

2020/21

Annual Report



TAFF

A message from the Chief Executive & Chair of the Board



What a remarkable year it has been! We entered 2020/2021 seeking to navigate our way through an unprecedented global pandemic.

Throughout the year, we've been struck by the extraordinary way in which our colleagues have adapted and responded to the challenges presented by Covid-19 crisis, placing the safety and well-being of our tenants, service users and wider community front and centre.

We are immensely proud of the commitment and dedication shown by all our colleagues. We maintained the delivery of essential frontline services, with the vast majority of colleagues working from home, demonstrating that we can do things differently.

We recognise the sadness and tragedy the pandemic has brought to so many, it has truly laid bare the impact of inequality in so many ways. As difficult as this year has been, we have sought out the opportunities to start an exciting programme of modernisation.

The successful implementation of Office 365, the introduction of Live Chat on our website and the launch of our tenant app MyTaff during the year is a testament to colleagues' resilience and determination. Our new branding and website has been really well received with a huge increase in the number of digital interactions with tenants and the wider community.

We have also delivered 36 much needed new homes and maintained the delivery of our programmes ensuring our tenants homes are compliant with health and safety legislation.

The shocking murder of George Floyd in the USA brought into sharp focus the oppression and racism that still sadly exists in our world. Taff strives to be absolutely anti-racist, both in terms of the organisational environment we create for our colleagues, and the services we provide. During the year we published our plan to deliver real change. We know people of colour are under-represented on our board, among our colleagues and particularly at senior leadership levels. We know BAME tenants are more likely to be in rent arrears and live in over-crowded properties. We also know that our services are not tailored or flexible enough to understand and meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve. We cannot solve all these issues alone, but we are committed to doing everything within our power to level the playing field.

We have maintained our Standard Standard regulatory judgement from Welsh Government on both governance and services and financial viability – the highest award possible. Satisfaction with our Support Services is high with 93% of people saying they were receiving enough, or more than enough, support during the Covid -19 pandemic.

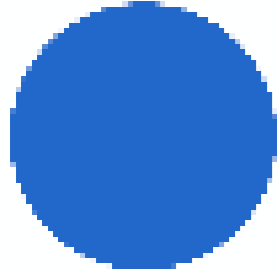
However, we also recognise the need to improve, the results of our tenant satisfaction survey tells us satisfaction has fallen over recent years. During the year some of our planned investment in homes was stalled by Covid-19 restrictions so we must now work even harder to ensure we offer everyone a home they can be proud of. Our continued investment in improving our homes is a key to the mission we are adopting in our new Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023 – to provide great quality homes and services, and support communities to thrive.

Traditionally we have supported people through difficult times. Now more than ever though, the support we provide to people through our services is crucial, as the economic impact of Covid-19 sets in and our customers face the challenges which accompany it. It will be a time when we need to continue listening to our tenants' voices ensuring they are heard and we can deliver what is most important to them.

We would like to thank tenants, colleagues, Taff Board members, partners, contractors, and funders for the crucial role they have played in helping us deliver great results under challenging circumstances.

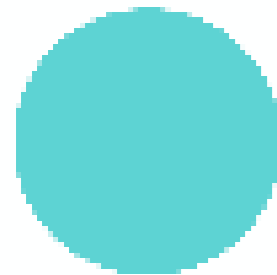
Helen White, Chief Executive and Andrew Knight, Chair of the Board

Re-brand



Accessibility

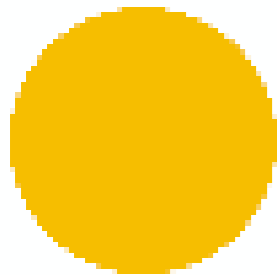
We work with a diverse group of people with a variety of needs. Using colour theory, our new logo meets accessibility standards and can be seen clearly by people with visual impairments, dyslexia and other conditions.



Authenticity

Developing our new brand was always more than just a logo change. It is about our people and the future. The papercraft images are reflective of both our communities and our authentic way of working.

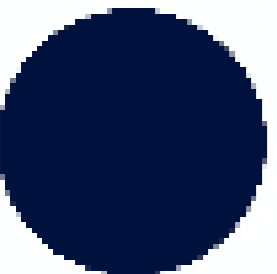
We wanted our new branding to reflect our services and the communities that we work in and to have the ability to grow with us.



Collaborative working

We wanted to change the way that we talk to make sure that we are accessible to everyone.

To help shape our new identity and language, we carried out workshops and ran surveys for tenants, hostel residents, colleagues and Board members.



Local businesses

We were pleased to have worked with local organisations John & Jane and Carta and Wood to help turn our vision into a reality.

As we continue to build more homes, support more people and deliver modern, reliable services we're pleased that our identity now reflects our ambition.

A

new

website

Alongside our new brand, we launched our new website.

By prioritising easy navigation, accessibility and translation into our top five community languages we saw website traffic quadruple in the first month of launch.

Tenants fed back that they loved it and our brand and website have been called an example of 'best practice' by tenant consultation organisation TPAS.

Retention on the website (bounce rate) significantly improved meaning people were interacting with our pages for longer and our average visit time went up to 2 mins and 15 seconds.

Most of our audience now find our site through social media or a search engine - previously it was referral or search engine - which shows us a change in user behaviour.

Live chat

Since the launch of live chat our Customer Services Team has:

- Spoken to 333 customers online
- With 90% chat satisfaction
- We've been online for a total of 1000 hours for our customers
- Customers, on average, got connected with an agent in under 2 minutes

“I love it. I have just registered and it is quick, easy to use and I would definitely use it rather than calling.

I just reported a repair with a photo and it took me less than a minute!”

Taff tenant

MyTaff

Launched in January, MyTaff is our tenant app which has helped us to increase our digital services as part of our commitment to accessible services.

Our tenants can now pay their rent, report a repair, access a budget calculator and contact the right person for their query.

A soft launch helped to tease out any initial problems and support colleagues with our new way of communicating with our tenants. By March, 15% of all tenants had signed up.

By enabling tenants to access our services on a digital platform that is easy to use and offers a high degree of functionality, we can reduce contact via phone or in person and enable tenants to interact with our services on a 24/7 basis at a time that suits them.

All of our digital services have been tested with a group of involved tenants before going live .

HouseMark

By using HouseMark benchmarking service we have been able to gain a clearer understanding of our operating costs and performance.

Benchmarking should enable us to understand our costs and performance in comparison with others' so that we can make better informed business decisions.

New homes

Cwrt Idris, Radyr

We welcomed residents to 36 new homes with the development comprising of 18 one-bedroom apartments, 10 two-bedroom apartments and 8 three-bedroom homes – 4 of which are suitable for wheelchair users. It is the largest scheme Taff has completed in three years and is part of Taff's ambitious development plans.

Working in partnership with Hale Construction the scheme delivers much needed affordable housing in Cardiff. Aspects of the scheme have also been designed specifically to meet the needs of disabled residents.

Investing in our current homes

As one of Taff's schemes for older people, Taff recognise how important it is to create a fully accessible space for residents that allow independent living for as long as safely possible.

We partnered with Solar Windows to improve every home in Alexandra Court, with works including replacing all windows and doors and installing a power assisted front door.

Creating warmer homes through proper insulation provided by new windows and doors is important to reducing carbon emissions as well ensuring that no resident is cold because of financial worries. Recognising that the residents of Alex Court are also more vulnerable to the impacts of Covid, the team worked closely to ensure that works could be finished safely and with minimal disruption to tenants.

Keeping tenants safe

- **Gas Servicing**
We continued to service boilers and we maintained a service level of 99.75%
- **Electrical Safety**
We have no properties with an electrical cert older than 10 years old and are well on the way to ensure all properties have an electrical check every 5 years.
- **Fire Safety**
We completed 100% inspections on our communal areas within our properties. Reducing fire risk actions by 90%
- **Legionella Safety**
We completed 48 new legionella risk assessments on communal areas this year.
- **Asbestos Awareness**
63 of our blocks had an asbestos inspection on communal area's this year

How many key components we've replaced:

- 52 boilers (that's 1 a week in lockdown!)
- 18 kitchens
- 4 windows

Affordability and procurement

Our new procurement policy provides a transparent process that ensures we remain compliant with procurement regulations, deliver value for money, improve our control of contract performance and leverage community benefits.

Value for money is assessed through the lifetime cost of the product or service we are purchasing and considered with the contribution it makes to the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

At Taff we want to be innovative in the way we procure. We won't necessarily procure works and services in the same way as in the past. We will consider different contract durations, different pricing structures and ways of incentivising high levels of performance.

The way we procure and deliver works and services should be a catalyst for the economic and social regeneration of the communities we work with so that we will create opportunities for local businesses and create long term partnerships that deliver local employment and training.

Decarbonisation

Wales is committed to be net zero carbon by 2050. As residential properties are responsible for 20% of carbon emissions, reducing greenhouse gases from the housing stock is an important part of achieving this ambition.

Taff want to lead the way by making our homes more energy efficient. New homes will be built to achieve the top band of energy efficiency. We are developing a programme to reduce the carbon emissions from the homes we currently provide, making them more affordable to heat.

As a pilot scheme, at Taff we're starting with 10 homes to achieve a net-zero rating within the next 6-8 months. If successful, it is hoped this will then be rolled out to more of our homes which will be more sustainable and better for our planet.

Inclusion

Get There Together housing, mental health and dementia

There has always been a fundamental link between housing and health which has been further highlighted by the pandemic.

This year we helped to deliver a campaign with the NHS Mental Health and Dementia Team, offering support to those shielding or who are vulnerable as a result of covid.

This project enabled us to develop links within our communities to provide accessible information to some of society's most vulnerable. Get There Together is a great partnership embracing technology and different ways of working for different needs.

At Taff we'll continue to work with health organisations to keep our residents feeling safe not only in their homes, but within the communities that they live.

and diversity

Deeds Not Words signing the Tai Pawb pledge

Recent events have underlined how systemic racism and discrimination remain prevalent and deep rooted in our society. The anger people feel is justified and society needs to change and we believe the Housing Sector has a significant role to play in this.

We know people of colour are under-represented, both on our board, our colleagues and particularly at senior leadership levels. We know BAME tenants are more likely to be in rent arrears and live in over-crowded properties. We also know that our services are not tailored or flexible enough to understand and meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

We cannot solve all of these issues alone, but we are committed to doing everything within our power to level the playing field, by changing what we can change and influencing and promoting where this is appropriate.

We also feel it's important that we explain how we plan to do this, in a specific and measurable way. We want to be held to account on our commitments, by our colleagues, our tenants and wider society. We want to demonstrate we are an ally to BAME communities in the fight for equality.

For full details of our action plan and what we've achieved so far, please visit our website.

#ZeroRacismWales

As part of our continued commitment to equality and diversity, Taff have signed the #ZeroRacismWales Pledge.

Andrew Knight, Chair of Board said; "I'm delighted that Taff has signed the #ZeroRacismWales pledge. It's time to finally eradicate racism and make Wales a place where we embrace our diversity and unique differences. We'll continue to use our voice, our established relationships and influence within the community, to promote and create a more equal society."

Since the launch of our new internal hwb, we have also created a dedicated list of resources on topics including anti-racism, LGBTQ+ and disability and accessibility.

Our tenants,

Tenant satisfaction survey

The survey was based on the Housemark STAR template that is widely used across the UK meaning we can compare our performance against the performance of others. 35% of tenants completed the survey and the final sample is representative of all residents.

- 85% satisfaction overall

Key findings

- 85% were satisfied with our repairs and maintenance service
- 76% were satisfied that their views were listened to and acted on
- 83% were satisfied with safety and security of their home

It is important to note that due to Covid-19 results are likely to have been influenced by delay or cancellation of some non-essential repairs, in addition to other disruptions to services.

This year we also...


We let **100** properties

...and collected **100.4%** of rent

Welfare calls

Our Community Inclusion Coaches made a total number of 320 calls during lockdown.

We received really positive feedback with people excited about getting their COVID vaccinations and telling us that they were appreciative of us calling them.



“Thank you for calling to see how we are and to ask if we need any support. We’ve been feeling very isolated so it’s nice to know that Taff cares.”

Taff tenant

Re-launch of tenant newsletter

Following consultation with tenants, colleagues and the community the newsletter is now digital. This enables us to continue to provide news in a way that is accessible and sustainable.

We can now use digital insights to see how our news reaches the communities and use this to tailor our content in the future. Our tenant editorial panel worked with our comms team to influence the content and fresh new look.

and those we support...

Support Services

Number of clients who we have helped to avoid homelessness this year

- 556 through floating support
- 133 through supported housing
- 689 total number of people supported

Support Services satisfaction survey closed with 93% of people saying they were receiving enough, or more than enough, support during the Covid -19 pandemic.

We have also had 30k external funding for two Community Inclusion Coaches, and a BAME support worker through COVID funding.

Red Sea House

This is an exciting project with the aim of Red Sea House becoming the first dementia-friendly, BAME sheltered housing scheme in Wales.

Set up 18 years ago to meet the specific needs of the local community, the scheme has ensured tenants get great and culturally appropriate service at Red Sea House.


The project will ensure that we meet the requirement of current and future tenants and will involve our Housing, Support and Asset departments.

Expanding our refugee project

We have been working closely with Cardiff City Council and their Young/Single persons Gateway since November 2020 with a proposal to increase our offer of supported accommodation to refugees.

The success of our Gold Street and Manor Street projects helped to secure the decision for us to go ahead in March 2021 with the extension.

We are now at the stage of looking for suitable properties to use and are looking forward to being able to support those seeking to live, learn and find safety in our communities very soon.



“I am very satisfied with all of the support I have received. It’s been a pleasure from start to finish”

person supported by Taff

Farewell to our forensic team

Having supported over 530 people, including high risk ex-offenders, prison leavers and ex-offenders on community orders, including women with young children and working alongside both statutory and non-statutory services, since 2010 the team have:

- reduced rent arrears totalling £27,000
- reduced debt totalling £56,336
- received over £135,000 in support grants
- increased income by a total of £8,400

Working from home

The last 12 months have demonstrated that we can work differently. The pandemic has led to many of us being based away from the office, whilst others have continued to work at our tenants' homes, at our office or our hostels with the appropriate safe systems in place to help minimise the risk of catching or transmitting Covid.

Our working practices will evolve as we are supported by modern technology as we continue to look at how digital transformation can support us to do things smarter.

Office 365

This year we launched Office 365 with 3 key aims:

- to work more collaboratively
- to find the latest internal news
- to be more creative

Our IT team were integral to the success of the remote implementation of O365.

Alongside external training, regular drop in Q+A sessions and peer lead support all colleagues we achieved our 3 aims and continued to deliver great services.

Lead@Taff is an exciting new Leadership Development Programme that will equip leaders to ensure that their teams and the business can grow through exceptional leadership.

Sweetmans are a Welsh based business and have worked across a diverse range of sectors and are a team of experienced coaches, facilitators and consultants who share a passion for making a positive impact on people and business.

On the partnership, Rosie Sweetman said: "We are delighted to have been selected as Taff's leadership development partner. We look forward to working with you to define, and develop, a leadership culture that's unique to you and that will support the delivery of your corporate plan and reflect your values. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you all and we look forward to building a positive and productive partnership!"

People and wellbeing

Virtual staff conference

In November, we held a week long event for colleagues to virtually get together. The programme included workshops and talks on race, lived experience of receiving PIE-based support and how to design a creative working space.

Colleagues also had the opportunity to hear from our health and wellbeing partners at Taff, with focus on wellbeing.

“I enjoyed the variety of speakers that were both directly and indirectly connected with the business and the flexibility of the sessions. There was a fun element as well as a some serious messages - it felt really inclusive”

Taff colleague

A week together

To mark one year in lockdown, and the moment that all of our lives changed, we held a series of events over a week that included talks from our wellbeing services, social events and a film club.

Financial summary

March 2021 is the end of the fourth year of Taff's five year Business Plan (Building Foundations for Better Futures). The year saw considerable change within the leadership team, the Board and the external operating environment.

As a result, a new Corporate Plan is emerging concentrating our attention on delivering great quality homes and services, and supporting communities to thrive.

To achieve this mission we are focussing on the following priorities:

- Delivering great homes and services
- Being financially resilient
- Making a difference in the communities we serve
- Enabling colleagues to thrive at work.



We always want to hear your views so get in touch

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