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There's no place like home for Whitefriars' tenants

Efforts to improve the lives and homes of thousands of Coventry people were today hailed a huge success by government officials.

Whitefriars Housing Group has been praised for its work in ensuring its tenants have a decent standard of housing.

The housing organisation, which manages nearly 20,000 homes across the city, has carried out thousands of repairs and refits to its properties to meet government guidelines on accommodation standards.

The government wants all the UK's social housing brought into a decent condition by 2010 and today pledged up to £3bn nationwide to help housing providers meet this target – and it cited Whitefriars as a prime example of how the work can be done.

Improvements carried out by Whitefriars on its properties to date include:

- 10,600 new windows
- 11,000 new kitchens and
- 4,600 new heating systems.

Howard Farrand, Chief Executive of Whitefriars, said: "Everyone is entitled to decent housing. People in Coventry can take a pride in their homes and we take a pride in what we have been able to do to help residents and improve their homes.

“But it’s not just about creating decent homes for people, it’s about creating decent neighbourhoods too. One of our great successes is that we have been working in partnership with other local organisations to help improve neighbourhoods. For example, our training and development agency has helped to create employment and we have worked with our partners to bridge the construction skills gap in the city.”

Whitefriars’ tenants were among guests from across the West Midlands at a special event at Coventry City Football Club today to celebrate regional successes in pursuing the government’s Decent Homes Standard.

Tenant Ellen Emms, 74, who lives in The Boxhill, Stoke Aldermoor, has seen a range of improvements to her property.

Mrs Emms, who is also chairman of the Stoke Aldermoor Residents’ Association, said: “I now have a new heating system, they’ve refitted the bathroom and kitchen and added double glazing. I’m very pleased with the improvements.”

Fellow Stoke Aldermoor resident Sylvia Wright is eagerly awaiting a new-look bathroom and kitchen from Whitefriars in the next few weeks.

Mrs Wright, 76, from The Lindfield, added: “The plans look perfect and I can’t wait for the work to be done. It’s going to look like Buckingham Palace when it’s finished. I’ve been consulted along the way and have even chosen the colour schemes.”

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott today revealed the number of non-decent social sector homes has been reduced by one million since 1997 – with Whitefriars among the housing organisations leading the way.

He said: "This is a tremendous achievement which shows we are taking great strides towards our aim of making all social housing decent by 2010."

Mr Prescott announced 58 new schemes to bring homes up to decency standards across the country. Regional initiatives will be carried out in areas such as Sandwell in Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

**For further information please contact Becky Hutson at The Bridge Group on
02476 217 398 or r.hutson@bridge-group.co.uk**