



Care & Repair  
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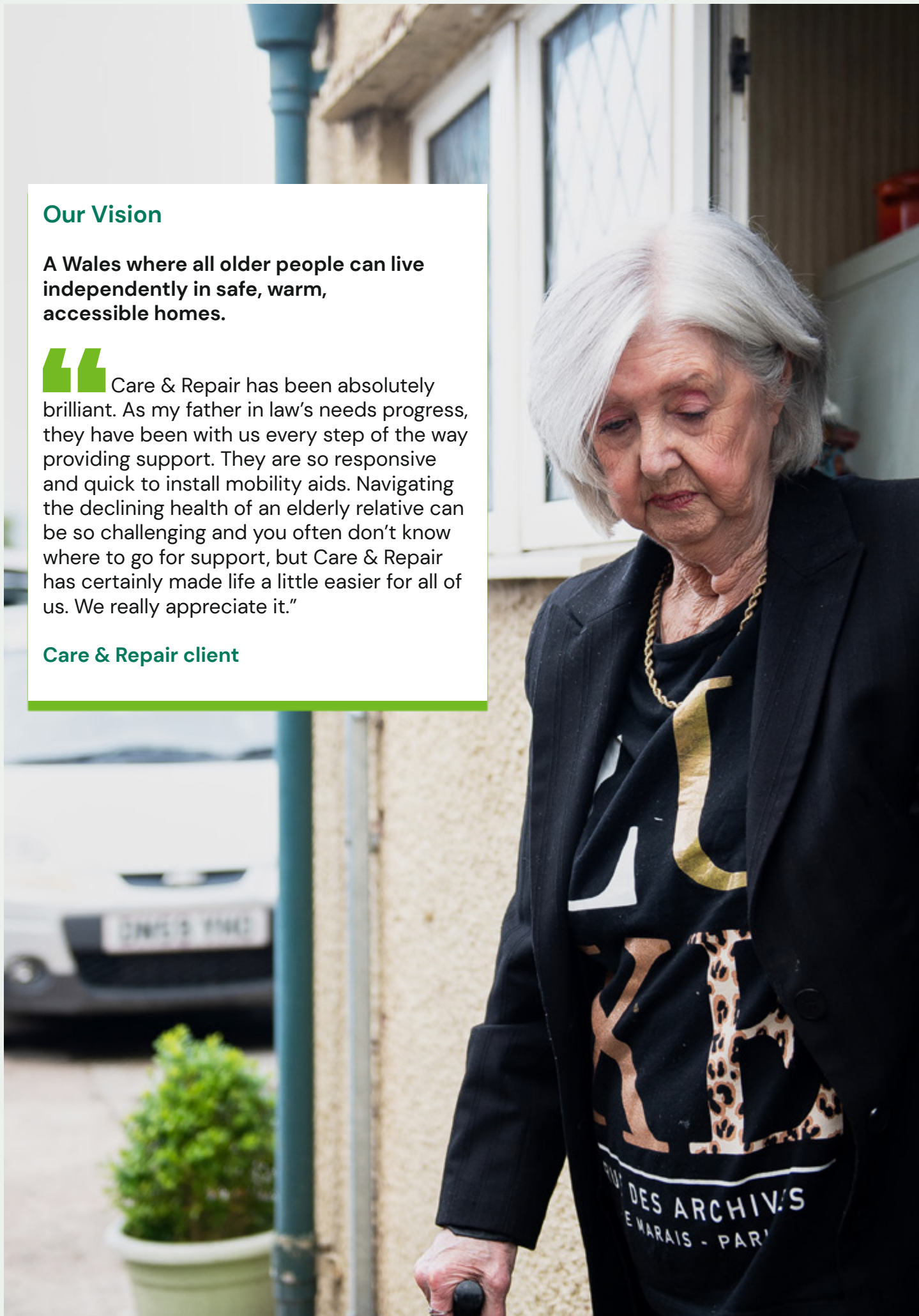
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# CARE & REPAIR 2024-2029

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A Five-Year Strategy for Care & Repair in Wales.

Improving Homes, **Changing Lives.**



## Our Vision

**A Wales where all older people can live independently in safe, warm, accessible homes.**

“Care & Repair has been absolutely brilliant. As my father in law’s needs progress, they have been with us every step of the way providing support. They are so responsive and quick to install mobility aids. Navigating the declining health of an elderly relative can be so challenging and you often don’t know where to go for support, but Care & Repair has certainly made life a little easier for all of us. We really appreciate it.”

**Care & Repair client**

# WHAT DO WE DO?

**Care & Repair helps older people in Wales to repair, adapt and maintain their homes.**

We are a Wales-wide charitable movement, working to ensure that older people have homes that are appropriate to their needs. We do not accept that any older person should:

- Live in a house unsuitable for their needs
- Suffer from ill health from cold, damp homes because they can’t afford the energy bills.
- Die in the winter months because they live in a cold home
- Live in a house that is hazardous or unfit for habitation
- Be without or wait too long for housing adaptations to enable them to live safely, independently and with dignity

For over 35 years, Care & Repair has delivered, evolved and innovated services that help older people live safely and independently at home. Our main beneficiaries are older owner occupiers and private tenants. We are grant funded by Welsh Government to support people aged over 60. Additional funding for specific projects, and some local commissioning and funding arrangements, enables us to help people with more complex needs who are aged 50 plus, younger disabled people, and some social housing tenants.

Our strapline **Improving Homes, Changing Lives** describes what we do, as well as the impact our work has on the lives of the older and disabled people we help.

## Care & Repair Agencies

Care & Repair Agencies deliver trusted, practical, front-line services across the whole of Wales.

Caseworkers, skilled tradespeople and qualified surveyors provide repairs, adaptations, maintenance and home improvements, advising on energy efficiency, accessing grants, raising funds and increasing welfare benefit take-up.

We help provide older people with safe, warm, accessible homes and enable them to live independently and with dignity at home. Trust is a key element of our success over the years, and a reason we are highly valued as a service.

## Care & Repair Cymru

Care & Repair Cymru is a strong voice for older people in Wales, and the national body for Care & Repair in Wales.

We champion and articulate the housing needs of older people to funders and decision makers. Through research, evaluation, and the collection of data we help influence strong government policy, and improve integrated working with health, housing and social care. Our evaluation reports to Welsh Government and other key funders reveal the significant preventative impact and outcomes of our work. They also show the value for money delivered, demonstrating how better housing leads to better health and reduced demand for NHS and social care services.

Care & Repair Cymru generates funding for innovative national and regional projects, to complement and increase front-line services and help tackle the need and growing demand of an ageing society.

We undertake leadership of the Care & Repair Movement in Wales, including managing the trusted brand, supporting good governance, service innovation, quality and consistency, as well as sharing best practice.



# OUR IMPACT

Over the last few years, the services we deliver have increased significantly. From 2022-23 to 2023-24 we saw 24% more services delivered to support older people to live independently at home, 10% more home improvement works completed, 19% increased value of works completed, and a 32% increase in unclaimed benefits accessed for our beneficiaries.

In a typical year Care & Repair will deliver:

- 65,000 combined service types to support safe independent living at home.
- £20 million worth of housing repair and improvement work.
- 60,000 individual jobs.
- 20,000 Rapid Response Adaptations, supporting hospital discharges, and preventing admissions to hospital and residential care.

- £10 million of unclaimed benefit entitlements for older people.
- 3,000 people supported who have sensory loss, stroke or dementia through our specialist Managing Better service.
- 4,500 patients supported with a quicker safe discharge home through our Hospital to a Healthier Home service based in 17 hospitals across Wales, leading to an estimated 25,000 bed days saved.
- 135 clients helped through our hardship funds, helping alleviate fuel poverty, tackling unsafe gas installations, and older people living in poor housing conditions with a total cost of works of £170,000, of which our hardship funds contribute £60,000.



# CHANGING AND CHALLENGING TIMES

**The challenges of an ageing population is well-known by policymakers, politicians, and service providers. Yet, the number of requests for help Care & Repair has received in the last five years has even outstripped the rate of older people entering eligibility for our services.**

We live in a very different world from the publication of our last strategy document. In recent years, vulnerable older people have endured a pandemic, cost of living crisis, and skyrocketing energy bills. During the pandemic they spent more time at home, which highlights the importance of a safe, warm, accessible home that's free from hazards to health and wellbeing.

With professional services closing during lockdowns, older people received fewer visits, and many housing issues went unnoticed, unchecked, and unresolved. The call to 'shield' for many older people meant reduced access to health and social care, and increased isolation from friends and family. Now, clients are coming to us with increased frailty both within their personal circumstances and their home environment. Our casework has higher numbers, and more complex needs, than ever before. Often a call for one issue reveals several more when we reach the property.

The cost-of-living crisis has had an impact on both our services and our clients. High energy prices led to many of our clients self-rationing their energy. One client we helped was spending 62% of their total income on fuel and water. Older people have cut back in other areas, including housing repairs and adaptations. Cutting back has had a knock-on effect: rather than wear and tear, every day we see homes in Wales unfit for human habitation due to severe disrepair.

Once problems are identified, we face significant challenges delivering our adaptations and home improvements. A shortage of materials, cost increases and a decline in the number of trusted contractors we can call on has created a scenario where alongside increasing complexity of need of our clients, it is increasingly complex to get works done. The number of clients who cannot afford to pay for works themselves has increased by 130%, but charitable funding is harder to come by. Older people are waiting whilst living in inaccessible, cold, and unsafe housing. We believe this is unacceptable.

On a national level, our services continue to support Welsh Government policies and strategies across housing, health, social care, fuel poverty and decarbonisation. The Welsh Government's Strategy for an Ageing Society 2021, includes Care & Repair as key to delivering on housing accessibility and acceptability, improving hospital flow, and access to health and social care. The Fuel Poverty Plan for Wales refers to the work we do to provide holistic support to people leaving hospital into cold homes.

We complete around 20,000 Rapid Response Adaptations every year, which play a vital role in preventing falls and accidents at home. We have worked with Swansea University to publish information that proves adaptations delivered through our Rapid Response Adaptation Programme prevents injurious falls by around 13%, and delays entry to residential care over a 5-year period.



We have embedded our Hospital to a Healthier Home Service across five Local Health Boards, helping around 4,500 patients each year to leave hospital more quickly into homes that have been made safe, warm, and adapted to changing need following a hospital admission. The service saves around 25,000 Welsh NHS Bed days each year and is a vital resource to improve patient flow and enable packages of care to go ahead. Held up as an example of good practice, this service remains a strong lever for health boards aiming to meet Ministerial priorities as Wales continues to work to reduce waiting lists for scheduled care.

Partnership working is key to our success. Managing Better works with four national organisations across Wales to share expertise and good practice on how best to support people 50+ in Wales living with sensory loss. The service has embedded accessible communication via BSL interpreters into its service, prototyped use of technology to support independent living, and takes an innovative approach to telling client stories and measuring wellbeing.

We provide fuel poverty and energy efficiency advice, initially via our 70+ Cymru service in partnership with Energy Savings Trust, and now via our Older Not Colder project in partnership with Wales & West Utilities. We support older people to access home improvements and government backed schemes such as the Warm Homes Programme and ECO4 (flex). Cognisant to Welsh Government priorities around decarbonising the Welsh housing stock, we are actively considering how we can expand our work and lead the way in advocating decarbonisation in the private housing sector.

Alongside our work to develop services that best support the statutory sector and Welsh Government priorities, we have also taken a more active role in our policy and advocacy work via emphasis on research and Senedd engagement. We hear the stories and see the homes of over 40,000 older people in Wales every year. This makes us well placed to highlight the challenges that older people face to continue to live safely and independently at home.

We are the voice of older people's housing in Wales. Despite our work, every day we come across unfit homes and serious disrepair where the needs of vulnerable older people cannot be met due to a lack of resource. One of our principal policy and funding asks is the implementation of an individual Right to Adequate Housing, in line with the seven factors of adequacy including accessible and affordable housing. Secondly, the creation of a safety-net grant for instances of serious and hazardous disrepair, where vulnerable people cannot resolve their housing problems and live in conditions harmful to their health and well-being.

It is vital that Care & Repair continues to deliver, grow and innovate over the next five years to meet the challenges ahead on behalf of older people who need support. As pressure on public funds continues to bite, as costs remain high, and as waiting lists continue to rise, we need to be agile, imaginative, and innovative to grasp new opportunities.

In the context of the above, this five-year strategy outlines the key priorities that we have identified, through a process of internal conversations between the teams and Board members of Care & Repair Agencies and Care & Repair Cymru, that has included planning days, events, discussions in Board meetings and individual conversations. It is a strategy for Care & Repair as a collective Movement. The bond and collaboration between Care & Repair Cymru and the 13 Care & Repair Agencies is strong, and this five-year strategy seeks to help us continue our successful journey of helping older people most in need of help and support with their housing.

“We’re seeing more complex cases and seem to be knocking our heads against brick walls. Properties are in a much worse state of repair. People didn’t approach others for help for so long, and now these problems have built up.”

**Care & Repair Caseworker, South Wales**

“I’ve got contractors now providing quotes that are valid for seven days whereas I used to have contractors saying they are valid for six months, because they can’t hold their prices. And that creates all sorts of problems.”

**Care & Repair Technical Officer, North Wales.**

“We are still living in a period of austerity. There is increased competition for dwindling pots of money as cuts to statutory and third sector services continue.”

**Care & Repair Caseworker**



# OUR EIGHT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Our aspiration is to help as many older people as we can to live independently in safe, warm, accessible homes. To do this over the next five years, we will work to achieve the following eight strategic objectives.

## OBJECTIVE 1

**Maintain and grow current funding streams and explore new business and partnership opportunities.**

- Meet growing demand and need from an ageing population for services that enable safe and independent living and reduce demand on health and social care.
- Strengthen the foundation from which we deliver national, consistent core Care & Repair services and grow local and project funded services to tackle need.
- Major project funding such as Managing Better, Hospital to a Healthier Home and Older Not Colder significantly increases specialised services for clients with particular needs.
- As pressure on public funds continue to bite and the political landscape changes, we need to be agile, imaginative and innovative to grasp new opportunities.
- Achieving new funding will help us to continuously expand our offer to older people in housing need and sustain Care & Repair as organisations.

## OBJECTIVE 2

**Improve our reputation as an expert voice, go-to service provider and point of excellence for housing adaptations.**

- To strengthen our influencing work on improved housing adaptations policy and services.
- To strengthen national and local funding applications.
- To strengthen our standing and preparedness for any future discussions on national Housing Adaptations service delivery.
- Adaptations are vital to support our front-line service delivery for clients, and to generate revenue to sustain Care & Repair services

## OBJECTIVE 3

**Achieve excellence in the collection, analysis and reporting of data.**

- Understanding our client experience better and improved data will help improve services.
- Compelling information about outcomes, preventative impact and social return on investment strengthens our case for funding from Welsh Government, Local Health Boards, Local Authorities and charitable funders.
- To strengthen our PR, policy, influencing, public affairs and campaigns work.

## OBJECTIVE 4

**Grow and improve our work on client voice and insights.**

- Improving how we capture the voice of our clients will increase understanding of unmet needs, service gaps and will drive improved services for clients.
- To strengthen our funding applications and asks locally and nationally.
- To strengthen our PR, policy, influencing, public affairs and campaigns work.

## OBJECTIVE 5

**Improve our digital offer to increase accessibility, inclusivity, and reach of our services and information.**

- To increase reach and online access to an increasingly digitally competent and technology savvy older generation.
- Modernise our services and make them more efficient.
- Maximise the use of technology to support independent living and wellbeing.

## OBJECTIVE 6

**Increase focus on internal recruitment, retention, and competencies, as well as local contractor capacity.**

- To attract and retain good quality people in Care & Repair.
- To help tackle local contractor shortages and client waiting times.
- To pre-empt increasing need as our population ages.

## OBJECTIVE 7

**Expand fuel poverty and decarbonisation services.**

- Provide better, expert services for older people living in fuel poverty.
- To highlight the growing problem of fuel poverty and excess winter deaths amongst older people.
- Grow our reputation as a leading and go-to organisation for decarbonisation of private housing sector.

## OBJECTIVE 8

**Further embed, good governance, quality assurance and a culture of learning and improvement.**

- To deliver excellent trusted front line services and operate to the highest governance and organisational standards.
- To manage corporate risk and ensure effective stewardship of public funding.



# FROM ASPIRATION TO REALITY

**We believe passionately in tackling the housing problems faced by increasing numbers of older people.**

We want the vision and ambition set out in this five-year strategy to help us on the journey. To deliver our vision, and each of the strategic objectives, we will develop detailed action plans and measurable targets. We will do this collaboratively as Care & Repair Cymru and all the Care & Repair Agencies, through our regular network meetings.

Strategies are dynamic documents and, since we commenced discussing and drafting this strategy document, we have already started to discuss and agree the practical work that Care & Repair Cymru and Care & Repair Agencies need to collectively take to turn the eight strategic objectives into reality.

We will continue to develop, implement and refine these action plans, and review, monitor and report on them working collectively as the Care & Repair Movement in Wales. We will ensure that our partners in Welsh Government, Local Government, the NHS, National Lottery, third sector, Wales & West Utilities, energy companies and RSLs are engaged and updated on the progress we make.





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