








**HOW  
ARE WE  
DOING?**

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## Talk to us on:

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# Welcome

Welcome to Newport City Homes – a housing association where we put our residents at the heart of what we do.

We aim to provide homes in communities where people want to live. That's what our 2020 Vision involves – a strategy with five key priorities which we've been working hard to achieve since 2015.

Every year, we share with you how we're doing. This involves honestly evaluating our performance, not just from our point of view, but with our residents and stakeholders having a say too.

We know that even when things might be going well, they can always be better – and we'd love to know what you think about the services we provide.

It's only by listening to, and engaging with, our residents and partners that we can act on the feedback we receive, really making a difference in your community.





## Residents at the heart

Putting our residents at the heart of what we do is the centre of our 2020 Vision.

### Resident satisfaction

Overall, **74%** of our residents are happy with NCH as a landlord. We don't believe that this is good enough, and we are continuing to address how we work with our residents to increase satisfaction levels.

**92%** of our residents find our colleagues helpful.

Our three top areas for dissatisfaction are repairs, anti-social behaviour, and the appearance of our communities; including litter and fly-tipping.

We are working to address each of these areas, including launching an online repairs portal later next year.

We're also reviewing our internal workforce to make sure our services are fit for purpose and delivering against the expectations of our residents.



**'Perfect location, it's easy for me to do my shopping at the same time'**

### **We've made it easier for residents to access services as and when they need them**

Since introducing our new customer service offer for residents last year, we've implemented:

- A new city centre office to make sure residents have easier access to face-to-face services
- A new resident portal and website, meaning residents can resolve simple queries and access the information they need online at any time. This means that we can focus on resolving more complex queries, improving our overall service to you
- new set of customer service standards, meaning that residents can hold us to account and make sure we're delivering a consistent and high-quality customer experience
- A new approach to resident engagement which means that residents have a variety of opportunities to get involved in all levels of decision making

**We opened our city-centre office, @195, last year. All 'First Point of Contact' (FPOC) services are directly delivered at the office, with a focus on 'getting it right first time'.**

We believe that focusing our delivery of face-to-face services through @195 improves the standard of services we deliver across all channels. Since opening @195, face-to-face visits are up by 47.35%, demonstrating the accessibility of our new location.

**Feedback from residents since opening @195 has been extremely positive.**

**'Feels more like home, much bigger and better'**

**'Better location, easier to get to than Nexus house, easy to park the car'**

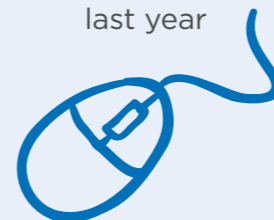
**'This office is much better. Far less of a walk for me to get to. I told them at Nexus and they listened to me. Thank you!'**

**'A fantastic, futuristic new headquarters for Newport City Homes, ahead of its time. The city itself is still catching up'**

## Where have we improved?

# 27%

of our residents have signed up to our online portal since launching last year



Our city centre office, @195, saw **57,648 calls answered, 3,136 web chats and 14,044 face-to-face** conversations with residents taking place during our first year of opening



With more people accessing online services, our average call waiting time has greatly improved, decreasing from **9:21 minutes** in Spring 2018 to **1:29 minutes** by Spring 2019



**Earlier this year we launched the first automated assistant, named 'Rob-Bot', which is based on chatbot technology and has been created in direct response to resident feedback asking for more online services**

As a result of the above, our call abandonment has dropped from **21.3%** in Spring 2018 to **1.2%** in Spring 2019



We're not stopping here and are already working to improve our offering through the web portal and RobBot.

Our next step will help residents book repair appointments online and is planned for release later next year



# Customer Service Review (CSR)

**We launched our new customer service offer last year, but we recognise that there is more to do to keep improving the way we provide services to our residents.**

Our Customer Service Review is an ongoing programme involving colleagues from all areas of NCH working together to improve our services. In July 2018 we launched a review of our voids and lettings process following feedback from residents. This involved looking at the length of time a property stays empty after a resident leaves. When we started the review, our average time was 56.6 days, which we recognise is not good enough.

The review is now close to completion and we've made a lot of changes to the way we work.

- We've invested in electronic tablets for our surveyors to save time on writing paperwork, meaning the overall process is quicker online
- We carry out an 'end of tenancy' visit with outgoing residents during their notice period
- New residents are matched to a property immediately after the advert is closed, giving them more time to prepare for a move
- New residents are given an opportunity to view their home before any work begins, meaning they can often have a say on things such as decoration and whether they would like to remove or retain items; such as carpets, curtains, blinds or built-in wardrobes
- We've put targets in place for how quickly we respond at each stage and our long-term aim is that the whole process should happen within 18 days

This process won't happen overnight, but we've already made some progress in heading towards our target. Our target time for the end of March 2020 is 28 days. As of May, we've already decreased to 34 days.

Following the voids and lettings review, we have taken resident feedback on board. As part of the next stage of improvements, we will be looking at how we manage repairs.

## We're supporting residents to stay in their homes

**We provide targeted help to support our residents to manage their finances and tenancy.**

During the last 12 months, we have helped residents to;

- Save **£20,289** on their water bills
- Access **£152,342** through grant support
- Access **£629,390** in welfare benefits and Universal Credit

- We're committed to helping our residents increase their disposable income and improve affordability. Our in-house team works closely with residents to support them in accessing their full financial entitlement. This includes supporting 741 residents in making new claims for Universal Credit (UC), equating to 15 new cases each week
- Recognising where residents are struggling financially, through our partnership with Money Saviour we were able to help a further 93 residents receive help with their finances
- Where residents are identified as needing additional support, we work closely with partner agencies to make sure they receive the right assistance. This year, we have supported 136 residents through referrals to other agencies such as social services



- We help residents to stay in their homes wherever possible. Where residents are at risk of losing a tenancy through non-payment or breach of agreement, we have carried out 233 reviews to help keep the tenancy in place wherever possible, including using our 'tenancy rescue' partnership agreement with local authorities
- Out of these, 130 (56%) resulted in affordable payment plans being set up, with approximately £24,000 in homeless prevention payments obtained from the Local Authority, which has enabled residents facing possession action to stay in their homes
- We recognise that personal circumstances can change and always work with our residents to help them adapt to new situations. This includes supporting 54 residents in moving from joint tenancies with another person to sole tenancies, supporting 70 residents in exchanging their home with another NCH resident through our Mutual Exchange programme, and assisting 84 residents in transferring to suitable alternative accommodation

## Tackling domestic abuse

We are committed to supporting residents who have experienced domestic abuse. Last year we joined the 'Free from Fear' project – a group of housing associations within Gwent working to combat domestic abuse and support residents and employees who have been impacted.

Our work so far includes launching a new web portal as a free online resource for those who work with people experiencing domestic abuse, this resource is available for all partners across Wales.

We have also directly supported eight domestic abuse victims in moving to a new home.

## Changing how we offer income support

We recognise that the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) is a significant change for residents transitioning from Housing Benefit to a system where they are required to receive monthly sums directly. We also understand that some residents can find budgeting difficult.

We are committed to helping residents move onto the new system. In December 2018 we changed our approach to income support, to offer a range of alternative payment arrangements (APAs). APAs have been introduced to help residents to manage their budgets in order to stay in their homes.

- In December 2018 our APA rate was 19%, equating to 224 residents
- Now our APA rate is 25%, with arrangements in place for 342 residents who require support



## A 'Good Start' for residents

**We recognise that moving home can be a highly stressful experience and residents may need a helping hand at the start.**

We've launched a 'Good Start' pilot, providing intensive support to all new residents for the first six weeks of their tenancy - getting their rent payments in place, any other support needs met and allowing our income officers to redirect their focus on rent accounts which need debt recovery attention.

Our 'Good Start' approach is helping residents establish their home and tenancy from the very beginning, helping them to sustain their tenancy in the long-term.

## CASE STUDY

**One of our residents was struggling financially to keep up with her bills on basic universal credit and had rent arrears. The resident then received a further arrears letter from a utility company stating that she owed £912 with an additional £135 ongoing monthly cost for electric usage in a two bedroom flat.**

The resident was suffering from mental ill health due to the stress of her situation.

We supported the resident by phoning the utility provider and completing a priority assistance fund which helps utility customers who are considered vulnerable to access additional help. This action resulted in the electric arrears being cleared and the resident received the Warm Home Discount, reducing her payments to a more manageable amount

We also supported the resident in gaining access to a food bank and completed a discretionary assistance funding form for the tenant to get a new bed, as she was sleeping on the sofa. We're pleased to say that as a result of these changes the resident's mental health has improved significantly, and she is now attending courses to improve her CV and is looking for employment.



We supported the resident by phoning the utility provider and completing a priority assistance fund which helps utility customers who are considered vulnerable to access additional help.

# We talk with residents and listen to what they say

## Scrutiny Partnership

As part of delivering our resident engagement strategy and making sure that residents are truly at the heart of what we do, we recognised a need to evidence the impact that residents have on our decision-making.

Our Scrutiny Partnership, made up of NCH residents, is involved in key decision making across the association, with members challenging us holding us to account for the decisions we make and providing assurance to our board and Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) that resident engagement informs strategic and operational decision making across the association.

### Since their inception last year, the group has;

- Provided feedback on our 2018/19 Self Evaluation document and has been involved in reviewing this document.
- Reviewed our Value for Money framework.
- Worked with our senior management team to review our progress in key areas such as customer service.

- Co-developed a resident engagement monitoring form.
- Conducted a mid-year review of organisational performance – with a full-year review in progress.

Our Scrutiny Partnership has made great progress and we're grateful for their significant and valued contributions. We're now looking to recruit more members and make sure that our membership is representative of our residents across the city, with the right skills and understanding to fully question and hold us to account.

We're providing additional training and will recruit future Scrutiny Partnership members in line with how we recruit for our board – by identifying skills gaps and recruiting accordingly.



## Seasoned and Support (SAS) group

Our SAS Group was previously made up of two separate groups. Following the launch of our resident engagement strategy in 2017, we recognised that we had too many formal groups containing the same membership, and so the SAS was developed to also include residents with additional support needs.

### This year, the group has;

- Reviewed our adaptations leaflet, making sure it's fit-for-purpose and clear for our residents
- Fed back to the Welsh Government as part of their review of TPAS Cymru's engagement and participation work
- Contributed valuable feedback in relation to our Sheltered Housing review

A key aspect of the group when it was first formed was to reflect our internal equality and diversity group and create a forum for residents to challenge us on our activity in this area. We're not there yet, and there are still improvements to make. We want to make sure our groups are reflective of our residents and we'll continue to work on this throughout the year.

## UNITY

As part of our new offer, we're modernising the way we structure our engagement with residents. In continuing our work to reflect local communities within our resident groups, we have partnered with Charter Housing to support UNITY, a forum for younger residents to have their voices heard.

### This year UNITY has been involved in;

- Reviewing our complaints process
- Running community events and social impact projects to support homelessness charities
- Inter-generational activities with older people
- Working with partners to contribute to significant campaigns such as the Welsh Government's Affordable Housing Supply Review



## Community Voice

Previously, our Community Voice meetings were held at our head office, where residents were invited to come and speak to us. We recognised that this way of working wasn't fit-for-purpose and we weren't visible enough in local communities.

We've now changed our approach, and Community Voice meetings are now rotated around local communities. The agendas for each meeting are set by the community and reflect the issues that are important to them, with additional activities on offer to encourage and promote attendance. We're confident that we can continue to develop how we encourage communities to use their 'Voice'.



## What difference have we made?

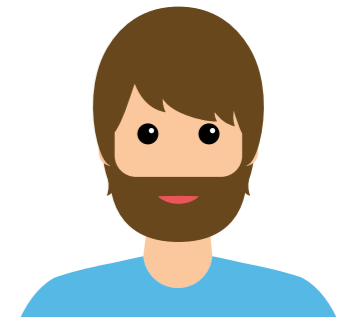
**We have made it much easier for our residents to access the help they need in a way that suits them – whether that's online, on the phone or face-to-face, through our new customer service offer.**

We recognise that there's still more we can do, and our customer service review is helping us to move closer to where we want to be. We know that one of our top areas for resident dissatisfaction is repairs, and we're now focusing on improving this service.

Through our resident engagement strategy, we are continuing to work closely with our residents, making sure they have the opportunity to contribute directly and challenge us on the work we carry out. Currently, our resident groups are not fully representative of our wider residents, and we are encouraging and promoting more diversity within these groups.

We are continuing to work with residents who are experiencing financial difficulties and we have changed our approach to make sure we're helping residents to sustain their tenancies for as long as possible. Our Good Start pilot means we're now helping residents from the very beginning of their tenancies, with the aim of helping people to stay in their homes for longer.

## Our rating



## What next?

- We will continue to improve resident satisfaction by making it quick and easy for residents to engage with us
- We will work to provide services that are tailored to provide what our residents want and value
- We will work to maximise the number of homes that are sustaining tenancies and generating income





# Investing in homes and neighbourhoods

For us, it is important that our residents feel safe in their homes. Here is a breakdown of how we're investing in homes and neighbourhoods.

## What have we done?

### Home quality

- **70%** of our residents are satisfied with the quality of their home
- The safety of our residents continues to be our highest priority. Following the introduction of our communal caretaking service last year and with external advice, we have implemented a zero-tolerance approach to all items left in a communal area which may pose a risk to residents or emergency services in the event of a fire
- Our communal caretaking team have now been in place for **12 months** and have completed **9,640** cleaning jobs, evidencing our commitment to keeping people safe in their homes and demonstrating our consistent approach across all communal properties

### Home safety

- **99.9%** of our homes continue to be gas safe compliant
- **99.9%** of our homes have had an electrical inspection within the last five years. Previously, legal advice stated that homes should be inspected every ten years, and has only this year been changed to five - meaning that we're leading the way when it comes to our safety processes
- When the actions of an individual or small group impact on wider resident safety and wellbeing, we take action. Although eviction will always be a last resort, we have served five possession orders to residents who continuously failed to provide access for legally required gas servicing - meaning our processes are robust and demonstrating our commitment to safety at every level

## Tower blocks

Replacement cladding material for our three tower blocks successfully passed stringent fire safety testing and we have been working on completing cladding work at each tower block site.

- **Hillview:**  
Remedial work has now been completed at Hillview
- **Milton Court:**  
Work is close to completion
- **Greenwood:**  
We have started site setup on our final tower block at Greenwood

Overall completion of the replacement cladding is set to happen by the end of 2019.

Following the tragic events of Grenfell in June 2017, we immediately launched a project to review fire safety in our tower blocks and reassure residents that they were safe in their homes.

Our response has been hailed as best practice by the Welsh Government, and we were delighted to pick up the Safety Leadership & Board Participation Award at the ASCP Awards earlier this year – celebrating the very best of compliance and safety within the industry.



## Investing in homes

We are significantly investing in our properties to make sure they're fit for the future, spending approximately £10 million on residential property improvements including external wall insulation, kitchen and bathroom replacement and new roofs – future proofing homes for our residents and improving the appearance of properties.

**This is a breakdown of our investment on maintaining homes and properties this year.**

Area	Spend
External Wall Insulation and roofing (new)	£1,120,627
Roofing (replacement)	£1,134,434
Door entry systems for communal areas	£251,773
Door replacements for general properties	£76,943
Windows	£120,602
Security doors	£169,206
Heating works (incl. replacement boilers, radiators and associated pipework)	£3,444,111
Welsh Housing Quality Standard upgrades	£334,454
Internal work including electrical upgrades	£195,021
Demolition work on garages and making good	£630,199

Home maintenance

We completed **38,421** maintenance and repair jobs for residents

**5,716** of these were emergency repairs

## Getting the job right first time

- 69% of our residents are satisfied with the way we deal with repairs and maintenance, and they told us that they were happiest when repairs or maintenance work is carried out by an NCH employee
- That's why we've launched an internal review of our direct labour operatives (DLO) workforce. We're working with Coleg Gwent on providing additional training to our current colleagues to make sure we can get more jobs right the first time
- We are also recruiting new multi-skilled operatives to help us deliver, with the aim of increasing our operational workforce by up to 20% this financial year. So far, we have recruited eight new roles
- We're also looking at how we can increase our efficiency, helping us to deliver more for our residents and provide value for money



- We have invested in new scheduling systems, and we're putting into place a new material supply chain which will be managed in-house for the first time - providing quicker turnaround and less downtime for our operatives. These investments will mean increased productivity, allowing us to make more repairs, more quickly
- We invest approximately £20 million in our operational activity every year, and every £1 we're spending this year will provide us with more value for money than last year

## Your neighbourhood

We are continuing to work with volunteers within the local community, regularly taking part in community litter picks in areas including Duffryn, Pill, Gaer and St. Julians.



Our staff regularly volunteer outside of standard working hours, taking part in 19 litter picks so far this year.

We are working with neighbourhoods and partners including Newport City Council to encourage and support recycling aims - furthering the 'green agenda' by working to reduce the levels of waste created from our properties and estates.

We will then look to invest the funding currently spent in this area back into local communities, supporting regeneration and community projects.



Through our partnership with local social enterprise and registered mental ill health charity Growing Spaces, we cleared 212 gardens for elderly and disabled residents last year.

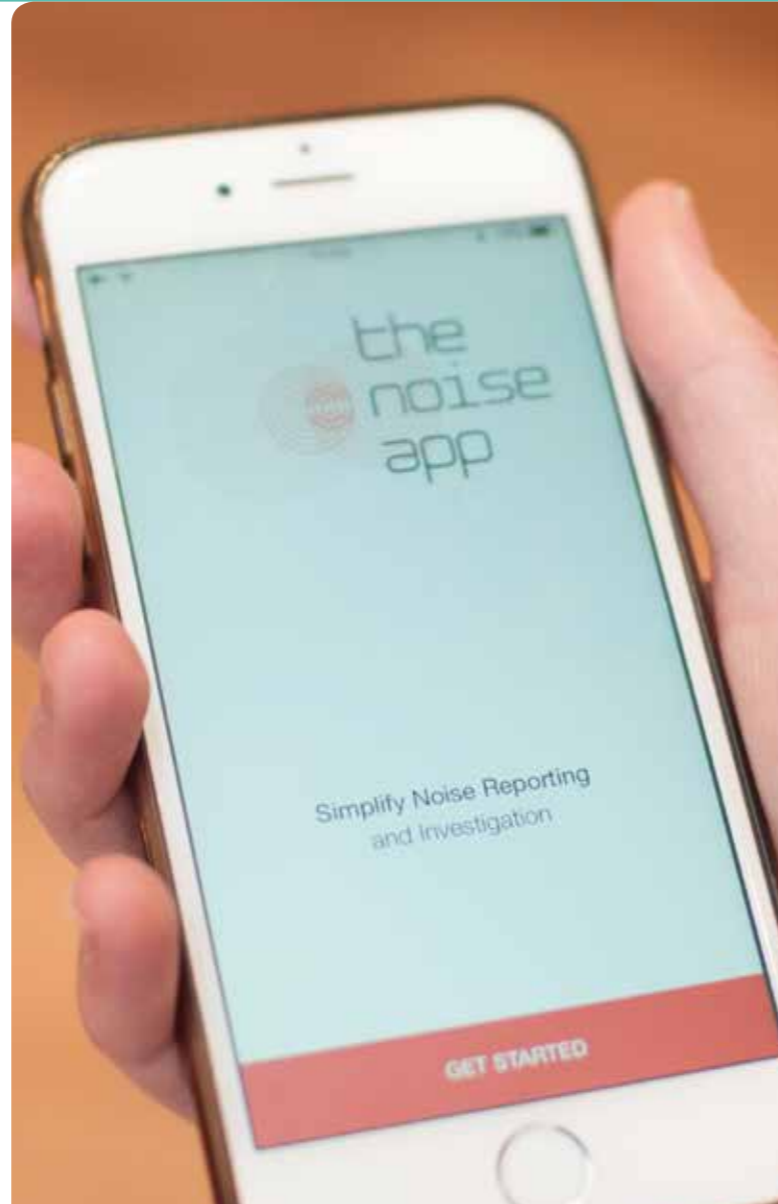
The charity provides real work skills and accredited qualifications in horticulture, woodwork and IT, with a support network to help adults with mental ill health reach their goals and improve their quality of life.

We're also part of the Duffryn Woodlands' Walks to Wellbeing' project; a Big Lottery funded project to create valuable, safe outdoor spaces for the community and improve the local environment.



## Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB)

- We understand that anti-social behaviour is a key part of resident dissatisfaction
- In total, we have responded to 1,366 reports of ASB this year and have introduced new processes to support residents in collecting evidence of anti-social behaviour
- Previously, our residents were required to manually write down incidents on a 'nuisance log' which would then be sent to us, with no clear timeline in place for responding to logs once received
- Through the introduction of the Noise app, residents are able to record audio and text evidence of anti-social behaviour and submit this through the app, where they receive a response from NCH within two working days
- 560 residents have used the Noise app this year to supply evidence of noise disturbance. Eviction will always be a last resort, but where an individual's actions continually impact many within a community, we take action to support community cohesion. We have successfully obtained three injunctions to prevent ASB from continuing within communities, with five evictions taking place following continuous anti-social behaviour



**560 residents have used the Noise app this year to supply evidence of noise disturbance.**

## What difference have we made?

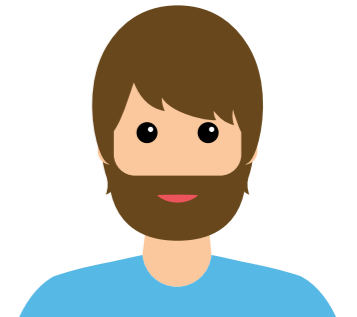
**We have made it easier for our residents to report incidents of anti-social behaviour and have successfully used interventions for persistent offenders. The use of the Noise app is helping us to manage and track incidents in a better way, and we'll continue our work in this area.**

The review of our internal workforce demonstrates that we are listening to the needs of our residents and acting accordingly. This has taken longer than anticipated to get underway, but we are making progress. We're significantly investing in our homes to make sure they're fit for the needs of our residents both now and in the future.

## Our rating



**AMBER**



## Next steps

- We will maintain the high quality of our homes, understanding the investment needs of our stock and delivering efficient planned and reactive works to maintain and improve our housing assets
- We will improve the quality of local communities, maintaining and improving the external appearance of our neighbourhoods
- We will improve the delivery of repair works, working to provide an effective, efficient and highly valued repairs service
- We will continue to improve the energy efficiency of our homes so that residents can save money on their energy bills
- We will continue to work on tackling anti-social behaviour within our communities, using technology to record evidence of ASB happening and enabling us to take action to prevent it from continuing



**Provide  
new homes**



We know that there is a real demand for new affordable housing in Newport and that it's important to look at the regeneration of our existing estates too.

### **What have we done?**

As part of our 2020 Vision, we know that we need to build new homes to combat the affordable housing shortage in Newport. We have a programme in place to build 888 new homes on specified sites over the next ten years.

So far, we have completed 21 properties, with a potential 332 homes in the pipeline.

Our development programme is split into three areas to meet the needs of our residents and current social housing requirements:

## Regeneration of existing homes and neighbourhoods

### Pillgwenlly



- Work is progressing on our £7.9m Pillgwenlly regeneration scheme, with nine flats and two three-bedroom houses expected to be completed during 2019
- As part of our work we have built a community hub, 'The Bigger Picture,' which is being run by residents. We have also supported the group with funding from our Community Benefits fund

### Ringland Masterplan



- Working with the local community including residents and businesses, we have developed plans to demolish the existing shopping centre to build a new, more accessible shopping area with 163 new homes in a well-designed neighbourhood
- These plans obtained outline planning approval in March 2019 and more detailed work will take place in 2019 to allow us to deliver the work

### Cot Farm



- This is the first phase of our regeneration plans for Ringland
- Work is progressing on our Cot Farm development, which includes the provision of 56 new homes - 26 two- and three-bedroom homes and 30 one- and two-bedroom apartments on land at Hendre Farm Drive in Ringland
- Work is expected to complete in Spring/Summer 2020

### Mountbatten



- Planning permission has been granted for a block of 12 affordable flats and 12 affordable semi-detached houses at Mountbatten Close, with 37 parking spaces provided
- This replaces the existing 12 properties at Mountbatten, with affected residents being offered the opportunity to move into the new properties at Cot Farm once completed by Spring 2020

### Longmeadow Court



- A former sheltered housing scheme, Longmeadow Court currently has five blocks of poor quality accommodation. We're looking at how we can develop this site in partnership and consultation with the local community, and plans are currently being prepared for submission

## Development of new homes

### Glen Court



Our Glen Court development was officially completed in Spring 2018, marking our first completed new build properties since our inception in 2009.

Local contractor P&P Buildings helped us to deliver the scheme in Bettws, which created 11 new family homes and a bungalow equipped for people with disabilities.

The project marked a landmark moment for Newport City Homes – the start of delivering our ambition of helping to tackle the affordable housing need in the city.

### Albany Chambers



In April 2019 we opened our first city-centre residential location, Albany Chambers, containing nine high-quality apartments designed for those who have a need to be located within the city centre - whether for work, education or support purposes.

### Kings Head, Somerton



Work has started on 25 new homes.

We're working closely with Lliswerry Primary School, who have visited the site several times as part of a school project on construction. Work is expected to complete in Spring 2020.

## Buying land

### Old Town Dock

Master planning will start in 2019 for approximately 200 units on NCH-owned land at Old Town Dock. An agreement has been reached for a drive-through Costa Coffee shop to be located within the development for use by the local community with building work expected to start in 2019, complementing the overall plans for the site.

### Additional planning

We have planning permission for 117 homes on four additional sites including Coverack Road, with works beginning in 2019/20 subject to grant allocation.

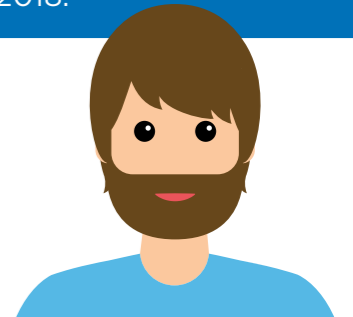
We have now purchased another site with planning permission for 83 homes; and are reviewing the potential purchase of several other sites, with the potential for 132 new homes.

## What difference have we made?

**We are substantially contributing to the demand for more affordable housing in Newport, supporting the regeneration of the city through developments such as Albany Chambers and working closely with local partners through the Public Service Board.**

Our regeneration and development plans continue to grow, following the unveiling of our first new build homes at Glen Court in Bettws in 2018.

Our rating



## Next steps

- We will redevelop and regenerate existing homes and communities to enhance community sustainability, designing and delivering existing units and estates We will build, acquire, let and sell homes driven by local market demand and need, providing homes of all tenure types to meet need
- We will provide the right type of accommodation in sustainable communities, including a range of homes to meet the needs of the community, making sure existing and potential home owners have options to access affordable housing solutions



# Making a difference in our communities

There is so much potential in our communities; we work with residents and partners to nurture, support, and grow that potential through a variety of discretionary activity.

**There are three broad areas which we look at as part of community investment;**

- Improving employment chances
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Improving financial and digital inclusion

As we move closer towards 2020 and look towards our 2025 Vision, we're continuing to assess our activities - looking at whether our priorities are in the right place and whether we are delivering the outcomes needed to fully benefit our residents.



# Community Benefit funding

We request a 'Community Benefit' on relevant contracts with third party suppliers, in line with the Welsh Government Community Benefits Policy.

Income and local employment are generated through this clause in our larger contracts, which can include 0.5% of contract value put aside for community projects or provision for apprentices.

This year, we have funded 15 community projects through our Community Benefits grant, totalling £56,628. This includes our partnership with Newport Live and sponsorship of the Gwent Dragons Phoenix rugby team for those who have experienced homelessness.



## Our Community Benefit work

### Tackling anti-social behaviour in Maesglas

We partnered with Newport City Council to provide £3,199 in funding for gates to be erected in Maesglas behind the main shopping area, following an increase in reports of ASB which were negatively impacting on residents and visitors.

The gate was erected as part of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and prevents public access to the lane directly behind Maesglas shops, stopping anti-social behaviour from taking place in this area.

### The Sail Shade, Somerton Primary

We provided £6,950 to fund a 'Sail Shade' at Somerton Primary School alongside our work in the area on the Kings Head development. The 'Sail Shade' is an outdoor canopy which provides shelter from both rain and sun. Pupils are now able to access additional classroom space through use of the shade as an external learning area.

### The MUGA, Ringland

We provided £4,473 in funding towards replacing the floodlights on the recreational area known as the MUGA in Ringland, as part of our wider work in the area. This means that young people could start using the space again in the evenings for recreational activities, and partners are now able to make use of the space for the provision of discretionary activities such as 'Fit & Fed' sessions during the school holidays.

### Eden Gate

Eden Gate provides emergency night shelter accommodation for those experiencing homelessness in Newport through the winter months in partnership with local churches. We supported the scheme with a £1,195 grant which was used to purchase items including foldaway beds, airbeds, towels and additional furniture, helping to provide a safe and secure temporary space for those who need it.

### The Bright Ideas den

We continue to promote the wider economic regeneration of Newport through the Public Service board; and have supported the University of South Wales by sponsoring a business start-up support scheme for students and recent graduates. The Bright Ideas den is a 'Dragons Den' style event where applicants can bid for grants to support the start-up of a local business. Our £1,500 funding helped to support five young people with grants to set up a local business.

### Sustainability Fund

Through the Community Benefits scheme we have also implemented an in-house Sustainability Fund to provide additional support to vulnerable residents by investing £20,000.

We want to help residents who are experiencing severe hardship, who are struggling to maintain their tenancy and who have insufficient income to meet their material needs.

The fund provides support for various needs including;

- flooring (pre-used carpet tiles through Greenstream)
- pre-paid utility cards (for gas / electricity)
- food (after exhausting food voucher allocation)
- clothes – such as school uniform
- travel expenses for specific journeys such as job interviews

**We are continuing to review our Community Benefits scheme to make sure that we're providing the right support in the right areas. Where community benefit funding is provided from a contract for work on a specific area (such as our ongoing work in Ringland and Somerton) we always look to provide support within that community.**



### The NCH Academy

The Academy aims to support residents or community members who have been unemployed for some time to gain employment or increase their career prospects following a six-month work placement at NCH. Since launching in 2012, the Academy has supported 58 work placements.

Following our last ‘graduation’ of six Academy trainees in October 2018;

- One trainee went on to higher education to study Law
- One trainee went on to further education to study counselling alongside working part-time
- One trainee has stayed with NCH as an apprentice, studying for an AAT accountancy qualification
- Two trainees gained full-time employment elsewhere
- One trainee became a carer for a family member

### Business Class Partnership

We’ve worked closely with Llanwern High School through the Business Class Partnership, which prepares pupils for the world of work and assists parents to gain further qualifications and support their children with their education, whilst also providing a pathway to re-enter the workplace.

Our support includes;

- ‘Try a trade’ sessions for four pupils, with information on potential apprenticeships as a career path
- Part-funded GCSE in English Literature and Maths for parents, providing them with essential educational qualifications to assist them in entering the workplace
- Ongoing Reading Buddies scheme supported by six NCH volunteers, promoting and helping with literacy skills

### Mutual Gain

As part of our wider work in supporting the regeneration of Ringland, we’re supporting the Alway and Ringland community through the Mutual Gain café – a community initiative to combat serious and organised crime in these areas. A resident group has been formed and has allocated £15,000 of funding on supporting local community projects.



### Newport Live partnership

Our Sport Divisionary & Engagement Partnership allows us to support the wellbeing of our residents through physical activities.

Through the partnership, we have supported 92 Friday Night Projects in Bettws and Pillgwenlly, providing a safe and friendly space for young people to take part in leisure activities with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour within local communities, and supported 943 resident participations in aquatics, gym classes, racquet sports & fitness at Newport Live sites across the city.

Our support of ‘Fit & Fed’ sessions across the city saw more than 3,166 meals provided over 60 days to more than 1,000 young people and over 300 hours of physical activity taking place – tackling hunger, isolation, and inactivity during the school holidays.

As part of our partnership, we’re also providing 250 free gym memberships to residents who can commit to three physical exercise sessions each fortnight.

### Apprenticeships

We’ve created the following apprenticeships, providing opportunities for individuals to earn while they learn and follow alternative routes into employment.

- One plumbing apprenticeship
- One carpentry apprenticeship
- Two electrical apprenticeships
- One AAT accountancy apprenticeship
- One customer service apprenticeship

The expansion of our internal workforce allows us to further invest within communities, generating training opportunities and local jobs.

## Sheltered Housing review

Our previous sheltered housing provision has been replaced with a new specialist housing offer for older people aged 55+, offering visibility at each scheme and facilitating social and leisure activities for residents.

We recognise that many of our residents told us they were happy with the service they previously received and didn't want anything to change. Whilst we weren't able to keep services exactly the same due to a withdrawal of funding, we worked closely with residents throughout the process to make sure we understood what was most important to them and making sure this has been reflected in the new service offer.

Our residents told us that having someone onsite who they recognised, and who could act as the 'eyes and ears' of the scheme, was important. We've been able to maintain this through a new supervisory role.

Previously, health and social activities at each scheme were organised on an ad-hoc basis – this is now delivered by a specialist Health & Wellbeing team, who is responsible for working closely with partners to leverage external funding and deliver a variety of activities.

As part of this work we have partnered with Mind to support the 'Making a Stand' campaign, which tackles mental health and isolation amongst the elderly. This has been initially introduced within our Duffryn schemes and we're now looking to increase this across all schemes.

We're continuing to work on delivering value-for-money services for the benefit of our residents, and we have committed to a full evaluation of the new service offer in two years' time, when we will be able to fully assess the wider benefits of the changes we have made.



## Phoenix Dragons sponsorship

In December we joined forces with Newport's Dragons rugby team as the main sponsor for the Dragon's Phoenix team – a volunteer amateur rugby team made up entirely of those who currently are or have previously experienced homelessness.

We're currently working closely with the team to identify skills gaps and provide additional support through IT training and employment workshops to encourage members to re-enter the workplace. Since the team's inception, three members of the team have moved into employment.



## What difference have we made?

**Our Community Benefits fund has helped local communities across Newport.**

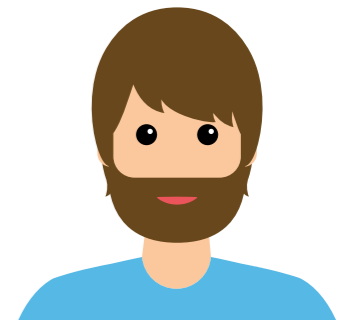
We want to expand on this work over the coming year and make sure that we are delivering the right benefits to communities across Newport, which will have a long-term social impact.

We are supporting people through employment schemes such as apprenticeships and our in-house Academy programme. We'll continue to maximise the expenditure we receive through contracts to provide more employment opportunities for local areas.

## Our rating



AMBER



## Next steps

- We will work with our residents to get them 'work ready', increasing the proportion of our residents in work to help with sustaining tenancies
- We will help our residents to maximise their household income, reducing the level of debt and increasing the income of our residents to sustain tenancies and protect our income
- We will respond to the support needs of our residents, identifying and delivering (or referring, where necessary) targeted support
- We will review the discretionary activities we carry out in local communities, defining our role for residents based on the need within each area and making sure the activities that we carry out will provide a lasting benefit to our residents



**Strong and effective organisation**

We are committed to continuously learning and improving the way we do things so that we can make the most of our resources; people, homes, and partnerships.

**We look closely at how each of our properties perform in terms of revenue generation and investment requirements – allowing us to make better decisions in terms of investment and regeneration and target our resources based on where they are most needed.**

Our ongoing work on the expansion of our internal workforce will ultimately bring the cost of maintaining our properties down – providing more value for money and allowing us to invest these funds into the continued regeneration of our housing stock and the building of new homes, as well as investing in local communities to provide long-term benefits to residents.

**What have we done to become more effective?**

- Since the introduction of our single-status board in 2017, we have continued to evaluate the skills we need to be effective as an association. We have recruited two additional co-optees to our board with specialist skills in treasury and development, supporting the board's aims of refinancing and giving us more freedom to maintain our existing housing stock and build new properties



Nicola Somerville,  
NCH board Chair

- Our Audit & Risk Committee, which is led by our board, conducted a review of our cyber security processes. From this, we have been awarded the Cyber Essentials Certification by the National Cyber Security Centre, meaning that our security processes are secure, and your data is kept safe



- We were granted a regulatory judgement of 'standard: standard.' This is the highest judgement rating available from Welsh Government, recognising that we have satisfactory governance arrangements in place and are financially well-managed
- We have created and implemented a 'Value for Money' (VfM) framework, making sure we are making the best use of every pound spent. Following our new procurement team being established last year, our new approach has already provided savings of £200k+ per year, with additional savings for the future identified

- Our current operating margin is 11%, and our Value for Money framework is aimed at increasing this to above 25% within the next five years. We're committed to using this surplus to further invest in homes and communities to meet demand and make us more efficient
- We are continuing to review our recognition and reward package, including our occupational health offering, and have implemented an annual benchmarking process so that we can continue to recruit, attract and retain the best talent while making sure we are delivering value for money



## Equality & Diversity

Following the implementation of our Equality & Diversity working group last year, we have been reviewing our activity in this area and have appointed a board member to act as equality and diversity champion.

This year, we have;

- Delivered community pop-ups in Maesglas and Underwood. These groups engage isolated and vulnerable residents, including young parents, directly within their community to remove barriers to them engaging with us
- Achieved the kitemark for Children and Young People's Participation Standards as part of a partner approach with other social landlords. These standards measure the process of children and young people's participation in the work that we carry out
- Continued our work with the 'Free from Fear' project to tackle awareness of domestic abuse
- Implemented mental health training for line managers, with 30 managers receiving specialist training from accredited mental health training provider i-Act so far. We are now planning to roll this out to all employees across the association



- Completed dementia awareness assessments to become a Dementia Friendly organisation, with an in-house Dementia Awareness trainer



- Worked with local community groups across Newport to engage directly with residents who may be vulnerable, including Families Love Newport and Age Alive, the Newport group for black and minority ethnic (BME) people aged 50+
- Participated in a partnership with the Welsh Housing Equality Network on Making Menopause Matter
- Provided two blocks of 10-week swimming lessons for BME women in Newport, attended by 26 women, aimed at improving wellbeing as part of our Newport Live partnership at a cost of £1,690. The majority of participants now access Newport Live's womens-only swim sessions every Sunday

# What difference have we made?

Value for money remains a priority for us. Savings made through our VfM framework and changes to our procurement process mean that we're able to invest more in developing and regenerating our communities.

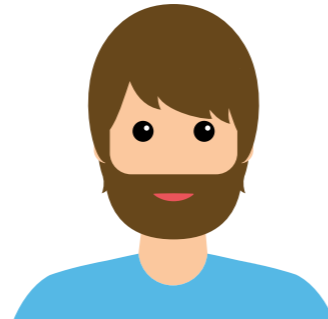
We are continuing to review our board structure based on the skills we need and to support our continued aspirations to build more homes, deliver community-led regeneration schemes on our existing housing stock, and work more closely with residents than ever before.

We have been awarded the highest regulatory judgement available of standard:standard that recognises that we have satisfactory governance arrangements and are financially well-managed. It is our intention to maintain this standard in future years.

Our continued review of our internal reward and recognition package means that we can attract the right people with the right experiences to help us become a stronger association.

Our work on equality and diversity continues, and we have made good progress in engaging with traditionally hard-to-reach areas of the community.

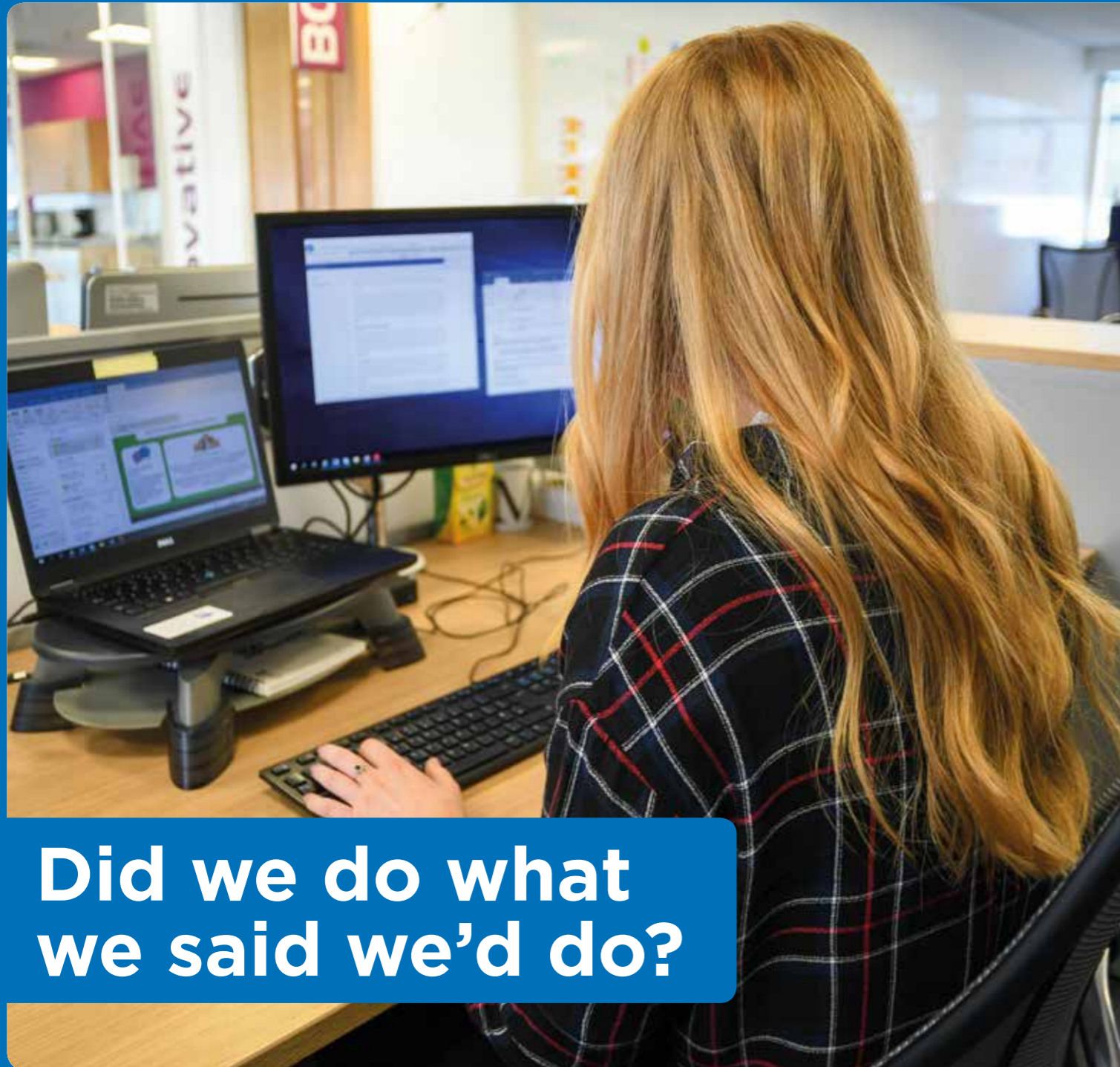
## Our rating



## Next steps

- We will enhance NCH as a great place to work, recruiting staff that are retained and developed to deliver great and improving services
- We will support our teams to deliver our purpose, putting efficient support services and infrastructure in place to help us deliver effective and efficient services for our residents
- We will continue to improve organisational performance and efficiency, increasing our operating margin to enable investment in growth





## Did we do what we said we'd do?

In our last evaluation, we told you that we would focus on specific areas. Here's a breakdown of our statements and what we've done about them so far.

### What we said

### What we've done

**We would continue to work towards resolving resident queries at the first point of contact.**

We're undertaking a full review of our complaints process to make sure we can resolve complaints for our residents as quickly as possible.

We're making it easier for residents to tell us when they're not happy and when we haven't done things right. Our response time is currently 21 days, and we're working with colleagues to review and improve our process.

We've gathered feedback from residents on how this can be achieved and have looked at what other organisations deal with complaints. Training will take place for colleagues later this year, when we begin to roll out new processes.

**We will work to make more of our services available online, giving residents more access to what they need, when they need it.**

We were proud to be the first Welsh housing association to launch an automated assistant earlier this year. The launch of our RobBot service has seen more online services added to our website. We're now looking at adding an online repairs process to make this even easier for residents.

## What we said

## What we've done

**We will continually review our services so that they are designed to put residents at the heart. We will start with a review of lettings and tenancy management.**

Our review of our voids and lettings process – the length of time properties sit empty between tenancies, is nearly complete. We've made changes to how we approach this and have reduced our turnaround times, but the process has taken longer than we thought. We haven't delivered all of the improvements that we wanted to, and we haven't been able to move on to another service this year like we had previously hoped. However, based on feedback from our residents we have changed our initial plan to focus on tenancy management and will be looking at our repairs service next.

**We will enhance our resident engagement opportunities so that residents can effectively challenge and shape our services.**

Our new comprehensive resident engagement strategy offers residents the chance to get involved in many ways. The Scrutiny Partnership assesses the engagement undertaken and reports its findings to the Audit & Risk Committee and the Board. We've made a lot of changes to our resident groups to make sure they are reflective of our residents, and we know there's still more work to do here. Changes to our Community Voice initiative mean that we're now building closer relationships with local communities and talking about the things which matter to them, giving residents more ownership and the ability to challenge us on the areas they feel are most important.

**We will support residents to sustain their tenancies and minimise the impact of welfare reform.**

We've changed the way we offer income support to encourage residents to sustain their tenancies for as long as possible. The launch of our Good Start pilot means that we're helping residents from the very beginning of their tenancies, and our tailored support service means that we're helping residents who need it, when they need it.

## What we said

## What we've done

**We will work to design our services, so they deliver repairs right first time.**

We've launched a review of our direct workforce – providing training and hiring multi-skilled roles to make sure we can deliver this in the future, increasing our workforce by 20% this year.

**We will improve the efficiency of repairs and maximise the effectiveness of our repairs team.**

As part of this review, we're overhauling the way we record and allocate repair work, to make sure our residents get the work they need done when they need it. This is a major project and is changing the way that we have delivered repairs for many years. It's a work in progress for us, and we expect this to take several years to complete.

**We will design and implement an Estates Programme to enhance the quality of neighbourhoods and communal areas.**

Our focus on service areas such as our voids and lettings process meant that we weren't able to concentrate on estates as much as we wanted to this year, but we've now started work on the Estates Programme and will be implementing this over the coming year. We have already increased a lot of the work we do in community estates and have invested heavily in some areas, which includes external wall insulation – giving properties a fresh new look. We know that the quality of our estates and neighbourhoods is really important to our residents, and we're going to be focusing more on what we can do in this area over the next year.



**What we said****What we've done**

**We will continue to work with our partners to maintain the appearance of our neighbourhoods. We can have a greater impact if we work together.**

We are actively working with neighbourhoods and partners including Newport City Council to encourage and support recycling aims – furthering the ‘green agenda’ through actively working to reduce the levels of wastes created from our properties and estates. We will then look to invest the funding currently spent in this area back into local communities, supporting with regeneration and community projects where appropriate.

Through our partnership with local social enterprise and registered mental health charity Growing Spaces, we cleared 212 gardens for elderly and disabled residents last year. The charity provides real work skills and accredited qualifications in horticulture, woodwork and IT, with a support network to help adults with mental ill health reach goals and improve their quality of life.

**We will remove the existing cladding on our tower blocks and replace it with a product that has passed fire safety tests.**

Replacement cladding material for our three tower blocks successfully passed stringent fire safety testing and we have been working on completing cladding work at each tower block site.

Overall completion of the replacement cladding is set to happen before the end of October 2019.

**We will continue to improve the energy efficiency of our homes so that residents can save money on their energy bills.**

During this year, we have installed 371 new energy-efficient boilers in resident homes and continue to look at how we can improve the energy efficiency of our stock.

We've invested circa £950k on implementing an External Wall Insulation programme across Newport – meaning that resident homes stay warmer for longer.

We've also installed around 800 new Heat Interface Units (circa 800) in Duffryn. These allow us to turn down the main heat output from Duffryn's boiler house much like a combi-boiler – reducing costs and proving more efficient for residents.

**What we said****What we've done**

**We will deliver the regeneration scheme in Pillgwenlly.**

Nine new properties are expected to be completed in Pillgwenlly during 2019. We've also worked with the Pill community to launch the Bigger Picture hub, a new community space within the redeveloped space, and provided funding to source an informal uniform for volunteers at the space.

**We will start on-site at our regeneration scheme in Ringland.**

Work is now well underway in Ringland at our Cot Farm development, and we'll be continuing our work in the area this year.

**We will deliver new homes for people on a range of incomes.**

We're continually looking at our service offer to make sure this is fit for all residents – our Albany Chambers development was designed for residents who need to be located within the city centre for training, work or support purposes.

Our Kings Head development in Somerton is expected to complete in Spring 2020 and will bring an additional 25 homes for residents with additional needs.

**We will identify and procure development sites to support our development plans.**

We're in the process of purchasing another Newport site with planning permission for 83 homes, and we are reviewing the potential purchase of a separate site, with the potential for 132 new homes.

### What we said

### What we've done

**We will determine our offer for the provision of diverse tenure dwellings and homes for sale in our new developments.**

The NCH board has agreed our development strategy and key principles for mixed tenure developments. Our first mixed tenure scheme, Coverack Road, is a package deal with developer Jehu. We have acquired the land, and the build contract will commence once we have grant funding – potentially later this year.

**We will understand what help our residents need to gain employment and support them to prepare for work.**

We've supported six residents and members of the local community in entering the workplace through the NCH Academy programme. Our work with the Business Class partnership at Llanwern High means that we were able to fund four parents in taking an English or Maths GCSE, providing the basic education level required for many entry-level roles and removing this barrier to the workplace.

**We will help residents manage their finances.**

We've changed the way that we support residents moving onto Universal Credit by introducing more flexibility into the way we work.

**We will help our residents maximise their benefit income.**

We've helped residents access £152,342 through grant support this year and £629,390 in welfare benefits and Universal Credit.

**We will support our residents to access additional financial support services.**

When residents need specialist support, we're able to refer them to our specialist partners, such as Money Saviour, for additional help in managing their finances.

### What we said

### What we've done

**We will maximise the potential of our expenditure and contracts to create jobs and apprenticeships.**

We've implemented a new Procurement Framework and Strategy, including a user-friendly E-Tendering system which makes it easier for smaller companies to apply for our work, helping us to establish a local supply base.

We've carried out reviews of all of our contracts, making sure we're achieving value for money at every stage.

We also request a 'Community Benefit' on relevant contracts, as per the Welsh Government Community Benefits Policy.

Income and local employment are generated through this clause in our larger contracts, which can include 0.5% of contract value put aside for community projects or the provision of apprentices.

As mentioned previously, we have funded 15 community projects through our Community Benefits grant this year, investing £56,628 towards community initiatives.

Our future planning includes £18,500 in funding for a one-year NVQ Level 2 Customer Service apprenticeship based at our @195 office.

### What we said

### What we've done

**We will work with partner agencies to identify the best support mechanism and enable our residents to get easier access to the services they need.**

We've joined forces with South Wales Fire & Rescue to launch the multi-agency HUB at Malpas Fire Station, along with Gwent Police and Newport City Council – where various partners work together in the same place, allowing us to share information much faster.

Our close relationships with partner agencies allow us to refer residents for specialist support when they need it. Our Tenancy Rescue partnership with the local authority has helped 130 residents resolve financial issues with their tenancy, and our sponsorship of the Money Saviour service helped 93 residents receive additional support in managing their day-to-day finances.

**We will enhance the effective governance of the organisation by recruiting additional board members, ensuring they have the skills to help NCH face the challenges and take the opportunities that lie ahead.**

We've recruited an additional two co-optees with treasury and development skills to help us deliver for residents in the future

### What we said

### What we've done

**We will focus on becoming the employer of choice so that we can recruit, develop, and retain the best talent to deliver and improve our service offer.**






We've implemented a salary benchmarking process to make sure our salaries are competitive while providing value for money. We're also continuing to review our reward and recognition process to make sure we're competitive within the marketplace.

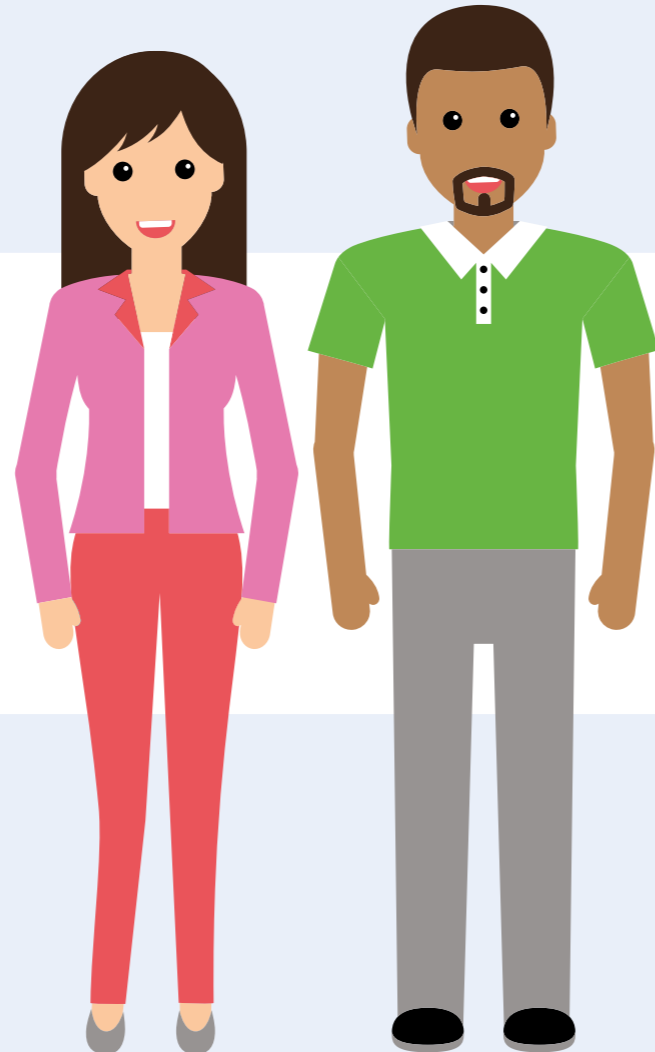
**We will implement a new recognition and reward package to meet the needs of an ever-evolving workforce, thus demonstrating our commitment to being a modern and dynamic association.**

This is how we think we're doing. But what do you think?

**We'd love to hear from you.**

**Talk to us on:**

-  NewportCityH
-  @NewportCityH
-  [www.newportcityhomes.com](http://www.newportcityhomes.com)
-  [enquiries@newportcityhomes.com](mailto:enquiries@newportcityhomes.com)
-  01633 381111



## Notes

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