



Part of



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Young mothers look forward to a bright future

At the beginning of the year a house in Alexandra Road, Farnborough which provides accommodation for vulnerable young mothers was in a run down state and in need of substantial repair.

The property, owned by Pavilion Housing Association which is part of First Wessex, is leased by LIFE, a charity providing support and access to independent living to young mothers and mothers to be. It has now been transformed into a modern, comfortable and safe place to live thanks to a £250,000 refurbishment funded by a grant from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and carried out by Wessex Property Services (WPS), First Wessex's property maintenance company.

The extensive makeover began in January when the six residents were moved out and temporarily re-housed. The list of improvements made to the house includes a new roof, an extension, new windows and fascias, new heating and water mains systems, fire alarm system, a re-wire, six new en-suite bedrooms, three new kitchens, a communal dining room, lounge, laundry room and garden area. In addition, the support staff now have a brand new office and staff room. Everyone received full training on how to use all the new equipment when WPS handed over the keys to the new facility on 4th September.

Residents moved back into their unrecognisable home shortly afterwards on the 8th September and Elaine Hall from Life is thrilled with the changes. "LIFE aims to provide a typical domestic environment for these young women, where staff can support them in learning to care for themselves and for their young children. They live independently but staff are always on hand to answer questions or help them when they need it, and this fantastic makeover has enabled us to

focus entirely on improving the lives of our residents rather than constantly worrying about the quality of their accommodation. Our aim is to help them until the point where they are able to move into their own independent homes and this has made such a difference. WPS have done an incredible job in helping us achieve our goal.”

Steve Caruana, Wessex Property Services Project Manager said: “From start to finish the refurbishment has taken 30 weeks, which is incredible when you consider the extent of the improvements which have been made. The beauty of this job is that we all work for the same organisation, so there were no hold-ups with external contractors which can often cause big delays in projects like this. It’s all been relatively straightforward as everyone was working towards a common goal – to create a fantastic home which works for LIFE and for the young mothers who live here. I’ve been amazed at the team spirit throughout the entire project; everyone involved just rolled up their sleeves and showed genuine passion and enthusiasm to do a great job.

“There have been some challenging times, such as when we discovered that the roof needed replacing at the start of the project, and then again at the eleventh hour when we had to replace the entire water mains system, so we’ve had to be flexible as the development changed. Now it’s all complete and we’ve moved everyone back in successfully all the hard work has definitely been worth it and we’re delighted with the outcome. We hope the house will benefit many people for years to come and are pleased to have been able to support Life in their incredible work.”

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Notes to Editors

First Wessex Housing Group manages around 17,000 affordable homes primarily in Hampshire and with some activity in Surrey.

The Group comprises Atlantic Housing Limited, First Atlantic Housing Limited, Pavilion Housing Association, Portsmouth Housing Association, Fernhill Care Limited and Wessex Property Limited.

Portsmouth Housing Association: provides homes in Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport and Havant. It also provides a wide range of community regeneration services across South East Hampshire.

Atlantic Housing and First Atlantic Housing: provide a full range of affordable housing including rented, supported, shared ownership and key worker housing. A large support portfolio includes housing for older people, extra-care housing, dementia care housing, housing for people with learning disabilities, people recovering from mental illness and some specialist accommodation. They cover a geographic area spanning Eastleigh, Southampton, Winchester and the New Forest.

Pavilion Housing Association: the largest provider of housing association homes for rent in the Aldershot, Farnborough, Ash and Farnham areas.

Fernhill Care: provides care services for tenants of First Wessex Housing Group and other landlords and for individuals in the community with support needs. It specialises in domiciliary, extra- and dementia care.

Wessex Property Limited: the Group's in-house repairs and maintenance organisation.

www.firstwessex.org
www.pavilionha.co.uk

LIFE Housing provides a support service to pregnant women, mothers of small children and families who are in need of support, so as to enable them to access independent living and successfully maintain their tenancies. The support is delivered to our service users in accommodation provided by LIFE Housing or in service users' own homes. We are currently operating in 30 local authority areas, and are funded by 23 Supporting People Administering Authorities.

We aim to ensure that LIFE Houses reflect a typical domestic environment. Most of the houses take between 4 and 5 service users, although we do have some houses with 3, 6 and even 7 bedrooms. Service users have their own bedrooms and share communal facilities, such as kitchens, bathrooms and reception rooms.

LIFE houses were opened in the 1970s as a response to requests from women facing homelessness if they continued with their pregnancies. LIFE supporters opened houses in various locations across the UK in order to provide a home for women who found themselves in this vulnerable position.