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## **Home sweet safe home**

Some of Coventry's most vulnerable residents are celebrating after being freed from the blight of anti-social behaviour.

Pensioners and disabled tenants in Hopedale Close, Wyken, and Eric Gray Close, Stoke Heath, can now enjoy their homes in peace after Whitefriars Housing Group replaced their flat roofs and provided extra security features.

The group has pitched the roofs of 17 properties in the first stage of a comprehensive spruce-up. New fencing has also been erected in an effort to deter intruders and work to improve the communal gardens at both sites will start shortly.

Youths had previously used the old flat roofs as a playground, with their stamping feet and threatening presence causing misery for residents.

The need for the work at the two groups of bungalows was prioritised following an assessment of Whitefriars' premises across the city.

Hopedale Close resident Gwyneth Grant, who lives with her husband Alan, said she is now the queen of her castle.

She said: "It has made such a difference and the bungalow feels more like a home now than just a box. Before they stuck out like sore thumbs, but now they look really pretty and are so comfortable.

“We feel a lot safer and secure because the youths can’t climb on them anymore. One night we had 20 to 30 youths sitting on our fence which would make you feel uncomfortable whatever your age.

“Your home should be your castle and you should feel safe and comfortable in it - we do now. It feels so much better.”

Near neighbour Yvonne Madden, who has lived in Hopedale Close with her husband Andrew for seven years, echoed her thoughts.

The council worker said: “It is like having a new house. The youths used to be right on top of your head and it sounded like a herd of elephants was up there.

“When they finish the new fencing it will be beautiful. It will feel completely safe and we will have our own little domain. It has put my mind at ease and is a 100 per cent improvement.

“I think this will definitely keep the youths away.”

Fran Gaught, tenant liaison team leader at Whitefriars, said: "The tenants of Hopedale Close and Eric Gray Close were identified as being particularly vulnerable to problems from anti-social behaviour and we are glad they are happy with the work and have already noticed a difference. All the feedback from the residents has been positive.

"We still have quite a bit of work to do to the gardens, but anticipate it will all be finished by early spring. We hope these improvements are going to give the tenants the peace and quiet they deserve."

Whitefriars is a leader in the field of tackling anti-social behaviour. Tenancy services manager Eamon Lynch said: “Whitefriars takes anti-social behaviour extremely seriously and we are committed to taking appropriate action, both

directly and in partnership with a range of agencies, to prevent it where possible and to stop it. It is a blight no resident should have to live with, and we will not tolerate it.”

The improvements link with tough new powers introduced this year which will further help Whitefriars and its partners to combat anti-social behaviour. These include new legal powers that allow housing groups to take out anti-social behaviour injunctions against non-tenants who persist in causing a nuisance to residents in Whitefriars properties.

**Ends**

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