, local services, help at home and scams.

The Age Cymru Advice line is open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm for information and advice including benefits, health, money, housing or care.

Call **0300 303 44 98** (charged at local rate).

www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/



Turn2us

A national charity providing practical help to people who are struggling financially. It features a number of tools including a benefits calculator, which takes 10 minutes to complete and can tell you which benefits you could get.

There is also an online grants search to help you look for funds that offer grants or other types of help.

www.turn2us.org.uk



Help For Households

Check what support is available to help with the cost of living and save money with energy saving tips on the Government's support website.

Helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk




Always remember that if you are eligible for Cost-of-Living Payments from the Government you will be paid automatically in the same way you usually get your benefit or tax credits. This includes if you're found to be eligible at a later date.

If you have had a message asking you to apply or contact someone about a payment, **this might be a scam**.

Forward suspicious emails to **report@phishing.gov.uk** and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) will investigate.

Forward suspicious text messages to **7726** - it's free and will report the message to your mobile phone provider.

If you think you've lost money, or been hacked because of an online scam or fraud, report to Action Fraud online at **reporting.actionfraud.police.uk** or call **0300 123 2040**.

For more information visit: www.gov.uk/report-suspicious-emails-websites-phishing



Do you have leaks in your finances?

As the cost-of-living crisis squeezes our finances tighter, more people are looking for ways to save money.

When was the last time you checked your finances for leaks?

A “leak” is any unnecessary expense. It could be a subscription you don’t use, a habit of eating out, or

even just small impulse buys. They can all add up quickly and drain your cash. However, if you can spot these leaks, you can take steps to plug them and start saving.

Here, Tenancy Support Officer for Flintshire Lucy Beavan, shares her tips for finding and plugging those leaks.



Track your spending

The first step to identifying your leaks is to track your spending for a month or two. This can be done by writing everything down or with a budgeting app. This will give you a clear picture of where your money is going, so you can see where you can cut back. You should be honest with yourself and write down everything, including all food shopping, clothes, small treats, bills, debts and everything in between.

Look for unnecessary expenses

Once you have a record of your spending, look for any expenses that you don’t need or can’t afford. These are your spending leaks.

Cancel unused subscriptions

We’ve all been there and signed up for a free trial or taken out a subscription and forgotten about it. But if you’re not using them, they’re just a waste of money.

Take some time to review your subscriptions, and those your children or other relatives may have taken out in your name and cancel any that you don’t use or need.

Cut back on eating out

Eating out can be expensive, especially if you do it often. Include everything in your budget, even if you’re taking the children to McDonalds or buying

a sandwich on your way to work. If you’re looking to save money, try to cook more meals at home. A loaf of bread and a tub of sandwich filler costs about the same as one shop-bought sandwich and should make enough to last all week.

Avoid impulse purchases

It’s easy to impulse buy when you’re out shopping or browsing online. Before you make a purchase, ask yourself if you really need it. If you don’t, put it back. Just think, a new top on Vinted pre-loved sale site may only cost £1 but with postage it all adds up.

Pay off debts

If you have debts, it's important to plan to pay them off as quickly as possible. The interest you pay on debt can add up quickly.

If you have lots of debts look at those that are a priority and could cause serious problems if you ignore them, such as rent, council tax and outstanding energy bills.

Citizens Advice has information on priority debts [citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/debt-and-money/help-with-debt](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/debt-and-money/help-with-debt)

If you are struggling with debts contact your local Tenancy Support Officer, who can help you to negotiate with the companies that you owe money to.

Set financial goals

Having financial goals will give you something to work towards. When you know what you're saving for, it's easier to resist temptation and stay on track.

Challenge yourself

See if you could reduce your spending by a minimum amount each week then increase as you get better at budgeting e.g. £3 the first week, then £4 etc (to suit your budget). Increase the amount slowly as you recognise where your budget leaks are happening.

Automate your savings

If you can afford it, set up a system so that a certain amount of money is automatically transferred to your savings account each month.

Review your budget regularly

Your financial situation is constantly changing, so it's important to review your budget regularly. This will help you make sure that it's still working and that you're not overspending.

CASE STUDY

Resident was paying more than £5 a week in bank fees

One South Wales resident on a low income was carefully trying to manage her finances and had set up an account to pay all her bills by Direct Debit.

She made sure that she paid in enough money every week to cover the Direct Debit payments for her rent, water, gas and electricity.

She contacted her Tenancy Support Officer when her rent Direct Debits kept failing and she couldn't understand why as there was enough money in her account.

They sat down with a copy

of her bank statement and from that it was clear to see the leak in her finances. Her local shop was charging £1.50 every time she paid money into her account or a payment was taken out. Some weeks it was mounting up to almost £10 and pushing her in the red despite her careful budgeting.

Once she was made aware of the transaction charges, she cut back on the number of times she was paying money into her account and made sure there was a little extra to cover any charges.



Our team of Tenancy Support Officers regularly help residents to keep on top of their budgets and deal with debts. If you are struggling and would like to speak to one of the team, call 0800 052 2526.

BRIDGEND

Toast and bananas every day are the secret to Lena Charles' long life

Wales & West Housing's oldest resident Lena Charles celebrated her 105th birthday in March, surrounded by four generations of her family.

Lena was born in Blaengarw during World War 1 on March 23 1918, one of 12 children in a Welsh-speaking family. She is believed to be the oldest person living in the Bridgend County Borough Council area.

On March 23 2023 she celebrated her 105th birthday with a party at our Dan Y Mynydd retirement scheme where she has lived for more than 30 years, in her home village of Blaengarw.

She was joined by her daughters Gwennan and twins Gill and Janet, son Kevin, granddaughter Helen, great granddaughter Alice and great great grandchildren Eira and Osian. Mayor of Bridgend Councillor Martyn Jones and Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, Councillor Huw David also attended and joined the guests in singing Happy Birthday as

well as her favourite hymn Calon Lan.

Among the gifts and cards she received was one of the first birthday cards from King Charles and the then Queen Consort, Camilla, which she added to her previous cards from the late Queen Elizabeth.

A lifelong member of Tabernacle Church in Pontycymer, Mrs Charles regularly attended services until recently. She was involved in organising tea dances and conducted Sunday services until she was in her 90s. The church held a party for her 100th birthday, which was attended by BBC newsreader Huw Edwards.

In 2015, at the age of 96, Mrs Charles was awarded a Brith Empire Medal for services to the community, having been a member of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service for over 40 years.

She recalled: "I used to deliver meals on wheels around the valley. Sometimes the gentlemen



would ask 'what's for dinner today?' and I used to joke "bees' knees and chicken's elbows."

Speaking about her BEM she said at the time: "If I can help someone as I pass along then my living shall not be in vain."

Nowadays Mrs Charles stays sharp by doing word searches and listening to music. She says the secret to her long life is "two rounds of toast and a banana for breakfast every morning."

PEMBROKESHIRE

Celebrating 70 years of marriage

There was a landmark celebration at Llain Las retirement scheme in Fishguard, when residents Richard and Olive Carter celebrated 70 years of marriage.

The couple, who recently celebrated their 95th birthdays, first met at a dance in the Sergeant's Mess at RAF Abington, Oxfordshire in 1952 when Mr Carter was a Chief Petty Officer and Mrs Carter worked at Nuffield

Exports, part of Morris Motors.

They were married at St John The Baptist Church, Burford, Oxfordshire on April 4th 1953.

The couple, who have a son living in New Zealand and two grandchildren in Australia, moved to Llain Las almost 10 years ago after retiring to Milford Haven.

They celebrated their anniversary with friends at a party in the common room at Llain Las.



CARDIFF/CARMARTHENSHIRE

Easter fun for young residents

Community Development Officers (CDOs) teamed up with local organisations and PCSOs to hold Easter fun days across some of our communities.

At Applewood Close, Splott, Cardiff, young people collected litter which they traded in for an Easter egg, at an event which was held with Keep Wales Tidy and Cardiff Council. Children at Ffordd Williamson, Cardiff, also joined a fun day.

At Clos Tawelan, Carmarthen, our local CDO Rhiannon took a box of outdoor toys and equipment for a pop-up play session for the young residents of the close.



Applewood Close, Cardiff

WREXHAM/FLINTSHIRE

King's Coronation event, Hightown

Hightown Community Resource Centre hosted a royal-themed craft event ahead of the King's Coronation in May – complete with crown making and a pin the diamond on the crown competition.



Also, at Mancot Way in Deeside, Flintshire, Caroline Wilkinson organised a street party for residents.

“It was such an historic event that I thought I would organise something for the estate. It was also important to me to give my grandchildren something to remember. The party was fantastic – we had around 50 people in total across the day.

“We set up a gazebo and provided food. We also had Union Jack flags running from house to house along the street. There was something for everyone really – we had Coronation bingo and a bouncy castle for the kids.”

DENBIGHSHIRE

Residents raise more than £2,000 for charity

Throughout 2022, fundraisers at Nant y Môr extra care scheme raised more than £2,000 for charities close to their heart thanks to the support of fellow residents, friends and family.

The Alzheimer's Society, Children in Need, Blood Bikes Wales, Guide Dogs and a local women's refuge and foodbank were among those who received a share of the money.

Alf and Mary Naylor held table top sales and raised money for Wales Air Ambulance and British Heart Foundation.

Alf said: “Fundraising is in my blood and everyone at Nant y

Môr is very supportive of what we do. All charities rely on funding to carry out the amazing work they do and we get a lot of satisfaction from the small part we play in helping them.”

Jean Carratero raises money for St Kentigern's Hospice in St Asaph, by making handmade cards.

Fellow resident Lily Whitley collected donations for charity



at afternoon teas, while Tracey Griffiths gave a talk about Guide Dogs accompanied by Lara, her labrador retriever, with proceeds going towards supporting the life-changing work of the Guide Dogs charity.

Resident involvement

in Wales & West Housing



*Heather Cristan
RPSG Member*

What is resident involvement?

Doing the right thing and understanding what matters when designing and delivering services is at the heart of what we do. Resident involvement means hearing every resident. Every resident has influence, irrespective of circumstance or characteristic. It's about strengthening links between staff and residents for continuous improvement.

Involvement doesn't have to be formal or complicated. We do it every day talking to each other. You tell us what you like, don't like, and what you think we should do. The key for us is to listen and use what we hear to review our services.

Feedback about involvement

As part of our 2022 Resident Satisfaction Survey, we asked about involvement. We wanted to understand what you might want to be involved with, and how.

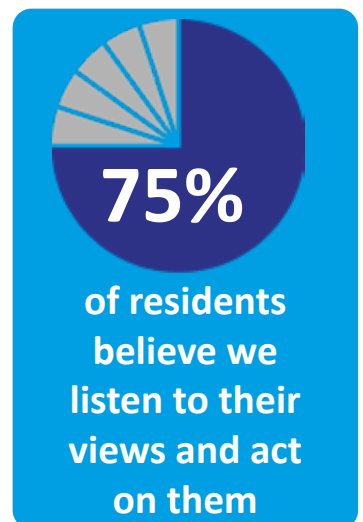
Residents told us they wanted to represent themselves and be directly involved in matters that affected them. The preference was to do this by talking to their Housing Officer or Asset Management Officer.

What do we want it to do?

The purpose of resident involvement is to develop the best possible services.

Meaningful involvement means greater impact. It leads to better decision making. It builds greater trust.

Involvement needs to be flexible, with lots of opportunities on offer. We want you to be able to see the impact involvement has and know how feedback has shaped the design and delivery of our services.



Ways to get involved

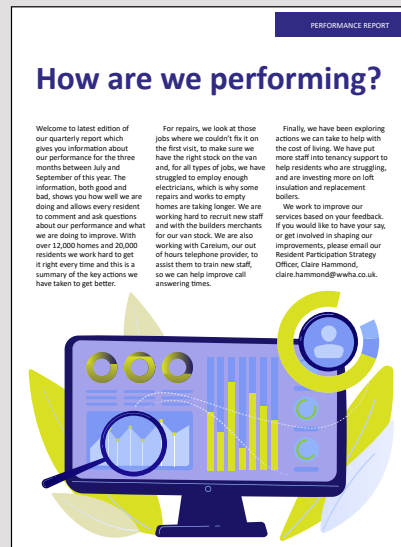
- > By talking to your Housing Officer, Community Development Officer, or another member of staff, and talking about what matters to you, you are already involved in shaping the services which you receive.



*Herman Valentin
Community Development Officer*

There are also many other ways to get involved.

- > We want feedback about the big decisions. Every six months we will publish information on our website and in this In Touch magazine about what we are prioritising for action.
- > We will email or write to residents who tell us they want more involvement in our business operations.
- > We will listen to you and arrange one-to-one discussions to understand what matters and what may help resolve problems.
- > We will listen to your community and arrange meetings, where necessary, for groups of residents to share their views and debate solutions.
- > We will prepare action plans for residents, us, and other stakeholders where appropriate, agreeing local service delivery arrangements.
- > We will make policies, reports and evaluation information available on our website and on request.



Resident Participation Steering Group

- > Our Resident Participation Steering Group (RPSG) is a group of up to 18 residents, from across Wales who help guide the way we involve residents. They help us with how to engage with as many as possible.

They are supported by our Resident Participation Strategy Officer. Members are given group and one-to-one support and training, including developing their digital skills, to help them play an active part in meetings.

If you are interested in finding out more, or joining RPSG, please contact **Claire Hammond, Resident Participation Strategy Officer**, claire.hammond@wwha.co.uk
07766 832 692

To read our **Resident Involvement Strategy** in full visit wwha.co.uk



“

Residents need a voice and our group gives that voice!

It's important to have new members, who bring new ideas and views to the group.

Our input has made a difference.

*Sian Hope
RPSG member*

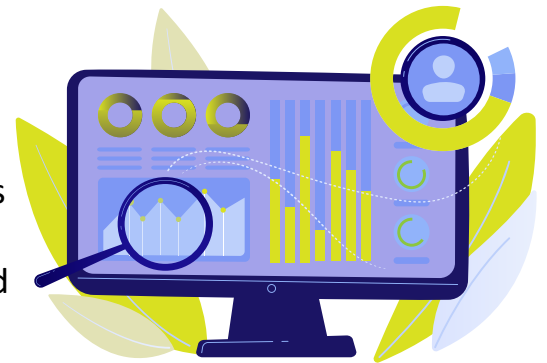
How are we performing?

Here is our latest performance report covering the three months between January and March 2023.

It's designed to show you, our residents, how we're doing and question us. It's also a chance for

you to see the areas where we are looking to make improvements and have a say in how we do that.

We use the data from this report to shape the way we work and the areas we need to focus on.



Lettings



Many local authorities are facing increasing levels of homelessness and we are working with councils across Wales to help those in need of a home.

Around 4 out of 10 homes were allocated to homeless families and individuals.

Your feedback



You liked:

- Allowance to decorate
- Property suits your needs
- The support received from us

We let

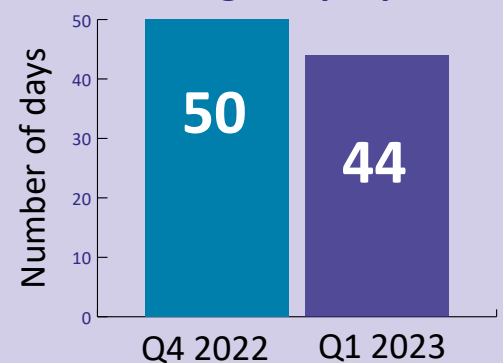
204

homes during Jan - Mar 2023,
184 were relets and
20 were newly-built homes



The satisfaction rate - that's the score that you give us for our service when finding a home - increased this quarter to 8.8 out of 10.

Re-letting our properties



Our work to improve the time it takes to relet empty properties has continued to improve. At **44 days** this is the lowest since 2019.

48% were let right first time, that means the property was accepted by the first applicant on the waiting list.



What you want to see improve:

- Outstanding repairs
- Cleanliness



Repairs and maintenance

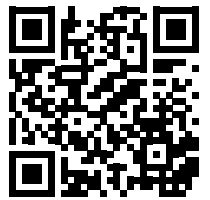
Between January and March this year we completed

9,603
repairs

That's 303 more than the same time last year

Our Repairs Team had a busy start to the year. Between January and March they received **20,519** calls, slightly less than the previous three months. More than 4 out of 10 calls during this time were heating related.

During this time we also focused on investigating damp and mould issues in our homes.

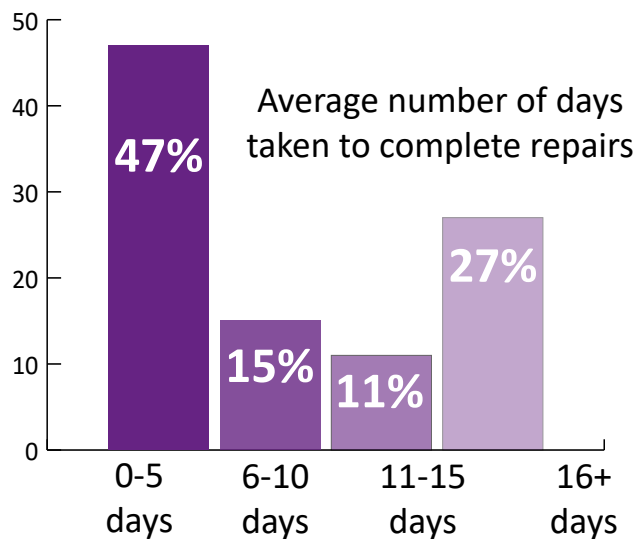


Scan here to visit the repairs section on our website.

You said you wanted us to fix your repairs on our first visit.



The percentage we fixed first time fell slightly to 69 per cent.



Electrical repairs
10 days average

Heating repairs
8 days average



The satisfaction rating for our repairs service increased this quarter to 9.6 out of 10



100%

Between Jan - Mar
100%
of arranged appointments were kept

Keeping you safe

In your homes between January and March we carried out:

9,682 gas services/safety checks
11,196 electrical tests

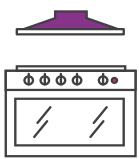


In communal areas of our schemes, we carried out:

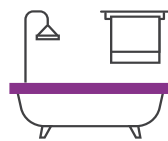
300 fire risk assessments
164 asbestos inspections
75 water checks



Between January and March this year we installed



90
kitchens



44
bathrooms



95
boilers



windows in
44 homes



34 front doors

36 back doors



During the first three months of 2023 we fitted **42 homes** with new cleaner energy technologies such as PV (solar) panels and battery storage or external wall insulation (EWI) and new windows to make them more energy efficient. In the coming months we will be carrying out retrofitting work on a further **172 homes**, including fitting Air Source Heat Pumps on some homes in West Wales.

Your feedback



You liked:

- Easy to report
- Appointments kept
- The behaviour of our operatives



What you want to see improve:

- No further work being required on the repair
- Quality of workmanship
- Repair staying fixed

Rents

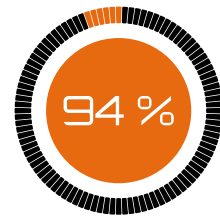
More residents have been turning to our Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) for financial support as the cost-of-living crisis hit many people during the winter months.

Many households have been struggling with rising energy, food and household costs. The extra TSOs we recruited last year have been helping to meet the increased demand.

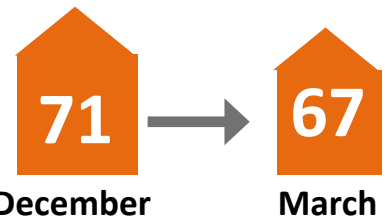
Between January and March, they supported nearly 1,100 residents to assist with rent arrears, benefit changes and debts.

They issued 190 fuel bank vouchers to residents in fuel poverty with pre-payment meters, an increase on the 145 issued in the previous quarter.

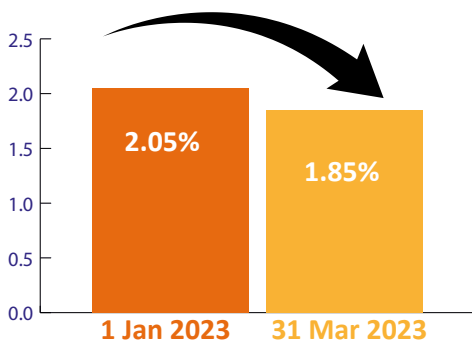
They also helped residents across Wales secure a total of £66,000 in Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP).



of residents are paying their rent as arranged with Housing Officers, that's the highest level since we began recording this information three years ago



67 residents were in high level arrears at the end of March, a slight decrease on 71 at the start of the year



RENT ARREARS

There were 0 evictions for rent arrears between January and March



By the end of March 6488 people were paying by Direct Debit which is the simplest way to pay your rent.

Anti-social behaviour

We are carrying out a review of our anti-social behaviour system to better understand what residents need. The review will take place during the summer when the numbers of reports of ASB, such as noise and neighbour disputes, are usually higher. We will be listening to what residents are asking of us when they report an issue where they live.

Following the review, we plan to redesign our service to meet residents' needs.



There has been a decline in the number of lower level ASB cases to 104 compared with the same period in previous years.

We are currently dealing with 61 new cases of serious anti-social behaviour reported to us in the first three months of the year.

This was an increase on the previous quarter of 49 cases but is lower than the same time in previous years.

The three most commonly reported issues are:

- Neighbour dispute
- Domestic abuse
- Noise

How we run our business

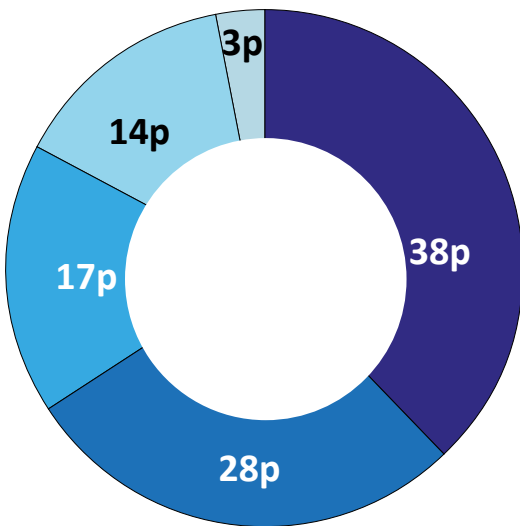


During 2022, we spent

£3,433

per property on running costs, which covers such expenditure as repairs and maintenance to our properties, staffing costs and other overheads, but not including major repairs.

Here is how we spent every £1 of your rent in 2022

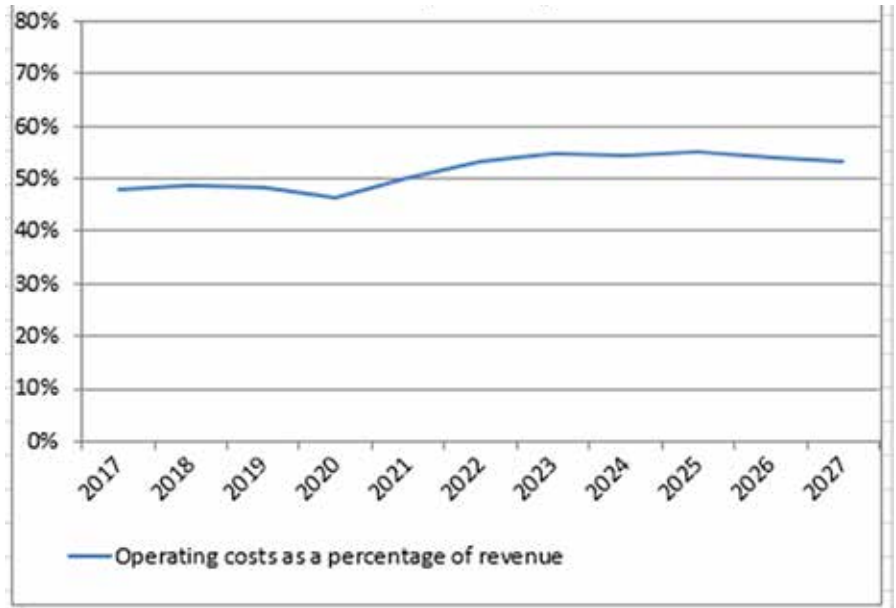


- Maintaining and upgrading our homes
- People
- Interest on loans
- Overheads
- New homes

Looking after our homes

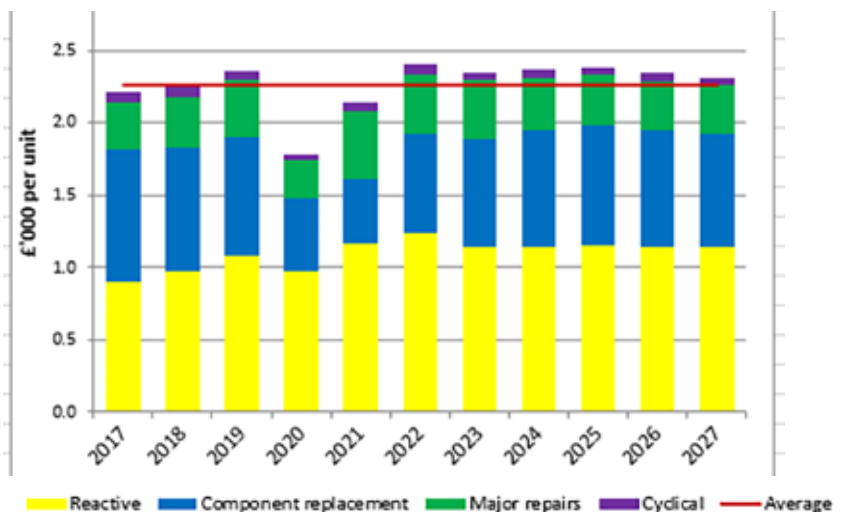
Our efficiency

By focusing on efficiency, we have maintained our operating costs at about 50% for many years, even though costs have been higher than inflation.



How we reinvest in our homes

This is how we reinvest in maintaining our homes. New kitchens, bathrooms, replacement windows and front doors, roofs and boilers make up the components while cyclical work includes decoration of communal areas and exterior works such as fences, gates and railings.



How we run our business

Between January and March we received

342 calls
per day about repairs and heating and

180 calls
per day about housing support



The busiest time to call our Repairs Team this quarter was 9am – 10am. The busiest time for our Housing Support Team was 11am - 12pm. After 12 it is generally a quieter time to call our teams.



The average waiting time for residents calling our:

- Repairs Team was **21 seconds**
- Gas Servicing Team was **20 seconds**
- Housing Support Team was **39 seconds**

Our Housing Support Team received **10,818 calls** between January and March this year.

Complaints

In total we received:

14
complaints

That's one less than the previous quarter and almost half compared with 27 the same time last year.

What next?

A new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is being developed with the input from the Board, and all members of staff through a survey and focus groups.

Much like we the way we have reported the Resident Involvement Strategy to you in this issue, once the full strategy has been developed we will feedback to you in In Touch. Ensuring the way we work is fair

for staff and residents alike is of the utmost importance.

We are also welcoming a number of new Directors to the organisation to help drive the adoption of our new strategies, corporate projects and business objectives, such as resident involvement, EDI and Asset management (which we told you about in Spring). The changes are designed to make our services

even better as we progress quickly with our projects and plans.

As outlined in the Resident Involvement strategy (pages 11-14) if you want to know more about our business objectives or the way we do things please get in touch at contactus@wwha.co.uk

Why buy when you can borrow?

Looking to do a spot of gardening or DIY this summer? It would be so much easier if you had the right tools for the job.

However, the cost of power tools and gadgets can be expensive.

Benthyg Cymru is an organisation that is making it easier and more affordable to borrow.

Benthyg (ben-thig) means to borrow or lend in Welsh and the not-for-profit organisation supports a network of communities, helping them to develop a Library of Things, that people can borrow for a small fee.

Why borrow?

Put simply, we have too much stuff, so Benthyg Cymru believe in sharing it out. Not everyone needs a drill, not everyone has space to store stuff and not everyone can afford to buy the things they need. Benthyg Cymru want to keep stuff in use for as long as possible. By borrowing they are helping people to live more sustainably. Less stuff means less impact on the planet.

They have a network of libraries in North, South, West and Mid Wales and have loaned out more

than 3,500 items.

The top three most popular items are pressure washers, carpet cleaners and gazebos and borrowing these has saved people more than £100,000.

You can also donate useful

items to your local Library of Things or volunteer your time to help run the local library.

For more information visit www.benthyg-cymru.org



Local Libraries

North

- Bws Benthyg, Smithfield Road, Denbigh
- Bws Benthyg, Daniel Owen Square, Mold CH7 1AP

South

- Splott Benthyg Y Sblot, Railway Gardens, Adeline St, Cardiff, CF24 2BH splott.benthyg.cymru
- Barry Benthyg, 74 Holton Rd, Barry, CF63 4HE
- ACE Benthyg, 460 Cowbridge Rd West, Ely, Cardiff, CF5 5BZ

- Benthyg Penarth, The Kymin, Beach Rd, Penarth, CF64 1JX

Mid & West Wales

- Benthyg Llandrindod, Temple Chambers, South Crescent Powys, LD1 5DH
- Pembrokeshire Circle, Norman Industries, Snowdrop Lane, Haverfordwest, SA61 1JB

Staying safe from

Legionnaires' disease



Legionnaires' disease usually hits the headlines when there are serious outbreaks, however, there are about 30 reported cases each year in Wales. The bacteria that cause the disease are present at safe levels in many places. Whilst the risk to you in your home is very low, this information explains what we can all do to keep safe.

What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a lung infection caused by Legionella bacteria. If you breathe in tiny droplets of spray from water with high levels of the bacteria, it can get into your lungs and cause an infection with flu-like symptoms. The early symptoms include muscle aches, tiredness, headaches, a dry cough and fever.

Although anyone could become infected, the disease is more likely to affect people over the age of 45, smokers, heavy drinkers, those suffering kidney disease or who have breathing issues, and those who are suffering from long term illnesses or recovering from illness.

Not everyone exposed to the bacteria becomes ill, it cannot be passed from person to person, and you cannot get it by drinking contaminated water.

The bacteria can be found in small numbers in water systems like the ones in most homes. It only becomes an issue when the bacteria are given the time and the right conditions to multiply to dangerous levels, such as when the water is not used for a long period of time.

What are we doing to keep you safe?

In our homes where there are communal water systems, we manage water safety by ensuring the hot water is hot, and the cold water is cold. It really is as simple as that! We monitor temperatures on a regular basis and make sure we have as little stored water as possible across our schemes. In addition, we flush communal showers, toilets, and wash hand basins if they are not used very often.

Steps to stay safe at home

Most people will use enough water in a day to flush through their system fully and so there is very little chance for the bacteria numbers to multiply to levels that would cause harm.

These steps can help to keep you safe at home:

Use your kitchen taps to test the hot and cold water

If after a couple of minutes your hot water doesn't feel as hot as normal, or your cold water doesn't feel cold, please report this to us.

If you go away from your home for more than a week

We recommend running the water on your return. You can do this by running the shower for a couple of minutes before you get in it, flushing your toilet a couple of times (with the toilet seat closed), and also running the sink taps. The same applies for taps and showers that you only use occasionally. Make sure you run water through them for at least two minutes every week.



**Call us immediately on
0800 052 2526 if:**

- Your cold water stays warm (more than 20°C) after you have run it for a few minutes
- There is any grit, dirt or sludge in the water or it is discoloured
- The boiler or hot water tank are not working properly, particularly if the hot water is not at least 50°C after it has run for a minute.

Clean, descale and disinfect your shower head

Do this about every 3-6 months or sooner if there is any build-up of limescale, mould, or algae growth visible.

If you use a hosepipe or paddling pool in your garden

We recommend you drain it when you have finished using it, and leave the hose disconnected so no water is left to stagnate.

If you have a water butt in your garden

You should use the water with a watering can rather than a hose to minimise the risks of creating spray.

If you have a spa or hot tub

Make sure it is kept clean and free from dirt and debris.

Do not interfere with the settings on your boiler or hot water system

The stored hot water should be 60°C because high temperatures are the best way to control growth of the bacteria. This can increase the risk of burns and scalding though so please take care, especially if you have children.

Please be reassured that the risk of contracting Legionnaires' disease from the water system in your own property is extremely low. Your safety is our priority and this information will help you and your family to live safely in your home.

If you have any questions about water safety, please call

0800 052 2526

*Carly Hodson
Career Development Manager*



Help Out this summer

It's the summer of lending a hand as people and communities across the country roll up their sleeves and join in The Big Help Out.

The aim of The Big Help Out is to raise awareness of volunteering throughout the UK and provide opportunities for people to experience volunteering and make a difference in their communities.

The campaign started on Monday May 8 after the King's Coronation, when 6 million people joined in giving their time to support local organisations.

Many of the UK's best-known charities are already signed up and you can join too as The Big Help Out is open to any individual or organisation.

Whatever cause is close to your heart, you can get involved. That could be helping at your local animal shelter, painting walls in your community centre, helping

with a local youth sports club or giving a hand to your local foodbank.

If you're interested but are not sure if you want to commit long-term, this can be a great way to test out whether volunteering is for you.

Register your details on the Big Help Out web page thebighelpout.org.uk so you can find out about opportunities near you that match your interests. The website is live, so if you don't find an opportunity which sparks your interest straight away don't worry, you'll be notified of new opportunities as they arise.

There's also an app you can download to link to organisations looking for help.



There are many reasons to volunteer. According to research by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 73% of volunteers say getting involved gives them more confidence.

Other benefits are a chance to:

- make a positive difference
- improve self-esteem and wellbeing
- gain valuable work experience
- receive high quality training and develop new skills in some volunteering roles
- use your own skills and knowledge to help the local community

Volunteering Wales

Volunteering Wales is a digital platform that hosts hundreds of volunteering opportunities across Wales in one place, making it easy to find something that interests you. Run by Third Sector Support Wales, the website works like a recruitment site for volunteers. Voluntary organisations post their volunteering vacancies on the site, and registered users can browse the advertisements until they find something suitable. It's open to anyone looking to volunteer – all you have to do is register for free to see what's available.

volunteering-wales.net

- meet new people
- feel valued and part of a team

Watch this video to learn more about the Big Help Out:



<https://vimeo.com/809035349>

If you would like to volunteer in your community and are claiming Government financial assistance please check with the Department that pays your benefits before signing up to any volunteering.

Staff volunteer in the community



During Volunteers Week in June (June 1-7) a group of Wales & West Housing staff rolled up their sleeves and got stuck in painting at a community project at Ysgol Gynradd Brynconin, Llandissilio.

Together with workers from partner contractors Jones Brothers (Henllan) Ltd, they volunteered their time to give parts of the school a half-term makeover.

The local authority provided the paint, our maintenance company Cambria Maintenance Services provided the equipment, and our Organisational Development Team and staff from Jones

Brothers (Henllan) Ltd provided the labour.

It was part of our community work in the area where we have contracted Jones Brothers (Henllan) Ltd to build 20 new homes on the site of the former Pencnwc East Farm in Llandissilio.



Making a Difference

Every year many inspiring people and projects in our communities are given help thanks to our Making a Difference fund.

Last year the fund, which is largely made up of contributions from our supply and contract partners, supported 31

community initiatives and 58 resident activities.

These ranged from supporting food pantries and community events for all ages, to sponsoring sports clubs for young people across Wales. We part funded Christmas hampers and events

from Wrexham to Bridgend and helped local organisations to provide play equipment for younger residents to enjoy.

Here are just a few of the many projects we supported in 2022:

Dinas Cross Memorial Playing Fields, Pembrokeshire



By providing funding from our Making A Difference Fund, the playing field association at Dinas Cross was able to upgrade play equipment and install a zip wire as part of a wider project providing hours of fun activities for older children in the area.

Families moving into the 17 new family homes we built in the area will be able to enjoy the facilities for many years.



Without the funding from WWH we would not have been able to buy the zip wire. It was a key piece of equipment for our play area and, when we consulted with our community, it was the most popular too. The older children in the village have really enjoyed it and use it extensively.

Feedback from the community has been very positive and when passing the playing fields, you can see how much more the area is being used.

Elin Jones, Dinas Cross playing fields

Shotton Town United FC



A youth football team, founded on the ethos of equal opportunities for all, waived the cost of kit for parents for the current season after receiving our sponsorship.

Brian Valentine, founder of Shotton Town United, said the

donation from our Making a Difference fund to cover the cost of kit for players and coaches had 'taken a huge weight off everyone's minds' during the cost-of-living crisis."

It has been running for eight years



The donation from Wales & West Housing to cover the cost of kit for players and coaches has taken a huge weight off everyone's minds during the cost-of-living crisis.

Flintshire is one of the most deprived areas in Wales, so we know there's a lot of hardship. We decided this year, because of the generosity of the company, we wouldn't charge anyone for kit. All the children have had a free kit, which has taken a lot of expense off parents, and the funding has also supported coach training.

Brian Valentine, founder of Shotton Town United

after Brian and a few other parents founded the club on the basis of 'every child should play,' enabling young people to gain training and match experience whatever their background or ability.

AFC Rumney Juniors



AFC Rumney Juniors in Cardiff were able to kit out three teams and buy new goals using our sponsorship.



Thank you again for your help. Our club is continuing to expand with more girls and mixed teams being added. The sponsorship from Wales & West Housing has had an immense impact. Our kit promotes uniformity and the equipment allows us to get more children involved with the beautiful game. We would like to thank Wales & West Housing for their willingness to invest in our club and hope this is the start of a long-term relationship.

AFC Rumney Juniors

Other environmental initiatives and groups we supported with the help of our contractors were:

- Finch Court, Llandrindod Wells
- Limebourne Court, Cardiff



- Penhill gardening group, Cardiff
- Tŷ Gwaunfarren gardeners, Merthyr Tydfil
- Maes Y Môr, Aberystwyth
- Cardiff Rivers Group
- Maenclochog Community Council Open Spaces community group in Pembrokeshire
- Lôn Cwm Green Voluntary Group, Llandrindod Wells

Carmarthenshire



“Our new home has given Logan his independence back”

Teenager Logan Dagnall is enjoying being more independent since his family moved to their specially adapted bungalow in Carmarthen.

Logan, 15, was born with cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. His family had been waiting more than five years for a suitable home to meet Logan’s needs.

Last November (2022) Logan, together with his mum, dad and older sister, moved from their privately rented house into their new home at Clos Tawelan, Carmarthen.

The bungalow has a fully accessible ground-floor wet room, wide doorways so that Logan can easily manoeuvre his wheelchair around and an electric front door with ramps to give him easy access into and out of his home.

In the kitchen we fitted a hob that can be raised or lowered allowing Logan to cook when he wants and hoists in the bedroom

and bathroom help Logan to get in and out of his wheelchair.

Logan’s mum Donna said: “In our old house there were steps leading up and down to the garden, which wasn’t too bad when Logan was younger as I could lift him up and down. But there’s no way I can lift a 15-year-old.

“We had a stairlift in the old house too, but there was hardly any space for Logan to get about in his chair.

“This new house is adapted for Logan and our family’s needs. It has given him his independence back. He can cook when he likes and go in and out as he wants.”

Clos Tawelan is a development of 18 houses and apartments, built on

the site of the former council-run Tawelan care home. It was built in partnership with Welsh Government, Carmarthenshire Council and TRJ Building Solutions.



Pembrokeshire



“It’s going to be good to have somewhere to call home. It’s hard to find stability when you are renting privately.”

Local port worker Iwan Jones and his partner Emma are one of the first families to move into our new affordable housing development in the popular Pembrokeshire tourist village home of Dinas Cross.

Built on the site of a former barn Parc Brynach is a development of 11 houses, four apartments and two bungalows which is providing modern homes for affordable rent for local people.

For Iwan, Emma and their 13-month-old son the move to Parc Brynach will be their fifth in four years – and they hope it will be their last for some time.

“It’s so stressful having to move all the time. It’s hard to find stability when you are renting privately,” said Iwan, who was paying £650 a month on rent.

“We’ve had to move around because our landlords have been selling their properties. It’s never easy to find a new place to rent as there is so much competition. It’s expensive to rent privately in

the area.

“We’re not at a point in our lives where we can afford to buy our own home.”

The couple moved to Dinas Cross from Fishguard where Iwan works at the Stena Ferry terminal and Emma works at a building society.

“We’d been on the council waiting list for nearly three years, so when we had the chance of a home at Dinas Cross we were so excited.

“It’s going to be good to have somewhere to call home with a proper garden. We’ve never had a garden before.”

Pensioner Susan Stickler is also hoping her move to Parc Brynach will be a fresh start for her. Her disabled husband passed away last year, so Susan gave up their specially adapted Wales & West Housing home in neighbouring Newport to make the move.

“Our old home was adapted for my husband who had lost his legs. It was lovely, but it felt right to move so that someone else who was in need could have the benefit of the house.”



“The old house had so many memories, so I hope that moving to Dinas Cross will give me a fresh start and the chance to make new memories.”



Scan this QR code to read more about the residents at Parc Brynach

The art of making new friends

Making new friends can be difficult and many people may feel lonely at some point in their lives.

Maybe you've had a bereavement or a relationship break up, perhaps you've moved to a new area, new job or new school and lost contact with old friends.

Whilst loneliness isn't a mental health problem, according to mental health charity Mind, the two are strongly linked. Having a mental health problem can also increase your chance of feeling lonely.

One of the ways you can manage loneliness is to make new connections. Joining a class or group based on your hobbies or interests, whether in person or online, is a good way to make new connections.

Volunteering is another route to meeting new people with the added effect that helping others can make you feel better mentally too.

Residents Barbara Edwards and Liz Metcalfe found their shared love of art, which started online, has helped them to make new friends.

They founded the Blitz Art Group, which meets every Monday at Sylvester Court in Wrexham, which is helping to reduce loneliness and isolation and teach people new skills.

Barbara and Liz met at an online art class during the Covid pandemic after Barbara took up art for the first time following

a serious illness which left her fighting for her life.

When Liz lost her husband last year, they decided to focus their passion for art on creating a new weekly group which would provide an opportunity for people to get together.

Blitz Art was formed and has grown to include a dozen regular attendees.

Liz said: "I love teaching and being involved in the group has helped me terrifically since losing my husband. I look forward to the class every week and I enjoy spending time at home preparing for each lesson. It's a great pleasure when you can see that the students are enjoying themselves."

The group received help from Wales & West Housing, who provided funding for art materials.

Activities range from watercolours and zen tangles to jewellery making. But alongside the learning, it's being connected with other people, which is most

important, says Barbara.

"There are set lessons each week but it's more about getting out and meeting people and having a go," she said. "I'm happy that people are getting together, they are absolutely loving it."

Resident Eirwen Price said: "I joined because it was something different and I wanted to meet new people. I didn't think I'd be able to do it, but I love it. There is camaraderie and we have such a laugh."

The group also provides an important social connection for Sian Hope.

"I've crafted for years so when Liz mentioned she was starting the group I jumped at the chance to take part," she said. "It's great fun learning new things all the time. I've met new people and old friends."

For more information on how to deal with feelings of loneliness visit [mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/useful-contacts/](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/useful-contacts/)



“

It's about getting out and meeting people and having a go, I'm happy that people are getting together, they are absolutely loving it.

Barbara Edwards

”



Useful contacts

Tenant Support and Wellbeing Service, information and tips for coping with loneliness for Wales & West Housing residents, www.tsws-assist.co.uk

Reengage, social activities for people over 75 who have little or no social support, reengage.org.uk

Age Cymru (Wales), information and support for older people, **0300 303 4498** ageuk.org.uk/cymru

Befriending Networks, information on befriending, including an online directory of UK befriending services, befriending.co.uk

Volunteering Wales, information about volunteering opportunities in Wales, www.volunteering-wales.net

The Silver Line provides free support, information, friendship and advice for anyone aged over 55 who may feel lonely or isolated, **0800 470 8090** thesilverline.org.uk

PUZZLES

In this edition our puzzles are just for fun so please **do not** post your completed puzzles to us this time.

Wordsearch

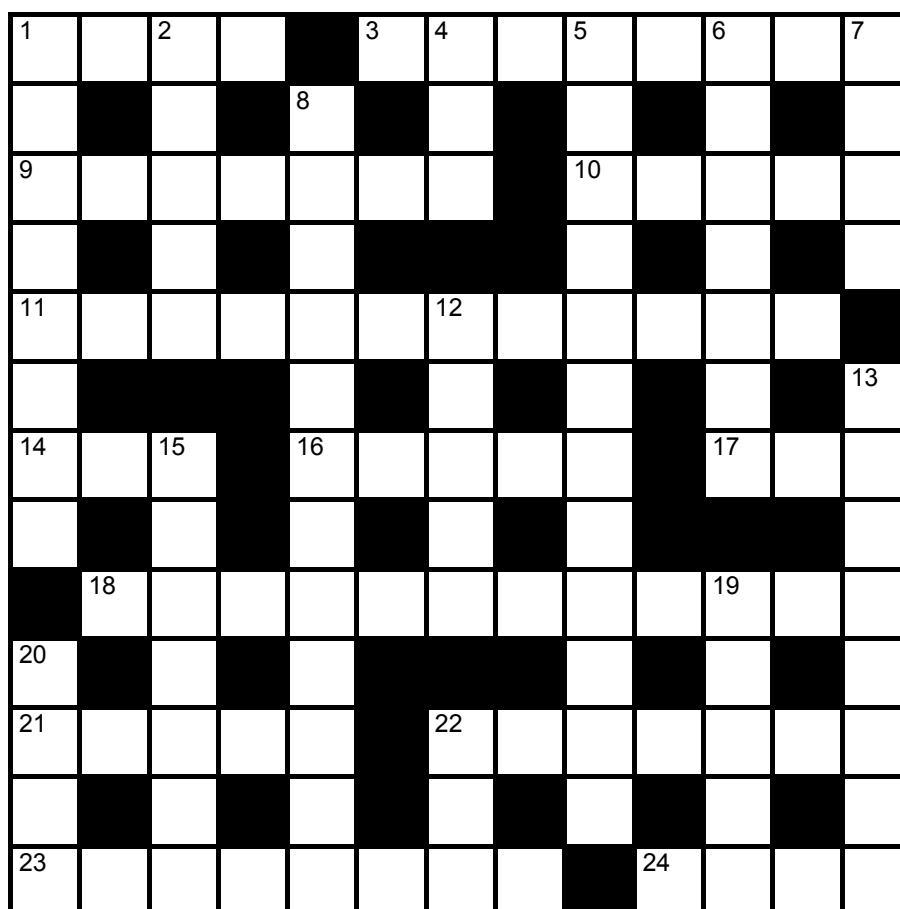
B	H	G	O	T	I	N	I	Y	T	C	M	I	Q	Q
E	X	I	C	H	I	R	E	O	H	A	L	I	O	N
X	L	P	L	U	Z	M	S	S	M	T	C	G	R	H
T	B	E	G	J	O	W	R	O	M	Q	H	E	V	B
N	D	N	P	N	D	W	O	Q	T	X	E	O	V	W
Y	E	T	K	H	Y	V	H	S	S	D	B	J	C	S
P	F	E	R	T	A	N	I	H	P	L	O	D	H	V
N	Y	W	A	Y	U	N	D	F	M	M	O	E	A	F
V	F	K	B	T	I	R	T	R	L	B	E	I	M	Z
K	J	T	B	O	F	H	T	M	I	P	G	O	S	F
P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

- CAMEL
- CAT
- HORSE
- DEER
- DOG
- TURTLE
- RABBIT
- SHEEP
- DOLPHIN
- DUCK
- PIG
- PENGUIN
- LION
- ELEPHANT
- HAMSTER
- MONKEY
- SNAKE
- BIRD

Sudoku

	4	1		7		2		8
			5	9	4			
6	3					7		
7			3			6	8	5
	2		4		5		3	
9	5	3			7			1
		2					6	3
			2	4	8			
1		7		3		5	4	

Crossword



Across

- 1 Rear-facing point on an arrow (4)
- 3 Site (8)
- 9 Member of an army (7)
- 10 Showy garden plant (5)
- 11 Detail considered to be insignificant (12)
- 14 Recede (3)
- 16 Develop fully (5)
- 17 Travel on the piste (3)
- 18 Glowing (12)
- 21 Young bird (5)
- 22 Hangs around (7)
- 23 Elementary particle with a negative charge (8)
- 24 Computer memory unit (4)

Down

- 1 Infatuated (8)
- 2 Remnant of the past (5)
- 4 Rowing pole (3)
- 5 Popular song on New Year's Eve (4,4,4)
- 6 Driving force (7)
- 7 Number represented by the Roman IX (4)
- 8 Semi-formal evening wear for a man (6,6)
- 12 Managed (5)
- 13 Aversion (8)
- 15 Outdoor blaze (7)
- 19 ___ board, used to shape fingernails (5)
- 20 Throb dully (4)
- 22 ___ Tolstoy, writer (3)

Here are some of the organisations that can help you through the cost-of-living crisis. For more information and listings visit wwha.co.uk

ALL WALES

Food banks

Food banks provide emergency food on presentation of a voucher. Find out where your local food bank is and how you can apply for a voucher: trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/

Dewis

An all-Wales directory for health and wellbeing. Pop your postcode into the website to find groups and organisations available in your area dewis.wales

Bridgend

- Baobab Bach food pantries - locations include Brackla and Bryntririon baobab-bach.org/pantries/
- BAVO – Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations – services include Community Navigators bavo.org.uk/get-help/help-for-individuals/community-navigators/

Cardiff

- Splo-Down Community Food Group – food co-operative for Splott, Adamsdown, and Tremorfa, vegetable boxes available for members. Low cost membership splo-down.org
- Cost of living support map for Cardiff – find warm hubs, community fridges, pantries and foodbanks near you helpnearme.cardiffmoneyadvice.co.uk

Caerphilly

- Cost of Living support hub – directory of local support caerphilly.gov.uk/services/cost-of-living-support

Carmarthenshire

- Xcel Furniture – a not-for-profit furniture recycling centre located in Johnstown, Carmarthen xcelfurniture.co.uk/
- Carmarthen Food Bank carmarthen.foodbank.org.uk/

Ceredigion

- Aber Food Surplus – redistributes surplus food among the community in Aberystwyth aberfoodsplus.co.uk. Similar initiative in Lampeter: facebook.com/groups/1211003065695753/

Conwy

- Crest Food Share – food free of charge but limited to one grocery bag (supplied / reusable) per customer per visit. 11am – 12pm Tues and Thurs – locations in Llandudno Junction, Llandudno and Colwyn Bay crestcooperative.co.uk/
- Hope Restored Foodbank Llandudno - West Shore Baptist Church - 9.30am - 12.30am Mon to Sat - clothes bank service now available - Tel: **07564991789** to arrange with Brenda, email: harveyfogg@hotmail.com

Denbighshire

- Foodbanks – locations include Kings Storehouse Foodbank, 102 Vale Road, Rhyl; 200 Victoria Road, Prestatyn, LL19 7TL; 15 Sussex Street, Rhyl, LL18 1SE
- Good News Mission – 75 Marsh Road, Rhyl – winter warmer café, 11am-1pm Tues and Weds goodnewsmission.co.uk

Flintshire

- Food Banks - operate in various locations across Flintshire flintshire.foodbank.org.uk/locations/
- Nanny Biscuit, a Community Interest Company offering a range of services including Food Pantries with 10 items for £3 - locations include Connah's Quay, Shotton and Sandycroft nannybiscuit.org
- The Well Fed scheme provides good food for households and communities struggling including a 'mobile-corner-shop, door-to-door delivery service and a slow cooker programme providing a slow cooker with special meal bags to households in crisis. Call 01244 819543 or visit cancook.co.uk/

about-well-fed/

Also bigbocsbwyd.co.uk/

Merthyr Tydfil

- Twyncarmel Warm Space and Pantry Warm Space - Tues and Fri, 10am to 4pm, book your shopping slot. Call Claire Hammond 07766 832 692 for more information.
- Hope Church Pantry – £3.50 weekly membership, members can choose a selection of food with a value of £15-£20 each week – email Hopepantry@hopemerthyr.org.uk

Pembrokeshire

- Fishguard and Goodwick Community Fridge facebook.com/fandgcommunityfridge
- Newport Community Forum newportforum.org.uk

Powys

- Brecon Food Bank, St Johns Centre, Pendre Close, Brecon LD3 9EA. Tel: 01874 611723 brecon.foodbank.org.uk
- Elim Church Foodshare Scheme, Canal Rd, Brecon - redistribute surplus food from local businesses, 11am on Wed and Sun for free tea, coffee and cake breconelimchurch.org.uk/foodshare-scheme.html

RCT

- Cost of Living support directory – includes Winter Welcome Centres rctcbc.gov.uk

Vale of Glamorgan

- Penarth FoodPod – St Luke's estate, open Mon, Wed and Fri facebook.com/penarthfoodpod/
- Food Vale – partnership providing emergency food foodvale.org

Wrexham

- Caia Food Club at St Mark's Church, Bryn Eglwys Road. LL13 9LA - supply of food and other essentials for all. Suggested £3 donation caiafoodclub@gmail.com, stmarks.wrexhamparish.org.uk
- Warm hubs at Hightown Community Resource Centre Mondays 1pm-3pm, Chirk Parish Hall room two, 10.30am-4.30pm every Wed wrexham.gov.uk

A day in the life of...

a Housing Options Advisor

Picking up the phone to tell people who are desperately in need of a roof over their head that they can move into a Wales & West Housing home is one of the highlights of Karin Davies' job.

Karin is one of our team of Housing Options Advisors who work to match empty Wales & West Housing homes to families and individuals in need.

Karin and the Housing Options Team (HOT) work with local authorities to match those who are most in need of an affordable home and who are at the top of the council's waiting lists to suitable Wales & West Housing homes when they become available.

When a resident moves out of their current home, or a new WWH development is completed and ready to be let, the vacancy goes to the HOTs. The available home is first advertised with the local authority, then the HOTs team make a shortlist to match the home with suitable people on the waiting list, depending on a person's needs. The process differs depending on which of the 14 local authorities is involved.

"I love the occasions when you call someone up and they are over the moon to be offered a property," says Karin, who joined HOTs last October after working for Castell Ventures.

"Sometimes the applicants haven't even seen the property, but they are so happy because they don't have a home, or they have medical needs, and they know the property will make their

lives a little bit more enjoyable for them."

"Our team comes in at the start of a resident's journey with WWH so it's important that we build a good relationship with them. We take care to make sure that the homes we offer are suitable and affordable to applicants," she says.

For Karin, who is based in our West office, the first task of her working week is to update the local authorities and the common housing register with all the properties that are no longer vacant, so that people who accepted properties can be removed from waiting lists.

"This is a nice part of the job as it means people have moved in and are starting a new chapter in their lives," says Karin.

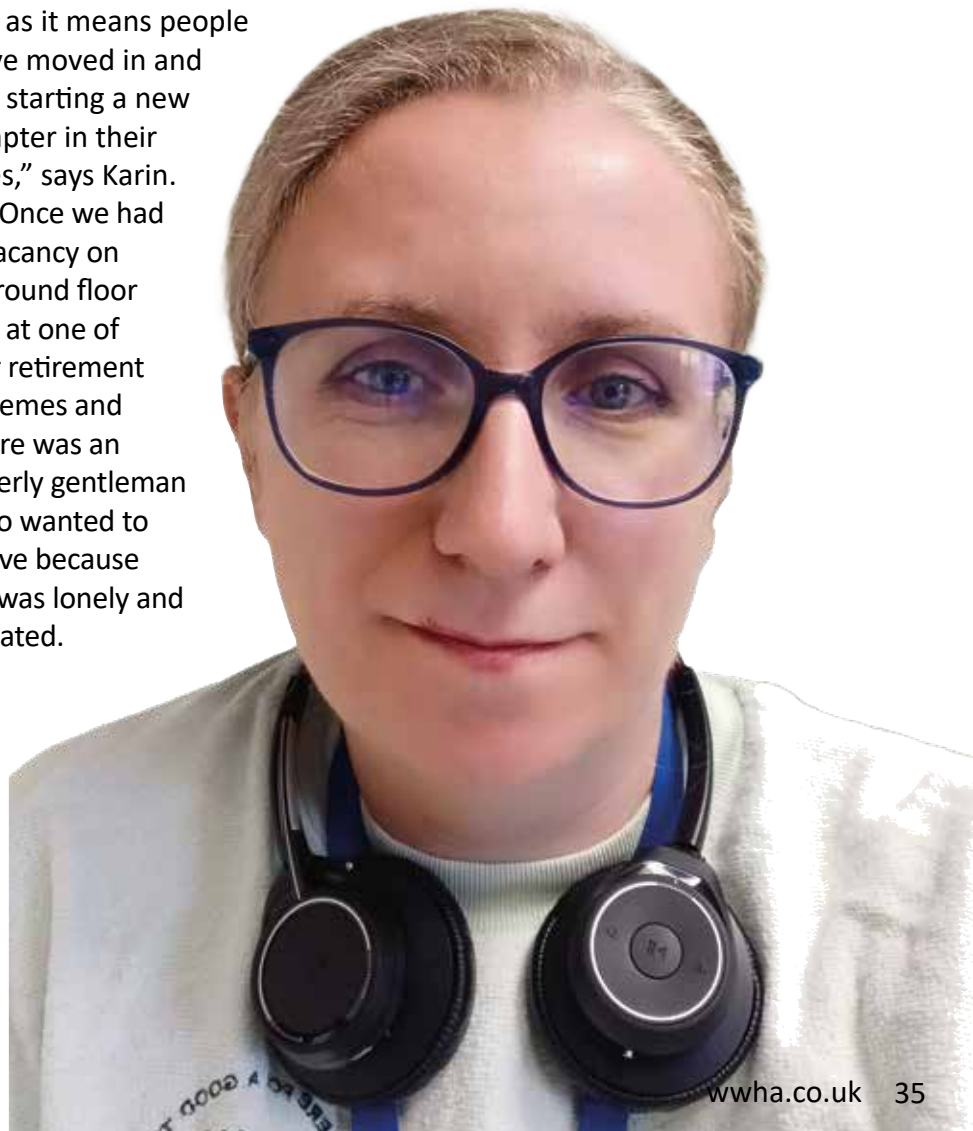
"Once we had a vacancy on a ground floor flat at one of our retirement schemes and there was an elderly gentleman who wanted to move because he was lonely and isolated.

I was so excited to make that call. He was so happy knowing that he could move to a more social environment.

"On another occasion I called a lady to tell her we had a property for her. She was so desperate to move in, she told me she loved me.

"Cases like these show that we make a difference to people's lives and that is the best feeling; knowing that someone's life has just been made that little brighter with one of our homes."

*Karin Davies
Housing Options Advisor*



Our new homes at Parc Brynach at Dinas Cross, Pembrokeshire, have been fitted with solar panels to help reduce energy bills.

Turn to page 29 to meet some of our new residents who now call Parc Brynach home.

