

Westfield Craic Christmas

Welcome to our news letter. We hope you find it useful and informative. We welcome feedback on any of the contents as well as suggestions for future editions.

2023

Christmas Update

Christmas closure:

To recognize our colleague's hard work and commitment throughout the year, our office will close on

Friday 22nd December at 12.000pm.

We will re-open on **Tuesday 2nd January 2024 at 9am.**

Rent payments:

The last day you can ring the office to pay your rent over the phone before Christmas is Friday 22nd December, between 9am and 12 noon.

You can still pay rent using your tenants portal during the Christmas closure.

Christmas time is another difficult time for everyone with lots of extra expense. It is very important that rent payments are made as normal over the Christmas period.

If you are having problems making your rent payments please contact us on 01900 602906 (option 2) to discuss the situation. We should be able to work with you to make a plan to ensure that you do not fall into debt and can enjoy your Christmas.

Repairs Service:

During the festive closure we will be operating an Emergency only Repairs Service.

If you have an **Emergency Repair**, including a **Gas Emergency** please ring our Out of Hours Service provider Orbis on **0151 343 2762.**

Please think carefully before using the out-of-hours service as you may be charged for non urgent repairs. Please see page 4 for examples of emergency repairs.

We ask that you do not ring contractors or staff directly.

For general, non emergency repairs, you can email us on repairs@westfieldha.org.uk

You can also log repairs via your tenants portal or leave a voice mail on our office number **01900 602906.**

Please note, emails and messages will not be responded to until the office is re-open on 2nd January 2024.

Rubbish Collection:

The Association will be carrying out its usual rubbish collection on the **4th and 5th January 2024.**

Please leave anything for collection out at the front or inside the front wall of your property.

Please separate cardboard/paper, glass, cans and wooden items from anything else to help with re-cycling.

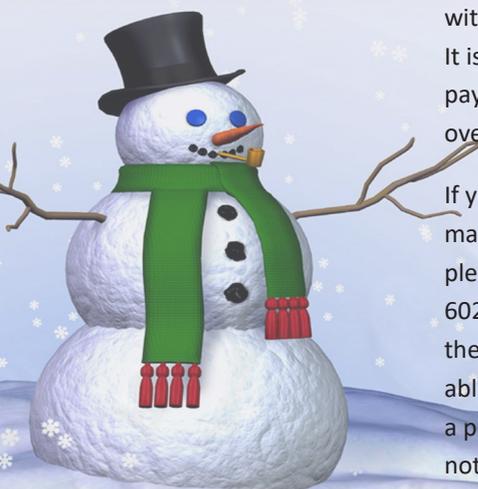
Please do not leave white goods, plaster board, gypsum plaster waste, large bulky waste furniture as these will not be collected.

To dispose of these goods please ring Cumberland Council on 0300 373 3730 for further details. of their collection services.

Christmas Re-cycling:

If you have a real Christmas Tree and need to dispose of it, please chop the tree up and put it out for

The Board & Staff would like to wish our tenants a very Merry Christmas and a healthy & happy new year.



Changes to our team

A fond farewell

'They say time passes more quickly as you grow older and this is certainly true of my time as Chief Executive Office (CEO) at Westfield. The last four and a bit years have disappeared in a blink.

Having worked for over 40 years in housing I have finally made the decision to retire. I am sad to be leaving the role and have truly appreciated the opportunity to work for such a wonderful organisation. Although small in size Westfield has always made a very significant contribution to the communities in which it works, including through the Footsteps nursery, a provision pretty unique to a housing association. Being part of such an organisation has been a fantastic way to end my career.

I hope that I have made some contribution to continuing the hugely successful work of my predecessors and maintaining the organisation's strong reputation. As always, the aim has been to deliver excellent homes and services to you, our tenants, and I hope that this has been your experience. In my time here we have had to navigate some particularly challenging issues, most notably Covid and its aftermath. Whilst this did affect our ability to deliver normal service levels we have worked throughout to provide services that meet your needs and expectations, whilst also working to grow our role and contribution, including building more new homes.

I would like to extend my thanks to all the team at Westfield, including our board and committee members who have worked so hard and with such strong commitment over the last four years. Without this work and dedication, we couldn't have achieved what we have. I would like to wish Helena (my successor), the team and everyone else involved with Westfield, including all our tenants and customers, every success in the future.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

A warm Welcome

We are delighted to welcome Helena Evans as our new Chief Executive, following Duncan Tilbe's retirement.

Helena's message to you :

"I am really pleased to be joining the team at Westfield Housing Association as CEO, at a time when the organisation continues to grow with new housing developments in progress, and an increased focus on tenant / customer engagement and empowerment. I bring with me 29 years of experience in the social housing sector, along with a wealth of knowledge in respect of social care and support services to older people and adults living with a range of disabilities.

I look forward to supporting my colleagues and Board members to listen to your feedback and continuously improve the experience of customers, tenants, and the wider communities that we serve. I will be carrying out a number of visits during the coming months and will hopefully get the opportunity to meet with you in the New Year and throughout 2024. With very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year, Helena Evans (CEO) "



Our Performance up to the end September 2023

Our Annual report published performance figures for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Here is an overview of our performance from 1st April 2023 to 30th September 2023. The full performance figures for 2023/24 will be published in next year's annual report and our website.



Measure	Performance 2022-23	Target	Apr - Jun 2022	Apr - Sept 2023	Trend in Quarter	Benchmark (end of 2022-23)	Comments/Actions
Current tenant arrears as a % of annual rent debit	3.61%	3.5%	3.78%	4.35%	↓	Median	Higher than previous quarter due to the timing of the large 4 weekly housing benefit payment.
% of rent lost through properties being vacant	0.91%	0.50%	0.36%	0.36%	↔	Lower Quartile	Performance stayed the same as previous quarter but still remained in the lower quartile.
% of emergency repairs completed within target time	97%	100%	100%	97%		Not benchmarked	From 67 jobs in Q2, 2 were late.
% of routine repairs completed within	90%	95%	91%	85%		Not benchmarked	From 470 routine repairs in Q2, 68
Average days to complete (routine)	17	15	15	21		Not benchmarked	NA
Number of live ASB cases including number of new cases	-		13	13		Not benchmarked	13 cases open at the end of Q2 including 9 new in
Number and % of cases closed and resolved in period			100%	100%		Not benchmarked	7 cases closed in the quarter, All 7 were reported as resolved and 0 cases were unresolved.



Customer satisfaction

Westfield has completed a pilot survey of its tenants based on the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) from the Regulator of Social Housing. This survey was conducted both online and face to face. 186 tenants responded from a census of all of Westfields 617 tenants. This gives a margin of error of ±6.0%.

The survey is generally positive with 86% of tenants satisfied with the overall services provided and even more satisfied with the way they are treated fairly and with respect, kept informed and provided with a well-maintained home. However, fewer are satisfied with the upkeep of the communal areas, and the handling of both ASB and complaints.

Overall satisfaction has remained the same in 2023 as in 2022 but there have been some changes in satisfaction between the two years, some improving but some falling.

The results compare well against other landlords who have used the TSMs this year, but less well against smaller landlords just operating in the North West.

The survey gave tenants the opportunity to express why they had answered the questions in the way they had but also to give any suggestions of what they might change, given the chance.

Whilst many are positive about the current service, the repairs service attracted the most negative comments.

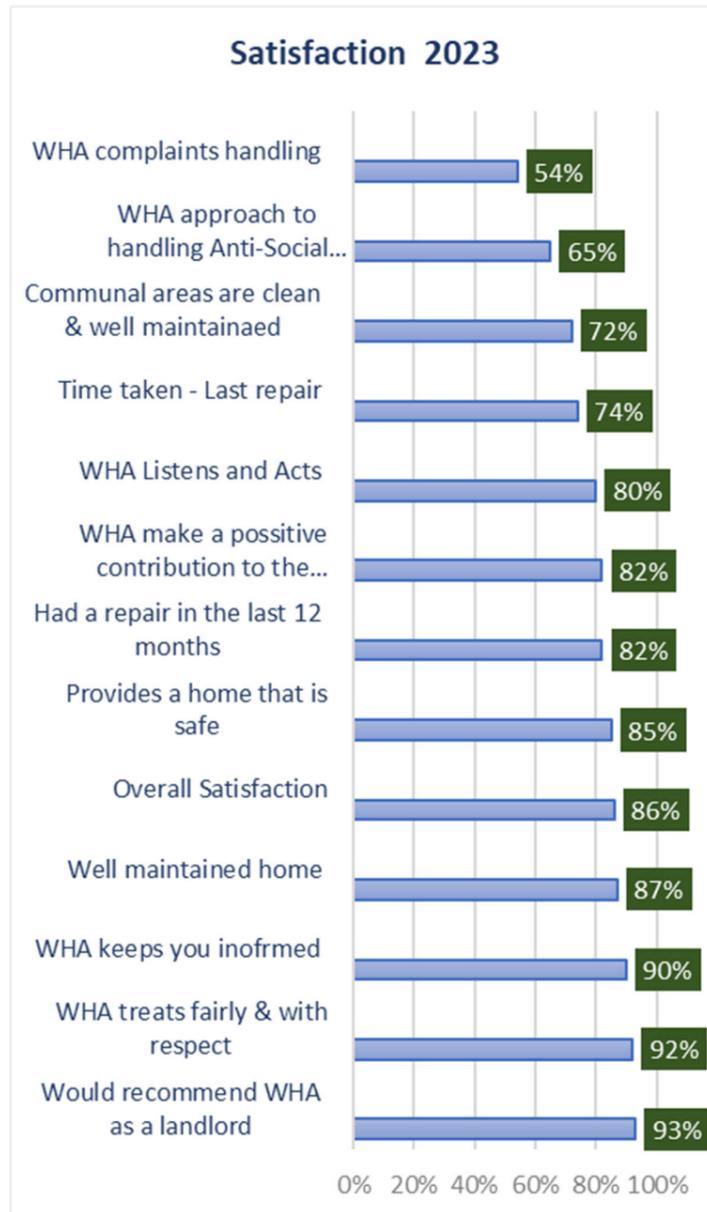
Other issues mentioned include local problems with ASB and the maintenance of the communal areas

Compliments

We receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide. Knowing when things are working well and are appreciated is just as important as knowing when things are not working as well as we would like.

We keep a record of the compliments we receive as well as any complaints. Good practice and learning can then be circulated across the organisation.

From April up until the end of September, we received 9 recorded compliments. There were 9 also recorded for the same period when compared to the previous year.



"Westfield are excellent. I can phone and speak to someone and they are happy to help right away"

"Absolutely love Westfield, they have helped me loads, never want to move anywhere else"

"WHA are brilliant we are very happy in our home."

Lessons learned from the survey

Repairs & maintenance: When asked about the repairs service comments mostly focus on the timescales for repairs, others mentioned the quality of work, keeping tenants informed of progress and checking after work is completed. It was recommended that by working with the contractor, repairs may be able to be completed a little quicker. It was also suggested that better communications about the time expected to complete repairs may help to manage tenants expectations.

Progress to date:

- Our Technical Officer is now carrying out post inspections on 10-20% of completed repairs.
- We aim to have more regular contact with our contractors before the due date of jobs.
- Contractors are now using a web-based portal which allows us and tenants to see updates on jobs, including any holdups such as parts on order/no access issues.
- We are working towards contractors making appointments for all jobs issued and where possible appointments will be made at point of reporting.

Local Issues: It is recommended that both the way ASB is dealt with, and the maintenance of the communal areas is reviewed so improvements can be made to increase satisfaction in these areas.

Progress to date:

- We are in the process of introducing an ASB App which will allow tenants to record, monitor and report Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) as it is happening. It will enable us to know exactly what is required as 'evidence' as part of an ASB case, allowing us to tackle ASB cases more efficiently and with a greater level of accuracy and documentation.'
- We are now carrying our inspection post the cleaning of communal areas, allowing us to monitor the service.
- We have instructed contractors to carry out painting of several communal entrances.
- The grass cutting contract will be re-tendered in the new year.



Customer Panel update

Our customer panel members have met 4 times this year and have covered the following items:

- Developed service standards
- Scrutinised performance
- Approved 2 applications for funding from the neighbourhood investment fund
- Reviewed the local offer based on the outcome of the community survey
- Took part in a repairs and voids service review
- Attended the Tenants Conference in Warrington
- Helped plan the calendar of events
- Provided regular reports & feedback to Board
- Taken part in the naming of the new development street names.

If you are interested in joining the panel or being involved in any way we would love to hear from you. Please contact Debbie on 01900 602906.

Residents' Group update

Our residents' group members have met 4 times this year and have been involved in the following:

- Worked in partnership with Rev Sharon Murphey of St Marys Church, to provide joint events for tenants.
- Helped with our clean up event
- Reviewed feedback following the clean up day
- Scrutinized performance
- Developed our calendar of events
- Taken part in a repairs and voids service review

Members have fed back that they feel like they are working in partnership with us, feel they are being listened to and that their views are taken on board. The opportunity to work closely with members of staff and be involved in the above activities has given members a valuable insight into the work that goes into delivering our services.

Repairs & Maintenance

Emergency Repairs

If you have an **EMERGENCY REPAIR**, please ring our Out of Hours Service provider Orbis on **0151 343 2762** please only ring this number if you have a genuine emergency. Examples of emergencies are:-

- Total loss of electricity/where electrics are damaged by water leaks
- Uncontrollable Leak (*which cannot be turned off and is causing damage*)
- Dangerous structures such as collapsed ceilings
- Total loss of water supply (*always check with United Utilities first*)
- Unable to use Toilet AND it is the only toilet in your home (*where the toilet is not blocked*)
- Total loss of Heating AND Hot Water - where household members are vulnerable / elderly (October – May)
- Boarding up windows/doors after a break-in/attempted break-in

If you can smell gas and think you may have a **GAS LEAK**, immediately:

- Turn off the gas
- Open your windows and doors
- Do not turn on or off any lights or electrical equipment, and do not light any matches
- Ring the National Grid on **0800 111 999** who will isolate your supply / make safe

Once they have attended you may have to contact **Westfield** as they do not carry out any repairs.

Please note that reported non

emergency repairs will be actioned on our return to the offices on 2nd January 2024.

Rechargeable Repairs

Access has become an increasingly challenging issue for our Contractors for all types of repairs and maintenance. Therefore where we have 3 failed access attempts we are now passing the charges back onto Tenants as our Contractors still need to charge us for their lost time.

Since January 2023, we have issued 25 jobs amounting to £2000 worth of recharges back to tenants.

Please ensure you allow/arrange access for your repairs with our Contractors to prevent the recharge

Health & Safety Compliance

APL Fire Safety has recently carried out our annual fire safety risk assessments in buildings with communal entrances.

It was identified that some of the Fire Action Notices had been removed from communal entrances. These have been reordered but please do not remove any notices moving forward. It is a legal requirement that these are displayed.

Other actions or recommendations from these inspections will or have been communicated to tenants

Adaptations

We currently have 13 Adaptation cases in progress. applications in process.

Planned Maintenance Programme 2023/24

We identified the following replacements for our 2023/24 planned programme which will be completed by 31st March 2024.

- 13 x Kitchen Replacements
- 8 x Bathrooms Replacements
- 12 x Heating System Replacements
- 48 x Properties for Window & Door Replacements
- 23 x Front Fence Replacements/ Repairs
- 23 x Loft Insulation (replace/top up)
- 27 x Extractor Fan Replacements

Energy efficiency

In February 2023 we secured over £400,000 of Government Funding as part of a scheme called 'SHDF' (Social Housing De-Carbonisation Fund). At time of writing (14.11.23), we have 19 properties in progress and we will fully complete a minimum of 30 properties by March 2024.

In 2024/25 we will carry out Energy Efficiency works on a further 20-40 homes. Works include Cavity Wall Insulation (or replacement), internal wall insulation, replacement windows and doors, energy lighting and Solar Panels.

Aside to Government incentives available, we have also have an allocated budget to ensure all of homes are EPC C rated or above (69 points or more) by 2030.



Repairs & Maintenance continued

RAAC – Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete

There has been a lot of interest in recent months around RAAC and the risks associated with it. RAAC is a lightweight material that was used mostly in flat roofing, but also in floors and walls between 1950's and 1960'. It is a cheaper alternative to concrete and is quicker and easier to install with a lifespan of 30 years.

It recently became evident that the predominant use of RAAC was in public building such as schools, hospitals, prisons and police stations.

Although Westfield do not own any of the high risk buildings above, we wanted confirmation that none of our properties contained RAAC, and if they did, to address the works etc required.

We employed a Specialist Structural Engineer in October 2023 who visited a sample of properties and the Minto Centre and confirmed RAAC is not present in any of our potential high risk properties.

Damp & Mould

In 2023 we created a new Damp and Mould Policy and Process. Our Technical Services Officer now visits all reports of damp and mould and works are issued as required.

Advice is also given to tenants on how to reduce the risk of condensation and treat as required. We monitor all cases reported, check in with tenants once works are complete and carry out a follow up inspection 3-4 months after works.

Condensation:

Is the moisture caused by everyday living. Moisture is absorbed into the warm atmosphere

of your home and when the house cools down, the moisture condenses cool surfaces such as external walls, around window and door reveals and uninsulated areas of ceilings, the result is condensation.

Advice given to tenants to manage condensation issues:

- Dry washing outside, do not dry clothes on radiators
- Keep the property ventilated - open trickle vents on windows etc
- Maintain a constant temperature in each room
- Position furniture/beds etc at least 100mm from walls to allow air flow, especially external walls
- Use extractor fans when cooking and bathing at all times

Damp:

There are 2 main types of damp 'Penetrating' and 'Rising'

Water penetration - is caused from external water ingress into the property usually from rainwater goods, missing roof tiles/slates, burst pipes, cracked render coatings, doors and windows. Signs of water penetration is staining to plaster, paintwork or paper usually higher than 1m up the wall(s)

Rising Damp – only occurs on the ground floor, when water from the ground rises up through the bricks and mortar of a building by capillary action, similar to a sponge soaking up water if placed in a bowl of water.

Any property not protected by a damp proof course, is susceptible to natural rising damp.

Typical examples of the different types of Damp Mould and Condensation.

Black Spot Mould



Condensation



Water penetration



Rising Damp



Development update

As many of you know, Westfield has a development plan to build up to 130 properties by 2030.

In the first phase we have built 17 new bungalows on the Westfield estate throughout 2023.

The first 11 of these were handed over in December and we are expecting a further 6 bungalows to be handed over in February 2024.

Westfield is still working towards delivering the second phase of the development programme and will provide updates in future newsletters.

In July 2023 we also saw the handover of four x3 bedroom family homes on the new Whins View Development, High Harrington, and expect a further four x2 Bedrooms homes handed over in April 2024.

Here's what our tenants said about their new homes.

"I can't believe we have been so lucky, we have watched these houses being built and are over the moon to be lucky enough to now live in one!"

"Westfield Housing is brilliant we are very happy in our new home"

"Very helpful association. Love our new home."

"Thankyou, we love our forever home"

Bungalow Allocation

We would like to thank everyone who made an application for one of our bungalows. We received over 150 applications for consideration for the 11 bungalows in our first phase.

To make the process transparent, we set up an allocation panel and anonymised every application. The panel considered housing need and supporting evidence provided when prioritising each application into high, medium and low need.

The applicants that were placed into the high need category completed a Pre-Tenancy Assessment in their home with a Housing Services Officer. From the information we gathered during these assessments we found our 11 New Tenants.

We hope our bungalows have had added value to the lives of the successful tenants..

The first of the Bungalows on Fell View Walk was handed over on 1st December 2023 and I'm sure you will agree the smile says it all?



Estate Matters

Estate clean up event

We held our 3rd successful annual clean up event in September 2023 in partnership with Cumberland Council, with a number of other community based organisations promoting their services.

The event was well attended and we managed to dispose of 6 large skips full of bulky items and household rubbish, reducing fly tipping and improving the appearance of the estate.

Thank you to those who helped us, we looking forward to more of you joining us next year's clean up.



Estate walkabout

In May we were joined by Workington Town Councilors Sean Melton & Neil Schofield. During the walkabout we also presented several garden appreciation certificates to our residents. Our lucky competition winner was Mr & Mrs Bousfield who received a £50 B & Q Voucher.

The autumn/winter walkabout was carried out on 11/12/2023 and the results will be published in the next newsletter. Dates of our 2024 Walkabouts will be published in January 2024.

Findings	We did	Following up
Several untidy gardens	Following our untidy garden procedure, we wrote to individual tenants who removed rubbish and tidied. Tenancy enforcement carried out to those not cleared.	A follow-up visit was carried out and confirmed the gardens had improved. Items that could not be removed collection was agreed on our annual clean up event.
Broken Windows	Wrote out to the individual tenants and arrangements made to replace.	All windows have now been replaced.
Rubbish & Weeds	Reported to Cumberland County Council	Cumberland cut weeds back tidying all areas.
Path defects	Reported to Cumberland County Council	This has now been completed in reported area.
Missing street signage	Reported to Cumberland County Council	Signage has now been replaced.

Our Events feedback

Kids Christmas Party 13th December 2023

This was a free event for Children whose parents are tenants of Westfield Housing Association.

36 children attended the event and had a fantastic time being entertained by "None stop party hire".

We had a visit from Santa and his Elf and each child received a gift from Santa as well as free refreshments.

Thankyou to everyone who joined us, we hope to see you again next year.



Christmas Jumper colouring competition



We had some wonderful entries for our children's colouring competition. Pictures were judged in two age groups:

Up to 5 years and 5 to 10 years.

The pictures were judged by the tenants and resident that attended our Christmas Bingo on Thursday 7th December 2023.

Congratulations

Up to 5 years

1st prize went to Pheobe Mattinson who received a £20 shopping voucher.

2nd prize went to Juliet Leisk who received a £15 shopping voucher.

5 to 10 years

1st prize went to Harper Foster who received a £20 shopping voucher.

2nd prize went to Phoebe Hall who received a £15 shopping Voucher.

Events feedback continued

Here's what our tenants said:

"Afternoon Susan I would like to thank yourselves and your team for a lovely day on Saturday"



Glasgow Christmas Markets & Christmas Bingo



Another successful bus trip was enjoyed by 35 tenants and residents on Saturday 2nd December 2023.

Congratulations to Mr Whetton who won our stand up bingo on the bus.

We also had a fantastic Christmas Jumper day event on Thursday 7th December. We played bingo and enjoyed some Christmas songs from our very talented children from Footsteps Nursery.

Bus trips and other events will be published in our next years calendar of events which will be developed by our Residents group in January 2024.

Warm Hub

Lynn Hodgson, member of our Customer Panel, has asked the association to support her in setting up a Warm Hub in the Minto Centre. Her idea is that the Hub is open on a weekly basis, and as well as serving free drinks and snacks, will include a programme of games and activities. Other local community-based agencies will also be invited to come along to talk about their services, including energy saving and financial advice.

If you would like to be involved helping Lynn to provide this service and know anyone that would benefit from attending the Hub, please contact the office on 01900 602906 and speak to either Susan or Julie.

Future ideas

If you have any suggestions for future trips or would like to become part of the Residents group to help us with estate matters, please let us know.

Help is available for older people

If you or anyone you know needs support now or over the Christmas period there is a range of help available from Age UK.

A few of the services they provide are:-

- Information and Advice service – free of charge and focus on access to benefits, info on heating etc.
- Activities and lunch clubs – our most popular lunch club being the Workington one held each Thursday – 2 courses of home made food for £5
- Warm hub – every week day from 10 to 2pm in our Finkle street shop – serving free drinks and snacks with games to play and activities.
- Day Services – for people who are less mobile and want to socialise. Where they can and where it is a paid for service they will collect people and bring them to the centre – food etc available. It can be a half or full day service
- Nail Cutting service – this is £22 and is available in Workington and other locations
- CommuniTEA service £25 per hour, where they go into your home and can do cleaning, make lunches etc, do laundry, make your bed, take you shopping or help with anything else you are struggling with. It is designed to be like having a friend in your home and we match the staff member to the customer.
- Deep clean service – we provide quotes for this on request.
- Hospital discharge service – this must be done through the hospital teams and we offer support for 4 weeks.
- Equipment shop – in our Oxford Street building. We offer advice on what will suit your needs and have all the equipment you need to remain independent. We stock wheelchairs and walking aids which are popular sellers. We also have mobility scooters which we can demonstrate and information on stair lifts.
- Veterans project.
- Befriending calls.
- Cinema club £5 including tea, biscuits and a film.
- Grand Days Out – free bus trips – but book early to avoid disappointment!

To find out information on any of the above email us – info@ageukwestcumbria.org.uk or call us on 01900 844670

A worthy cause

In the past we have held a Christmas Decoration competition and had some wonderful entries over the years. However, due to the cost increase in electricity we decided not to go ahead this year.

Although we are no longer running the competition we wanted to take a moment to appreciate the wonderful picture we received from one of our tenants at 80 Windsor Road Workington. The tenants have decorated their house in support of Andy's Man Club.

Speaking to our tenant for permission to publish this picture, this is what they said :
“ Thank you for supporting us. We have a go fund me page & there is donation bucket in the porch. The lights are on between 5-8 each night depending on if we are at home.”

All donations are greatly appreciated for a very worthy cause.

Thankyou.

