

ISSUE 04 AUTUMN 2025



Respond Round Up



INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome!

to the latest edition of the Respond Tenant Newsletter. A special hello to our newest tenants across Respond estates. We are delighted to welcome you to our community and hope you are settling into your new homes. If you have any questions or need help with your housing, your Tenant Relations Officer is your first port of call. This goes for all tenants - we're here to help!

P.S. Don't forget to follow us on social media for the latest updates and announcements!

 @respondhousing  @respondhousing  respond housing

Tenant voices at the heart of social housing

In recent years, social housing in Ireland has been changing. It's not just about new homes being built, but also about how tenants are being listened to, valued, and included in shaping the services they receive and the communities they live in.

A big part of this change is the growth of Tenant Engagement, a new but fast-growing approach that ensures tenants have a real say in housing decisions. Tenant Engagement is about more than surveys or one-off consultations. It's about working in partnership, making sure tenant voices are heard and acted upon in a meaningful way.

To help drive this forward, the Irish Tenant Engagement Network (ITEN) was established in 2022. The network brings together tenant engagement professionals from housing organisations across the country. Together, the ITEN works to make sure that tenant voice is at the heart of

how housing services are planned and delivered. Darren Hudson, Respond's Tenant Engagement Manager and current chair of ITEN, explains the purpose of the ITEN.

"Our purpose is to embed tenant engagement into the DNA of social housing in Ireland. Real engagement is not just about asking tenants for their opinion every now and then, it's about ensuring tenants play a lasting role in shaping their homes, services, and communities."

As part of this work, the ITEN has recently launched a new research paper to support housing providers and tenants in building stronger, more inclusive communities.



Scan the code to read the research paper and learn more.



CORK HIGHLIGHTS

Visits to Millfield Cottages and The Crawford Centre by An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin and Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, James Browne

Earlier this year, An Taoiseach Micheál Martin visited two Respond developments in Cork – a historic development at Millfield Cottages, and one of the city's largest social and cost rental housing developments at The Crawford Centre. Both visits marked important milestones for home and community in Cork.

Last year, Millfield Cottages were just 18 of over 4000 homes that we had in construction. We are just as proud of these 18 homes as we are of our large-scale developments.

Giving old builds such as these a second life is something Respond is immensely proud to do, and we are delighted to see the community that has been built here.

On the other end of Respond's figurative hand, An Taoiseach officially opened 69 new social homes, completed earlier this year, and turned the sod on the next phase of 149 Cost Rental homes, due for completion in 2027. This will bring the total number of units for this project to 218 high-quality homes.

The Taoiseach was accompanied by the Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Dan Boyle, and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, James Browne TD to both of these official openings.

Phase 1 of the development – The Crawford Centre – is already home to 94 residents living in high quality, energy efficient one- and two-bedroom apartments.

The 69 social homes were delivered by Respond with funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage through the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF), alongside finance from the Housing Finance Agency.



WHERE LITTLE STORIES MAKE BIG IMPACT

Tiny Graduates mark a Big Milestone

Preschoolers across Respond’s Early Learning and School Aged Care services donned caps and gowns to celebrate their graduation from preschool to primary school. The Respond team hosted joyful celebrations for children and their families, complete with songs and performances, and in some cases, a rainbow balloon arch for extra sparkle!

Lisa O’Rourke, Respond’s National Early Years Manager said:

“Supporting young children to learn, grow and thrive is at the heart of everything we do, and moments like this remind us how meaningful that work is.”

Our Early Learning and School Aged Care services help children to build friendships in a safe, nurturing space and strengthen the communities they live in.

Lisa O’Rourke, continued,

“We believe every child deserves a place to discover their own magic. We wish all our graduates the very best in this next chapter.”



STAFF TESTIMONIAL

Meet Eddie, the man who keeps Seven Mills ticking



If you live in Seven Mills, chances are you know Eddie Cantwell. He started doing work in Respond’s Family Homeless Services, supported our Elanora Court development and now services as a Building Supervisor in Seven Mills. He’s the key master, the friendly fixer and the reliable first call for little things that make a big difference – from sorting bin sheds and helping with heating to supporting our Tenant Relations Officers on move in days.

By end of September, Eddie expects to be looking after 450 complexes when an additional 78 homes join the Seven Mills community.

However, through all this, Eddie claims his favourite part of his job are the tenants, “I get on with every one of them. They come to me if they need problems sorted”.

“The people – they’re the highlight of my job,” says Eddie. “I think the people are great in here. Work colleagues, to the people that live here, they’re very good, and that’s maybe my highlight, because I get on with everybody. I get on great with them, and they get on great with me.

“The tenants come to me looking for help. I help them all out, every one of them. They always come back too, they’ll come to have a chat.

“It’s a different sort of living in an apartment - it’s hard,” adds Eddie. “I know it is, because half of those

people are 14 years waiting on places. And then they go in, they leave their parents and then they’re there on their own. Some lovely people, from all different backgrounds and cultures.”

However, it’s not just about the relationships with tenants, but also the staff at Respond, “It’s nice being able to help them out, because they do help you out if you need anything.”

Working alongside Barry Williams, Community Support Worker at Respond, Eddie also stays behind after hours to help with a community summer football camp.

“We started off about three weeks ago, Barry put a post on all the notice boards and all the kids seen it. And the first day we went out, we had I think roughly about 16-18 children which is good. And the week after, we had about 25 children attend. And it only continues to go up in numbers.

“So now we have to split them. We have to let half play on the all-weather, and the other half on the green. So, about half an hour on each and we swap them over to give the other kids a chance. And then at the end we’ll have a penalty shoot-out.”

Eddie would never call himself a hero, but many communities have someone like him - people who give their time and heart to helping the community. Respond is full of people like Eddie and we are grateful for them.

CELEBRATING LOCAL STORIES

Day out to Bunratty Castle and Folk Park

Twelve families - 40 people - from Ballygrennan Close and Distillery View in Limerick - enjoyed a brilliant day in Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. Tenants climbed the castle, explored the old houses and learnt about the people who lived there.

Children had fun naming animals they spotted along the trail, later enjoying time in the playground.

For many it was a first visit - a new experience to share together. One family said the trip ‘took our family away from everyday life and let us have fun together.’

This outing was kindly funded by the Housing Finance Agency and Respond’s Tenant Engagement fund and organised by our Family Support and Tenant Experience teams.



Tenant Tales & Staff Stories



Kim Arthur, 36, never thought she would be able to live independently in her own accommodation, up until the beginning of 2025, when she joined Respond’s community of tenants.

Living with an incurable illness, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, a connective tissue disorder that affects Kim’s entire body, saw her go from living alone and working 12+ hour shifts in the hospital as a Midwife, to moving back home with her parents, being almost bed bound and needing a wheelchair to leave the house. A major life adjustment for her and her entire family, Kim was fainting multiple times a day, experiencing joint dislocations and subluxations day-in-day-out for years.

Having tried everything and anything to improve her quality of life, Kim says nothing worked. Kim began researching treatments in an attempt to find some form of relief.

“I was always researching treatments to see was there anything out there that could help me. One day I came across a small trial in America that was having great success and so I did some more digging. I’m forever grateful for my healthcare background because it enabled me to be able to read and interpret research papers.

“One day I decided to print off the research and bring it to one of my consultants. They said, ‘Yes, this looks promising, but I’m not the person to do it.’ I was disappointed, but I didn’t give up. Another one of my consultants agreed to give it a go but had to be approved for funding as it’s quite an expensive

treatment so I waited. A few weeks later, funding was turned down because my condition wasn’t on the approved lists for this treatment.

“Thankfully my consultant went back and fought for me. Finally, the day after my birthday it was approved on a trial basis - the best present I could have ever received, and six weeks later I got my first infusion and have been getting them ever since.

“It changed my life. I now wasn’t fainting at all which meant my dislocations were dramatically reduced - my illness is incurable so objectively I’m still unwell but it’s night and day from what I was.

“I’m now able to live alone which I didn’t think would ever be possible, so when Respond offered me this apartment it was honestly a dream come true, my own little space. I’m still in hospital most weeks for tests, treatments or appointments with my consultants but I can live with that,

“It was a massive thing for both my parents and me to be able to live on my own again. Respond have made the whole process very smooth, from finding out about the apartment to getting the keys was only a week. It was such a whirlwind for me I couldn’t believe it was happening. The process couldn’t have been smoother.

“I really enjoy living in a Respond neighbourhood, I’ve made some friends, and we check in on each other and help each other out when needed. I’ve recently fractured my ankle and have had offers of help from multiple neighbours which is so appreciated.

“I only moved in at the start of the year so it’s still early days in terms of building relationships with people, but it’s nice to know that I have people around me willing to help if needed and to have the chats with also. We are living in a brand-new estate so they are just putting the finishing touches to it now and there are still new people moving in so no doubt there will be more friendships made along the way.

A true Dundalk woman, Kim, has lived in the town for most of her life, attending her local college, DKIT, studying midwifery, before securing a job with Our Lady of Lourdes hospital, Drogheda, upon finishing her training.

With a small stint working and living in Mullingar, she wasn’t in this position very long before she fell ill and was forced to move home. Her new home in Marshe’s Upper estate, is now just three kilometres from her family home in Blackrock, with her brother living just around the corner, which she said is ideal for her and her situation.

“The majority of my friends live here too, and I love having them close by,” Kim said.

Working as a midwife, Kim says it is “without a doubt the job” she “was made to do”. However, her rare genetic illness took this away from her for many years.

“Midwifery has played a huge role in where I am today. I feel incredibly lucky to have a career that I’m so passionate about, being a midwife is an absolute privilege, I will forever treasure my time working on the wards, especially the labour ward, not many people can say it is their job to help bring life into the world.

“My illness took this away from me for many years which was one of the hardest parts about being so unwell, for a long time I didn’t think it would ever be possible to work as a midwife again. Working on the wards is physically and mentally taxing, doing 12+ hour shifts and nights is not for the faint hearted and you really have to be in your full health to sustain a career like that.

“I would love to get back on the wards at some point on a part time basis, if I was well enough, but unfortunately that’s not in the cards for me right now, however I started a job in 2024 that is perfect for me, and I absolutely love it.”

Kim now works for a company called The Baby Academy teaching a range of Antenatal classes online, allowing her to work from the comfort of her home and provide job satisfaction all the same.

“It’s only a few hours a week but I’m back working as a Midwife and that means so much to me. I feel so lucky that I wake up excited to go to work. I know there’s not many people that can say that and being so unwell has

definitely made me a better midwife, I can empathise with people in a way I couldn’t before, that’s not to say I wasn’t good at my job before, but it has just added a new layer to it.”

Some highlights from her time in midwifery include delivering one of her close friends’ babies, who is now almost 14, “I think that’s something that bonds you for life, it was the biggest privilege and the most fun day at work being able to look after her and have the chats while she was in labour.

“Another highlight happened recently when I was teaching a class, the participants can talk to me through a chat box, and it turns out one of the pregnant women had the same rare genetic condition as me. I honestly felt like I was meant to be there teaching that class for her, if it was any other midwife I can almost guarantee that they wouldn’t have known what the condition was or what the implications were for pregnancy, labour and birth but of course I did. It turned out to be one of the most rewarding classes I’ve ever taught.”

While midwifery is Kim’s first passion in life, she also took up posting content to TikTok following a photoshoot with Kash Beauty, an Irish makeup brand founded by an Irish makeup artist.

“I’m no model, but when Keilidh (founder of Kash Beauty) posted a story on social media about needing a model for a photoshoot the following week I put myself forward.”

Kim put herself forward for the shoot shortly after she started her treatment for her condition. She had promised herself that she would start saying yes to new opportunities if they presented themselves. Never did she think she would be chosen for the opportunity, however, the next day after applying, she received a message asking her to do the photoshoot.

With a real passion for makeup, Kim says she finds it therapeutic, allowing her to sit down and turn her brain off, “I just started posting for fun, I figured that I do my makeup all the time anyway why not film it!

“I’ve now incorporated a little bit of midwifery into my content too by showing a day in the life of a midwife. I’ve also continued to work with Kash Beauty on other photoshoots and created content for them. I love it. I’ve often been asked would I like it to be my full time job if I could make money from it and the answer is no, Midwifery will always be my real passion in life but I’m having so much fun doing TikTok on the side, I’ve met lots of lovely people through it and my confidence has grown so much, it meant that when I started teaching online that I was used to talking to the camera so it didn’t faze me at all.”

If you would like to nominate a neighbour or family member for the tenant spotlight piece, please get in contact, as we’d love to share more stories of our tenants.

NEWS FROM RESPOND

Family Fun Days across Respond communities

Ard Mor Court, Tallaght

Over 20 families came together for a lively Family Fun Day with outdoor games, a sensory van and – of course – an ice cream van. The day was a celebration of the hard work that has gone into building trust and shows what's possible when communities are supported, included, and empowered. It has laid a strong foundation for continued growth in Ard Mor Court.

Newtown View, Drogheda

Led by the newly formed Residents Association, more than 150 tenants turned out to meet their neighbours and enjoy activities. The emergency services - Gardaí, Ambulance, Fire Service and Boyne River Rescue Service – ran popular show and tell demos. The Mayor of Drogheda, Cllr Michelle Hall, dropped in to meet with tenants. Residents have already started planning future activities, including an Anti-Bullying workshop, led by community Gardaí and the Marie Keating Foundation Mobile Unit.

Seven Mills, Dublin

Seven Mills hosted its first Street Feast in May, with over 350 tenants joining the festivities. It was a true team effort, Respond organised an ice cream van and arts and craft materials for children while tenants brought their food to share on the day. People from many backgrounds came together to get to know their new community.



Congratulations to Our Newsletter Competition Winners!

We are delighted to announce the winners of our "Name the Newsletter" competition. After much consideration, the chosen title was The Respond Round Up.

A special congratulations goes to **Jodi Balfe** (Dublin) and **Graham Coyle** (Drogheda, Co. Louth), who both submitted the winning name. Each will receive a €100 One4All voucher as their prize. We would also like to extend a big thank you to everyone who entered. The Newsletter Editorial Group had a tough job choosing from so many creative and thoughtful suggestions. Keep an eye out for future opportunities to get involved – your ideas really do shape what we do!

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