

Community News

Edition 15 | SUMMER | July 2025

Welcome to the 15th edition of Community News.

We, the Tenant Editorial Panel, hope you enjoy all the latest news, activities, upcoming events and items of interest from around our Woven communities.

Woven winner of Member Engagement & Communications Award



Woven tenants and staff received the **Member Engagement & Communications Award** at the **Association & Institute Awards 2025**.

The Award is in recognition of the ongoing engagement with tenants by the Homes & Communities Team and in particular the work being undertaken to redevelop Woven's **Menu of Tenant Engagement** in line with tenant led 'House' infographic initiative. There'll be more to share on this as the plans are adopted by Woven.

Would you like to join our Editorial Panel?

Community News is produced by tenants, for tenants; co-ordinated and compiled by the Editorial Panel and members of Woven's Homes & Communities Team.

We are on the lookout for willing tenant volunteers. Gain experience of newsletter production and share news with tenants across NI. Email: newsletter@woven.org.uk

woven GARDEN COMPETITION 2025

theme: **WILDLIFE FRIENDLY GARDENS**



prizes:

**Nine Category
Prizes & One
Overall Prize**

three categories:

- 1. SMALL SPACE**
(balconies/smaller,
yards/porches)
- 2. TRADITIONAL**
(front/rear green
/planted space)
- 3. COMMUNAL**
(shared spaces
& tenants can
work together)



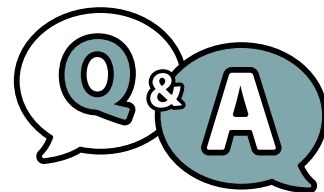
Thank you to the tenants that have already submitted their entries. There is still plenty of time to get involved.
Visit the following link for full entry details: <https://tinyurl.com/yn2vy7c2>



woven

Meet The Chief Executive

Alan McKeown joined Woven as Chief Executive earlier this year. We sat down with him to find out more about him and what he sees for the future of Woven...



Give us a brief overview of your history/career and how you came to join Woven?

I started my housing journey as a student at Stirling University back in the early 1990s (not 1900s). I did some work in experience in a few organisations, but my first role was in housing management in the Scottish Borders with Roxburghe District Council.

I then went to work for the Chartered Institute of Housing of Scotland in policy, lobbying and legislation development. My next role was in housing policy and regeneration in Fife Council before moving back into representative work on housing, homelessness and social care at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

I moved up to Angus Council where I was the Chief Housing Officer for seven years and an Executive Director for Communities for a further six years. When I moved home, I worked in economic development with Invest NI, but housing was always my calling.

What are you most looking forward to about joining Woven?

I'm looking forward to getting back into the world of all things housing. There is nothing better than seeing great customer service, strong community work and watching fabulous new housing being built. I'm also (strangely) looking forward to the governance role, ensuring we are well run, well managed and provide strong assurance to our tenants, our funders and the regulator. Lastly, I'm looking forward meeting all the staff and tenants.

What do you hope to achieve with Woven in the next few years?

I hope to help the organisation grow further and become bigger and better in every way. The biggest priority is to make sure we get back to our high regulatory grading, but I also want to see improvements in the performance of services to our tenants and to ensure Woven plays a major role in meeting the new build targets for housing in Northern Ireland. The association has great staff, homes and customers so I am very optimistic for the future.

What would be your message to Woven tenants as you take up your post as Chief Executive?

Our tenants are our greatest asset. I want to make sure we provide you with the best services in your homes and your communities. We know we have a few areas to make progress on, such as our repairs service, and we've started that journey, so my message is I want the best for you and will work with you and the team, including our contractors to make sure things are better.

What do you do to relax, outside of work?

I spend a lot of time with my family which includes walking the Charlie dog and keeping her entertained. We have a big garden so cutting the law takes some time. I spend time with my children, and my son Alex likes to Mountain Bike which can be great fun. Lastly, I love spending quality time with my partner Kate so always must make sure there is time for that.

What is your motto for life?

Be the person who brings happiness to the room when you are there, not when you leave (a little deviation for an Oscar Wilde quote)



woven

Out and About

As ever, the Communities Team have had a busy few months. Below is just a snapshot of events that have taken place recently...



Community Allotment Open Day
📍 Cathedral's View, Armagh



Strawberry Fair
📍 Sion Mills



Planting Workshop
📍 Portaferry Road, Newtownards



Arts and Crafts
📍 Greeves Park, Strabane



Planting Workshop
📍 Conar's Court, Londonderry



Photography Workshop
📍 Hollywood Schemes



Planting Workshop
📍 Victoria Hall, Londonderry



Health Checks
📍 Brians Well, Belfast

Check out the 'Date For Your Diary' page and Woven's Facebook page for details on upcoming events. If you want a specific event in your area, please contact your Community Involvement Officer to discuss further.

Communities Team - Award Winners!



Delighted to share the news that Woven has picked up the **Member Engagement & Communications Award** at the **Association & Institute Awards 2025**.

The Award is in recognition of the ongoing engagement with tenants by the Homes & Communities Team and in particular the work being undertaken to redevelop the Association's Menu of Tenant Engagement

The Team picked up the award at the awards night at the Royal Marine Hotel in Dublin alongside tenants that have been involved in this work!



Members of the Woven Communities Team and tenants collecting the award in Dublin!



woven

Tracing Ireland's Spanish Roots... ...From Snails to Surnames



Editorial Panel and Woven tenant Dave Maher once again takes a look at Irish history, this time exploring the island of Ireland's enduring links to Spain...

For centuries, the story of Ireland's early settlers has woven together myth, legend, and mystery. One of the most enduring of these tales is that of the Milesians, an ancient people said to have sailed to Ireland from Iberia. Long dismissed as folklore, this tale has recently found unexpected allies in science — through genetics, archaeology, and, oddly enough, snails.

The Milesians left Spain to conquer Ireland and became the ancestors of the Irish Gaels. Historians once viewed this as myth-making by medieval monks, eager to give the Irish people a grand origin story.

However, in recent decades, hard evidence has emerged that makes this Iberian connection more than just legend. In the 2010s scientists began decoding the DNA of ancient Irish remains.

These bones found in passage tombs like at Newgrange, date back over 5,000 years and their genetic makeup tell a fascinating story: the early Irish farmers were closely related to Neolithic populations in Northern Spain.



These people didn't spring from the island itself. They were part of a great migration that began in the Middle East, moved across Europe and eventually reached the Atlantic coasts.

By around 4000 BC, some of these seafarers had made their way to the west of Ireland, bringing with them agriculture, pottery, and new technologies. Their DNA lives on today in modern Irish people.

One of the strangest and most charming pieces of this puzzle involves a small, unassuming creature: the land snail. Biologists studying snail populations noticed something odd.

A unique genetic strain of this snail is found only in two places: Northern Spain and the West coast of Ireland. Snails do not swim oceans, they don't stow away easily or travel by accident over such vast distances.

The conclusion? Humans brought them — possibly tucked away in food supplies, firewood, or under damp boat decking likely unaware they were transporting snails that would survive for thousands of years in their new island home.

This biological breadcrumb adds weight to the idea of a direct

maritime link between Iberia and Ireland long before recorded history.

What we call the "Irish" today is a blend of many peoples over time, with the Spanish-Irish link standing out as particularly strong and early.

Many early Irish surnames, like O'Driscoll or O'Sullivan, are heavily associated with southern and western coastal communities — areas most linked to early Iberian settlers. There are also broader cultural similarities between the Atlantic peoples. Megalithic tombs and stone circles found in Ireland closely resemble those in Galicia and Cantabria.

Traditions of seafaring, hilltop fortresses, and even certain musical scales and rhythms show echoes across the western seaboard of Europe.

So next time you walk along the stony paths of the Burren, or see a snail trail on a damp wall in Kerry, remember: you're sharing the land with the quiet descendants of voyagers, both human and not, who crossed the sea from Spain some 6,000 years ago.



Mental Health

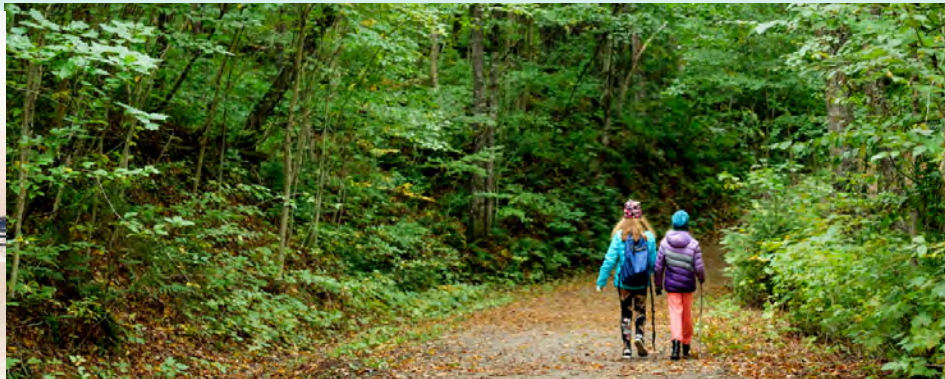
Words by Woven Tenant, Dave Maher

In our fast-moving, often stressful world, it's easy to forget how important it is to take care of our mental health, just as we do our physical health. And yet, the two are deeply connected. One of the simplest ways to support our emotional well-being is by lacing up our shoes and going for a walk, especially if the sun is shining!



The Power of a Walk in the Sunshine

You don't need a gym membership or fancy gear. A gentle daily stroll, even for just 20–30 minutes, has been shown to lift our mood, improve sleep, and reduce feelings of anxiety. Walking gets our blood flowing, helps clear the mind, and, importantly, increases the release of endorphins: the brain's natural "feel-good" chemicals. When we walk outdoors in natural light, our body produces more vitamin D, which plays a key role in brain health. Sunlight also helps regulate our sleep-wake cycle, which can go off track during periods of stress or sadness. There's growing evidence that people who spend time outside in daylight are less likely to experience the deep dips that come with low mood and depression.



You are not alone - Three brave Woven tenants

Before I moved into Castle Gardens I had lived in a local homeless hostel for 2 and a half years. My mental health at that time was really bad.



My marriage had broken down and I was evicted from my private rental due to falling behind on the rent. My self confidence had hit rock bottom.

I still have my low periods but I have made some very good friends since moving here and that helps a lot. I may give out from time to time but I really appreciate everything Woven does for its residents, like the events they hold to make us feel part of the community.

I particularly enjoyed the cookery and photography workshops. I have regained my confidence and hope to take part more in the future.

Briege Corr, Castle Gardens Tenant

I have struggled with my mental health over the year and at my lowest point I had attempted to take my own life.



This was after the loss of my Dad and brother. At this stage I didn't want to take any involvement with anything but after a stay in hospital I changed my mind and decided to start taking part in things with Woven.

I have taken part in many different things with Woven and through this my mental health is in a much better place than it ever was.

Being involved and meeting new people has given my new found confidence and given me the boost I needed in life.



Cavell Moore, Castle Gardens Tenant



woven



Understanding How Depression Can Creep In

Depression doesn't always appear suddenly. Often, it develops gradually, making it easy to miss the early signs. Modern research shows that things like isolation, lack of routine, poor sleep, long periods of stress, and even simple inactivity can combine to tip the brain's chemistry out of balance.

Some common early signs to look out for include:

- Losing interest in things you once enjoyed.
- Feeling tired all the time, or finding it hard to get out of bed.
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Changes in appetite or sleep.
- A sense of hopelessness or irritability.

If you recognise these signs in yourself or someone close to you, it's important to know you're not alone, and help is available. Speak to your GP, reach out to a friend, or contact one of the many mental health charities offering support.

Are you struggling?



Health and
Social Care

If you feel you are struggling, you should speak to your GP to see what help they can provide

woven



If you are worried about money or your Housing situation, reach out to Woven - we want to work with our tenants and help where we are able. For independent advice regarding debt and benefits Advice NI are a great option to talk to

SAMARITANS



Feel you have no one to talk to and want to remain anonymous? There are a number of helplines willing to listen and help you through. Samaritans, Mind and CALM are great examples.



Many now have 'webchat' features if you're not comfortable talking over the phone.

If you think you have no one - think again!

Woven - 028 9042 7211
Advice NI - 0800 915 4604
Samaritans - 116 123

Mind - 0300 102 1234
CALM - 0800 58 58 58



share their own mental health stories

My mental health issues started many years ago, after I gave birth. I started getting less and less sleep and eventually suffered what would later be described as a psychotic episode. At the time however, with the limited knowledge of this event I was diagnosed with post-natal depression. It was only after some years and more episodes leading to a really serious episode, that experts could put all the clues together and realise I had a chemical deficiency in my brain. Then, instead of trying to suppress these episodes, they gave me tablets to offset the imbalance.. Since then, on this daily medication, I have not had any episodes. Yes, the medication does make me slightly less of the 'me' I used to be, but it is far better than the volatile alternative, and it allows me to lead a normal life.

”

I should also mention; I had the support of a loving husband who, while he had no idea how to understand what I was going through (many experienced professionals failed in that area also so I cannot fault him for that!), he still stood by me and supported me through my treatment. Every time I would have one of these events, his life was turned upside-down and made all the more insecure. I think often people forget that carers suffer, as they go through this challenge - especially before a proper diagnosis is given.

Now we are on the other side of this with a proper diagnosis and medication, we live with the condition together as partners. I recommend to others to make sure you try your best to get a proper diagnosis as your issue may well be beyond your control because it may be a chemical problem not an issue with how you behave or respond to conditions around you.

Anonymous Tenant



woven

Recipes

Steak Tacos

Woven tenant, Cavell Moore shares her favourite Mexican tacos! Packed full of flavour



Ingredients

- 395g pack of thin-cut beef steak
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2tsp ground cumin
- 2tsp smoked paprika
- 4 vine tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 120g radishes, finely sliced
- ¼ red onion, finely sliced
- 30g chopped coriander
- 1 red chilli, finely chopped
- 1 lime, zested and juiced
- 8 mini tortilla wraps
- 1 avocado

Method

- Toss the steaks in 1 tbsp oil; sprinkle with the cumin, paprika, salt and pepper. Set aside for 5 mins.
- Mix the tomatoes, radishes, onion, most of the coriander and most of the chilli in a bowl. Add half the lime zest and juice; mix well and season to taste. Set aside.
- Heat a griddle pan over a high heat and lightly brush the tortillas with oil. Griddle, one at a time, for 30 secs each side until charred.
- Return the griddle pan to the heat and, when very hot, cook the steaks for 30-45 secs each side for medium. Loosely cover with foil set aside to rest for 5 mins.
- Thinly slice the avocado, pour over the remaining lime juice and scatter over the zest. Slice the steak on a board and drizzle over any resting juices. Top each wrap with avocado, salsa and steak.
- Add cheese if you like and top with the remaining coriander leaves. Serve with extra lime wedges.

Filipino Mango Royale

Woven tenant, Lyne Owens shares a recipe from her home country, The Phillipines. Super easy and no baking involved. Perfect for those hot summer days

Ingredients

- 150g butter (unsalted)
- 270g crushed digestive biscuits
- 700g very ripe mango flesh
- 15ml lime juice
- 130g sweetened condensed milk
- 360ml whipping cream

Method

- Melt and brown the butter
- Pour in digestive biscuits and mix well
- Press ⅔ of the mix into a pie plate which has been greased and chill
- Score mango into cubes and scoop in a bowl
- Squish mangoes by hand until it is a mix of half chunks, half puree
- Add the lime juice
- Combine the condensed milk and whipping cream
- Whip until firm
- Spread half of cream mix onto the chilled crust, followed by half the mango mix
- Sprinkle on half of the remaining crumbs
- Repeat the layers once more



woven

Tenant Zone



WE WANT YOU!

Your Voice Matters

Words by Woven Tenant, Dave Maher

Have you ever thought, "I've a wee story worth telling," or "I could write something better than this!" (Don't worry, we would agree with you!). Well, here's your chance.

We'd love to hear from you for future editions of the Woven Community Newsletter. Whether you fancy writing a short article, a poem, sharing a family recipe, or even just telling us a bit about your life or local memories, we'd be delighted to include it.

You don't have to be a professional writer. If it's from the heart, it's already good enough. Maybe you've got a handy tip for saving money, a craft you love, a photo of your blooming garden, or a memory from your childhood worth sharing, that's exactly the kind of thing that makes this newsletter feel like it belongs to all of us.

Getting involved has its own rewards. It's a chance to meet others, share ideas, and feel more connected to your community. And who knows — you might discover you have a hidden talent!

If you'd like to have a go, or even just chat about an idea, drop us a line or speak to a member of the Newsletter team. We're here to help you shape your piece if you want a bit of support.

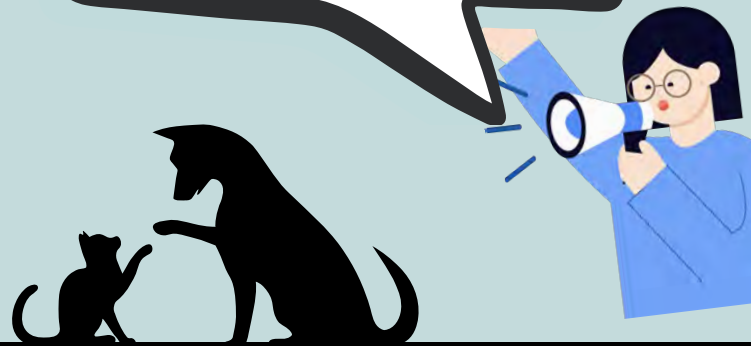
So come on, give it a go. This is your newsletter. Let's make it something we all look forward to reading.



The next edition of the Newsletter will be published in September. If you want to get involved, please email newsletter@woven.org.uk

Welcome to Tenant Zone! This section is all about our tenants. Got a photo, a story, a poem or anything else to share? Get in touch and we could feature it here.

This is also your opportunity to get involved and have your voice heard.



Pets Corner



This Editions featured pet is Kobe! Kobe lives in Abbey Place, Hollywood with Woven tenant, Lynda Cleland

Thank you to the wonderful tenants that contributed to this Edition of the Newsletter:

- Cavell Moore
- Dave Maher
- Lynne Morrow
- Lyne Owens
- Brendan Owens
- Briege Corr



Dog Fouling



Words by Woven Tenant and
dog owner, Lynne Morrow

Not only is dog fouling unsightly, it creates a health hazard and can cause environmental damage. Dog waste can contain bacteria and parasites harmful to humans, especially children and can contaminate water sources.

It's also a nuisance, making public spaces unpleasant and potentially damaging property.

Health Risks



Dog feces can contain pathogens like roundworms, hookworms and other parasites that can infect humans and animals

These can cause illnesses such as toxocariasis which can lead to stomach upsets, sore throats, asthma and in rare cases, blindness or seizures.



Environmental Risks



Dog waste can pollute water sources, and even drinking water, making it unsafe. It can also contaminate soil with worm eggs remaining active for extended periods, even after the waste itself has decomposed.

Just Bin It!



One of the main causes of irritation to everyone, including many dog owners - is fouling in public places.

Everyone has to share the same recreational spaces and there is nothing worse than having to constantly look out for dog poo, to prevent you or your children stepping in it.

Obviously it is the dog that makes the mess but it is unfair to blame the canine population. It is the responsibility of the dog owner to ensure that all mess is cleaned up and disposed of properly.



Tie your dog poo bags to your dogs lead, so you never leave the house without them!

There are estimated to be more than 8 million dogs producing more than 1000 tonnes of mess everyday in the UK alone. Be a responsible owner and pick up after your dog!

ASSET MANAGEMENT - REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

Upkeep of the home is one of the most important issues for tenants.

It's in Woven's interest as well as yours to keep your property in a healthy state. Care of your home is a shared duty for the Association and yourself jointly. Some repair items will be the responsibility of Woven and some are the responsibility of the tenant*.

Woven carries out Response Maintenance - repairs to your home - and Planned Maintenance - periodic replacement or upgrade of features.

REPORTING A PROBLEM

You can report a repair to your Community Assistant (where applicable), or by contacting Woven via email, telephone**, website or calling in person.

When reporting a repair you must help make arrangements for access. Woven will then arrange for workmen to call and carry out the repair. Always ask to see some proof of identity when someone visits your home.



In order for approved contractors to prioritise their work, repairs are categorised:

- ▶ **EMERGENCY REPAIRS - 24 hours (eg burst pipes and dangerous electrical problems).**
- ▶ **URGENT REPAIRS - 4 working days (eg other plumbing / electrical work)**
- ▶ **ROUTINE REPAIRS - 20 working days (eg repairs to fences, carports / stores)**

Whilst Woven will try to respond quickly, some times may be busier than usual (for instance after bad weather) and meeting targets becomes more difficult. **Last year, Woven carried out over 8000 repairs at properties across Northern Ireland, of which more than 80% were completed within their target time.**

- ▶ *Some repairs are known as **TENANT RESPONSIBILITY REPAIRS** (TR)

It is important that you are aware of Tenant Responsibility repairs as you need to carry out these repairs yourself. Check the Maintenance / Repair Liability section of Woven's website or your Tenant Handbook. If work is carried out by a contractor and it proves to be a TR, you may be liable to pay back the costs. If in doubt, ask your Housing Officer.

- ▶ **For **'OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS'** 0330 123 1097 - in partnership with Radius Connect 24. **NB Only 'emergency' repairs are dealt with under this service.**



Scan the QR code for more detailed information on Repairs & Maintenance, Tenant Responsibility and Repair Reporting on the Woven Website.

Dates for your Diary



Your Communities Team

Margaret McLaughlin

Senior Officer for Tenant Engagement & Community Services
margaret.mclaughlin@woven.org.uk
07376621940

Deirdre Nash

Community Involvement Officer
deirdre.nash@woven.org.uk
07485396524

Philip Whyte

Community Involvement Officer
philip.whyte@woven.org.uk
07817057846

Tom Cummings

Community Involvement Officer
tom.cummings@woven.org.uk
07485396526



Events



woven

homeslivescommunitieswovenasone

JULY 2024

Community Involvement Events
& Tenant Engagement Activities

DATE EVENT

- 1 Sport Changes Life Boccia @Ardnaclooney CI
- 2 Photography Project Calendar Launch Hollywood HfA
- 2 Northwest Regional Panel TE
- 2 Sport Changes Life Boccia Programme @Ardnaclooney CI
- 4 Street Pastors Volunteer Celebration Hollywood HfA
- 9 North Coast Regional Panel TE
- 9 Summer wreath workshop Coleraine CI
- 9 Summer fun with the KidzFarm @Girona Close HfA
- 9 Sport Changes Life Boccia @Ardnaclooney CI
- 10 Wee Bugs and Beasties @The Cloisters CI
- 23 Service Improvement Group Regionwide TE
- TBC Pre-tenancy meeting with tenants @Lorne Street HfA
- TBC Launch of Sensory Community Garden @Abbey Place HfA
- TBC Health Checks @Ardnaclooney CI
- TBC Kids Planting Event @Cole Court CI

CI Community Involvement TE Tenant Engagement HfA Housing for All

2025/2026

woven

homeslivescommunitieswovenasone

Tenant Engagement Calendar of Activities

Regional Panel meetings

North West	North Coast	Belfast	Dungannon
13/5/2025	15/4/2025	12/2/2025	07/4/2025
01/7/2025	08/7/2025	23/6/2025	01/09/2025
02/12/2025	25/11/2025	15/9/2025	08/12/2025
03/03/2026	11/03/2025	8/12/2025	23/02/2026

'Housing for All' Advisory Group meetings

Portrush/Portstewart	Sion Mills	Holywood	Lorne St / Malone Mews
23/5/2025	03/06/2025	19/05/2025	07/4/2025
19/09/2025	02/09/2025	22/09/2025	01/09/2025
28/11/2025	25/11/2025	15/12/2025	08/12/2025
27/02/2026	11/03/2025	09/03/2026	23/02/2026

Residents' Forum	Service Improvement	Policy Review Panel
28/04/2025	Gardening / grounds	Corporate Net Zero
14/10/2025	22/05/2025	Policy- 03/06/25

Editorial Panel / Community Newsletter Group - online meetings

Apr 2025 weekly	Jun 2025 weekly	Aug 2025 weekly	Nov 2025 weekly
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

Additional Diary Dates

Mystery Shopping	Tenant Training
September 2025	Neurodiversity (Orchardville) 19/06/25
Tenant Conference	Dates tbc for:
26/02/2026 (venue tbc)	Mental Health First Aid; First Aid; Mediation/Conflict Resolution



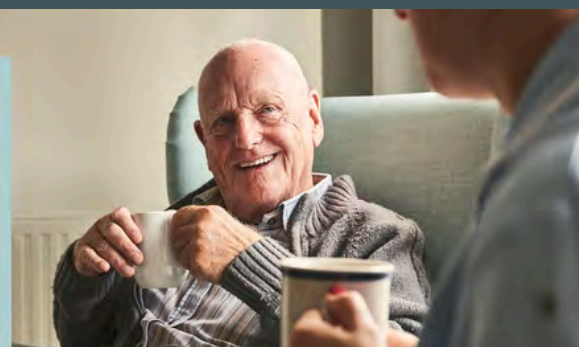
Follow us on Facebook to stay up to date with all Woven news and upcoming events!

Find our latest events online at
www.woven.org.uk



Homes, Lives
and
Communities;
Woven as one.

woven



woven

