

Welsh Government continues to deliver improvements for Wales – First Minister

Last September, the Welsh Government published its national strategy, Prosperity for All, setting out its ambitious programme for government and priorities for delivering for the people of Wales.

6 priority areas have been identified for cross-government action:

- early years
- housing
- social care
- better mental health
- skills and employability
- decarbonisation.

Together, these 6 areas reflect the support people need throughout their lives and where, if the right help is provided, dramatic improvements can be made to their life course.

The Welsh Government has published its Annual Report, setting out the progress it is making made towards delivering its commitments to the people of Wales.

One of these commitments is to provide 20,000 more affordable homes, a target that the Welsh Government has made significant progress on in the past year.

To hear more about how Welsh Government's support for house builders has helped keep it on track to meet this ambitious target, the First Minister visited the Tonyrefail site of Lewis Homes, which is providing a mix of market housing, much of which is supported by our Help to Buy – Wales scheme, and affordable housing.

Lewis Homes have benefited from loans from the Development Bank for Wales through the Property Development Fund, which have allowed the company to expand its plans to build new homes across a number of sites, and increase its workforce.

Speaking during the visit, the First Minister said:

“Lewis Homes is an excellent example of where our commitment to supporting business is helping them to grow and bringing added benefits to our communities, from creating job opportunities to providing a better choice of affordable homes right across Wales.”

The First Minister added:

“Throughout my time as First Minister I have been open about the progress we are making as a government. I am proud to say we have never been afraid to make the choices that are right for the people of Wales, even when that means taking a different approach to others.

“We’ve delivered improvements despite a decade of cuts from the UK government. We recognise that in the face of austerity people need support more than ever, and as a result have set out priorities that will not only deliver improvements that directly impact the lives of people today, but are laying the foundations for longer-term benefits that will be felt well-beyond this government term.”

Progress in the past year includes:

- delivering the £80 million New Treatment Fund, to allow people everywhere in Wales can have the same fast access to new drugs and treatments
- prioritising school spending to remain on track to invest £100 million to improve schools’ performance
- increasing the amount of money people can keep before they have to fund the full cost of their residential care to £40,000
- increasing spending on mental health services by a further £20 million to nearly £650 million
- delivering tax cuts for small businesses through our High Street Rates Relief Scheme.

The Director of Lewis Homes, Ifan Glyn, said:

“To build the homes that our communities require, it is vital that small house builders are provided the appropriate support to thrive. The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) has been working closely with the Welsh Government to develop some of these support streams. There is plenty of work still to do, but we have already seen some positive government interventions taking place over recent years.

“One such example is the Property Development Fund, administered by the Development Bank of Wales. Access to finance became a major barrier to small developers post-recession as traditional lenders virtually ceased loaning to small building firms. This Welsh Government intervention provided many with a lifeline and FMB members throughout Wales have been able to make use of it to build homes that would not have otherwise been built.”