

## Resident Version: Wales & West Housing Group Self-Evaluation 2024 – InTouch article







All housing associations in Wales are regulated by Welsh Government and must follow the Regulatory Framework. Every year, we must carry out a self-evaluation as part of our Regulation Judgement. It shows how we meet the 9 Regulatory Standards that all social landlords in Wales must meet. The standards cover governance, service delivery and financial viability.




**Well-governed:** This means to be led effectively and be well managed by boards, executives and staff. Working with residents and partners to make and implement effective business decisions.

**Delivering high quality homes and services:** This means providing homes and services that meet people’s diverse needs and expectations, with an emphasis on high quality services and continuous improvement.

**Financially viable:** This means having well-managed finances, and the resources and cash flow to meet current and future business commitments.

How will we improve:

		<b>Improvements</b> - To meet all areas of this standard, we will:
<b>Regulatory Standard 1: Strategic leadership and governance</b>		Implement a Board recruitment and succession plan for 2024 and 2025  Publish the Association’s approach to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion on the website.  Design an approach to ensure all new projects with legislative requirement changes and appropriately risk assessed
<b>Regulatory Standard 2: Robust risk management and assurance arrangements</b>		Undertake an induction of our new Internal Auditors.
<b>Regulatory Standard 3: High quality services are delivered to tenants</b>		Determine suite of measures for each service to enable effective regular monitoring of performance and fair outcomes for staff and residents to include quantitative and qualitative measures.
<b>Regulatory Standard 4: Tenants are empowered and supported to influence the design and delivery of services</b>		Embed intervention skills across the staff group, focusing initially on front line service such as Repairs, Lettings and ASB.
<b>Regulatory Standard 5: Rents and service charges are affordable for current and future tenants</b>		Work with Community Housing Cymru and other social landlords to carry out a full review of Living Rents for Wales.
<b>Regulatory Standard 6: Strategic approach to value for money</b>		Work on an in-house project to improve our systems from procurement to payment to make sure that we maximise value for money.

<b>Regulatory Standard 7: Financial planning and management</b>		An in-house project to look at accounting and reporting systems is underway to make sure that all systems work well together.
<b>Regulatory Standard 8: Assets and liabilities are well managed</b>		Put in place an asset management system to further improve how we maintain homes and understand quality, safety, performance and investment required.
<b>Regulatory Standard 9: Providing high quality accommodation</b>		We will be working on an update to our Asset Management strategy and WHQS Compliance Policy.

For further performance information please see our quarterly InTouch magazine.

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### **Our Self Evaluation**

The self-evaluation is updated throughout the year and reported to Board every three months. It focusses on resident priorities, business objectives and now the regulatory standards. The self-evaluation has been reported to Board in this way for several years and has proved an effective and reliable way of showing high levels of performance and resident satisfaction.

We use a wide range of information to evidence our self-evaluation, including performance measures, financial reports and forecasts, resident satisfaction and feedback, and annual reports.

The Board reviewed the self-evaluation in July 2024 and agreed the contents to be provided to Welsh Government.

This document is a summary of how well we are delivering on the Regulatory Standards and sets out the areas where we plan to make improvements over the next year

Find out more about the [Regulatory Standards](#).

### **The Regulatory Standards:**

RS1 – Strategic leadership and governance

- Clear strategy reflecting vision, culture and values
- Committed to equality diversity and inclusion (including anti-racism and tackling hate crime)
- Makes logical decisions and complies with law and regulation

RS2 – Robust risk management and assurance arrangements

- Have a framework for risk management and manage current and emerging risk
- Does not put social tenants or assets at undue risk

RS3 – High quality services are delivered to tenants

- Keeps tenants safe in their homes
- Delivers services which meet the needs of tenants

RS4 – Tenant are empowered and supported to influence the designed and delivery of services

- Creates and enables a culture which values and promotes involvement
- Demonstrates diverse tenant views inform the development and review of housing and related services

RS5 – Rents and service charges are affordable for current and future tenants

- Ensures the rules and guidance are complied with

RS6 – Strategic approach to value for money

- Makes decisions in line with value for money approach
- Demonstrates to tenants that it achieves value of money

RS7 – Financial planning and management

- Sets financial plans to meet its aims and is financially viable

RS8 – Assets and liabilities are well managed

- Understands the assets and liabilities of the organisation
- Uses this information to inform decisions

RS9 – Providing high quality accommodation

- Homes meet appropriate standards including Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

### **Regulatory Standard 1: Strategic leadership and governance**

We have a business plan that outlines the vision, culture and values of the organisation and sets out the strategic priorities and actions to achieve its purpose. The annual report showcases achievements over the year against the strategic priorities.

The Board has adopted the 2021 CHC Code of Governance and the review highlighted areas of improvement around Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). We have written a diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan to help us work towards achieving a more diverse inclusive organisation.

We review how the Board is made up every year. There is a good mix of skills, experience and diversity on the Board which reflects the communities we serve. This means that decisions are robust, well discussed and logical. There are a number of Board Members standing down over the next few years, so recruitment of new members is an area that we're looking at.

The Resident Involvement Strategy is based on listening to demand from residents and gathering feedback on services provided. The views of many people are captured and understood. Residents have consistently told us they wish to represent themselves, not be represented by a small group, they want to be involved in those matters that directly affect them which is why our approach has been developed and enshrined as part of the Wales & West Housing Group Way.

### **Regulatory Standard 2: Robust risk management and assurance arrangements**

We have a comprehensive Board Assurance Framework which is based on the management of risk and performance. It identifies the matters to be paid attention to, the controls to be applied and the reporting of outcomes. The quarterly assurance and performance report provides the Board with evidence of financial and operational performance and risk management as well as identifying emerging risks. The Board reviews its approach to risk every year.

Risk is considered as part of all Board decisions that involve new business ventures, developments, or major expenditure.

Business continuity and disaster recovery plans are in place for Wales & West and set out the approach for the delivery of services if there were a major event or threat to the running of the business.

### **Regulatory Standard 3: High quality services are delivered to tenants**

Safety and compliance works are mainly undertaken by the in-house contractor, Cambria Maintenance, giving us full control over the areas of compliance. Performance is very high and is reported to the Executive Director monthly and to Board every three months.

We use a model described as the WWHG Way. This means that services are tailored at point of delivery to meet the needs of every resident. Staff are empowered to vary services as required and are provided with information about residents such as support needs, protected characteristics or the need for reasonable adjustments. Staff are provided with training on different needs to address conscious and unconscious bias. The training is being reviewed as part of actions to deliver the Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.

To make sure that residents are happy with the services that they receive, we regularly survey residents. This is done in two way – shortly after service is provided, such as a repair or planned works and annually as part of a larger telephone survey.

A summary performance report is available on our [website](#) and included as part of our In Touch magazine. This is one of the ways that we let residents know how the organisation is doing.

Resident satisfaction result in 2023:

- overall satisfaction with services was 81%,
- satisfaction with quality of the home was 82%
- 88% felt safe and secure in their home.

#### **Regulatory Standard 4: Tenants are empowered and supported to influence the design and delivery of services**

The WWHG Way puts residents at the heart of the way the business is run. It is an integral part of all staff engagement and underpins the approach to service design, delivery and improvement. Listening to many residents to understand what matters is fundamental to our culture.

The Get Involved “Have Your Say” section of the website helps residents to understand the organisation’s approach to resident involvement and the ways to get involved. We also have a Resident Participation Steering Group who assist in guiding the approach to engagement.

The resident involvement strategy is based on what matters to residents. Through listening to demand from residents and getting their feedback on services, the views of many people are captured and understood. This helps us shape our services and introduce improvements.

The vast majority of residents are satisfied with the arrangements based on the results of the 2023 Resident Satisfaction Survey:

- listens to views and acts on them (74%),
- taking part in decision making (66%),
- having a say in service management (74%).

The results are top quartile based on the Welsh Government report May 2024.

#### **Regulatory Standard 5: Rents and service charges are affordable for current and future tenants**

Our rent policy is based on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) living rent model. This was developed after undertaking additional research understand the implications across different areas of Wales and for different groups of residents.

The rent policy has been applied to all new tenancies since April 2020 and is fully compliant with all applicable rules and statutory guidance.

Current arrears are: (GRAPH)

2020 – 3.41%

2021 – 2.65%

2022 – 2.05%

2023 – 1.5%

2024 – 1.35%

#### **Regulatory Standard 6: Strategic approach to value for money**

We have a well-established approach to Value for Money, which focusses on efficiency, resident satisfaction and maximising social value. Information on value for money is included in the Annual Report and Financial Statements. [\(LINKS\)](#)

Performance measures provide information about efficiency, both organisationally and for specific areas such as the cost of kitchen renewals. The performance report is presented to Board each quarter and to residents through the In Touch magazine.

The most recent resident satisfaction survey showed that 83% of residents were satisfied with value for money of their rent.

### **Regulatory Standard 7: Financial planning and management**

The Business Plan sets the financial plan for the coming five years and the management accounts and rolling forecast provide a quarterly update on how well we are performing financially. The Board is told of our financial position at every meeting with the full accounts presented every three months.

Ensuring the availability of funds to meet short- and medium-term commitments is a risk that the Board has identified and monitor through the quarterly assurance and performance report. The report along with the five-year business plan demonstrates the long-term strength of the Group and that sufficient funding is available to meet the business strategy.

The Board receive quarterly reports on compliance with the terms agreed with lenders including covenants, and we comply with all of these. We also set internal performance levels and Board are assured of these through the reports they receive.

As part of the Business Planning process, sensitivity and stress testing against a number of scenarios are carried out, as well as “perfect storm” testing to the breaking point. The results of the stress testing are reported to Board to inform its decision making. The financial regulations set limits for staff before further authorisation is required to ensure a tight control on spending and help ensure the achievement of financial goals.

### **Regulatory Standard 8: Assets and liabilities are well managed**

An accurate and up to date Asset & Liabilities register is maintained and shows where records and information on our homes and other assets can be found. Key parts of the register are detailed in the quarterly management accounts.

All housing stock is reviewed every two years by the Asset Management Group, which includes all Executive Directors, housing and property senior managers and frontline staff. The assessment includes a review of stock condition data, rent and lettings performance and local housing market information to inform asset investment and management decisions.








We hold lots of information on stock condition, adaptation and energy efficiency. This is used to develop a rolling three-year investment programme and helps inform about remodelling and disposals.

### **Regulatory Standard 9: Providing high quality accommodation**

We have an Asset Management Strategy which commits to effectively managing and investing in our homes to ensure both the value and suitability for residents is maintained.

The Board also receive a development update to each meeting about new homes and developments, as well as an annual report on WHQS compliance for its current stock.

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