

The magazine for residents of Wales & West Housing

FREE

In Touch

AUTUMN 2021

**Your money questions
answered**

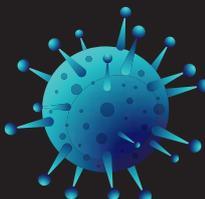
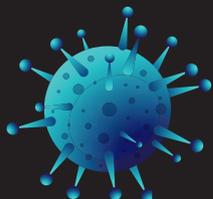
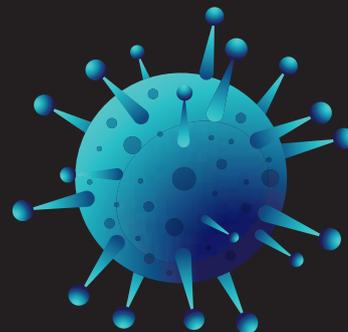
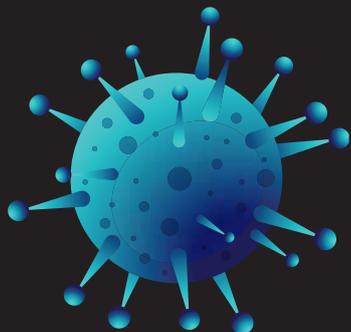
**Advice to keep you safe
from scammers**

**A virtual tour of
the new homes
we are building
across Wales**

**Puzzles and
brainteasers**



COVID-19



KNOW YOUR FACTS

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU GET THE VACCINE

The COVID-19 vaccination is one of our most important tools to help reduce the spread of the virus. The vaccines are safe and effective and offer protection from COVID-19.

Getting vaccinated and following protective measures will protect you and your loved ones from becoming seriously ill or dying from the virus.



gov.wales/coronavirus-facts



Contact Us

Wales & West Housing, Archway House, 77 Parc Tŷ Glas, Llanishen, 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

Due to the current situation the waiting time for calls may be a bit longer than usual, so please be patient.

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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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication. With the ever-changing circumstances we would advise residents to check up-to-date information on our website wwha.co.uk, the Welsh Government website, Public Health Wales website and other official and reputable sources.



Message from Anne

Welcome to this special edition of In Touch.

Last year, as the country was in the middle of a national lockdown, we provided a Covid Special edition magazine, filled with information and advice, which many of you found useful.

I appreciate it has been a difficult time so I hope this special edition will give you more useful information to help guide you through these unusual times.

Wales moved into alert level zero last month (August) and out of the strict Covid restrictions, bringing more opportunities to meet more of our family and friends. With the ongoing success of the vaccination programme, it feels like we may be getting closer to a new normality.

In this special edition we look back over the past 18 months to see what is working well for many of our residents and what improvements we can make for the future.

Our Tenancy Support Officers answer your questions about changes to Universal Credit payments and other financial concerns you may have. We also look at the latest scams and what you can do to protect yourself and your family from getting caught out.

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of a place to call home. With that in mind we are building more new homes than ever and you can see some of them as you read on.

Plus, there's all the usual puzzles to keep you entertained.

As ever, if you have any questions, please get in touch.

Stay safe.

Anne Hinchey
Group Chief Executive

What the pandemic

After more than a year living with Covid restrictions, things are beginning to open.

It has been a difficult time, but we have worked throughout the pandemic and managed to keep services running and to support our residents.

Thank you to everyone for your support and patience during these unusual times: your positive

feedback and compliments are much appreciated.

Here we look back on what we have done to create more access to services. By working smarter we have found more efficient ways of working and will be looking to improve on these in the future.

While our offices are still closed, our Housing Officers and

Property Services staff are getting out and arranging more face-to-face meetings with residents. We are also using online services for faster, more environmentally-friendly ways to sign tenancy agreements or view homes via video.

Deputy Chief Executive Shayne Hembrow shares what we have learnt and the improvements this could bring to future services.

Opportunities to learn

Sir Winston Churchill is credited for saying “never waste a good crisis.” By changing some of the ways we worked during the pandemic, we have discovered some new and improved ways of doing things.

We have all had to do more online and where this works, for example signing a tenancy agreement or video viewings of new homes, we want to do more. We have been delivering services differently because of the pandemic and this has made us think more about how you access our services and will want to in the future.

More staff are working from home than ever before. Just like many others, they are using more Zoom, Teams, and online services for some communication.

But we recognise it is not the answer for everything or everyone, which is why we will

strive to find a balance in our offering giving you a quicker, more thorough, digital offering alongside our traditional services.

As we learn the best ways to grow our digital services, we

will look for your feedback and thoughts. If you would like to help us shape these services, please get in contact at contactus@wwha.co.uk.

You said...

“ I was seven months pregnant and living in temporary accommodation. Wales & West Housing were able to offer me a 2-bedroom house. I viewed the house on a video which was emailed to me on my phone.

I liked what I saw and signed the tenancy agreement online too. It was all so quick and easy using the online services. I moved in and within a week gave birth, so now I am settling into my new home with my larger family.

”

A resident who used online services to secure her new home.

has taught us

So where are we now?

Looking after your home/repairs

We delivered an essential repairs service throughout the lockdowns and returned to a full repairs service in autumn 2020. Our learning is that not much needs to change, but we need to be more consistent about letting people know what's going on.

Our repairs teams are following protocols such as calling ahead to check whether anyone in the household is showing symptoms of Coronavirus and taking all necessary precautions.

Where our staff are not able to maintain a safe distance, they will wear face coverings.

We are currently carrying out an average of 130 repairs per day and repairs are completed within 12 days of being reported.

If you call to report a repair, we are making appointments for about 9 days from the call for most types of repairs.

Heating

We are currently carrying out 30 heating repairs per day. These repairs are completed within 3 days of being reported to us. The time to arrange an appointment is around 1.5 days.



30



heating repairs per day
completed within 3 days
of being reported

Gas and electrical safety servicing

It is really important that we carry out electrical and gas safety servicing in all our homes every year to keep you safe. We are carrying out all annual safety checks and our staff are also continuing with regular fire-related checks and water safety checks.

Planned works such as kitchens and bathrooms

We have restarted our planned works replacing kitchens and bathrooms.

Since resuming works in May we are increasing the number of new kitchens and bathrooms we are fitting each week.

All kitchen and bathroom replacement work and adaptations are being carried out in full consultation with residents to ensure safe working environments.

We have also started to increase the number of special



130

repairs per day



12 days

from time of reporting
to complete a repair

Figures from April to June 2021

adaptations carried out in residents' homes.

During national and local lockdowns, when we stopped planned works, our maintenance teams focussed on renovating empty properties, where it was safe to work.

We have also carried out some work on external and communal areas, where this could be done with minimal interaction with residents.



You said...

“ My wet room adaptation was carried out during local lockdown. The fitters worked safely and kept the room well ventilated, so I always felt safe. ”

A disabled Cardiff resident whose bathroom was adapted last year.

Lettings

After the brief suspension of lettings in 2020, we are letting homes straight away.

We have adapted the process so that we meet the Covid guidance in place. We are also using the online Docusign service for tenancy agreements and contracts you need to send to us.

Moving in and out

When moving into one of our homes we might sometimes want to send photos and videos of properties to potential residents. This allows residents to get a sense of space and feel for the property and decide whether it's suitable for them. We can now arrange viewings in person.

When residents are happy with their home viewing and want to move in, we are using electronic tenancy agreements through the DocuSign service. It's great for the environment and saves on paper as well as time.

With some of our new-build

homes we have been creating video user guides to help residents settle in.

Moving out? After asking residents to send us photos and videos to show the condition of their properties, our Housing Officers have now returned to visiting properties to check the condition before residents move out.

Rents

Our Housing and Tenancy Support Officers have been working hard to support residents. If you are struggling to pay, please call us. The sooner you get in touch, the quicker we can deal with the situation and prevent arrears mounting up. Your Housing Officer can help you to manage your money and set up a payment plan that you can afford. It is important that you pay your rent and keep talking to us or you could risk losing your home.

Turn to page 8-9 to find out more about financial support.

Retirement housing

We understand it has been tough for our older residents, for some lockdown has added to a sense of isolation. We have worked hard to keep residents and our schemes safe with regular wiping down of touch points to reduce the risk of the spread of infection.

During the lockdowns we had to close communal areas, which we know was hard for some. For others it was a relief as they were worried that meeting up indoors would add to the infection risk. Thank you for your understanding during this period of closure, we do appreciate the messages of support we receive.

Since Wales moved into alert level zero on August 7, these areas are now opening again. Posters have been put up explaining how we wish these areas to be used safely, for example open windows, wear a face covering and maintain good hygiene. If you have any questions about this, please get in touch on 0800 052 2526.

For more information see page 18-19.

You said...

“ My Housing Officer sent me a video and then phoned me. I was able to watch the video on my computer as my Housing Officer explained the rooms over the phone.

I liked the look of what I saw. When I moved in, I picked up the keys to my new home from a key safe. I walked through the door and was surprised how much bigger the flat was. I was very pleased.

An older resident, who has moved into a new apartment in Bridgend during the pandemic.

Anti-social behaviour and estate management

This was one of the most difficult areas to manage during the lockdown restrictions. During this time, our response to ASB complaints had to change significantly.

We have responded to all reports of ASB throughout the lockdown though the restrictions have limited what we have been able to do.

Our specialist officers, who would usually deal with serious or complex cases, have been responsible for dealing with a higher-than-average number of calls. Instead of visiting schemes and seeing residents in their homes, they have been speaking with residents virtually and by telephone. They also used email to keep residents and staff safe and comply with guidelines.

This has allowed Housing Officers, who would usually be the first point of contact for ASB complaints, to focus on helping residents with financial support.

We have also dealt with an increase in mental health-related cases as an effect of lockdown.

We have learnt that a combination of telephone and site and home visits work best, and this is what we will continue to do as restrictions lift.

We hope that listening to residents, engaging them in finding solutions and being open about what we can do, will continue to help address anti-social behaviour and help resolve problems around our schemes.

Police powers

The police have powers to deal with reports of drug dealing, harassment and threatening behaviour.

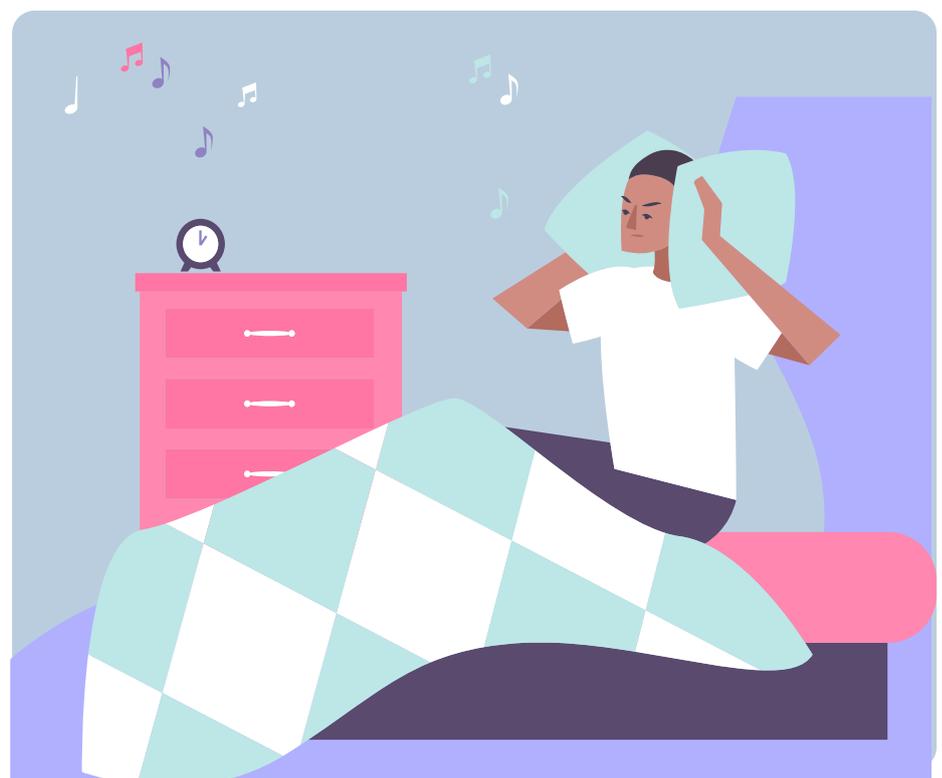
Noise nuisance

The local authority Environmental teams also have ways to record noise nuisance, for example via mobile apps, when we were unable to visit residents' homes and assess the levels of noise and disruption.

However, local authorities across Wales, and all parts of the UK, reported a sharp rise in the number of noise complaints as more people were at home all day. Many of the statutory services such as local authorities' Environmental Health teams and police have been dealing with higher volumes of calls.

Domestic abuse

Sadly, the number of reports of domestic abuse increased. During the national lockdown we responded to these reports over the phone and made referrals to support agencies. As lockdown restrictions started to ease, officers have been able to make home visits, following safety protocols. This has helped us to understand and assess problems, then work with partner agencies using restorative approaches to help residents come to their own solutions to resolve problems.



Your finance questions answered

As we slowly move to a new normal there are lots of changes to the financial support that has been available. Not all changes are set to be good news.

Our Tenancy Support Officers answer your questions and give advice on the support available to help you manage your money.



Q I've heard there are big changes to Universal Credit payments starting in September. How will it affect me?

At the start of the lockdown last year the UK Government decided to temporarily increase Universal Credit by £20 a week. As things stand, the £20 boost is due to end in September 2021. Unless the Government has a last-minute change of heart, this is set to leave many people almost £90 a month worse off. This could mean that you may be facing financial difficulty. If you are struggling, speak to your Housing Officer or Tenancy Support Officer to find out what extra support is available to you.

Q I've tested positive for Covid-19 and can't go to work. I can't work from home and I can't afford to lose pay. What can I do?

Welsh Government has a self-isolation support scheme for those who cannot work from home and must self-isolate. It is also for parents and carers on low incomes with children who are self-isolating and cannot work

leading to a loss of income.

The maximum payment for loss of earnings increased from £500 to £750 early in August.

To qualify you must have been advised by Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) to self-isolate. If you receive notification to self-isolate via the Covid App unless TTP advise you to self-isolate, you will not be eligible. You must also be working (employed or self-employed) and you need to claim within 21 days of your last day of self-isolation.

You will need to apply through your local council. For more information visit <https://gov.wales/self-isolation-support-scheme>

Q I'm worried that I can't pay my rent, what can I do?

It's been a difficult time for many people. During the pandemic we've all learnt how important it is to have a safe home and it's important to pay your rent so that you don't lose your home. Your rent also covers the repairs and services WWH provides.

If you are struggling with your rent, don't ignore the issue. Contact your Housing Officer, they can help you to manage your money and set up a payment plan that you can afford to pay off any arrears. If you are having trouble sticking to your payment plan, don't just miss a payment. Let your Housing Officer know so that they can work with you.

Q What will happen when the furlough scheme ends?

The Government's Job Retention Scheme, or furlough as we all know it, comes to an end on September 30.

Introduced in spring 2020 to help employers to retain their staff during the national lockdowns, the Government scheme has been responsible for paying up to 80 per cent of staff wages for hours not worked up to a maximum of £2,500.

The level of Government grants available to businesses was reduced to 70 per cent in July and from August 1 this dropped to 60 per cent of wages (up to a maximum cap of £1,875)

for the hours the employee is on furlough. During this time employers are expected to continue to pay their employees 80 per cent of their wages to qualify for Government support.

With the furlough scheme ending, more people than ever could find themselves in financial difficulty. If you are struggling speak to your Housing Officer.

Q How can I find out what benefits I can claim?

You can complete a free benefit calculation at www.entitledto.co.uk. By answering some simple questions about your circumstances, it will provide you with what benefits you could potentially be entitled to claim.

You can also complete a free grant search at www.turn2us.org.uk.

Q What other financial help is out there for household bills?

There are a number of extra support schemes available:

- Your water and energy providers have schemes that can reduce your bills or help with arrears if you are in receipt of benefits or classed as a low-income household.
- Apply for the Warm Home Discount Scheme. You can get £140 off your energy bill this winter if you're on a low income.
- Complete a free energy comparison online to see if you could save money by switching suppliers. You can find these on sites such as www.moneysavingexpert.com.

- BT offers a "Home Essentials" package, which offers low-cost broadband and phone plans if you are in receipt of certain benefits, including Universal Credit.
- Apply for free school meals and uniform vouchers from your local council if you receive qualifying benefits. You can also reclaim childcare costs through your Universal Credit claim.
- Foodbanks can provide food parcels as well as other advice and support. To find your local foodbank visit www.trusselltrust.org
- A limited number of emergency cash grants are also available from the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF). For more information on how you can apply visit <https://gov.wales/discretionaryassistance-fund-daf>
You can also contact your Tenancy Support Officer or Housing Officer for help with DAFs.

Q Is there any help for savers?

If you're working and receiving benefits and able to save between £1 and £50 per month, you could join the Government's Help to Save scheme. It's a type of savings account. If you are entitled to Working Tax Credit or receiving Universal Credit you can get a bonus of 50p for every £1 you save over 4 years. For more information visit www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income

Further support

Citizens Advice

Free, confidential, independent advice on lots of issues including benefits, debt and money or legal issues. Visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk or call 0800 702 2020.

Money Helper

Quick and easy money guidance and advice about support you could be entitled to from UK Government. Visit www.moneyhelper.org.uk or call 0800 138 7777.

Dewis Cymru

Find money and debt advice services where you live at www.dewis.wales.

If you are worried about how you will manage your money or pay your rent following any of these changes, then please speak to us. We are here to help and have money advice experts who can work with you to find a way forward. There are grants, schemes to clear your debts and extra help available with bills. If you find yourself out of work, on reduced wages or low income, we can complete a benefits calculator with you to check you are receiving everything you are entitled to. We know that this may be a difficult time for many, so it is more important than ever that you let us know if you are struggling.

Speak to your Housing Officer or Tenancy Support Officer to find out what support is available to you or contact our call centre on 0800 052 2526 and we will arrange to call you back.

Building more homes than ever

At a time when homes are more important than ever, we are playing our part in tackling the housing emergency.

Although Covid delayed building work on some sites, they are almost back to normal now.

We currently have more than 650 homes under construction or in the planning stage across Wales, our contribution to helping the Welsh Government to meet its target to build 20,000 new low-carbon social homes for rent.

Our ambitious development programme has seen us ranked in the UK's Top 5 housing associations building the most homes for social rent this year.

This year we aim to have 435 new houses and apartments

Cardiff
 Ffordd Yr Haearn, Clive Lane, Grangetown 100
 Blue Dragon, Roath 49
 Colchester Avenue, Penylan 50

Vale of Glamorgan
 Subway Road, Barry Waterfront 72

Carmarthenshire
 Cartref Tawelan, Johnstown 18
 Abergwili, Carmarthenshire 6
 Station Road, St Clears 45

Pembrokeshire
 Globe Inn, Maenclochog 11
 The Barn, Dinas Cross 17

Ceredigion
 Phase 1 Tollgate Inn, Penparcau, Aberystwyth 13
 Maes y Môr Extra Care, Aberystwyth 56 extra care apartments
 Cylch Peris, Llanon 10
 Aberaeron Hospital Site 20

Conwy
 Abergele Road, Colwyn Bay 6

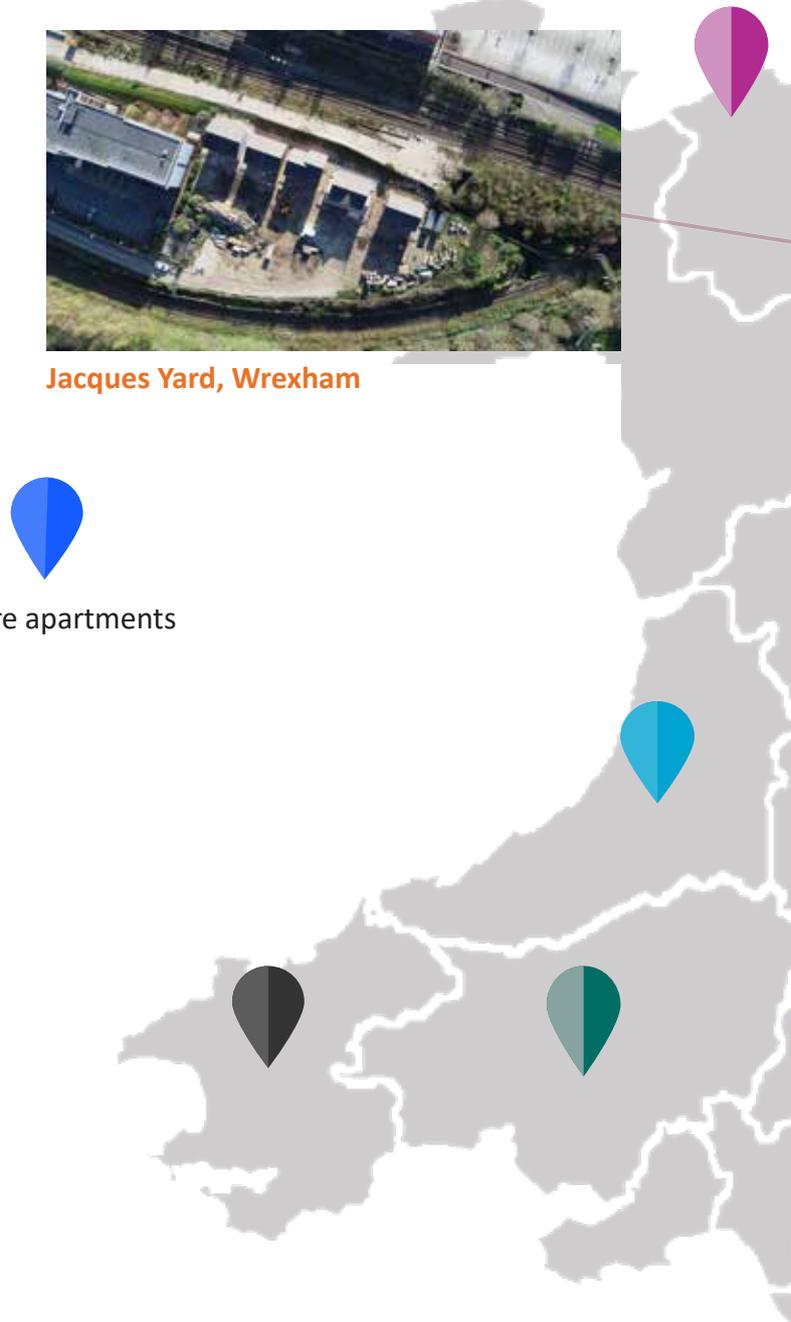
Flintshire
 Halkyn Road, Holywell 44
 Bryn Awel, Mold 23
 United Reform Church, Northop 6

Wrexham
 Jacques Yard, Wrexham 25
 Woodlands Farm, Dobbs Lane, Wrexham 23
 Heol Berwen, Wrexham 34

Powys
 Garth Owen, Newtown 25



Jacques Yard, Wrexham



completed and ready for residents to move in, and we are committed to delivering 2,500 more over the next 5 years.

We are building more homes in areas where people want to live and close to local connections.

When our new homes are ready, we work with local authorities across Wales to rent them to the people most in need on their housing registers.

This map shows all the places where we are currently on site

and building new homes, while the gallery of photographs over the next 2 pages shows some of our current and recently finished developments.



Former Blue Dragon Hotel, Cardiff Our development of 49 apartments for people over the age of 55 is taking shape on the site of the former Blue Dragon Hotel, Newport Road.



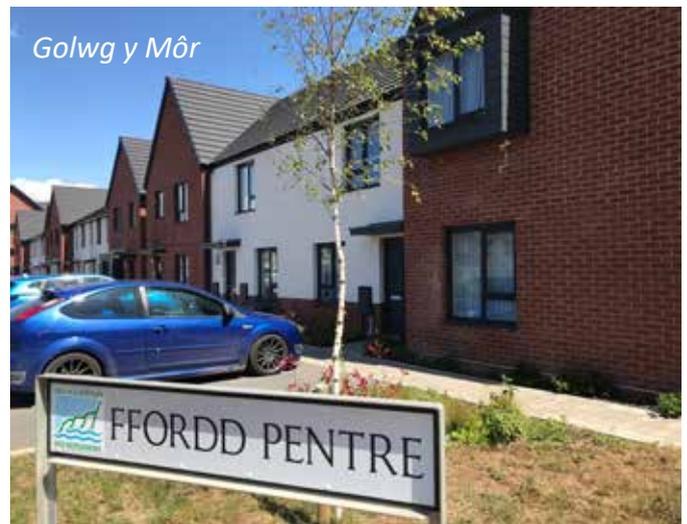
Subway Road, Barry The first residents are expected to move into their new homes this year. Our long-term development partners Jehu Group are close to completing the development of 72 apartments as part of the town's Dockside regeneration. The 1 & 2 bed apartments are being allocated via the Vale of Glamorgan County Council's Homes4U Housing Register.



Barry Waterfront



Golwg y Môr



Golwg y Môr

Barry Waterfront/Golwg y Môr In recent years we have been working with house builders Taylor Wimpey to provide homes for social rent and low-cost home ownership in the Vale of Glamorgan. Over the last decade the former Barry Dockland has been regenerated into a vibrant new Barry Waterfront community. This year we have taken ownership of 24 houses and apartments at Barry Waterfront. At Golwg Y Môr, Rhoose, we have taken ownership of 16 homes this year, bringing the number of homes we own in the area to 104.



Former Globe Inn, Maenclochog

Work is progressing well on our new development on the site of the former Globe Inn in the small rural Pembrokeshire village of Maenclochog, where we are working with our long-term partners TRJ Ltd to create 11 new homes.

Ffordd yr Haearn, Cardiff The first of our homes at Ffordd yr Haearn, Grangetown, Cardiff, are almost ready for residents to move in. Hale Construction, one of our long-term construction partners, are building 100 2, 3 and 4 bed homes with gardens and 1 and 2 bed apartments. The new homes will be ready in phases between the summer and the end of 2021 and are being allocated through Cardiff Council's Common Housing Register.



Grange Hotel, Rhyl In the Denbighshire seaside town of Rhyl our development of 41 new apartments was completed in June. We worked with our long-term construction partners Anwyl Partnerships to redevelop the site of the fire-damaged Grange Hotel on East Parade, Rhyl, into homes for people over 55.

STOP ● CHALLENGE ● PROTECT

to avoid being scammed

The Coronavirus pandemic has brought new ways of working for many of us – including criminals.

There has been a rise in scams with criminals looking to exploit financial and health concerns

by asking for money upfront for fake services, collecting personal information or bank details, or offering temptingly-high returns on made-up investments or pension transfers.

Action Fraud, the national fraud and cyber-crime reporting agency, reports that millions of pounds have been lost by innocent people during the pandemic.

Scams to look out for

Online shopping has provided criminals with a new opportunity to trick people into paying for goods and services that don't exist. These are often advertised via auction sites or social media with images taken from genuine sellers to convince you they're the real deal.

Scams include buyers paying deposits for pets that don't exist, DIY equipment, electronic devices such as games consoles and even event tickets.

Scammers also use cloned websites with slight changes to the URL to trick you into thinking you're purchasing from a genuine website. They may also ask for payment prior to delivery and send you fake receipts and invoices that appear to be from the payment provider.

How to spot a potential purchase scam

- ▶ You're offered a heavily discounted or considerably cheaper service or product compared to the original genuine worth. The deal sounds too good to be true.
- ▶ You're asked to pay by bank transfer instead of using the online platform's secure payment options.
- ▶ The website that you're purchasing from was only launched days/weeks ago.

For more information on how to spot a purchase scam visit www.takefive-stopfraud.org.uk

Tips



Action Fraud has the following advice to avoid being scammed:

STOP

Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

CHALLENGE

Could it be fake? It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

PROTECT

If you think you've been a victim of fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online at actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.



Ways to protect yourself

- Be suspicious of any “too good to be true” offers or prices.
- Use the secure payment method recommended by reputable online retailers and auction sites.
- Where possible, use a credit card when making purchases over £100 and up to £30,000 as you receive protection under Section 75 of the Credit

Consumer Act.

- Read online reviews to check websites and sellers are genuine and ask to see high value items in person or via video link, as well as getting copies of the relevant documentation to ensure the seller owns the item.
- Purchase items made by a major brand from the list of authorised sellers listed on their official website.
- Always access the website

you're purchasing from by typing it into your web browser and be wary of clicking on links in unsolicited emails.

- Always ensure you click 'log out' or 'sign out' of websites.
- The introduction of Lucy's Law makes it illegal for you to purchase pets sold by a third-party seller. If you're looking for a pet, buy it directly from a breeder or consider adopting from a rescue centre instead.

Other scams to watch out for

NHS Test and Trace

There are reports of scammers using the NHS Test and Trace system to obtain personal or financial information from vulnerable people. Genuine staff employed on behalf of the NHS Test and Trace service should not

- enter your home
- ask you to provide your name - staff will already have your name and will ask 'Am I speaking to ---?' for you to confirm
- ask for your National Insurance number, telephone number or any other identifying information, other than your passport or driver's licence
- photograph your identification document
- ask for your financial details, such as your bank or credit card information
- ask you for money or issue a fine.

If someone visits you claiming to be from NHS Test and Trace and you do not believe they are legitimate, call 999 and ask for the police.

For information relating to contact tracing in Wales please visit the Welsh Government site: www.gov.wales/contact-tracing

Text message scams

Mobile text messaging scams tend to include a link to a fake, but very convincing, website designed to trick you into submitting personal information such as bank details, a password or a credit card number.

These include fake texts claiming to be from 'the Government' or HMRC offering a 'relief' pay-out or threatening a fine or tax rebate and encouraging you to click on a link. These scams also include messages claiming to be from Royal Mail and other delivery services telling you a parcel is awaiting delivery and you need to make a payment.

If you receive a suspicious text message, you should forward it to **7726**. This free-of-charge short code enables your provider to investigate the origin of the text and take action, if found to be malicious.

Email scams

Known as 'phishing', these scams are often very convincing. Like the texts they also encourage you to

click on links by offering refunds, advice or scams.

What to do?

If you have received an email which you're not quite sure about, forward it to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS) at report@phishing.gov.uk

More information on text and phishing scams can be found at the National Cyber Security Centre website at www.ncsc.gov.uk

What to do if you've been scammed

- If you've already responded to a scam, end all communication immediately.
- Call your bank directly and cancel any recurring payments.
- Report the scam to the police through Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040, or report a scam on its website <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>

For more information visit <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/about/take-five/>

Changes to our

Customer Service Centre

Last month we wrote to you proposing to make some changes to the times when you can contact our call centre and we wanted to get your views. We put together a short survey to capture your opinions and comments, and we want to let you know the outcome of that survey and what will be happening with our call centre opening hours.

Firstly, thank you to the 289 residents that took the time to complete the survey. Of those responses 80% said that the proposed opening hours of 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday would suit their needs. Following this result and due to the very low number of calls we receive in the evenings and over the weekends we are going to change our opening hours to **8am – 6pm Monday to Friday from 1st September 2021**. Outside of these times, residents will still be able to call the freephone 0800 052 2526 number to report emergencies such as repairs or other urgent issues.

- **Reporting emergency repairs after 6pm**

You will be able to call 0800 052 2526 and report an emergency repair with calls answered by our telephony partner Doro.

We are working with Doro because of their experience in providing telephony services as well as telecare and other services specifically for people in need of support. Their call centre is based in the UK.

Doro have 30 years' experience in monitoring out-of-hours services for many housing and care

organisations and use the same systems as our Customer Call Centre to take calls and answer emergency alarm activations.

- **What is an emergency repair?**

We consider an emergency repair to be any repair that is required to make safe and deal with a potentially dangerous situation where there may be a risk to personal safety or a risk of extensive damage to a property. The call handlers will assess everyone's individual circumstances to establish if



If you think you have a gas leak or can smell gas call Wales and West Utilities on 0800 111 999 immediately

If your CO Alarm is activated call Wales and West Utilities on 0800 111 999 immediately

the situation is an emergency and where required they will arrange for a maintenance operative to attend to make the situation safe, with a full fix to be carried out at a convenient time for you during our usual opening hours. Examples of what works are an emergency can be found on our website: wwha.co.uk.

- **Could we stay open one evening and/or a Saturday morning?**

We have been open 24 hours a day for almost 20 years with staff available to deal with all types of queries. As explained

in the previous letter the number of residents calling us in the evenings and weekends has reduced significantly in the last five years which is why we were proposing to change the opening hours. We will keep this matter under review and extend opening hours if required.

- **What about accessing other services outside of the proposed hours?**

You can pay your rent, report repairs or report anti-social behaviour issues via our website (wwha.co.uk) or by emailing contactus@wwha.co.uk.

wwha.co.uk and we will respond as soon as possible in working hours.

- **Contacting staff directly**

Contacting staff can be done via the freephone number where call handlers will try and put you through or provide you with direct numbers and email addresses. Your Housing Officer's contact details can also be found in the Contact section of our website, by selecting contact my Housing Officer in the drop down menu.

How to get in touch



This is how you speak to us.

Call our freephone number

0800 052 2526.

You will always speak to a person
8am - 6pm.

6pm - 8am emergencies only

Email

contactus@wwha.co.uk

and we will respond
between 8am and 6pm
during office opening
hours

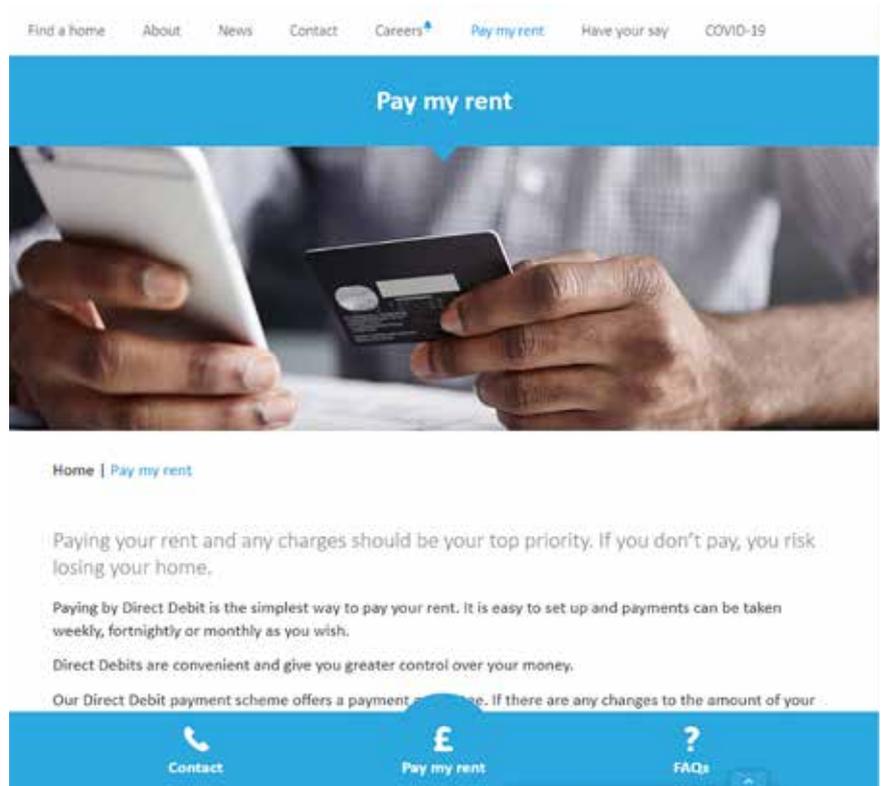
Want to pay rent?

You can pay your rent via our website www.wwha.co.uk/en/pay-my-rent/

Our online rent payments are managed by Worldpay, a trusted international online payment service used by many large companies and local councils.

To pay online you will need a Visa, Maestro, Mastercard or JCB card and your name, address and tenancy reference number.

Your payment will show on your account the next working day.



Anti-social behaviour

- Call 999 if you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger of a violent crime, hate crime, assault, threat to kill, domestic violence, or child protection issues or if you are concerned a crime is being committed.
- Call 101 to report crimes that have previously been committed.

Neighbourhood noise:

If you're having a problem with noise nuisance during unsociable hours, please call 101.

You can also report incidents to the Environmental Health Department of your local council. Visit your local authority's website for more information - to find your local authority visit <https://www.gov.uk/report-noise-pollution-to-council>





Keep in touch

Last year's lockdown brought many new ways of keeping in touch with our friends, family and local services in our communities.

When visiting people in their homes, calling into our offices and arranging personal viewings of homes was no longer possible, there was still a need to communicate.

When face-to-face meetings and conversations came to an end overnight, many people took to more digital methods.

Our staff started making regular welfare telephone calls to all vulnerable residents and those aged over 70 to make sure they had the help they needed with shopping and collecting

prescriptions or simply having a chat.

By working smarter, with many of our staff still working from home, we are using more technology to keep current and new residents informed.

Here are some of the improvements so far...

Nice to see you!

It's fair to say that at the start of 2020, many of us hadn't heard of Zoom. But over the past 16 months we've taken to video calls more than ever before, which has contributed to the UK's internet usage more than

doubling.

Our Housing Officers are using video conferencing such as Facetime, Zoom and Microsoft Teams to chat with residents who are comfortable using such technologies.



Social media

We have accounts on the most popular social media platforms and you can use these to get in touch with us. We use our social media channels to share news and updates about our services and developments, as well as job opportunities.



Facebook
facebook.com/
wwhousing

If you ask a question through our closed comments section we will respond. Follow us to find out about current career opportunities across our Group companies.



Twitter
@wwha

If you send us an enquiry as a Direct Message, we will respond even if we don't follow you.



LinkedIn
linkedin.com/
company/wwha

Follow us to find out more about career opportunities.



Instagram
instagram.com/
wwhousing

You can Private Message us with your questions and we will respond.



Email

We appreciate that not every resident has access to email, but for those who do we are keen to work in this way.

Did you know the type of things we send out on email? It can be anything from a viewing video for a new home (as previously mentioned) or checking that you're OK. We can also send a digital version of In Touch instead of a printed version via email if

you would prefer. To request a digital version email communications.team@wwha.co.uk

We also use emails and online surveys to gain feedback for a variety of things.

In our Resident Satisfaction Survey 2020, a lot of residents said they would use digital methods to get in touch, so we plan to make improvements in this area.

Want to be more involved?

If you would like to be a part of helping us shape our digital self-service offering, this may be through a website or an App, please email contactus@wwha.co.uk.

Make sure you let us know your up-to-date email address. You can do this by contacting your Housing Officer or by emailing contactus@wwha.co.uk with the subject 'my email address'.

You said...

“ I really appreciated my Housing Officer's help. It's nice to have someone that makes you feel they are there to support you. For that I very much appreciate your time and efforts. ”

A Cardiff resident, who has communicated with his Housing Officer via email over the past 5-6 months. They received financial advice and support to set up a payment plan for their rent at a time when their earnings in hospitality have been affected. They have also arranged repairs and gas and electric safety checks via email.



Website

Our bilingual website www.wwha.co.uk was launched just over two years ago. It is the place to go for urgent updates to our services, job vacancies and news of our new homes and developments. Throughout the pandemic it has also been the place to go for up-to-date information on services and restrictions

Many residents also choose to pay their rent through our website or contact us with a query..

We'd like to know what works for you online and what you want from it. For example, do you use online

services with other organisations? Is there something you would like to be able to do on the Wales & West Housing website?

If you have any suggestions for improvements to the online services and information on our website email our Communications Team at communications.team@wwha.co.uk

You can also use the 'contact us' section to find out the relevant numbers for your Housing Officer, or to report repairs or incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Text (SMS)

You can send us a text message to **07788 310420**. These messages are monitored Monday to Friday 8.30am – 4pm.



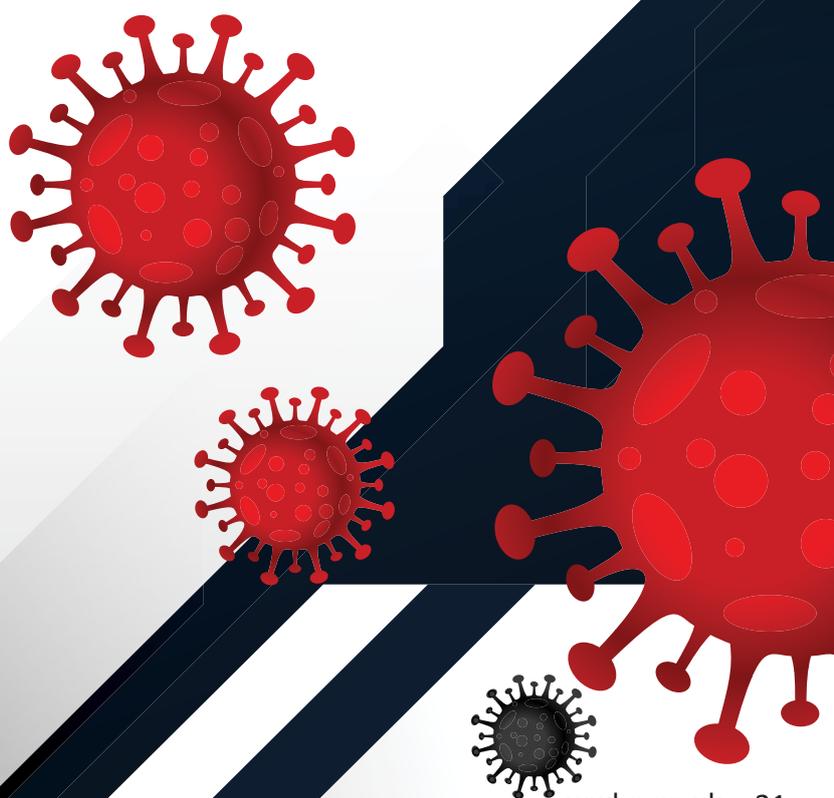
Keeping everyone

SAFE

As the Covid-19 vaccination programme progresses, and following the move to alert level zero, it's important that we all continue to work together to do the right thing to keep infection rates down and keep our families and communities safe, says Group Health and Safety Manager Beth Burns.

What we are doing

We continue to follow Welsh Government guidance and follow protocols to keep you and our staff safe. These include adjusted working methods, following physical distancing guidelines, rigorous hand and breathing hygiene, increased ventilation and increased cleaning of work equipment, tools and working areas. Our staff wear face coverings in indoor communal spaces and, where necessary, we will wear additional PPE. We are using technology to continue to keep in touch with you and enhance the services that we provide and are continuously looking to improve how we deliver our services in a safe and Covid-secure way.



What you can do

We encourage you to follow the rules and work together to keep levels of Coronavirus under control. Our staff and visitors are requested to wear face coverings in communal areas of schemes such as corridors, laundry areas and stairwells and we strongly recommend that you do the same. We also encourage everyone who can to take up both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination when it is offered to you.

And, of course, we encourage you to continue to:

- ▶ wash your hands carefully and more often
- ▶ maintain social distancing
- ▶ wear a face covering in indoor public spaces and on public transport
- ▶ avoid touching surfaces others have touched, wherever possible

Scheme Facilities

Following the First Minister's announcement to move to alert level zero on 7th August, we started re-opening communal facilities the following week. Before doing this, we completed cleaning and safety tests and carried out a risk assessment for all communal areas.

If you live in one of our retirement schemes you should have received a letter explaining the safety procedures and urging everyone to use their own

personal judgment before using the communal facilities, as these areas are not permanently staffed or monitored.

There are also posters in all communal areas reminding residents of the Welsh Government guidance on what reasonable measures are in place to keep you, our staff and others safe. We ask everyone using the facilities to follow this guidance.

Some scheme facilities such as rooms specifically

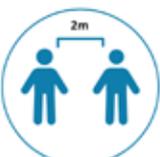
designated for close contact services such as hairdressing have already opened and are being booked by businesses if they can demonstrate they have appropriate controls in place.

We urge everyone using communal areas to be mindful of our advice for your own and others' safety. We will continue to apply Welsh Government guidelines, so if they change, we may need to respond at short notice.



COMMUNAL AREAS ARE OPEN

To ensure the safe use of this area please:

	MAINTAIN 2 METRE PHYSICAL DISTANCING		FOLLOW GOOD HAND HYGIENE PRACTICES
	WEAR A FACE COVERING WHEN USING THE AREA		CLEAN THE AREA AFTER USE
	DO NOT USE THE AREA IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS		OPEN WINDOWS TO KEEP THE AREA WELL VENTILATED

PUZZLES

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

Wordsearch

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

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <i>HOLIDAYS</i> | <i>COURTESY</i> | <i>LOOK</i> |
| <i>FLOWER</i> | <i>ANIMALS</i> | <i>WALK</i> |
| <i>TREE</i> | <i>PENCILS</i> | <i>SOMEONE</i> |
| <i>CHAIR</i> | <i>SCIENCE</i> | <i>WORK</i> |
| <i>MEET</i> | <i>SERVICE</i> | <i>SCHOOL</i> |
| <i>MATHEMATICS</i> | <i>RULES</i> | <i>CLASSROOM</i> |
| <i>HUMANITIES</i> | <i>MUSIC</i> | <i>GOING</i> |

Sudoku

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

- Across
- 1 Doglike (6)
 - 3 Sponsor, investor (6)
 - 7 Exploitation, expediency (11)
 - 10 Alienate (8)
 - 11 Informal talk (4)
 - 13 Might, may possibly (5)
 - 14 Breathe noisily during sleep (5)
 - 18 Measure of land (4)
 - 19 Publican (8)
 - 21 Showing curiosity (11)
 - 22 Refusal to admit something (6)
 - 23 Small pieces of bread or cake, for example (6)

- Down
- 1 Kitchen appliance, oven (6)
 - 2 As a rule (8)
 - 4 Waterless (4)
 - 5 Far off (6)
 - 6 Adjudicator (5)
 - 8 Jar of mixed flower petals used as perfume (9)
 - 9 Hindu spiritual leader (9)
 - 12 Of the middle of a region or country (8)
 - 15 Disguised (6)
 - 16 Very shy (5)
 - 17 Area set back or indented (6)
 - 20 Shade of blue tinged with green (4)

Crossword

1				2			3	4				5
						6						
7		8								9		
10										11		
								12				
		13						14				
15							16					17
18						19						
					20							
		21										
22												
							23					

Residents have moved into their new homes at Clos Yr Orsaf in the popular seaside town of Porthcawl.

The 10 apartments for over-55s were built in partnership with P+P Builders.

