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## Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday Caerphilly Bond Scheme

Caerphilly Bond & Support scheme celebrated their 10th birthday this month. The scheme which works with private rented sector landlords and other agencies to house people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness held an event at Caerphilly's Landlord Forum.

The scheme was originally set up in 2003 due to a shortage of affordable and accessible accommodation in the private rented sector. In that time the scheme has helped obtain 737 private rented sector tenancies for our clients.

As well as clients, the bond scheme also supports landlords, as without them there would be no housing available. The scheme, as you would expect with any Gwalia project, has evolved over the last 10 years. When it was initially set up there were 2 staff, 10 years later and the scheme has doubled its staff!

All staff that have worked on the scheme are always extremely dedicated. Turnover of staff on the scheme is low and the two previous staff members that have left the bond scheme in the last 10 years are still with Gwalia. One tenant support worker was promoted to Project Leader on another scheme and the other has moved to an offenders project.

What is Caerphilly Bond Scheme?

Traditionally, landlords and agents request at least one month's rent in advance and a bond before offering a tenancy agreement, which often excludes people on benefits or a low income. To assist with this, we offer a paper bond guarantee certificate to the landlord in lieu of a cash bond.

The increased use of the private rented sector is also seen as a priority and the use of bond schemes fits in with Local Authorities Housing Strategies.

So what do we actually do, apart from 'just' issuing bond certificates?

- We work with landlords to increase the supply of good quality private rented properties and make these properties available to clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- We give support to tenants to enable them to sustain a successful tenancy
- We give support to landlords to enable them to manage the tenancy appropriately and successfully
- We educate any landlords that are not aware of the pitfalls or legal requirements of renting out a property

- We prevent homelessness presentations, prevent placements in Bed and Breakfast and provide greater choice of accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

We also offer a more appropriate package now to any clients we house. We don't just house clients with a bond certificate and then walk away. We offer on-going tenancy support to any client who needs it. This support may be for two weeks whilst they settle in, or it may be longer term depending on their needs.

All clients also have the option of being referred to NEST. If the client agrees, this could result in new energy saving items being added to the property, which should reduce their utility bills and carbon footprint. Clients also have the option of being referred into Firebreak Wales. If the client agrees, this could result in extra fire safety devices being added to the property.

We also open up Credit Union accounts for any clients that we bond, with 119 accounts set up since April 2011. This encourages clients to save for day to day things and hopefully stops clients using high interest payday loan companies.

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**Note for editors:**

- Photo 1: (l-r) Sue Cousins, Principle Housing Officer for Caerphilly Council, Helena Preece, (Project Leader), Emma Rowlands (Admin Assistant), Joanna Payne (Bond Worker)
- Photo 2: (l-r) Helena Preece, (Project Leader), Emma Rowlands (Admin Assistant), Joanna Payne (Bond Worker)
- Grŵp Gwalia Cyf is a leading provider of social housing in south and mid Wales, managing over 10,000 high quality affordable homes and meeting the needs of a broad and diverse range of people in the community.