

Blog

The Housing Quality Network Cymru

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HQN Cymru members' update – 26 November 2018

The price of tenant safety is eternal vigilance

By **Keith Edwards**, Lead Associate, HQN Cymru

The Grenfell inquiry must surely identify the causes of the tragedy and bring those responsible to justice. It should also make sure that we all learn the lessons so that nothing like this can ever happen again.

Of course, the implications for the sector are already deep and enduring. This was never going to be a passing fad – the scale of the tragedy ensured that. If anything, as landlords have looked in depth at the safety of their own tenants, their awareness of the long-term nature of the challenges has increased.

The Welsh Government's recent [Sector Overview](#) of registered social landlord health and safety is a welcome and honest appraisal of how associations have addressed the issue post-Grenfell. More importantly, it has flagged up a number of key areas for action backed by a series of recommendations for boards and executives.

Renowned health and safety expert **Vicki Cutler** has reviewed the report and recommendations for HQN, and a group of our members have shared their detailed submissions to the regulator. An HQN Cymru report – [Compliance-plus: housing associations and health and safety](#) – based on this work aims to make a serious contribution to embedding the very best health and safety practices in Wales.

This is, of course, not the end of the story; in fact, it will never end. As HQN Chief Executive **Alistair McIntosh** says in his introduction to the report:

“The messages are clear: on the one hand Welsh associations are doing the right thing to prioritise health and safety in a post-Grenfell world; on the other, the watchwords have to be eternal vigilance – there is zero room for complacency at a time when new risks emerge on a regular basis.”

SafetyNet, in partnership with HQN Cymru, is organising an event on Thursday 17 January 2019 in Cardiff. It will cover:

- Headline messages from government to the sector
- Case studies on current practice in Wales
- Lessons learned and what should organisations be doing going forward.

[Click here for more details.](#)

From Merthyr to the Basque Country: Co-operation in action

As part of a three-day visit in December organised by the Wales Audit Office, leaders of Europe's premier co-operative region will be visiting Merthyr Valleys Homes to share experiences and learn more about Wales' ground-breaking tenant/staff mutual.

The Basque Country is widely recognised as a dynamic and successful region. Part of the success is linked to how they organise their society, which includes a focus on innovation, social entrepreneurship and a co-operative culture.

The delegation coming to Wales includes renowned academics, business leaders and innovators, along with internationally-recognised co-operative experts Professor Fred Freundlich, of the Faculty of Business, Mondragon University, and Rosa Fernandez, Director, Colaborabora Social Innovation Co-operative, Bilbao.

Mike Owen, Chief Executive of Merthyr Valleys Homes, said: "We are delighted to be hosting a visit from international co-operators from Mondragon in the Basque country of Spain. We have been a mutual for the last three years and have so much to learn from organisations like Mondragon who have had a co-operative community since the mid-1950s."

Mike pointed out that the co-operative collective in Mondragon is now the tenth largest businesses by volume in Spain. He emphasised that in a global economy where decisions about our futures are often made in remote boardrooms, there is lot of learning – not just for Merthyr but across Wales – on how we can create thriving and co-operative communities whose destiny is controlled by local people.

You can find out more and book onto a free Wales Audit Office event showcasing the work of Basque co-operatives [here](#).

About the author

Keith Edwards is a former Director of CIH Cymru and TPAS Cymru. He came to the housing sector via the trade union, co-operative and community development movements. As a consultant, he has worked for Welsh Government Ministers, the Housing Regulator and a number of local authorities, housing associations and private companies.

He has wide experience of stakeholder involvement, developing strategy, option appraisals, designing new service models and supporting co-operative and mutual housing. He has particular expertise in helping organisation get the maximum social, economic and environmental benefits from their investment and service delivery, having set up and run the innovative i2i project for Welsh Government.

Keith is Lead Associate for HQN Cymru.