

Abbeyfield & Wesley House in Downpatrick Wins Gold Award



Margaret Ritchie with residents and staff at Abbeyfield & Wesley House, Downpatrick

Abbeyfield & Wesley House in Downpatrick recently won the gold award for older people's housing scheme at the prestigious Elderly Accommodation Counsel ([EAC](#)) Awards 2019.

The UK-wide awards, now in their 8th year, celebrate the best in specialist housing for older people and aim to help shape the future of housing in later life.

Over 25,000 retirement housing schemes or developments exist across the UK

and the Abbeyfield & Wesley House in Downpatrick was one of 300 to have won a top prize at the awards.

To celebrate the achievement, [Abbeyfield & Wesley](#) hosted a coffee morning at which special guest, Margaret Ritchie, presented staff and residents with the EAC award certificate.

Congratulating everyone, she said:

“Specialist housing for older people is enormously important as it allows older people to continue to contribute to society in a meaningful way and this in turn helps to create stable communities.

“Abbeyfield & Wesley House is a brilliant example of a housing development that values older people. It provides an environment that allows residents to maintain their independence and participate in activities that are engaging, while building relationships with other sections of the community.”

Mrs Ritchie continued: “Encouraging interaction through organised events and outings also helps to reduce social isolation which can have a negative impact on an individual’s mental health and wellbeing. This award recognises the ongoing efforts of both staff and residents, and it is truly well deserved.”



Commentating on the EAC Gold Award in the retirement living under 25 units category, Hilary Hamilton, Support Manager, Abbeyfield & Wesley House Downpatrick, said:

“We provide supported living accommodation for up to ten residents and it is just fantastic to receive an EAC Gold Award.

“The awards are voted for by staff, residents and visitors, which means that everyone who has regular contact and interaction with the Downpatrick House is really happy with the scheme. That’s what counts.”

He added: “It’s also great to have Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association recognised in this manner.

“Personally, I am delighted to be involved in looking after the older generation and making their lives comfortable and happy. There is a great sense of companionship in the Downpatrick House. We are a small dedicated team that takes pride in carrying out our daily duties and supporting our residents. To receive an award, which recognises what we routinely enjoy doing, has been a lovely surprise.”

Residents echoed Hilary’s enthusiasm.

Ann Gordon: “Abbeyfield is like home from home and the staff are very friendly and kind to everyone. The food is excellent, and everyone tucks in.”

Deidre Mitchell: “I love living here, it is just home to me, I could not be in a better place.”

Donald Jones: “It means security and comfort and it’s like home to me.”

John Galvin, EAC’s Chief Executive, explained the importance of the awards:

“Specialist housing for older people helps them stay independent for longer. The security, support and community dimension of these schemes and developments have a positive impact on individuals and reduce the need for NHS services.”

There are two Abbeyfield societies in Northern Ireland, and both are charities. Abbeyfield Belfast Society operates seven supported sheltered houses in South and East Belfast.

Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association manages 18 supported, sheltered houses in Ballycastle, Ballyclare, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Banbridge, Bangor, Carrickfergus, Donaghadee, Downpatrick, Greenisland, Holywood, Lurgan, Newtownabbey and Portstewart. In addition, the charity also runs a residential dementia care home in East Belfast and three sheltered schemes in Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey and Belfast.

For further information on Abbeyfield & Wesley please check out www.abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk