

in view

annual review 2008



Newydd



Sustainable Communities
Affordable Homes
Successful Partnerships



www.newydd.co.uk



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If you require translation facilities or information in other languages or formats, including Welsh, Braille, large font or on CD or tape then this is available on request. You are also able to use our Language Line service to speak to someone in your preferred language. Please ask for details.



Welcome to our latest Annual Review. We have decided to use our In View magazine format and to fill it with information that we hope will be of interest to our tenants and partner organisations.

As always it has been a busy year and we need to say a big thank you to all the tenants who have helped us over the year whether through their work on the estates and at the schemes or by attending meetings and working groups to help us improve our services. It is appreciated. Thanks also to our staff, Board members and all the contractors, solicitors, funders and other businesses without whom it would be very hard to get things done.

Newydd's aims are Sustainable Communities, Affordable Homes and Successful Partnerships and we will work towards achieving these three aims by delivering:

Sustainable Communities

- Communities that people want to live in
- Communities where the quality of housing and the environment is high
- Communities where everyone feels included
- Communities where people feel safe
- Communities that people are proud of

Affordable Homes

- Homes that are at or within rent benchmarks
- Homes that are within the reach of first time buyers and local people in housing need
- Homes that are efficient to heat and live in
- Homes that are appropriately designed and located for people's needs
- Advice and support to encourage successful money management



Gail Lancaster
Chair

Successful Partnerships

- Partnerships that add value to the participants
- Partnerships that are stable, collaborative and can evolve
- Partnerships that are making a positive impact
- Partnerships that are addressing challenges
- Partnerships that secure efficiencies

You will see from this Annual Review that we are making good progress but there is still a lot to do. We will need your support and ideas so please take the opportunities that are in place and summarised on page 26 to get involved.

Gail Lancaster
Chair of the Newydd Board

Newydd's new homes at Robins Lane, Barry



Home Buy properties sold by Newydd at Williamstown (left) and Barry (right)



providing affordable homes

Newydd's development programme has continued to gain momentum during 2007 with 215 new homes in the development pipeline due to be delivered in the next two years.

We asked our residents for their views on our recent developments for rent at Robins Lane and Holton Reach, both in Barry. Typical comments included:

"It is a stunning house from the inside and the outside."

"Newydd have provided myself and my family with the perfect home, not only does it look good on the outside, it's the same throughout the whole house."

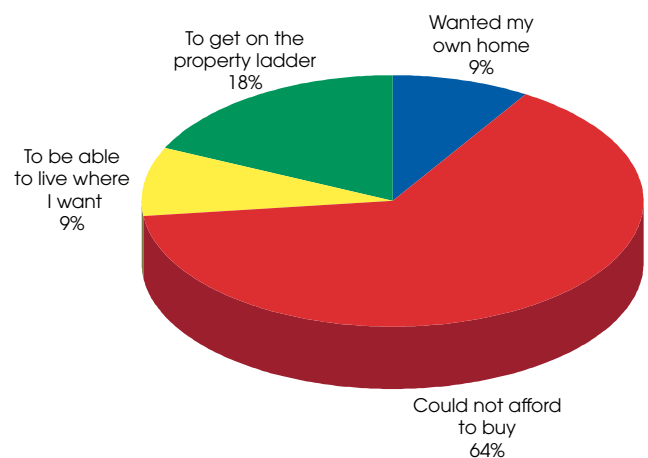
"Newydd has furnished me with a property I am proud to reside in."

Newydd has also provided opportunities for first-time buyers wishing to purchase a new home but unable to afford the full market price of the property. Newydd has worked in partnership with Barratt Homes South Wales using our Home Buy route to enable first-time buyers to purchase a new property. First-time buyers can purchase a proportion of the value of the new home (typically needing to obtain a mortgage for 70% of the value).

Newydd has offered this opportunity in Williamstown and Barry, where we have been working in conjunction with the relevant local authorities to provide 17 new properties.

Feedback from purchasers of our Home Buy properties sold previously in Rhoose and Penarth illustrates that affordability is a major problem for those wanting to purchase a home rather than rent. Home Buy provides a solution to this common problem.

Why did you apply to purchase a home via our Homebuy scheme?



For details of Home Buy properties being sold by Newydd and our partner housing associations see the website www.homeswithinreach.co.uk or call our offices.

Treforest, Pontypridd
Development of 14 houses and 9 flats
Completion: Winter 2009



future developments

Newydd is developing new affordable homes across the Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda Cynon Taf. With nearly 7,000 people registered on our waiting lists every new housing scheme makes an important contribution to tackling housing need.

Jacksons Quay, Barry
Development of 50 flats and 19 houses
Start on site: Christmas 2008



Main Street, Barry
Development of 5 houses and 15 flats
(2 for disabled residents)
Completion: Spring 2009

providing homes at affordable rents

Where our homes are

Local Authority	Affordable Rent	Affordable Home Ownership	Managed Under Management Agreements
Caerphilly		10	
Cardiff	31	12	40
Carmarthenshire		1	
Ceredigion		11	
Merthyr Tydfil		5	
Neath Port Talbot	68	4	
Powys	218	6	
Rhondda Cynon Taf	712	16	
Swansea			20
Torfaen	38		
Vale of Glamorgan	1208	58	317*
Totals	2275	123	377

* Management agreement is with The Cadarn Housing Group

Charging Affordable Rents

Assured rents charged per week from April 2008

Accommodation	Lowest	Highest
One bed flat	49.16	57.24
Two bed flat	54.24	63.59
Two bed house	59.34	67.65
Three bed house	63.81	75.93
Four bed house	78.10	84.79
Sheltered accommodation	47.11	58.88

Rents do not include service charges

In April 2008 our benchmark rents increased by 4.9% in line with the Assembly rent benchmarks. Some rent increases were higher as some rents are still lower than benchmark levels.

Our rents may be affordable but many tenants still struggle to keep up with rent payments and this problem has got slightly worse over the last year. We were only able to collect just under 98% of the rent we were due. As a result we were unable to meet our target of no more than 2% for rent arrears.

We have been working closely with specialists employed by partner organisations to find ways of addressing this issue and our staff have also attended training on benefits so that they can offer better advice to tenants who find themselves in trouble.

Rent unpaid by current tenants

2007/08	2.43%
2006/07	2.15%
Best in Wales	0.30%
Worst in Wales	13.92%
Average in Wales	4.27%

Rent collected as a percentage of rent due

2007/08	97.86%
2006/07	98.96%
Best in Wales	99.83%
Worst in Wales	91.84%
Average in Wales	97.04%



maintaining homes

We have significantly increased the amount we spend in response to repair requests from tenants but we still need to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard through improvements to kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems and other key parts of tenants' homes.

	2007/08	2006/07
Day to day repairs	1,008,000	662,000
Cyclical (e.g. painting)	154,000	382,000
Planned improvements	1,192,000	1,529,000
Total	2,354,000	2,573,000

By working with new contractors and developing better ways of working we have also managed to speed up the time it takes to complete repairs compared with last year. We completed nearly 6,000 jobs during the year, that's over 100 a week.

Time taken to complete repairs

Priority	Target	Average time taken	Number of jobs completed
Emergency	1 day	1 day	1,481
Urgent	7 days	4 days	2,036
Routine	28 days	11 days	2,404

Responding to your feedback

It is very important that you tell us what you think of our maintenance service as we can only improve things if we know about them.

During 2006/7 you told us that you rated 91% of the work completed by our contractors as good or satisfactory. During 2007/8 your satisfaction with one of our contractors deteriorated sharply and by the middle of 2007 19% of jobs completed by this contractor were being rated as poor.

In response to your feedback we decided to end our relationship with this repairs contractor and transferred their work to another firm. So far this year we are pleased that satisfaction results are now much improved with more than 95% of the jobs completed by R & M Williams and Celtic Developments being rated as good or satisfactory.

However many tenants do not return the satisfaction questionnaire and this makes it difficult to assess how you feel about the contractors we use. As an incentive we enter all completed questionnaires into a prize draw and one lucky person will win £150.



maintaining homes

Spending Money on Maintenance

We have a legal duty to provide a maintenance service to tenants and we continually monitor and assess the service and the contractors we work with to ensure that it is as effective and efficient as possible.

Repairs can be reported by telephone, at our offices, on-line or to any member of staff. Once reported they are assessed, classified as emergency, urgent or routine and passed to our contractors who organise and carry out the work.

Maintenance is very expensive and we also need tenants to take a responsible approach to maintaining their home. Fortunately the majority do take the time to ensure their home is safe, secure and in a good state of repair.

Tenants are expected to look after their homes and not to allow damage to be caused. Certain matters are the responsibility of tenants to repair and maintain, these include:

- Carpets and other laminate flooring that has been laid by the tenant.
- Gas and electrical appliances purchased by the tenant.
- All broken windows.
- Repairs to washing machines and tumble driers (other than those provided in our sheltered schemes).
- Blocked sinks, basins and toilets.
- Plugs and chains to baths, sinks and basins.

- Gaining access to a home and lock changes when a tenant loses their keys.
- Toilet seats and lids.
- Patios laid and fencing erected by the tenant.
- Keeping private gardens tidy, cutting the grass and removing rubbish.

In some circumstances (for instance in emergency situations) we will carry out repairs that are the responsibility of the tenant but the cost of this is recharged to the tenant. We also incur significant costs when residents move out of their homes and leave the property in a poor state of repair.

We try to assist this moving process so that it is as smooth as possible and so that we can get our properties ready quickly so that the incoming tenant moves into a clean, comfortable, safe and secure home. However there have been incidents where our properties have not been left in a good condition which results in us having to spend a considerable sum of money and time bringing that home up to an acceptable standard.

Significant costs were incurred during 2007/8 in our void properties for works that were the responsibility of the outgoing resident. The total costs amounted to just over £100,000.

While we always try to recover these costs this money could have been spent on other improvements such as providing 40 new kitchens, or 67 new bathrooms, or new windows to 44 two bedroom flats or 29 three bedroom houses.



Newydd says thank you

Newydd wants to say thank you to the many tenants who leave their home in a good condition.

We have introduced a reward scheme for residents when they move out of our properties in order to thank them for leaving their property in a good state of repair and with no outstanding financial debt on the property. If the criteria are met, we will pay the outgoing resident £250.

Recently, a resident living at Newydd's estate in Newpark, Talbot Green wanted to move out to a home that was better able to meet her changing needs. The home that she was living in at Talbot Green was assessed before she moved out and she was asked to repay a small amount of rent that was outstanding. The resident had also taken the responsibility to carry out small repairs within her home before she moved out so that the only work that we needed to do once the resident had moved out was to carry out statutory checks on the gas installation in the house (including the boiler), do an electrical check and carry out a final clean throughout the property before the new resident moved in.

The responsible actions taken by the resident moving out of the property enabled us to rent the property a lot faster to another resident who needed a new home, and the resident moving out was rewarded with a £250 payment.

To qualify for this payment when you leave you must:

1. Ensure 4 weeks notice is provided to the Association of your intention to end the tenancy.
2. Ensure that the rent account for the property is up to date.
3. Ensure that there are no outstanding court costs against the tenancy.
4. Ensure that any rechargeable repairs carried out on the property during the course of the tenancy have been paid.
5. Ensure the property is left in a clean condition so that the only work required before re-letting the property is a gas service, an electrical test and a final clean.



letting properties

It is important that we let our properties as quickly as possible.

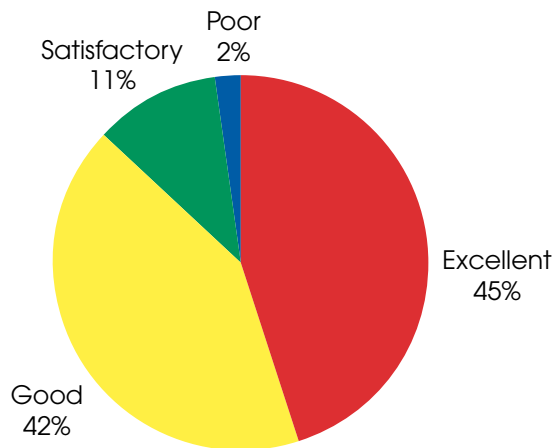
This enables us to maximise the rent we receive so enabling us to spend more on services like maintenance. It also means that people on our waiting lists get a home quicker. This year our performance has deteriorated slightly and whilst we still let our homes on average in 9 days (against a target of 10 days) we are no longer meeting our target of no more than 0.4% of rent lost due to empty property.

To speed lettings up we carried out a review of the process from the day the outgoing tenant tells us they are leaving to the day the new tenant moves in. We are hoping to improve our performance this year.

Rent loss due to empty properties	
2007/08	0.65%
2006/07	0.39%
Best in Wales	0.05%
Worst in Wales	4.30%
Average in Wales	1.13%

Every time we let a property to a new tenant, they are asked to complete a feedback form to let us know how we can improve the service. Over the last year, the responses have been very positive with 98% of new tenants satisfied with the lettings process.

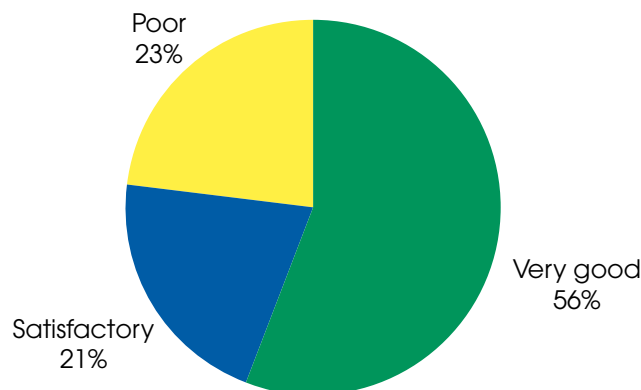
How do you rate the Association's lettings service?



A crucial part of the lettings process is that the allocation systems we use are easy to understand. In our surveys, 93% of new tenants found the information easy to understand and we are working to improve the information we provide.

The quality of the property is also assessed through the survey and the results are set out below. Almost a quarter of new tenants felt the property they were moving in to was in a poor condition and for this reason we have consulted with the Community Panels and introduced a "Minimum Lettings Standard" to ensure that all properties are in good condition before they are let.

What condition was your property in?





don't risk your life!

The local and national newspapers report from time to time that people have been seriously injured or died from carbon monoxide poisoning or an explosion due to a leak or build up of gas from an unserviced or faulty gas boiler or gas fire.

Newydd has a legal duty to carry out an annual service on the boiler within the property (and gas fire if one has been fitted by us). The purpose of the service is to ensure that the boiler is working properly, is not leaking gas into the property and is also working efficiently which will help to keep fuel bills down.

Sometimes we find it very difficult to gain access to properties in order to carry out the annual service. The majority of our tenants provide access when it is requested but some tenants fail to respond to an access request or fail to provide access on an agreed appointment. This results in additional work and costs for our staff, gas service engineers and inconvenience for other tenants as appointments have to be re-arranged.

More importantly, failure to provide access can put your life at risk so we will take legal action against tenants who fail to respond to three requests for access. It is a condition of every tenancy that reasonable access must be provided. For example, we have recently taken legal action against a tenant in Barry.

The tenant responded to the Court's request for access by confirming that she hadn't actually been living at the property for some time and she subsequently ended the tenancy which allowed us to carry out the necessary gas service when the property was empty.

On another occasion, we commenced legal action against another tenant and applied for possession of the property. On this occasion, the tenant responded to the Court's notice within the required 28 day period and provided access to allow a gas service to be carried out. Had the tenant not responded to the Court's request for access then we would have applied to the Court to carry out an eviction.

Both gas boilers have now been serviced but in both cases the tenants have been charged the costs of the legal action.

If you want to check when your next gas service is due or want to arrange access then please phone our maintenance staff on 0845 603 1696 during office hours.



Care & Repair in the Vale

meeting your needs

Everyone has different needs and Newydd is committed to providing a flexible range of services that support people who just want to get on with their lives. We are involved in a range of projects aimed at making our services as accessible as possible and improving the quality of life for everyone who lives in our homes or uses our services.

Helping Older Home Owners

Care & Repair helps older home-owners to remain in their own homes by assisting with repairs or adaptations. In 2007/8 Care & Repair in the Vale assisted 1639 people through its different services, most of which are in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Type of work completed	No of Jobs Completed
Main service (repairs & adaptations)	266
Advice only	498
Handyperson Service	1081
Carers Handyperson Service	222
Small Adaptations for Social Services	116
Keysafes for Social Services	293
Renewal Area Safety Grants	15
Rapid Response Adaptations	429
Total	2920

Our Care & Repair service can be contacted on 01446 704308 or care&repair@newydd.co.uk

Mrs J is 78 years old and suffers from arthritis, which makes it very painful for her to move and very difficult to climb stairs and impossible to use the bath.

Our Care & Repair Caseworker visited Mrs J to discuss the problems she was having and the options that may be available to her. The caseworker also checked whether Mrs J was getting all the benefits she was entitled to. Because of her physical difficulties Attendance Allowance was applied for and obtained which also increased the amount of pension credit she was entitled to. Mrs J was referred to Social Services for an Occupational Therapy assessment, but as there is a long waiting list, it was arranged privately and paid for by a benevolent funder.

The assessment enabled Mrs J to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant with Care & Repair's help. A grant was provided to adapt an outside outhouse to provide a ground floor toilet and walk in shower. The Care & Repair Technical Officer prepared drawings and obtained estimates for the work.

Throughout the whole process Mrs J has been supported by Care & Repair staff who took most of the worry out of the process, they ensured everything progressed and that all of the work was done properly and if there were any problems Mrs J only had to lift up the phone and ring Care & Repair.

The finished ground floor facilities. Mrs J is now overjoyed to be living downstairs and no longer worries about climbing the stairs.





property adaptations

Sometimes tenants' homes become unsuitable for their changing needs. However moving is not always the best option and we may be able to carry out adaptations that enable tenants to continue to enjoy their homes.

The Assembly provides Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs). There are strict rules regarding what can be funded but Newydd will help tenants who may qualify by making applications on their behalf.

5 Steps to an Adapted Home

Step 1

An Occupational Therapist visits to assess your needs. It is important that the assessment is thorough as once the grant is approved additional adaptations that were missed cannot be funded.

Step 2

Newydd starts the application process based on the Occupational Therapist's report.

Step 3

Newydd asks contractors to visit your property to see how much the works will cost. You will need to provide access to your home so that they can do this.

Step 4

Providing that the work falls within the Welsh Assembly Government's cost guidelines, we will then issue an order to the successful contractor and they will call you to arrange a convenient time to carry out the work.

Step 5

Newydd will apply for PAG funding from the Assembly. The tenant does not need to contribute to the cost of the works and Newydd sorts out payment to the contractor.

Two satisfied customers

Mr and Mrs Rocke of Penarth:

"The contractors were very co-operative, tidy and did a fantastic job. We are very pleased with the process and delighted with the results"

Mrs Stirling also from Penarth:

"The adaptations have given me a new lease of life, I was delighted with the work and the contractor was very kind and polite"

If you think you would benefit from adaptations to your home ring our maintenance staff on 0845 603 1696 during office hours.



providing clear benefits

Over the past year we have written to every tenant to ask them if they would like to receive information in large print or in another community language. We now have a record of every tenants expressed wishes and will try to take these into account in all our dealings with them. Nearly 50 tenants said that they struggled to read information in our standard sized print so we now provide letters and newsletters to these tenants in a large print version.

Many of those requesting information in large print live in our sheltered schemes. Therefore we have been working closely with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) to implement their Visibly Better standard at our sheltered schemes. Our staff have been trained and audits have been carried out to identify improvements such as the use of contrasting colours to aid people with sight impairment to enjoy their home safely.

Three tenants have asked to receive information in Welsh. In response to this demand, and following consultation, we reviewed our Welsh Language Scheme. On 1 May 2008 the Welsh Language Board approved a new scheme. This means that we will no longer provide everyone with information in Welsh and English but those who have asked for information in Welsh will continue to receive it.

Some key features of our new Welsh Language Scheme

Newydd is still committed to providing services in the Welsh language to those who request it. Our intention is that anyone requesting services in Welsh will not be placed at a disadvantage, nor will they receive a slower or worse service as a result.

We will no longer produce bilingual information so English speakers will only receive information in English.

14% of our staff speak Welsh and we will continue to employ designated Welsh speakers so that people wanting to speak Welsh can be served by Welsh speakers.

Designated Welsh speakers will wear a badge (pictured above) to identify themselves at public events.

We will no longer have bilingual messages on our answer phones; this was very unpopular with tenants.

We no longer have a bilingual website. There is a page in Welsh on how to access services in the Welsh language. Any published information in Welsh will be placed on the website.

These changes have significantly reduced the costs of producing information. We are using this money to improve the quality of the printed information we send to tenants.

equality and diversity

Promoting Employment Opportunities

Just over 1% of our workforce is from a minority ethnic community and we have worked hard at promoting careers in housing by attending careers fairs aimed at minority ethnic communities.

Over the past year we have also been working closely with Women Connect First. This organisation assists women from minority ethnic communities who are looking for employment by giving them work experience through placements. Over the year we assisted five women with placements and it is hoped that these women will apply for jobs with us in the future.

We have also been looking at ways of helping people with disabilities to get work experience and find permanent employment. We supported the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) in carrying out research that looked at ways to encourage housing organisations to support disabled people wanting to pursue a career in housing.

The project is called 'Positive Action for Disability' and the CIH believes the development of a new trainee scheme has considerable potential to support the recruitment and retention of new skilled people into the housing sector. It is estimated there are 9.8 million disabled adults in the UK and 85% of UK businesses are reported as experiencing difficulties in recruitment. 40% of households living in social housing have a family member who is disabled or has a limiting illness, and disabled people are twice as likely to live in social housing compared with other types of accommodation.



Martin Winn, CIH
Director of Professional
Development said:

"There is a strong ethical and business case underpinning the project from which all employers in the sector can benefit".

Equality of Access to Information and Services

With input from tenants and experts we have started a review of all our services against the seven strands of equality, these are:

- **Race**
- **Religion or Belief**
- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Gender**
- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Welsh Language**

The review is considering whether the way we do things has a neutral impact or a negative impact and whether there are any changes we can make that will achieve a more positive impact. The result of this review will be a new Equality and Diversity Action Plan for Newydd.



equality and diversity

Tackling Racial Harassment

Newydd will not tolerate, in any circumstances, any form of racial harassment. We are committed to tackling incidents of racial harassment and hate crime effectively and we will offer support to victims and take appropriate action against perpetrators of such acts. We acknowledge that incidents of racial harassment and hate crime are under reported and will seek to address this issue by the ongoing development of our Racial Harassment Policy and by adopting a sympathetic complainant centered approach to dealing with reported incidents and complaints.

The Association believes that a racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

If you feel you have been a victim of a racist incident, you should contact the Association for advice and we may advise you to contact the police. We will come out and talk to you about the incident within 48 hours. Where people feel threatened we may be able to fit extra security to your home.

We have agreements in place with many other agencies to offer support and to resolve the problems you may be having. If the perpetrator is a Newydd tenant and we are able to demonstrate enough evidence (and you agree) we can take the perpetrator to court and may be able to evict them.

We encourage you to report racist incidents and can assure you that we will take swift action in response.

N.E.A.D.S.

Newydd's Equality and Disabilities Subgroup, formerly the Disabilities and Equalities Advisory Group, has continued to go from strength to strength. Tenant membership has increased and the group has now developed an action plan to ensure that their aims remain focused, that their needs are recognised and achievable targets set.

Meetings are very interesting as members not only share their experiences and ideas but guest speakers are regularly invited along to give specialist information on specific topics, for example, the Stroke Association, In Control (self directed support) and Vale People First. Free training was also offered to group members and was provided by the Disability Advice Project. Communities First are also heavily involved and share updates on what is happening regionally.

Anyone who has an interest in disabilities and equalities is more than welcome to come along to the meetings because in order for us to achieve success Newydd N.E.A.D.S. you!



community involvement



Estate Champion



Hi, my name is Susan Nipper and I live at College Field Close in Barry. I have been a Newydd tenant for many years but have only recently been involved with the Newydd community team.

My area hasn't got a tenants group but after chatting to Tracy my Community Involvement Officer I became involved as an Estate Champion.

I attend the Newydd Equality and Disabilities Sub group (N.E.A.D.S.) which tries to improve the way Newydd works with their disabled tenants. The group has regular guest speakers and I feel we are improving things for all tenants. I am also part of the festival planning committee. I always thought that the festival was only for children but now I'm involved, I can see that the day will have activities for all age ranges like bingo, tea dances as well as bouncy castles and children's activities.

Newydd has made it easy for me to attend meetings with transport arranged to the offices. This is important for me because otherwise I wouldn't be able to attend. There has also been training for us all so that we are better informed to make decisions and work with Newydd to improve things.

The best thing about getting involved has been meeting new people from all across south and mid Wales. We all have lots in common and I have made some really good friends. We even keep in touch outside the meetings by writing to each other. In the past I haven't really left my area, but now I get out and about more and can't wait for the Aberaman Duck Race which the girls from the N.E.A.D.S. group have invited me to.

I would tell any tenant that if they have time to spare to get involved, give the office a call and they will make sure you can attend. I didn't realise before how much fun people had getting involved and the great opportunity it offers to meet new people.



What do our tenants want?

Newydd Housing Association is focussing on what its tenants want – we believe that the best improvements to the services you receive will come when we fully understand how you want the service to be delivered, what your needs will be in the future and what choices you want to be given. We measure our success in achieving this by assessing your overall satisfaction with the service.

We are finding out what your opinions are in a number of different ways:

- Tenants' survey
- Tenant led quarterly mystery shopping exercise
- Through having tenants on the Newydd Board
- Community Panels
- Advisory Groups
- Newydd 90
- Tenant involvement in Best Value reviews
- Monitoring of complaints
- Feedback from tenants' groups

Every year we review our priorities to ensure we are improving services and we really need your views. If you want to get involved, contact your local Newydd office.

You will have by now received the tenants' survey and we would encourage you to complete the form and return it to us as soon as possible. You may be one of 10 winners of £100!

The survey tells us how you want the service delivered in the future, and measures our success so far. If you need help to complete the survey, please contact your local Newydd office who will be happy to assist.

Tenants' Group Funding

This year saw the introduction of new criteria for applying for funding for tenants' groups. Regular monitoring has been incorporated into the process as well as CRB checks of any persons working with young and vulnerable tenants.

More groups than ever bid for monies from the pot and Newydd received requests for funding for a wide range of activities and projects across all regions – sensory gardens, amateur dramatic projects, trips to markets and places of interest, training, Welsh classes, computer projects and youth clubs.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the newly formed groups and give thanks for the achievements of all the existing ones.

If you are interested in getting involved or setting up a tenants group or want to know more about the funding that is available please contact Tracy or Keiron on either 01446 701501 or 01443 408080 or send an email to consultation@newydd.co.uk



Community Panel Member

John Phillips, pictured above, from Rhiw Ceris (Cwmbach) has been a member of the Valleys Community Panel since it started last September. John is currently Chair of the panel and a Newydd Board member. Since the start of the panel John and other tenants have been involved in reviewing the way we tackle anti social behaviour, repairs, service charges and many other areas of Newydd's work. John has been involved with the group to ensure that as an organisation we are able to deliver services which reflect the views and needs of tenants.

John commented, *"The Community Panel gives tenants the ability to scrutinise and review the actions of our landlord. It is a place where tenants' views can be taken into account and acted upon by Newydd staff as well as giving us a direct link to the Board"*

For those who would like to get involved Newydd will provide transport as well as provide any support you may need (e.g. childcare, disabled access etc) to attend. We also offer training to any tenant who would like to be involved.

Newydd Hits the Road

This year saw the return of the Newydd road-show! The main focus of the road-shows was to encourage tenants to complete the tenant satisfaction questionnaire. To this end, a motor-home was hired for 2 weeks to tour our estates. The first week was spent on estates in the Vale and the second in the Valleys and Newtown. Many staff came along to assist the Community Involvement Officers in completing this mammoth task and despite the terrible weather conditions the events were a runaway success.

As a thank you to tenants who took the time to fill in the form, they were given a free piggy bank and ice-cream. Can you spot who is ably assisting Mr Whippy in the photo?





planning ahead

Each year we review our plans for the future and set ourselves new priorities to ensure that we are heading in the right direction to meet our overall aims of:

- *Sustainable Communities*
- *Affordable Homes*
- *Successful Partnerships*

Following extensive consultation involving tenants, local authorities, key partners, staff and Board members we have set the following priorities for the coming year. These are arranged into five themes of;

- Customer Insight
- Service Improvement
- Communication
- Business Performance and Governance
- Reputation and Identity.

▲ What are we going to do?

■ What we will do to achieve this and when?

Customer Insight

- ▲ We will use the feedback from the 2008 STATUS survey and develop a prioritised action plan that will achieve a step change in service delivery and improved tenant satisfaction.
- Produce an action plan by February 2009.
- ▲ We will put in place a new framework for carrying out surveys and evaluating feedback received to focus action on tenants' priorities.
- Put in place framework by June 2008.
- ▲ To challenge the way we do things we will introduce an enhanced system of tenant scrutiny through trained tenant mystery shoppers and tenant membership on Audit Committee.
- Train a team of tenant mystery shoppers by August 2008. Aim for tenant membership on Audit Committee by October 2008.

Service Improvement

- ▲ We will implement a Service Delivery Plan that clarifies expectations for day to day service delivery so that our staff are clear about what is expected of them and their performance can be monitored.
- Prepare the plan to commence implementation in September 2008.
- ▲ We will establish baseline measures for customer satisfaction from the STATUS survey feedback and set targets to achieve the step change in service delivery and improved satisfaction we are aiming for.
- Establish baseline measures and targets by February 2009.
- ▲ Based on tenant feedback and following consultation with

Community Panels we will review the current model of regional service delivery in order to best meet our tenants' needs.

- To report on feedback and results of consultation and present proposals by February 2009.
- ▲ We will carry out a review of equality of access to information and services to ensure no group is unfairly disadvantaged by the way we do things.
- To prepare an integrated Equalities Action Plan by February 2009.
- ▲ We will carry out a review of maintenance processes in order to transform the service we provide to tenants.
- To report on review outcomes and action plan by January 2009.
- ▲ We will implement an Affordable Warmth Strategy in order to identify ways of tackling fuel poverty and reducing tenants' costs and supporting national carbon emissions reduction targets.
- To implement a strategy by February 2009.
- ▲ We will complete the review of anti social behaviour and implement new systems that will significantly enhance the way we address reported anti social behaviour.
- To implement new systems by July 2008.
- ▲ We will implement a framework for process review and service improvement.
- To implement framework by September 2008.

Communication

- ▲ We will implement a Communications Strategy for internal and external purposes to achieve better knowledge and understanding about our work and facilitate better dialogue and partnership working.
- Implement a Communications Strategy by October 2008.
- ▲ We will provide opportunities and monitor the effectiveness of opportunities for tenants to communicate their views, needs and priorities through Community Panel meetings, tenants groups and ad hoc advisory groups.

- Report to Board and tenants on outcomes by February 2009.

- ▲ We will hold an Annual General Meeting to which all tenants are invited at a tenant event as an opportunity to discuss our work.
- Hold an Annual General Meeting and tenants' event by August 2008.

Business Performance and Governance

- ▲ We will produce a performance schedule, indicating key performance measures and targets, to be used as a performance monitoring and reporting tool.
- Implement performance schedule by July 2008.
- ▲ We will review the use of internal IT systems and implement a staff training programme to ensure that staff have the right tools to deliver a first class service.
- Implement a staff training programme by March 2009.
- ▲ We will complete the tenant elections for Board members by the Annual General Meeting to improve accountability by increasing the proportion of tenants on the Newydd Board to one-third.
- To report on outcome of tenant elections to Annual General Meeting in August 2008.
- ▲ We will review the outcome of the 'Essex Review' in order to decide how we will make use of the changes that will result to the regulation of the sector.
- To report to Board on the 'Essex Review' by August 2008.

- ▲ We will complete a review of the Corporate Plan to ensure that new priorities are set for the period to March 2010.
- To review priorities by February 2009.

Reputation and Identity

- ▲ We will complete a review of our corporate identity to ensure that our brands are strong, clear and attractive.
- To complete review by February 2009 and start implementation.



checks and balances

It is vital that we identify how well we are doing against our plans and ensure that we address poor performance where it exists. The Board play an important role in this but tenants also have a role to play and we plan to develop the influence that tenants can have over the coming months.

Tenants on the Board

Newydd rules allow up to one third of the places on the Board to be reserved for tenants. The Board is committed to increasing the number of tenants on the Board and this year set up tenant elections. The plan was that tenants who wanted to join the Board would stand for election and all tenants would have a vote to decide who they wanted.

Unfortunately and despite a lot of initial interest we did not get enough nominations to hold an election. We will be announcing the successful nominees at the Annual General Meeting and will include their details in the next In View magazine. We will give more information on the work of the Board so tenants are clear about the commitment and what is involved and hope that more tenants will stand for election next year.

The Mystery Team

We have trained a team of tenant mystery shoppers. Mystery shoppers will test the services we provide by contacting us and comparing our

response with what we say we will do. In this way we can identify areas that need to be improved and our staff get really useful feedback on how they are doing their jobs.

If you wish to be involved in carrying out Mystery Shopping, please contact Tracy or Keiron on either 01443 701501 or 01446 408080. Alternatively send an email to consultation@newydd.co.uk

A Health Check

Every year we employ experts who review our work to ensure that it is being carried out effectively and areas for improvement can be identified. These experts are called internal auditors and in 2007/8 we were subjected to nine planned reviews and received the highest grading of Substantial Assurance in each one





when we mess it up

We don't always get it right and our complaints procedure is there for tenants and other customers to let us know.

Often things can be put right straight way and we would rather it was always like that but sometimes it just is not possible or just does not happen. In these cases the Chief Executive will investigate a complaint and provide a written response. The Chief Executive's response can also be reviewed at Board level if the person complaining is still not satisfied and everyone also has the right to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales who will carry out an independent review if it is decided that this is appropriate.

In 2007/8 the Chief Executive dealt with and responded to 58 complaints, none were investigated by the Ombudsman. Apart from four complaints where additional time was needed all were responded to within our target of ten working days.

The majority of complaints were about the maintenance service and these tend to be about either work that the tenant wants and we have either failed to do or have refused or about the quality of work. The remainder were about the Association's response to anti-social behaviour and various other housing issues.

Complaints are monitored by ethnicity, gender, age and disability and are discussed by Newydd's senior staff team and Board members.

Using Complaints to Improve Services

We are continuing to make significant changes to our maintenance service as a result of complaints received and levels of satisfaction have increased following a change of contractor last year. We have also employed more staff to deal with repair enquiries.

During the year we also received some complaints about damage to belongings caused by water leaks. Sometimes these were the result of heavy rainfall causing a leak or due to other tenants' washing machines flooding.

Unfortunately Newydd is not responsible for accidental damage of this kind and is unable to pay for the cost of replacing damaged belongings. This has left some tenants very unhappy with our response and on further investigation it has become apparent that some tenants are not insuring their own household contents.

It is extremely important that tenants insure their belongings so Newydd has teamed up with a firm of insurers called Jardine Lloyd Thompson and have sent details of insurance cover available to all tenants. Details of this insurance can be found on the inside back cover of this magazine.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Our tenants expect to be treated with courtesy and most tenants are reasonable in their dealings with us. However occasionally we have to deal with people who are unreasonable, aggressive or rude. This is unpleasant for staff and for other people visiting our offices at the same time.

Following consultation with tenants on the Community Panels we have introduced a policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour by customers. This allows us to limit or control contact and in extreme cases allows us to take action against the tenant which may include legal action or eviction proceedings.

using your money wisely

Most of the money we spend comes from tenants' rent so it is vital that we spend it wisely.

Each year we prepare a budget to plan what we are going to do and how much it will cost.

Most of the money we receive is spent on maintenance, salaries and the mortgages we have taken out to build more homes.

The money left over (the surplus) is kept by Newydd to fund future improvements and homes.

How we use our income

	2007/08	2006/07
Maintenance	29%	31%
Staff costs	27%	21%
Mortgage costs	22%	20%
Estate costs	10%	13%
Office & other costs	9%	10%
Surplus	3%	5%
	100%	100%

Newydd Housing Association Ltd

Summary Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st March

	2008 £'000	2007 £'000
Turnover	8,244	8,252
Operating costs	(6,254)	(6,318)
Operating surplus	1,990	1,934
Surplus on sale of properties	134	85
Interest receivable on investments	42	27
Interest payable on loans	(1,970)	(1,652)
Surplus for the year	196	394
Transfers from restricted and designated reserves	701	776
Surplus for the year (after transfers)	897	1,170

Summary Balance Sheet At 31st March

	2008 £'000	2007 £'000
Net cost of housing properties	36,148	35,298
Other fixed assets	1,327	215
Fixed asset investments	1,050	924
	38,525	36,437
Current assets	3,191	2,655
Current liabilities	(3,764)	(2,466)
Net current (liabilities) / assets	(573)	189
Total assets less current liabilities	37,952	36,626
Creditors due after more than one year	(29,471)	(28,341)
Net Assets	8,481	8,285
Accumulated surplus	6,918	6,021
Designated reserves	1,563	2,264
	8,481	8,285



customer service standards

The picture above shows members of the Valleys Community Panel in action. The Community Panels have recently been involved in reviewing the Customer Service Standards – these are standards of service that you should expect from the Association whenever you are receiving a service from us. We now want to know if YOU have any opinions on the level of service you should receive from Newydd Housing Association.

To the right the subjects for the proposed standards are listed – if you have any comments about any of them please contact us on 01446 701501 for the Vale office, 01443 408080 for the Valleys office or 01686 621965 for the Newtown office. Alternatively send an email to consultation@newydd.co.uk. We can send you the draft standards or take your ideas on board.

Once the consultation is finished, you will receive a full, printed list of all the service standards by which you can ensure you receive the highest quality service at all times from the Association.

A number of the service standards are monitored by 'Mystery Shopping' – this is a group of tenants who volunteer to "test" the Association's service and the outcomes of those tests are reported to the Community Panels and Newydd's Board.

The Customer Service Standard

These are the standards you would expect if you contact us, or we contact you.

The Equality & Diversity Service Standard

These standards relate to how we ensure the services we provide respect diversity.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Service Standard

These are the standards you should expect to receive if you have neighbour nuisance problems.

The Service Standard for Support Needs

These are the standards that tenants who are in our supported accommodation should expect.

The Repairs Priorities Service Standard

These are the levels of service you should expect from the repairs service.

The Contractors Service Standard

These are the minimum service levels you should expect from any of Newydd's contractors.

The Minimum Lettings Service Standard

When you start the tenancy of a new property, this is the level of cleanliness and repair that the property should meet before you move in.

The Estate Management Service Standard

These standards set out how the estates should look.

The Tenancy Management Service Standard

These standards set out how we respond to other issues relating to your tenancy and rights.

The Complaints Service Standard

If you have to complain to the Association, these standards set out how your complaint should be dealt with.

involvement roundup

Not everyone wants to get involved in the work of their landlord but many people do. Newydd is committed to offering a variety of ways for tenants to get involved in their community, the services we provide or other activities.

Not all of these will suit everyone but by offering a choice we hope that most people will find a way to get involved that suits them. However the range of opportunities on offer can be confusing so on this page we have summarised the different involvement routes so you can decide what is best for you. Of course you don't need to choose just one; some tenants get involved in everything and are very welcome!

Tenants Groups

Many estates and housing schemes have a tenants group who meet to represent the views of tenants or to arrange social activities. Many tenants groups receive funding from Newydd and a condition of funding is that they remain open to new members. Tenants groups are able to send representatives to Community Panel meetings.

Estate Champions

We don't want to exclude tenants who can't join a tenants group because there isn't one so we are keen to develop a network of Estate Champions who are prepared to attend Community Panel meetings and get involved so that we hear the views of tenants who are not served by a tenants' group.

Community Panels

Community Panels meet on a regular basis to review the services Newydd provides and offer suggestions for improvements. Community Panels are made up of tenants' group representatives and Estate Champions. Community Panels set their own agenda and their views are reported to Newydd's senior management team and Board.

Board Membership

Newydd has reserved up to four places on its Board for tenants. Nominations are invited each

Spring and if necessary an election is held so that the successful nominees can be announced at Newydd's Annual General Meeting in late Summer. Board members are responsible for making important decisions affecting all tenants and for monitoring performance.

Share Membership

You can become a share member of Newydd allowing you to vote at the annual general meeting on issues such as Board member elections.

Newydd 90

Originally our aim was to attract 90 tenants who would be willing to give their views on a range of issues several times a year by completing a questionnaire. One fifth of our tenants have now signed up to be consulted in this way so we probably need to change the name!

NEADS

This is Newydd's Equalities and Disabilities Sub Group and consists of tenants and others who are interested in equality issues and are keen to help Newydd to improve the way it deals with people who may have specific needs or may be put at a disadvantage. There are also specific groups that have been established to deal with different issues, for instance we recently established a gay, lesbian and bi-sexual group and are hoping to set up groups for younger people, older people and people with support needs.

Consultation Network

If you don't fancy any of these opportunities for involvement but don't want to be overlooked then you can register for our Consultation Network. This allows you to tell us what you are interested in and then we will ensure that we involve you when we are consulting on these issues.

Remember we can offer help to ensure you can get involved such as arranging and paying the cost of transport and child care. We also operate a time banking system so that the time you give is rewarded by a payment to your tenants' group or community project.

To get involved or to suggest different ways in which we can involve tenants contact our Community Involvement Officers, Tracy James or Keiron Montague on 01446 701501 or 01443 408080 or e-mail consultation@newydd.co.uk

My Home Contents Insurance scheme



10

reasons to choose
the My Home
contents insurance
scheme.

- Flexible regular pay as you go payment options.
- No fuss, quick and easy to apply either through the post or over the telephone.
- No excess (you don't pay the first part of the claim).
- Covers theft, water damage and fire.
- Covers damage to internal decorations.
- Covers accidental damage to sanitary fixtures such as toilets and washbasins.
- Covers damage to external glazing for which you are responsible.
- Covers lost or stolen keys and freezer contents.
- You don't need to have special door or window locks.
- All post codes are included.

Sums insured are available from £6,000 to £35,000; all premiums, terms and conditions contained within the free information pack.

Ask your local Newydd office for an information pack or telephone 0845 337 2463



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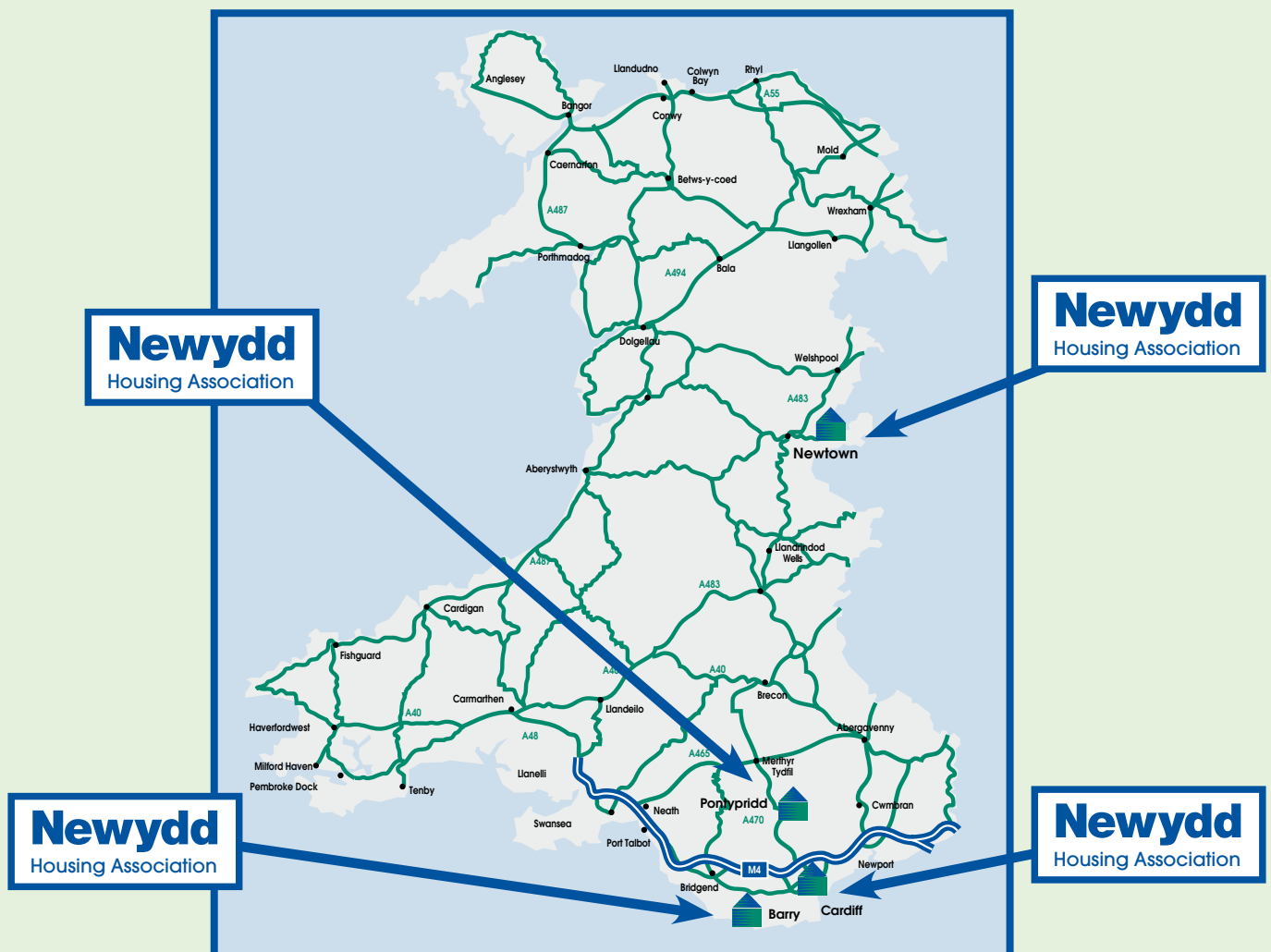
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