

Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date:

15 July 2014

Meeting time:

09.00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Agenda

- 1 Introduction, apologies and substitutions**
- 2 New petitions (9.00 – 9.30)**
 - 2.1 P-04-569 Stop National Tests for Primary School Children (Page 1)**
 - 2.2 P-04-570 Inequitable Access to Treatments That Have Not Been Nationally Appraised in NHS Wales (Page 2)**
 - 2.3 P-04-571 Treating Pernicious Anaemia (Page 3)**
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- 2.8 P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time (Page 8)
- 2.9 P-04-577 Reinstate Funding to the Real Opportunities Project (Page 9)
- 2.10 P-04-578 Noise Mitigation Works on the M4 to the West of Junction 32 (Page 10)
- 3 Updates to previous petitions (9.30 – 11.00)**
- 3.1 P-04-541 Support for the Mentrau Iaith (Language Initiatives) (Pages 11 – 13)
- 3.2 P-04-548 The Reintroduction of Welsh Classes in Rennes (Pages 14 – 15)

Housing and Regeneration

The following two items will be considered together

- 3.3 P-04-480 Address Private Sector Student Housing Standards (Pages 16 – 21)
- 3.4 P-04-529 A Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales (Pages 22 – 61)

Economy, Science and Transport

- 3.5 P-03-315 New Dyfi River Crossing Petition (Pages 62 – 64)

Natural Resources and Food

- 3.6 P-04-399 Slaughter Practices (Pages 65 – 69)
- 3.7 P-04-433 CCTV in Slaughterhouses (Pages 70 – 74)
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Health

- 3.9 P-04-532 Improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales (Pages 81 – 93)

3.10 P-04-545 Aneurin Bevan Hospital Procedures (Pages 94 – 102)

Education

3.11 P-04-543 No Increase to University Tuition Fees (Pages 103 – 104)

Local Government and Government Business

3.12 P-04-540 Stop Sexism In Domestic Abuse (Pages 105 – 111)

Agenda Item 2.1

P-04-569 Stop National Tests for Primary School Children:

Petition Wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to remove national tests for primary school children.

Additional Information: I believe that National Tests for Primary School children cause unnecessary stress and anxiety in young children. Children should feel nurtured and positive in their attitude to school, not pressured and anxious about doing well in an unrealistic exam environment that only rewards those who perform well under such conditions, and punishes those who do not. To set children against one another and force them to consider the consequences of 'failure' at such a young age is cruel. The National Tests are also widely condemned by teaching professionals as an ineffective motivating and measurement tool that does not work in determining a young child's potential and current state of knowledge.

Petition raised by: Alexander Roberts

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures :123

Agenda Item 2.2

P-04-570 Inequitable Access to Treatments That Have Not Been Nationally Appraised in NHS Wales

Petition Wording

We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to review the use of the "exceptionality rule" in determining whether a patient can access a treatment through the Individual Patient Funding Request process.

Additional Information: To access treatments through the IPFR process, a patient population must demonstrate its exceptionality. For common illnesses, it may be possible to identify a subset of patients within the larger population who are more likely to respond to a particular therapy. For rare disease patients, demonstrating that you are a unique patient when you are part of a small group of patients whose condition is considered rare is practically impossible. The exceptionality criteria place an onus on clinicians to provide evidence that the patient's clinical condition is significantly different to the general population of patients with the same condition and is likely to gain significantly more benefit from the intervention than might normally be expected. This evidence requirement is too onerous to apply to patients with rare diseases due to small patient numbers within rare disease populations. Patients with great clinical need are prevented from accessing life-changing/ life-saving treatments.

Petition raised by: Genetic Alliance UK, Tuberous Sclerosis Association, Association of Glycogen Storage Disorders

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 1089

P-04-571 Treating Pernicious Anaemia

Petition Wording

We call on the Welsh Government to change the way Pernicious Anaemia is treated away from the current one-size-fits-all format towards a regimen based on the patient's individual needs and where the patient is offered a choice of how he or she receives their replacement therapy B12 including self-administered injections.

Additional Information: The usually prescribed treatment of Pernicious Anaemia is one injection every three months. For a great many patients this is totally inadequate. Some doctors will prescribe more frequent injections but where this isn't the case patients are sourcing B12 injections from various sources including the internet which is unsatisfactory. They then inject themselves without any training and without using antiseptic wipes or lockable sharps bins.

Petition raised by: The Pernicious Anaemia Society

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 126

Agenda Item 2.4

P-04-572 Grants for Flood Resilience.

Petition Wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to approve grants for properties that have recently flooded to fund work to make them more resilient to future flooding.

Petition raised by: Charles Edward Moore

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures : 88

Agenda Item 2.5

P-04-573 – Call on the Welsh Government to Investigate the Residential Leasehold System in Wales.

Petition Wording

We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to instigate an investigation into the way in which the residential leasehold system is operating in Wales despite the changes made by the Leasehold Reform Act and to consider whether there should be a cap on increases to leasehold agreements in Wales.

Additional Information:

This petition has been submitted in light of the fear that residents on the Elba estate in Gowerton are currently experiencing, due to the demands of up to 5000% increases in annual ground rent that Swansea Council are demanding of these leaseholders.

Petition raised by: Residents of Elba Estate

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 583

Agenda Item 2.6

P-04-574 Bus Services in Burryport

Petition Wording

We the undersigned, request that the direct service from Burryport to Prince Philip Hospital be reinstated with immediate effect.

Petition raised by: John James

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures : 572

Agenda Item 2.7

P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications

Petition Wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to call in all opencast mining planning applications over 10 years duration or over 350 hectares in size because the implications of these developments are far reaching and long standing with effects beyond the immediate locality.

Petition raised by: United Valleys Action Group

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 130 – An associated petition relating to a specific planning application collected in excess of 6500 signatures

Agenda Item 2.8

P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time

Petition Wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to review the guidance to Local Authorities on head teachers being able to authorise absence for family holidays during term time. Many families from poor backgrounds can only afford to go on holiday during term time, as holidays are about 60% more expensive during the holiday period. Also, many families where parents work are unable to take time off during the school holidays. Holidays can be extremely educational, giving the children awareness of the world in which we live.

Petition raised by: Bethany Walpole-Wroe

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 1008 – An associated e-petition has collected over 10,300 signatures.

Agenda Item 2.9

P-04-577 Reinstate Funding to the Real Opportunities Project

Petition Wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reinstate funding to the Real Opportunities project previously funded by the European Social Fund in Wales, or some new similar project that has the same values as Real Opportunities. The project is vital to helping 14-19 year olds with a learning disability or autistic spectrum disorder to gain life skills and independence.

Additional Information:

The Real Opportunities project enables 14-19 year olds with a learning disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder to develop skills vital for their transition into a college education as well as enabling them to transition into the world of work and develop basic life skills vital to their independence. The project has helped over 1700 young adults with learning disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder and has helped train over 1000 peer mentors with the intention of increasing the levels of integration between mainstream school pupils and those in a special needs unit. The values of this project are vital to these young people who at the start may have little or no awareness of personal hygiene etc and at the end are self aware of their personal hygiene and have completed Agored Cymru qualifications that they would otherwise be unable to do.

Petition raised by: Aled Davies

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 25 - An associated e-petition collected 226 signatures

Agenda Item 2.10

P-04-578 Noise Mitigation Works on the M4 to the West of Junction 32

Petition Wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to take action to reduce the noise from the M4 motorway to the west of junction 32 as it passes over the valley of the river Taff

Petition raised by: Margaret Watt

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 19

Agenda Item 3.1

P-04-541 Support for the Mentrau Iaith (Language Initiatives)

Petition wording:

We call on the Assembly to ask the Welsh Government:

to congratulate the Mentrau Iaith for their innovative work in promoting the use of the Welsh language across Wales;

to confirm that the Mentrau are a key partner for the Government in the context of implementing its Welsh-language strategy;

to provide a prompt response to Cardiff University's survey of the Mentrau's work, ensuring that the funding that is given to them is a fair reflection of the scale of the task that they face – while accepting that the amount of money that is available to them needs to be increased substantially;

to accept that there is a need for consistency between the Mentrau in terms of funding and that the current inconsistency needs to be addressed;

to fund Mentrau Iaith Cymru fairly, ensuring that it can play a full role in co-ordinating the work of the Mentrau and providing them with assistance and guidance;

to ensure that the Welsh-language standards compel Welsh local authorities to support the work of the Mentrau and to ensure that the authorities work closely with the Mentrau;

to play a full role in providing strategic guidance in the context of community planning.

Petition raised by: Heini Gruffudd

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 29 April 2014

Number of signatures: 1346



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-04-541
Ein cyf/Our ref: FM/00634/14

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

18 June 2014

Dear William

I am writing in response to your letter of 30 May 2014 seeking my views on a petition presented to the Petitions Committee regarding the Mentrau Iaith.

Since the petition was tabled we have published our response to the 'Review of the Work of the Mentrau Iaith, Language Action Plans and the Aman Tawe Language Promotion Scheme' as well as a policy statement on the Welsh language 'Bwrw Mlaen / Moving Forward' in which the Mentrau Iaith feature significantly.

As stated in our response to the report on the work of the Mentrau I believe that they are a powerful and valuable tool in promoting the language and that we should support and appreciate the work they do, while at the same time strengthening the impact and influence they have.

The policy statement 'Bwrw Mlaen' also recognises that the Mentrau Iaith are an integral part of the communities they serve. I have announced that we will be investing £1.2m over the next 2 years to promote the use of Welsh in the community, of which £750,000 will be to develop the Mentrau Iaith across Wales.

I believe there is an opportunity for the Mentrau Iaith to support and assist each other, and there are already examples of good practice. This should evolve further and become formalised among the Mentrau to raise standards. In order to facilitate the strengthening of the work of the Mentrau, the Welsh Government will invest a proportion of the new fund mentioned above to support a programme for developing the capacity of the Mentrau. This investment will offer opportunity for effective leaders to mentor others. We will also invest in training and professional development programmes – a provision we will seek to offer to other partners in the area of language planning.

Yours sincerely

CARWYN JONES

Agenda Item 3.2

P-04-548 The Reintroduction of Welsh Classes in Rennes University

Petition wording:

We are visitors from Brittany and we would like the National Assembly for Wales to discuss the reintroduction of Welsh classes in Rennes University.

Petition raised by: Cedric Choplin

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 29 April 2014

Number of signatures: 14



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-04-548
Ein cyf/Our ref: FM/00640/14

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

26 June 2014

Dear William,

I am writing in response to your letter of 30 May 2014 seeking my views on a petition presented to the Petitions Committee asking for the National Assembly of Wales to discuss the reintroduction of Welsh language classes in Rennes University.

As I have responsibility for the Welsh language portfolio I would be pleased to see Welsh classes reintroduced in Rennes University, especially given the firmly established relationship between Wales and Brittany.

However, regarding financial support for such a course, given the pressures on the Welsh Government's budget all expenditure must be carefully considered in order to maximise value for the people of Wales. It is therefore unlikely that the Welsh Government could fund a course in Rennes University but I would be interested in being kept abreast of any developments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carwyn Jones'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

CARWYN JONES

Agenda Item 3.3

P-04-480 Address Private Sector Student Housing Standards

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to investigate the problems raised in the recent Aberystwyth Housing Survey Report 2012 which has raised concerns about the poor standard of student accommodation and the correspondingly poor treatment of students in the private rented sector. Furthermore, we call on the Welsh Government to engage in a full and frank consultation with the affected communities on this neglected issue while ensuring that current housing legislation and new measures by the relevant authorities are properly observed to help raise standards in the private rental sector.

Student housing has been a constant issue in Aberystwyth for many years. A report published in December 2012 surveyed students on their housing experiences and details the issues that they have been facing.

Petition raised by: Aberystwyth Student's Union

Date petition first considered by Committee: 15 May 2013

Number of signatures: 188

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-480
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/01318/13

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

9 August 2013

Dear William

Thank you for your further letter, highlighting the petitioner's on-going concerns about a number of issues in relation to student accommodation in the private rented sector. I will respond to these in the order in which they are raised.

Administration fees – the Welsh Government currently have no plans to cap or end letting agency fees. This subject matter is currently not devolved to Wales and we therefore have no powers to introduce legislation ending agency fees as they have done in Scotland. However, as I have already mentioned, I intend the codes of conduct that will form part of the landlord and letting agent registration and licensing scheme that will be introduced in the forthcoming Housing Bill, to re-iterate the need for landlords and agents to make prospective tenants aware of the level of fees which they will be charged. Compliance with the codes of practice will be a requirement of licensing as set out in our original proposals which were consulted on last year. In the meantime, anyone who believes that they are being charged unreasonable fees, should challenge them, or alternatively, contact citizens advice or trading standards to consider further action.

Tenancy Deposit Schemes (TDS) – I believe that the existing tenancy deposit scheme legislation is sufficient, along with the recourse options for tenants if their landlord or letting agent does not comply with it. I do not therefore agree that further legislation is required on this. Again, the proposed code of practice for the registration and licensing scheme will re-iterate to landlords and agents the need for them to comply with all of their statutory responsibilities. Of course, the tenancy information packs I intend to introduce will help to ensure tenants know that their deposit should be placed in one of the schemes and what to do if it isn't. Until then, of course, there is a role for the NUS and University Accommodation Officers to play in helping ensure students know how the scheme works and what they can do if their landlord doesn't comply.

Condition of Properties – As I have already pointed out, accommodation standards are one of the main drivers for the proposed registration and licensing scheme. I believe that our scheme will make a significant improvement in standards of accommodation and management of rented property. Landlords and letting agents will need to comply with the scheme requirements or lose the ability to manage properties in the private rented sector. However, these proposals are currently anticipated to come into force in 2015, not 2016, as stated by the petitioner. Whilst I understand that this scheme may come too late for some current students, legislation must be developed, carefully scrutinised and introduced in a measured and appropriate manner.

In terms of current enforcement of existing legislation, for example in relation to HHSRS and HMO licensing, it is the local authority's responsibility to take appropriate enforcement action as it considers necessary. Any complaint against the local authority in regard to the service it provides or any failure to take action should be made through the authority's complaints procedure and the Public Service Ombudsman in Wales.

Consultation - In terms of consultation on the details of the proposed scheme, I think the petitioner may be confusing the Housing Bill with the Renting Homes Bill. The registration and licensing scheme is part of the Housing Bill which is due to be introduced to the Assembly later this year. It has been developed through the Welsh Government's Private Rented Sector Working Group which was set up in January 2012. NUS Wales have been represented on the group since its inception and continue to be represented. In addition, the NUS responded when we consulted on the proposals for the scheme in July 2012.

I am proud that we have been able to work with and engage effectively with NUS Wales in developing the proposals and appreciate the contribution they have made, along with all the other representative groups. However, there has to be a limit on the amount of time given to consultation, otherwise we would never be in a position to progress the legislation to the point of being introduced. Overall, I think the Housing Bill proposals for the PRS go a long way to addressing most of the concerns raised by the petitioner. However, the introduction of such a significant piece of legislation will, quite rightly, take some time.

I trust this further information clarifies the position and note the Committee's intention to consult on this and possibly hold oral evidence sessions in the autumn term.



Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration

Agenda Item 3.4

P-04-529 A Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to give the people of Wales a 'Letting Agents Ombudsman' by including it within their Housing Bill.

An ombudsman will give people guidance, issued by the Welsh Government, of what their rights are as a tenant. It will tell them how to complain directly through the agents' complaints procedure and when all avenues are have been exhausted, they can ask the Ombudsman to step in and take action.

Additional Information:

We very much welcome the regulation of letting agents and landlords set out in the Bill – this has been urgently needed for years. Students and young professionals are being robbed time and time again with invented letting agent fees and even invented letting agents and these need to be held to account now. There is not enough being done to help tenants against landlords – regulation will help, but there will always be bad landlords and letting agents that slip through the cracks and their tenants need someone on their side.

We need a Letting Agents Ombudsman. Letting agents and landlords are exempt from many of the regulations that estate agents have to follow. And many young people renting are straight from home or university and are vulnerable to their methods. They end up paying fees because they had no idea they had an option not to.

England has the 'Housing Ombudsman Service' that has worked effectively and provides a defence and a right to complaint for tenants all over the country. Wales needs one too.

Petition raised by: Let Down in Cardiff

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 21 January 2014

Number of signatures: TBC

P-04-529 A Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 09.06.14

Dear Kayleigh,

Many thanks for your help so far in progressing our petition. I just wanted to update the Committee on what the campaign group has been up to and how we plan to lobby the Welsh Government and the Housing Minister about reform of the private rented sector.

Last time my petition was considered:

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister for Housing and Regeneration along with further comments from the petitioner and agreed to:

- 1. Group the petition with P-04-480 Address Private Sector Student Housing Standards, as requested by the petitioner; and*
- 2. Defer consideration of this petition, given the Minister's commitment to introduce a compulsory registration and licensing scheme for private rented sector landlords and letting and management agents as part of the Housing Bill.*

Meanwhile, we've been building up the campaign and have a new website, Twitter and Facebook page to gather renters' stories. The Committee and the AMs can find them here:

<http://letdownincardiff.wordpress.com>

<https://twitter.com/letdowncardiff>

<https://www.facebook.com/letdowninwales>

We're also putting together a report which we will publish very soon. It will be available on the website, but we were considering having a report launch at the Assembly, if an AM would be interested in sponsoring us. Other organisations have aided us in putting together this report, such as Shelter and Citizens UK, so it should be of interest to a wide variety of people.

Our report will show the standards of the private rented sector from the point of view of tenants, rather than landlords. Whilst we appreciate that many landlords and letting agents do excellent work, we're calling for further regulation to ensure best practice and high standards for renters in Wales. We do not mind if this is through a Housing Tribunal (like Scotland); a Housing Ombudsman (like England) or a new Welsh mechanism altogether, like a Committee or "Renters' Champion" or a Tenant's Commissioner.

All we want is better rental standards for people who cannot afford to buy a home.

Many thanks for your consideration, I look forward to the Committee's response.

Liz Silversmith

Chair of Let Down in Cardiff

01.07.14

To the Petitions Committee,

I'm writing just to update you on what the campaign has been up to the last few weeks. Here is an email we sent to the Housing Minister on 22nd June with our first report and a letter responding to his comments. We also sent these to all AMs and Mark Isherwood mentioned us several times in the Housing Stage 3 debate last Tuesday.

I will also forward you the second report that we sent to all AMs yesterday.

I'd very much appreciate the Committee's thoughts before Summer recess, even if only briefly. I also have paper copies of the reports to present to William Powell, Bethan Jenkins, Joyce Watson and Russell George if they'd like them.

Many thanks,
Liz Silversmith

Coordinator – Let Down in Wales

Let Down in Wales

*Campaigning for
Private Rented Sector
reform*

Dear Mr Sargeant,

I'm writing to let you know about our report 'Letting Agents: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'. I'm the coordinator for Let Down in Wales and you kindly replied to our petition in the Petitions Committee in February. We appreciate your response but still think an Ombudsman would vastly improve the Bill in terms of the private sector. We have put together some of our website responses from tenants about what they have to deal with when they and bad letting agents and landlords and made a brief report that we have sent round to all AMs, in the hope of some further consideration on the issue.

Our petition has also been grouped with one from Aberystwyth's Students' Union similarly calling for better standards in the private rented sector.

In your reply you said "*all letting agents are already covered by The Property Ombudsman*". But this is not the case; only letting agents and landlords that voluntarily register with the Ombudsman are covered by this. You acknowledge this problem when talking about England's Housing Ombudsman, but it is my understanding that all renters could use it regardless of registration pre-2011, which I know because I used it myself against the London-based letting agent, Foxtons. In 2011, the Localism Act arguably made it weaker by requiring the tenant to first try and get a Councillor, MP or Tenant Panel to help resolve the issue, and then requiring the 'designated person' to refer it to the Ombudsman.

You said that you believed that by having all landlords and letting agents registered (and then choosing to be licensed, if they wish) will solve the various problems in the private sector.

Whilst very much in the right direction, there is still a lack of clarity over where tenants go and what they should do if they think their landlord/agent is not adhering to the code of conduct. If the registration must be via local authorities, with very limited resources, to ensure that all complaints are picked up upon and all disputes settled, and to presumably also ensure that the right information about how to do this is sent to all renters in the area, then we think it would be very difficult to ensure a consistently good service.

A central register of all people renting out property in Wales would ensure good practice in a much more efficient and fairer way. With the right kind of interface, an Tenants' Ombudsman website could provide a wealth of information for tenants, directing them to how to carry out complaints procedures and advice on how to settle problems. Ideally, with a centrally registered scheme, it would be enough of a deterrent for bad-practicing

agents and landlords because it would be swiftly dealt with if their tenants' complaints went unresolved. Likewise, landlords could use the Ombudsman for advice on how to deal with badly-behaving tenants.

One of the things we found in talking to tenants in Cardiff is that they didn't know where to go when they had a problem with their landlord. They felt threatened and scared of being kicked out of their home without enough money or security to risk annoying their landlord. A lack of consistent information is just as much a problem in renting as it is having no one to turn to. An Ombudsman could both help prevent disputes by being a central hub of information and also help to actually settle disputes when a landlord or agent or tenant is not adhering to their contract or code of conduct.

I hope you'll give our proposals some thought so that a debate can be aired on the issue. Our report is attached to this letter and we've cc'd the letter for fullness of information to all AMs and the Petitions Committee.

Many thanks for your time,

Liz Smith
Coordinator - Let Down in Wales

Let Down in Wales

*Campaigning for
Private Rented Sector
reform*

'Letting Agents: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'

How private tenants rent in Wales

June 2014

Let Down in Wales

*Campaigning for
Private Rented Sector
reform*



Let Down in Wales is campaigning for reform of the private rented sector. This report was compiled from renters' true stories in Cardiff, gathered on the Let Down in Cardiff website.

The Problem with Renting

As part of the UK-wide Let Down campaign (see letdown.org for more details), we are very concerned about **the state of private rented housing in Wales**.

We started collecting people's stories from our website, our Facebook and Twitter pages. Renters who found out about our campaign (which was helped by Citizens UK members) would share stories of how their letting agent or landlord had treated them. The vast majority of complaints were about letting agents, some about bad landlords and some purely because renting is hard.

Renting your home is a very insecure way of living. Renters are not just young people anymore. We no longer think we will ever 'get on' the housing ladder, and we're simply too poor to qualify for a mortgage or save up for a deposit. This could be for many reasons, but the real problem is that buying a house is just too expensive for so much of society.

But renters don't always 'mind' renting. Some people might like the flexibility of only staying somewhere for a few months. Some people might have short-term jobs which means they just need to live in a city for 6 months. Some people like the security of having a landlord or letting agent pay for their costs of living (like included bills or fixing broken boilers).

Many people no longer live in the same house for longer than 1-2 years. Most young people and students will rent for 12 months at a time, moving every summer. Lots of students move accommodation twice every year (say, 10 months renting and 2 months living at home). Renting is a great way for people not sure of where to settle yet or need to move house a lot for family or employment commitments.

Furthermore, due to the changes in welfare reform and the lack of 1-2 bed social housing stock, it is expected that the number of private tenants will increase in the UK. These people, often in desperate circumstances already, are having to leave the security of social housing for the uncertain and often inadequate circumstances of private housing.

Despite this, **renting is a nightmare**. Everyone has a 'renting disaster' story. People share stories about not being able to have hot water for a month because their landlord wouldn't fix the pipes. They move into new houses that are covered in damp, with the electricity broken and no one to fix it. Landlords that only give you one month's notice to move out, because they decided to sell the place. Landlords saying that they want to move back in so demand the house back. Landlords that try and sue you for moving out of their property 6 months early, demanding you see them in court for 6 months rent.

The Let Down in Wales campaign has been gathering these renters' stories, so that we can give politicians a real picture of the problems renters face.

A Vision for Housing

What the Let Down in Wales campaign proposes

The Housing (Wales) Bill has so much potential for reforming the housing sector. It will help homeless people. It will help tackle domestic violence. It will build housing. It will reform social housing. And it will ensure that all landlords are registered.

However, for renters, this does not go far enough. **If you want to change the way the private rented sector works, you have to regulate it.** The Welsh Government is proposing that letting agents and landlords voluntarily register for a scheme which has to be regulated by local authorities. But it requires more capacity than many local authorities have at their disposal in the present climate.

With Welsh Government regulation, **a central register of landlords and letting agents could ensure that they could be held truly accountable.** When a tenant complained about their landlord or letting agent, this would get recorded. This could be via the Local Authority still, on to a Welsh Government register. If a landlord/letting agent received a certain amount of complaints, that could get investigated into by a Committee, a Tribunal or an Ombudsman.

They could hold a private inquiry into whether this person or organisation was taking advantage of their tenants. **They could decide if they were charging too much rent or letting their properties fall into disrepair.** They could decide if they were responsible enough and 'qualified' to be a landlord or letting agent. The register would also check if they had been on a course to teach them the 'rules' of being a private landlord.

In reality, there would be very few complaints that would warrant this private inquiry. A local authority could perhaps determine if a serious complaint should be put on the Central Register.

A Housing Tribunal mechanism is being put in place in Scotland and it will be interesting to see how that works in practice. The Scottish Housing Minister said:

"Every year, huge amounts of time, money and resources are spent to no effect trying to resolve issues that arise between tenants and landlords. This is something I have experienced first-hand while helping people in previous roles, and it is absolutely vital that we come up with solutions to ensure that disputes are resolved as quickly and as painlessly as possible."

In Wales, we could do any number of things. **A Housing Tribunal. Or perhaps a Housing Ombudsman. A Tenant's Commissioner.** Essentially, a complaints procedure for the private sector that will give a voice and a form of redress for tenants.

This would regulate landlords and letting agents and safeguard all renters from bad practice. Local authorities would not have to take on the burden of all the administration and the Welsh Government could create a regulatory framework which specified how much training landlords/letting agents need and how many complaints warrant an inquiry. This could also make it much easier to share best practice across Wales and to create a private rented sector that renters deserve.

This is our proposal for the Housing (Wales) Bill and we urge AMs for a debate on the issue.

Stories from Renters

Let Down in Cardiff, a newly formed branch of the UK-wide Let Down campaign for private rented sector reform, has been gathering stories online to share tenants' experiences of renting with landlords and letting agents in Cardiff, in order to help tenants avoid the bad ones and to promote the good ones. Here is a small selection of some real and common problems that tenants encounter.

Renters talking about Imperial Lettings:

"This letting agent is notorious for bad service. My partner and I rented off them for 10 months – where they repeatedly failed to top up the boiler (heating being included in the rent) and left us freezing for weeks at a time. They didn't care when we have mice and never responded to our complaints. They advertised the flat as a 6 month contract with electricity included too, but when it came to signing the contract, they decided it should be 12 months without electricity included. My partner negotiated them down to 10 months, but still a lot longer than planned and we still had to unexpectedly pay electric on top of the extortionate rent.

Worst of all, when they couldn't find new tenants to replace us, they gave our flat's address to other multiple letting agents, who spent months knocking on our door with absolutely no warning at all, with people coming to view the property. Imperial did nothing and we had to give our phone number to half a dozen estate agents, and ask them to contact us before barging into our house (as many of them seemed to have keys). When we finally moved out, they tried to charge us for an imaginary soap dish that we never had, and wouldn't pay back the deposit for 2 months. We had to threaten various courses of action before they'd give us the full deposit back.

Would never recommend them to anyone. Avoid at all costs. They're also notorious for changing a medium sized house into tiny bedsit flats. They're not good places to live."

Renters talking about CPS Homes:

"They were absolutely terrible, we had our roof leaking and they were very slow to do anything about it, but now they are finally doing something about it. My wardrobe was falling apart when I came in September, and it took them 2 days to come and fix it. The house is very cold, we have no insulation. When we arrived our house was on business tariff which meant our gas and electricity ended up being £100 more for 2 months. Which is the landlord's fault but she would not pay the difference. The reason I give them two stars is because one day I got locked out my room and they came out in 10 minutes to unlock it, which is pretty good."

Stories from Renters

Renters talking about the StarFlats website:

"This website is hard to work out, as it seems to be almost an open forum for landlords to post flats across the country. I only have experience of the Cardiff section, but my experience is that of an absolute, total SCAM. Please AVOID at all costs. It seemed too good to be true, but I went ahead and enquired about a nice looking flat on Newport Road anyway – the landlord emailed back and forth convincingly for a day or two, but said they were away at the time so couldn't show me the flat straight away. Then they asked for the deposit to be transferred via Western Union immediately to secure it, and luckily before I parted with any money, I realised that it was a scam and they dropped contact entirely. DO NOT send anyone money before you've met them and seen the property.

Who knows if everything on this site is a scam or not, but it's a terrible website for allowing even one of its properties to be fake."

Renters talking about Imperial Lettings:

"Absolutely terrible, to be honest. These guys are absolute crooks, and we feel totally let down by their (lack of) service. I am currently renting a 4 bed upstairs flat and we have had endless problems. Our problems began the day we moved in, when we found our flat had not been cleaned at all over the summer – dirty bathroom, dust everywhere, mouldy food in the fridge, and the freezer was so frosted up it was unusable for over a week. Most recently we found a problem with damp and mould in our bathroom, and after ringing them repeatedly to investigate it, they sent 3 guys round who were extremely rude to us, slagged us off and made fun of us while we were still in the flat, and then managed to break our shower and made no effort to fix it. I would say only go with this company if you want to live in dilapidated housing, have your complaints ignored for weeks at a time and have viewings and "maintenance" barging their way in whenever they like with no warning. 100% learnt our lesson! This company treats students with absolutely no dignity, and we have learnt our lesson never to go with this pigheaded agency ever again.

Stories from Renters

Renters talking about being kicked out of short tenancies:

"I signed a short-term agreement with a letting agent, and about two weeks before the end of the initial two-month tenancy I got in touch with the agency again, surprised that they hadn't contacted me, and asked to arrange an appointment to re-sign our contract and continue the tenancy for another 6 months or a year. I was told that the property had already been let to someone else from the end of my two months. This had never been mentioned when we initially talked at the start of the tenancy about extending it, and no-one had been to view the flat while we were living there.

The incredibly rude staff were completely unsympathetic and deliberately unhelpful in this process. I wasn't offered assistance in seeking an alternative property to move into, I was just told I couldn't stay and that was that.

Thankfully I did manage to find a flat in the bay to move to for not much more than I was paying before. So I scraped around, borrowed some money from my dad, used my overdraft to pay the £100+ fees and credit check fee and moved there. And the cycle began again."

Renters talking about broken boilers

"My husband and I's landlord is great, always comes to our flat to check out any problems. But at the moment we have a problem that isn't his fault; there is huge amounts of water coming down from the flat above us. It's saturated all our insulation and is even making our floorboards bow. It's because it's a new block of flats and with ours at the bottom, so some water problems - literally - trickle down to us.

Now there's water in our electrics and we need to get a whole new bathroom fitted because of the damp and mould that has grown. Our landlord wants to help, but with it being the fault of the flat above us, another landlord needs to pay or at least get their insurance to cover it. We've no idea how many repairs we need or if their insurance will cover it, but for the foreseeable future we have to live with leaks throughout our flat and mould rapidly developing."

Let Down in Wales

These people have been 'let down' by their landlords. We need to rent but are continually over-charged and treated badly in our homes.

There are so many other examples we've gathered of bad practice from letting agents. Such as:

- A medical student in Swansea who was sued by his landlord for moving out early (his new hospital placement meant it was now too far commute and had to move closer). The landlord created a year's worth of stress and court summons, until a judge finally ruled that the landlord was at fault. The student had to ask for a legal charity's help to ensure he was represented
- The London letting agent, Foxtons, who kept a £750 deposit for 3 months until the tenant finished a complete, 3-month long complaints process through the local branch, national branch and the CEO, which triggered allowance to use the English Housing Ombudsman. Foxtons finally returned the deposit the night before the Ombudsman could have acted
- The Cardiff Student's Union letting agent, who tried to charge money off the deposit for not mowing the lawn. At the beginning of the tenancy they said it was not necessary to maintain the garden. At the end, they told us tools should have been used in the shed (note: the property did not have a shed)

Please listen to renters and help them to get a fair deal and a fair voice in the Housing Bill and the Renting Homes Bill.

We'd also like to thank other organisations that are trying to show the bad conditions we rent in. We've had many discussions with Shelter, Citizens UK and the Let Down coalition across the UK about what our priorities should be for the private rented sector. We need better tenancy agreements, regulated landlords and improved housing conditions. In the first instance however, we are calling on the Welsh Government to consider our request to provide a competent vehicle for our right to complain and a right to tenant protection.

The Housing Bill is aiming to transform the private sector; these proposals would fit in with this agenda and could enshrine tenants' rights in statute or at least put them at the centre of these vital reforms.

Find out more about the campaign



[@letdowncardiff](https://twitter.com/letdowncardiff)



[Let Down in Wales](https://www.facebook.com/LetDowninWales)



letdownincardiff.wordpress.com

*Other useful information on reforming
the Private Rented Sector in Wales:*

[Shelter Cymru 'Fit to Rent' report](#)

The biggest survey ever carried out of private tenants in
Wales, March 2014

[Tenantiaid Cymru/Welsh Tenants response to the Renting
Homes White Paper, August 2013](#)

letdown.org.uk

A coalition of private tenant groups organising actions to
bring down rents and keep them under control; longer
secure tenancies; banning fees for tenants; proper
regulation of letting agents and no discrimination against
housing benefit claimants

01.07.14

Here is Let Down in Wales' second report and email sent round to all AMs yesterday. In the report, we explain how the campaign has been progressing through the Petitions Committee so is of particular relevance.

Many thanks again for everything you guys do. The Petitions Committee is an exemplar of how campaigns can be brought to the upper levels of Welsh Government from just a small group of people wanting to change something. If only the UK Government worked like this too – you need 100,000 signatures I think to get attention paid to a campaign there!

All the best,
Liz Silversmith

----- Forwarded message -----

Dear Mark,

Thank you so much for raising our campaign in the debate last week. We can't help but feel like social housing tenants are being prioritised at the expense of private tenants. Whilst we absolutely think that vulnerable people should be given priority to housing reform, the fact of the matter is that more and more private tenants ARE vulnerable. The less housing stock there is, the more people get passed over to landlords and letting agents.

We've just launched a new report: 'Fixing the Private Rented Sector: And why, if the Welsh Government don't listen, Wales will fall behind the rest of the UK in standing up for tenants'.

The report and a letter to all Assembly Members (where you are also mentioned) is attached.

Thank you again for your support. If any AM would like to take this further in asking written questions, tabling SOPs or tabling debates then please do let me know, I'd be happy to help. I have worked for several MPs and AMs so am very familiar with the process.

Kind regards,

Liz Silversmith – Let Down in Wales

Let Down in Wales

*Campaigning for
Private Rented Sector
reform*

To all Assembly Members,

We are Let Down in Wales. We are a campaign group which is part of the UK Let Down coalition of private renters' groups who are urging the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government to reform the private rented sector (PRS).

We were very grateful to have our report mentioned by Mark Isherwood last week, in discussing how the Bill's proposals of regulation of the private rented sector will not work. There is an enormous need for there to be a central body of advice, support and information for tenants. There is also both a need and two established solutions to tackling rogue landlords and bad letting agents: a Housing Ombudsman (as in England) or a Housing Tribunal, which is currently being laid in statue in Scotland's Housing Bill.

The Housing (Wales) Bill proposes voluntary regulation and training for landlords, with an 'expectation' of following a Code of Conduct:

"Under the Housing Bill, all private landlords and letting agents will be required to register, undergo basic training on their legal rights and responsibilities, pass a 'fit and proper person' test, become accredited and they must follow a Code of Practice. This means that for the first time, tenants can have confidence that their landlords are expected to meet certain basic standards and that there will be measures available to them if their landlords do not."

Mike Hedges AM, Labour, Swansea East

This is the ONLY thing that is changing for tenants and we refute that there would be any confidence in this system. Governed by local authorities and no new or central bodies to fully coordinate this new legislation will mean we have the exact same situation in the PRS as we do now; loose, voluntary regulatory bodies and vague guidance from numerous organisations that most tenants have never heard of. Even less will have heard of the Code of Practice that they are supposed to expect from the landlord.

Other parts of the country and other organisations, like ours, are finally changing the private rented sector for the better. UK Government is consulting with rental groups

with their Private Rented Sector Taskforce; UK Labour is proposing massive reforms should they win in May 2015; and Scotland is establishing a Housing Tribunal and a much stronger regulatory and licensing system.

Our second report, 'Fixing the Private Rented sector', is attached to this letter. We were not consulted on for this Bill and neither were any other tenant groups. In fact, it is debatable whether the Bill's working groups have any renters in them at all. If the only people scrutinising this Bill are people who own their home, renters are being completely left out of this process.

So we decided to send two reports to all Assembly Members, in the hope that some AMs will stand with us and stand up for tenants. The first one, 'Letting Agents: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' – How private tenants rent in Wales, was sent around last weekend. This one presents some solutions.

We call upon all opposition parties and all Labour backbenchers to stand up for tenants. Listen to us. Consult with us. Ask us what we need from our landlords. Ask us how we're struggling. Ask us how we cope with landlords that won't accept DSS. Ask us how so many of us end up homeless or needing to moving back in with family, because renting is so insecure.

We propose to move all PRS reform to the Renting Homes Bill, where it can be duly scrutinised and after the Welsh Government has conducted a proper consultation. Don't just ask landlords what they want. Ask us.

Let Down in Wales

- Liz Silversmith - Cardiff West
- Calvin Smith - Cardiff West
- Ed Stubbs, Councillor for Splott - Cardiff South and Penarth
- Alex Thomas, Councillor for Rhos - Neath
- Holly Taylor - Cardiff South and Penarth
- Phil Copple - London
- Benjamin Thomas Connell - Cardiff Central
- Gráinne McNamara - Cardiff Central
- Esther Muddiman - Cardiff Central
- Rhian Jones - Cardiff West
- Jennifer Smith - Cardiff North
- Sion Tetlow - Cardiff North
- Vikki Weston - Wandsworth, London
- Anita Parbhoo - Harrow & Wealdstone
- Shane Jackson - Harrow & Wealdstone
- Michael Fogg - Cardiff Central
- Natasha Davies - Cardiff Central
- James Brinning - Cardiff North
- Harry Thompson - Cardiff Central
- Tim Cox - Cardiff South and Penarth
- Shrouk El-Attar - Cardiff North
- Jemma Bere - Brecon & Radnorshire
- Sion Steffan Davies - Gower
- Robert Lodge - Cardiff Central
- Grant Davies - Cardiff South and Penarth
- Byron Long - Cardiff South and Penarth
- Alex Williams - Brecon & Radnorshire
- Billie Williams - Brecon & Radnorshire
- Amy Owling - Cardiff Central

These are just some of the people that want to see reform of Welsh private housing.

Let Down in Wales

*Campaigning for
Private Rented Sector
reform*

Fixing the Private Rented Sector

And why, if the Welsh
Government don't listen,
Wales will fall behind the rest
of the UK in standing up for
tenants

July 2014

The story of Let Down in Wales

We are Let Down in Wales.

We have been campaigning to be heard in the Housing Bill, but the Minister has repeatedly ignored our concerns and dismissed our proposals.

It started off with a plea to the Petitions Committee back in January:

P-04-529 A Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to give the people of Wales a 'Letting Agents Ombudsman' by including it within their Housing Bill.

An ombudsman will give people guidance, issued by the Welsh Government, of what their rights are as a tenant. It will tell them how to complain directly through the agents' complaints procedure and when all avenues have been exhausted, they can ask the Ombudsman to step in and take action.

Additional Information:

We very much welcome the regulation of letting agents and landlords set out in the Bill - this has been urgently needed for years. Students and young professionals are being robbed time and time again with invented letting agent fees and even invented letting agents and these need to be held to account now. There is not enough being done to help tenants against landlords - regulation will help, but there will always be bad landlords and letting agents that slip through the cracks and their tenants need someone on their side.

We need a Letting Agents Ombudsman. Letting agents and landlords are exempt from many of the regulations that estate agents have to follow. And many young people renting are straight from home or university and are vulnerable to their methods. They end up paying fees because they had no idea they had an option not to.

England has the 'Housing Ombudsman Service' that has worked effectively and provides a defence and a right to complaint for tenants all over the country. Wales needs one too.

Petition raised by: Let Down in Cardiff

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 21 January 2014

Eventually, in March, it was considered again with a reply we had received through the Committee from Housing Minister, Carl Sargeant. He dismissed our concerns, saying that Welsh Government regulation "offers the same protection for tenants, if not more than, the proposal for a Letting Agent Ombudsman".

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

 February 2014

Dear Bill

Many thanks for your letter of 31 January requesting my views on the petition submitted by the group *Let Down in Cardiff*, which calls for a Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales.

Whilst I sympathise with their plight, I do not think that their proposals would add anything to what is already available in terms of support for tenants who have been the victims of bad practice by landlords and agents.

Letting agents are already covered by The Property Ombudsman. The Ombudsman provides a free, fair and independent service for dealing with unresolved disputes between letting agents who have joined the scheme, and landlords or tenants of residential property in the UK. The Ombudsman's role is to reach a resolution of unresolved disputes in a full and final settlement and, where appropriate, he will make an appropriate award of financial compensation, or other relevant reparative action.

The petition mentions the Housing Ombudsman who covers England, and helps to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. Whilst I have no doubt that this scheme has helped many people, I would argue that the fact that the Ombudsman is unable to intervene if the landlord is not a member of the voluntary scheme, does indicate that he is unlikely to be able to achieve resolution in the most extreme cases of bad practice by landlords, as the perpetrators are unlikely to be a member of the scheme in the first place.

It is unclear how disputes between landlords and tenants would be dealt with through a Letting Agents Ombudsman. This is where the Welsh Government's proposed landlord and agent registration and licensing scheme will step in. The scheme will require the landlord of every single property on the private rented market to become registered. Landlords will then have a choice to go on to become licensed, which will mean that they can manage the letting of their own property, or they can choose to delegate the management to a licensed agent or responsible person.

All licensed individuals or agents licensed on the scheme will have to abide by a code of conduct. Failure to adhere to the code will be dealt with by local authorities who will have a range of tools at their disposal. Ultimately, it can mean the withdrawal of their ability to manage the letting of privately rented property in Wales.

I am pleased that *Let Down in Cardiff* have warmly welcomed the Welsh Government's proposed scheme for regulation in the sector, and I hope that this letter makes it clear that the scheme offers the same protection for tenants, if not more than, the proposal for a Letting Agents Ombudsman.



Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration

Undeterred by this lacklustre reply, the campaign continued. We had already been in contact with the UK Let Down coalition and they had already happily welcomed us as the new Wales branch of Let Down. We met up with them in London and discussed how we could ask all three governments on this island - the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government - to listen to renters' concerns.

We carried out with our website, gathering bad practice of letting agents and landlords so we could get an idea of the problems renters are facing.

Shelter also carried out the ground-breaking 'Fit to Rent' report, the largest every survey of private tenants in Wales. Their work found many problems and they concluded that there was a need for further regulation. Here are the findings:

Shelter
Cymru

British Gas

fit to rent?

Today's Private Rented Sector in Wales

Key findings: who are private renters?

- Households with children now make up a significant proportion of the PRS. A third of tenants lived with dependent children under 18. A further quarter were cohabiting couples with no children. Around three in ten lived alone.
- The stereotypical image of PRS tenants as being mostly young and child-free was not borne out by the survey. Half were aged 35 and over, and nearly three in 10 were aged 45 and over. Just over a third were aged 25 to 34 and among these, around two-fifths had dependent children living with them. Nearly one in six were aged 55 or over, just over half of whom lived alone.
- Tenants saying they were in the PRS because they had no other choice outnumbered those who said they wanted to be there by four to one. Three out of five tenants said they were in the PRS due to a lack of alternatives. Only 15 per cent said they actually wanted to be there.
- More than half said they would like to buy their own home but didn't think they would ever afford it. Only one quarter (27 per cent) expected that they would own their own home within the next five years.

Key findings: conditions

- Nearly two thirds of tenants told us they have had at least one of the following problems in the last 12 months: damp, leaking roof or windows, electrical hazards, mould, animal infestations and gas leaks.

- Nearly half have had damp; nearly half have had condensation; more than two in five have had mould; more than two in five have had poor insulation / excess cold; nearly a third have had leaking roofs or windows; one in six have had poorly secured or unsafe locks and doors; and one in six have had electrical hazards.
- One in 10 tenants told us their health has been affected in the last year due to their landlord not dealing with repairs and poor conditions – equivalent to nearly 45,000 tenants across Wales. Over one in 10 tenants with dependent children said their children’s health has been affected in the last year for the same reason.
- Many problems were more widely experienced in Wales than in England. In particular, tenants in Wales were 19 per cent more likely to have experienced damp; 23 per cent more likely to have experienced leaking roofs and windows; and 27 per cent more likely to have experienced trip hazards.
- Three in five tenants told us they had a smoke alarm in their current property. Less than a third said they had a fire extinguisher or fire blanket. Just over half were aware that they had a gas safety check and certificate in the last 12 months.

Key findings: practices

- Tenants reported a range of poor practices in the last year from both landlords and agents. Seven per cent of tenants – equivalent to more than 31,000 tenants – said their landlord had unfairly kept their deposit. Eleven per cent – equivalent to more than 49,000 tenants – said their landlord had entered their home without permission or the agreed notice. Five per cent – equivalent to more than 22,000 tenants – said they or another tenant had been threatened by their landlord.
- Four per cent said they were currently renting from a rogue landlord – equivalent to more than 17,800 tenants. The same number again told us they had escaped a rogue landlord in the last 12 months. Households on low incomes and households with dependent children were more likely to say they had a rogue landlord.

Key findings: dealing with problems

- While most tenants feel their landlord is responsive, there is also a minority of tenants who find it very difficult to get their landlord to address urgent issues.
- Almost three out of four who have required an urgent repair said that when something goes wrong with their tenancy their landlord normally deals with it within a week. One in 10 said it takes longer than a month or never.
- Nearly a quarter said their landlord had not carried out repairs or dealt with poor conditions in the last 12 months. This rose to nearly a third among tenants who rented from a letting agent.
- Just under one in 10 said they had complained to their local council in the last five years about a private landlord’s or letting agent’s behaviour. Of those who complained, around one-third said their complaint solved the problem and two-thirds said it didn’t solve it.
- More than one in 10 tenants said that in the last year they had not complained about conditions or challenged a rent increase because of fear of eviction. This was higher among households with dependent children, households receiving housing benefits, and households who were in financial difficulties and constantly struggling to pay the rent.
- Two per cent – equivalent to nearly 9,000 tenants – said they had actually been evicted or served notice in the last year because they complained to the council or asked for a problem to be dealt with that was not their responsibility.

- In total, four per cent said they had either been threatened with eviction, or actually evicted in retaliation for raising problems. We estimate that more than 17,800 tenants were victims of retaliatory acts that were either threatened or actually carried out in the last year.

Following this report, we met with Shelter to discuss the problems letting agents were having. We had also already met with Citizens Cymru, the community organising group. They were both encouraging of our campaign and offered their help in making sure we were heard. Citizens Cymru started doing some work with Cardiff University students and we set out a long-term plan to engage with one of the largest groups of renters in Cardiff - students - and make sure that they were fairly treated.

Shelter agreed that private tenants were not being heard and that they could not be the only organisation to be consulted on this. It was too important to only have one voice.


We carried on with our website, Facebook and Twitter pages to shore up support. We gathered letting agent reviews, shared bad practice and asked tenants to let us know what the worst parts of renting was. We wanted to find all the problems so that we could seek some solutions. We wanted to ask the Welsh Government to put these solutions in the Housing Bill and Renting Homes Bill.

Let Down in Wales

The campaign for private rented sector reform in Wales

HOME
ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN
CAMPAIGN NEWS
LETTING ADVISOR
THE WELSH ASSEMBLY PETITION

SEND IN REVIEWS



'Letting Agents: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' – How private tenants rent in Wales

[Leave a reply](#)

Our report is finished! It was sent around to all Assembly Members on Sunday in advance of the Stage 3 Housing Debate on Tuesday 24th July.

It provides a snapshot into the complaints, problems and on-going disputes that Let Down in Cardiff has collected from tenants across the city. It highlights the various issues that tenants have and points out that the Housing Bill's current proposals will do nothing to fix any of it and that they need to be stronger.

LETTING AGENT REVIEWS

- [Imperial Lettings](#)
- [Letwise](#)
- [StarFlats](#)
- [Wentworth Properties](#)
- [CPS Homes](#)
- [John Winter Properties](#)

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Let Down Wales

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Let Down in Cardiff
@letdowncardiff

The campaign for private rented sector reform in Cardiff and Wales


Cardiff
letdownincardiff.wordpress.com

Tweets Tweets and replies

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Let Down in Cardiff @letdowncardiff · Jun 26

Highly recommend following @eptag + coverage on Housing (Scotland) Bill, which is at least attempting PRS reform. Oh Scotland, you so wise.



Let Down Wales

Let Down in Wales
Community

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Meanwhile, we asked the Petitions Committee to group ours with the Aberystwyth's Students Union petition, which has also raised the shockingly bad standards of students' renting conditions:

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister for Housing and Regeneration along with further comments from the petitioner and agreed to:

- 1. Group the petition with P-04-480 Address Private Sector Student Housing Standards, as requested by the petitioner; and*
- 2. Defer consideration of this petition, given the Minister's commitment to introduce a compulsory registration and licensing scheme for private rented sector landlords and letting and management agents as part of the Housing Bill.*

Since then, our support has grown rapidly. We put together a report of our findings so far and sent it around to Assembly Members before Stage 3 of the Housing Bill.

We had replies from Shadowing Housing Spokespeople Mark Isherwood AM (Welsh Conservatives) and Peter Black AM (Welsh Liberal Democrats). Peter Black thanked us but said that it was unfortunately too late to table amendments. Mark Isherwood gave a more substantial reply:

From: **Isherwood, Mark (Assembly Member)** <Mark.Isherwood@wales.gov.uk>
Date: Sun, Jun 22, 2014 at 11:49 PM
Subject: RE: Let Down: Report on the private rented sector
To: Liz Silversmith <liz.silversmith@gmail.com>, "Asghar, Mohammad (Assembly Member)" <Mohammad.Asghar@wales.gov.uk>, "Burns, Angela (Assembly Member)" <Angela.Burns@wales.gov.uk>, "Davies, Andrew RT (Assembly Member - Conservative)" <Andrew.Davies2@wales.gov.uk>, "Davies, Byron (Assembly Member)" <Byron.Davies@wales.gov.uk>, "Davies, Paul (Assembly Member)" <Paul.Davies@wales.gov.uk>, "Davies, Suzy (Assembly Member)" <Suzy.Davies@wales.gov.uk>, "Finch-Saunders, Janet (Assembly Member)" <Janet.FinchSaunders@wales.gov.uk>, "Graham, William (Assembly Member)" <William.Graham@wales.gov.uk>, "Melding, David (AM, Deputy Presiding Officer)" <David.Melding@wales.gov.uk>, "Millar, Darren (Assembly Member, Clwyd West)" <Darren.Millar@wales.gov.uk>, "Ramsay, Nicholas (Assembly Member)" <Nicholas.Ramsay@wales.gov.uk>, "Sandbach, Antoinette (Assembly Member)" <Antoinette.Sandbach@wales.gov.uk>, "George, Russell (Assembly Member)" <Russell.George@wales.gov.uk>

Dear Liz,

Thanks for your e-mail.

The deadline for submission of amendments to the Housing Bill has passed and Stage 3 is being debated on Tuesday afternoon/evening.

The Bill in large part replicates the system of registration and licensing tried and failed in Scotland. The differences the Minister highlights between the registration and licensing scheme in Scotland and the proposed scheme here are about processes, not outcomes, when criminal landlords in Scotland were falling through the net because Local Authority resource was being used to regulate good landlords. For this reason, Scotland has reverted to existing selective licensing powers to control bad landlords and developed other new approaches that better target the problems you highlight.

The Bill introduces a whole new apparatus for enforcement against those who breach licensing and registration requirements, but almost nothing to address the gap in use of enforcement powers when tenants are subjected to bad and criminal practices.

The Welsh Local Government Association told us that registration will not require inspection of properties and that they will not do this unless a tenant complains (as now). As you state, tenants "didn't know where to go when they had a problem with their landlord. They felt threatened and scared of being kicked out of their home without enough money or security to risk annoying their Landlord".

As Shadow Housing Minister, I have argued consistently for a different approach that incentivizes good landlords and targets bad ones.

Regards

Mark

Mark Isherwood ended up mentioning Let Down in Wales several times throughout the debate and we are very grateful to the Welsh Conservatives for highlighting our concerns. They have been the first political party in Wales to do so.

He pushed the Housing Minister for improved regulations in the private rented sector, but it was very disappointing to see the Minister dismiss it so out of hand. Particularly as our proposals are modelled on progressive regulation like the Housing Ombudsman in England and the Housing Tribunal in Scotland. Both of these countries have recognised that there is a serious need for a body to step in to regulate and yet a – usually progressive – Minister is completely rejecting this and insisting that his current regulation proposals will be strong enough.

As a body of people with a large amount of experience in hearing about and helping to solve private tenants' problems, we are certain that the current proposals for the PRS in the Housing Bill this won't actually change anything. Some landlords may voluntarily decide to take training and be regulated and licensed, but these are likely to already be good landlords (as the Liberal Democrats have said).

The private rented sector is only growing. There is literally no other option for working people that cannot afford to save up a mortgage and do not qualify for social housing. It's a huge and growing cross section of society that suffers from a completely unregulated market.

Private housing is essentially just a business, where people that own property can make a living off it, or at least pay off some of their own mortgages from it. Bad landlords and agents make a serious amount of money off tenants, through mechanisms like 'contract-signing' fees; 'adding a new tenant' fees; inspection fees; taking money (illegally) off your deposit for invented damage; taking extra bonds for having pets; charging for cleaners after you have moved out; charging for cleaning when you move in (we're not entirely convinced these cleaners always exist)... the list is endless.

And these are just the additional costs of being a renter. We also suffer from landlords hiking up our rents with little notice; evicting us with little notice; not fixing broken utilities but also not being allowed to fix them ourselves; from the severe cost of simply moving house where you have to go through a ritualistic loss of money as one agent tries to keep your deposit and the new agent charges you for two months rent and a bond up front. And tenants supposed to magic up that money from where...? It's no wonder payday loans are so popular for renters.

Higher demand for the properties around you will push your rent up. Rent is higher in student areas simply because landlords and agents know that they can charge them more. Many houses and new builds are created purely to make very small living spaces for students. But these Houses of Multiple Occupancy will get twice the amount of rent from 4 tenants than you could get from 2. This pushes up rents in areas students find best to live to access their university and is arguably leading to a much higher cost of living crisis for students, who are already going to have to pay off their loans and grants on top of their income tax for most of their lives.

The private rented sector is distinctly unfair and we find it even more disappointing that so many parties recognise this, even UK Labour, but that in the first Housing Bill for Wales that we are falling so short of the regulation we really need.

We hoped that the Minister would be able to regulate the PRS further in the Renting Homes Bill, but if the framework is not in place in the Housing Bill then it will never happen and we'll stay with a weak and unruly market, with the balance of power squarely with agents and landlords.

Further regulation in something like an Ombudsman or a Tribunal has so much potential. Knowing who owns our PRS housing stock will help us to monitor and see where new housing needs to be built. We could very easily identify the bad landlords and agents and train them to ensure that they are responsible and know how to run a business is vital.

We could also make sure that there is less discrimination in the sector: people on benefits; people with mental health problems; people with physical health problems are sorely hit by the discrimination of landlords and letting agents. It is incredibly difficult to find a landlord happy to accept a tenant that relies, even a little, on housing benefit. Yet housing benefit and other kinds of benefits are increasingly becoming a part of people's incomes.

The weak attempts at offering benefits to vulnerable tenants in an increasingly and systematically demolished welfare state is actually just helping their landlords. The more benefit you are entitled to is usually reliant on the amount your rent is. For example, if you have paid your rent for 6 months from full-time income and you lose your job, Cardiff Council will allow you 13 weeks of your full rent to ensure you are not evicted. This is a great scheme and gives renters a small bit of respite when in between jobs and waiting for various benefit offices to get back in touch with them to see where they can afford to live. However, this is not consistent across councils and the problem is the same; we're funding bad letting agents and landlords to keep their rents high.

Most of the time, people who need to get Jobseeker's, Employment and Support Allowance or Housing Benefit will have to wait several weeks or even months to get a payment. In the meantime, their landlord has ended their tenancy, they can't find a new house because they are now labelled 'DSS', and they end up homeless.

It's not rocket science. Vulnerable people who can easily end up homeless are increasingly left to the whim of the private rented sector. Whilst other proposals to do with social housing in the Bill will help these people, the vast majority of them will not be reached. The vast majority of vulnerable people are now renters.

Do not just use us as a political tool. Buzzwords like 'Generation Rent' are all well and good, but we are people. We are struggling. And no one is listening to us.

The next section of the report highlights work being done in the rest of the UK to tackling the crisis in private rented housing. If the Welsh Government listened to just some of these comments and practices, we might just be able to get somewhere. If the Welsh Government does not listen, they are abandoning tenants.

What UK Government are doing

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-rented-housing-sector--2/supporting-pages/private-rented-sector>

 GOV.UK

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Policy

Improving the rented housing sector

From: [Department for Communities and Local Government, The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP and Minister of State for Housing](#)
History: Updated 23 April 2014, [see all updates](#)
Part of: [Housing](#)
Applies to: England (see policy for [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#))

Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector has grown and improved enormously in recent years and accounts for approximately 16.5% of all households, or nearly 3.8 million homes in England.

The private rented sector offers a flexible form of tenure and meets a wide range of housing needs. It contributes to greater labour market mobility and is increasingly the tenure of choice for young people.

The government wants to see a bigger and better private rented sector and believes that the most effective way to make rents more affordable is to increase the supply of new homes.

We are investing £1 billion in a Build To Rent Fund, which will provide equity finance for purpose-built private rented housing, alongside a £10 billion debt guarantee scheme to support the provision of these new homes; and up to 30,000 additional affordable homes.

In October 2013, we published our response to a recent select committee report on the private rented sector. Our response sets out an ambitious package of proposals to ensure all private tenants get proper protection from their landlords. This will include:

- raised standards on the condition of rented properties
- greater protection for tenants against hidden agency fees and improving tenants' access to longer-term family friendly tenancies

In addition, a new model tenancy agreement is being developed, which will provide tenants with a clear guide to rental contracts. This will enable tenants to identify which clauses in their agreement are optional or unique to that property, helping them to negotiate longer fixed-term tenancies and demand greater certainty over future rent rises.

We are also supporting consumers by requiring all letting and property management agents to become members of an approved redress scheme - so consumers can complain and seek compensation if agents' fees are not transparent. Legislation will be in place by October 2014.

In the few areas where there is bad practice, £4.1 million has been allocated to 23 local authorities to tackle rogue landlords, in addition to the £2.6 million the government has pledged to crack down on 'beds in sheds'.

£10 billion housing debt guarantees for private rented housing

The private rented sector housing debt guarantee scheme supports the building of new homes for the private rented sector across the UK, offering housing providers a government guarantee on debt they raise to invest in new privately rented homes. This will help to reduce their borrowing costs, increasing the number of homes they can afford to provide.

The debt guarantee is designed specifically to attract investment into the private rented sector from fixed-income investors who want a stable, long-term return on investment without exposure to residential property risk. The scheme rules for the private rented sector housing guarantee scheme were published in February 2013.

The government is open for direct discussions with interested parties that are eligible in line with the published scheme rules and can raise their own debt finance. We will be looking for applications that comply with the scheme rules and can demonstrate:

- a solid management structure
- suitable asset cover
- a viable exit strategy
- robust rental demand
- are clear on where and how they will raise the debt

Please email housingguarantees@communities.gsi.gov.uk if you would like to discuss a specific proposal.

The government has recently issued an invitation to tender inviting applications from the market from organisations capable of sourcing funding and on-lending it to borrowers in line with the scheme rules. Further detail about this opportunity is available by registering on the procurement portal.

Private Rented Sector Taskforce

The expert Private Rented Sector Taskforce has been established by the government to improve quality and offer a wider choice to tenants living in privately-rented accommodation across the country.

The taskforce brings together developers, housing management bodies and institutional investors to help them provide more housing for private rent and to increase the size of the sector.

The taskforce is headed by Andrew Stanford. Andrew was Managing Director and founder of Stanford Mallinson, a property and asset management company, and was formerly Head of Cluttons Residential.

Taskforce members that took up post in April 2013 are:

- Julian D'Arcy of Kirkby Capital, a former regional chairman and proprietary partner at Knight Frank
- Joanna Embling, a property consultant and chartered surveyor, specialising in urban redevelopment and a former equity partner at Cushman Wakefield
- Dominic Martin, senior analyst at EC Harris and a qualified surveyor

And in written answer in the House of Lords, Baroness Stowell explained that the Taskforce had consulted with many more organisations than the Welsh Government has.

Private Rented Sector *Question*

*Asked by **Baroness King of Bow***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Stowell of Beeston on 6 May (WA 392), with which organisations representing private tenants the Private Rented Sector Task Force has engaged since its establishment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con): The Private Rented Sector Taskforce work closely with my officials in developing our policies in relation to the private rented sector. Together they engage with a wide range of private sector tenant groups including Shelter, Crisis, Generation Rent and its predecessor the National Private Tenant's Organisation, the National Union of Students, as well as individual private tenant organisations.

What UK Labour are doing

Despite a lot of 'working closely' with Welsh Labour, UK Labour's proposals are radically better than the Welsh Government's.

UK Labour has recognised that a large swathe of society is affected by the cost of living crisis and that reform is desperately needed to ensure fairness and equality for all tenants.

Let Down in Wales has great respect for Ed Miliband's and Shadow Housing Minister, Emma Reynold's, proposals. We can only hope that Welsh Labour might realise that their colleagues in Westminster already have the right idea.



Emma Reynolds MP, Labour's Shadow Housing Minister, said:

"It is appalling that David Cameron's Housing Minister thinks it's acceptable for someone to be evicted just because they are receiving social security, even if they are in work, paying the rent on time and looking after the property. Does he also think landlords should be able to evict people who have just lost their job through no fault of their own, or people receiving disability support?"

"There has been a sixty per cent rise in working people claiming housing benefit under this out-of-touch Tory-led Government. They're having to claim assistance because of a cost-of-living crisis

squeezing disposable incomes and sky-high rents, caused by David Cameron's failure to build more affordable homes. The number of homes being built in the UK has been at its lowest peacetime level since the 1920s under David Cameron and it's clear the Tories aren't just incompetent, they're callous about the real-life impact of their failures.

"Labour has set out its plans to reform the private rental market by legislating for longer-term tenancies with predictable rents, and a ban on letting fees charged to tenants. Only Labour will stand-up for Generation Rent."

Source: <http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/mortgageshome/article-2669492/Private-rental-sector-not-fit-purpose-Labour-says.html>



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'Make three-year tenancies the norm': Labour calls for greater stability in rental market as it warns sector is 'not fit for purpose'

Britain's private rented sector is 'not fit for purpose' according to Labour and new legislation is needed to give tenants greater stability.

Emma Reynolds, the shadow housing minister, told the Commons that Britain had 'one of the most

short-term, insecure and unstable' private rented sectors in Europe and the Government's voluntary approach was not working.

Speaking at the start of an Opposition Day debate on the private rented sector, Ms Reynolds outlined a three-pronged approach to reform the sector, arguing Labour would legislate for longer term tenancies, act on unpredictable rent rises and ban letting agent fees on tenants.

However, planning minister Nick Boles accused Labour of recycling old ideas to tackle the problem.

Ms Reynolds said: 'The opposition have called for this debate because we believe the private rented sector is simply not fit for purpose. It is in fact more suited to the 1980s than the 21st century.

'The sector has grown massively in size, but also beyond recognition in terms of the demographics and character of those renting from private landlords. Nine million people now rent privately, more than those who rent a social home.

'Over a third of those who rent privately are families with children and nearly a half are over the age of 35. However many people who are renting privately are not doing so out of choice but because they can't get on the housing ladder and they are being priced out or they can't secure a social home.'

Private renting, she said, was the most expensive type of tenure, with people renting privately spending 41 per cent of their income on housing, compared to 30 per cent in the social rented sector and 19 per cent for owner occupiers. She added: 'But the extra expense is not buying greater stability or higher standards. In fact if you rent privately you're more likely to live in a non-decent home than in any other tenure.'

Labour, she said, was calling on the Government to legislate to make three-year tenancies the norm, with tenants given a six-month probationary period. Students and some others would continue to want more flexibility and Labour's proposals included that, she added.

In his response, Mr Boles warned of the negative effects of rent controls. He said: 'They disinter a mouldy old policy from the 1970s, spray a bit of shiny new paint over it and present it as the solution to all of the ills of the modern market economy. We have seen them follow this script in relation to energy bills and now they are trotting it out for rental housing.'

Early Day Motion 171:

SECURITY AND RENT LEVELS FOR PRIVATE RENTED TENANTS

Session: 2014-15

Date tabled: 24.06.2014

Primary sponsor: Lucas, Caroline

Sponsors: Mitchell, Austin | Corbyn, Jeremy | Shannon, Jim | Llwyd, Elfyn | Sharma, Virendra

That this House notes that nine million people in England rent privately and that private renting is becoming the new norm; further notes that in Brighton, Pavilion constituency the private rented sector (PRS) is roughly double the national average, accounting for 32.7 per cent of households at the 2011 Census; recognises that renting at extortionate rates is often the only choice for people on low incomes, for young families and for working people on average incomes; acknowledges the many good landlords, but condemns rogue landlords who fail to undertake basic maintenance or repairs, leaving many tenants in expensive substandard housing; believes that the norm of short-term contracts leaves PRS tenants without security in their homes, at risk of eviction and of unfair rent increases; further notes that this volatility is particularly harmful for families with children who often have to move schools as a result; further believes that longer-term renting could work better for both renters and landlords; further as the latter could reduce void periods and expensive re-letting costs; calls for five-year stable rental contracts to be the default, to give good tenants the option to stay in their homes; and also further calls for action to tackle unaffordable rents, including smart rent controls, a radical increase in housing supply including building a mass programme of sustainable, energy-efficient council housing and the establishment of a living rent commission to explore ways of bringing rent levels in line with the basic cost of living.

Total number of signatures: **14**

Show: Supported by Withdrawn signatures



Showing 14 out of 14

Name	Party	Constituency	Date Signed
Campbell, Ronnie	Labour Party	Blyth Valley	25.06.2014
Caton, Martin	Labour Party	Gower	25.06.2014
Corbyn, Jeremy	Labour Party	Islington North	24.06.2014
Edwards, Jonathan	Plaid Cymru	Carmarthen East and Dinefwr	25.06.2014
Glindon, Mary	Labour Party	North Tyneside	26.06.2014
Hopkins, Kelvin	Labour Party	Luton North	25.06.2014
Jackson, Glenda	Labour Party	Hampstead and Kilburn	25.06.2014
Lavery, Ian	Labour Party	Wansbeck	25.06.2014
Llwyd, Elfyn	Plaid Cymru	Dwyfor Meirionnydd	25.06.2014
Lucas, Caroline	Green Party	Brighton Pavilion	24.06.2014
McDonnell, John	Labour Party	Hayes and Harlington	25.06.2014
Mitchell, Austin	Labour Party	Great Grimsby	24.06.2014
Shannon, Jim	Democratic Unionist Party	Strangford	25.06.2014
Sharma, Virendra	Labour Party	Ealing Southall	25.06.2014

What Scotland are doing

Source: <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Landmark-housing-reforms-given-green-light-e3f.aspx>



Landmark housing reforms given green light

Housing (Scotland) Bill will end Right to Buy

A new law will prevent the sale of up to 15,500 social houses over the next ten years and support improvements to the private rented sector. The Housing (Scotland) Bill which was today passed by the Scottish Parliament, will enhance housing conditions and put in place safeguards for social and private tenants.

The Bill will end the Right to Buy social housing in Scotland over the next two years, giving tenants time to consider their options and find financial advice if they want to exercise their right to buy their home. The legislation will establish a private rented sector tribunal which gives tenants and landlords access to specialist justice and allow them to resolve disputes more effectively.

Changes to mobile home site licensing will also improve the rights of over 3,000 households, many of whom are elderly, living permanently in mobile or park homes across Scotland.

Other measures in the Bill include introducing a regulatory framework for letting agents and giving local authorities new discretionary powers to tackle poor housing conditions in the private sector.

Housing Minister Margaret Burgess said: "This is a historic day for housing as it marks the end of Right to Buy social housing in Scotland. Stakeholders from across the sector have given this legislation widespread support as they recognise that we have put together a package of measures which will help improve housing in the social, private rented and owner-occupied sectors.

“Today I put forward a number of amendments to the letting agent provisions in the Bill to provide a robust regulatory framework that will ensure consistent and high standards of service for tenants and landlords across Scotland.

“I am very grateful to all those who have contributed their views on the Bill over the last nine months and more. But legislation is only one of many actions that this Government is taking to improve housing in Scotland.

“This government continues to invest in affordable housing. Earlier this week the First Minister confirmed we have invested £1 billion in affordable housing since April 2011, putting us well on track to delivering an additional 30,000 homes across Scotland by March 2016. This investment is supporting 8,000 jobs in each year of the five-year parliamentary term.

“This Bill is a landmark step forward for housing. With the full powers of independence we will have greater control to tailor our grants and housing supply investment, and to integrate housing and welfare policies to meet the needs of our communities and the homebuilding industry in Scotland.”

Notes To Editors

The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 21 November 2013. The Bill covers a wide range of housing issues, taking forward policy proposals that the Scottish Government has consulted on extensively over the last 2 years. “Homes Fit for the 21st Century”, the Government’s strategy and 10 year action plan for housing (published in February 2011) signalled its intention to legislate in a number of areas.

Ending Right to Buy:

The Bill provides for Right to Buy to end two years from the date of Royal Assent. The Scottish Government supports people’s home ownership aspirations in ways that do not involve the loss of housing stock from the social rented sector including:

- the demand-led Low-cost Initiative for First Time Buyers (LIFT) shared equity schemes.
- the new Help to Buy (Scotland) shared equity scheme was launched on 30 September and we have committed £275m to this over the next three years and
- financial backing for Homes for Scotland’s mortgage indemnity scheme.

Private rented sector:

The Bill will protect tenants in the private rented sector, which has more than doubled, from per cent of all homes in 1999 to 11 per cent of all homes in 2011 by:

- Transferring private rented sector cases from the sheriff courts to the new First-tier Tribunal (which will be created by the Tribunals (Scotland) Bill)
- Introducing regulation of letting agents to promote high standards of service and levels of professionalism across the country and provide landlords and tenants with easy access to a mechanism that will help to resolve disputes where these arise.
- Enhancing standards in the Private Rented Sector by requiring landlords to fit carbon monoxide detectors and carry out electrical safety checks.
- Enabling local authorities to inspect properties and report breaches of house condition standards in the PRS to the Private Rented Housing Panel, which enforces the ‘Repairing Standard’ in the sector.

Mobile home sites with permanent residents:

- There are 3,314 mobile homes on 92 sites across Scotland. An increasing number of people, many of whom are elderly, live permanently in mobile or park homes.

- The Bill strengthens the licensing regime for mobile home sites with permanent residents, by giving local authorities a range of tools to ensure sites meet acceptable standards, and to tackle unscrupulous site owners.

Increase flexibility in the allocation and management of social housing:

- Replacing prescriptive and outdated priority groups with a broader framework that gives landlords and their communities more local flexibility
- Allowing a minimum period to be put in place before antisocial tenants are eligible for the allocation of social housing
- Introducing a new right for tenants to appeal a landlord's decision to suspend them from being allocated a property
- Allowing landlords to give Short Scottish Secure Tenancies to applicants and tenants with a history of antisocial behavior
- Simplifying eviction procedures for tenants convicted of a serious offence

Investment in affordable housing:

- Over the four years to 2015/16, the Scottish Government's planned investment in affordable housing will exceed £1.35 billion, keeping it on track to deliver its target of at least 30,000 affordable homes by March 2016. Every £100 million of housing expenditure, whether from the Scottish Government or other sources, supports a total of £180 million of economic activity and around 1,300 jobs.

The only thing Let Down in Wales asks is to be consulted. The UK Government and the Scottish Government will overtake us in reforming the private rented sector if the Welsh Government do not listen.

We call upon the Welsh Conservatives to continue their support of our campaign.

We ask Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Liberal Democrats to join us in supporting and standing up for tenants.

We ask for all opposition parties and Labour backbenchers to vote against these proposals and make the Welsh Government come up with something better.

Something that will work.
Something for tenants.

Agenda Item 3.5

P-03-315 New Dyfi River Crossing

Petition wording

We, the undersigned, are in favour of and support, any proposition to create a new crossing of the Dyfi River (or the re-routing of the A487) linking South Meirionnydd with Powys, Dyfed and Ceredigion, to accommodate and suite the demands of modern day traffic and urge prioritisation of funding and action. We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to create this crossing as a matter of priority.

Petition raised by: South Meirionnydd Older People's Forum

Petition first considered by Committee: February 2011

Number of signatures: 3204



Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-315
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/04319/13

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@wales.gsi.gov.uk

26 June 2014

Dear William,

In my letter of 6 January I committed to provide the Petitions Committee with quarterly progress updates regarding improvements at Dyfi Bridge.

Please find enclosed an updated Appendix 1 showing progress on the improvement actions.

I will write again with a further update at the end of September.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Edwina Hart', written in a cursive style.

Appendix 1: Dyfi Bridge Actions

Short Term			
	Activity	Progress Report	Date Complete
1	Inspect drainage on the A487 in and around Machynlleth.	Inspection completed and trunk road drainage was found to be relatively clean and fully operative	December 2013
2	Availability of CCTV:	A fault causing the lack of cameras has been identified. Cameras now operational	January 2014
3	The short term study will consider the anecdotal evidence that the River Dyfi used to be dredged and this might be an option for the future	Investigations have found references to the dredging of small estuarine channels downstream of Dyfi bridge. Further investigations will continue.	July 2014
4	Steel barriers at Dyfi Bridge	Historically during closures some road users have chosen to remove signing/coning and to cross the bridge at their own risk. Welsh Government provided a physical closure system to protect road users and workforce.	December 2013
5	Strategic diversions and the use of Variable Message Sign (VMS) at Cross Foxes.	Planning to install VMS in 2014/15.	Winter 2014
6	Network Rail Bridge condition.	The bridge is owned and maintained by Network Rail. Officials confirm that they are unaware of any concerns pertaining to the trunk road.	January 2014
7	Remove from the current scope the investigation into benefits of raising the existing road between the Eco Park	This short term measure does not address the issue of the bridge. See longer term options below.	December 2013

	and Dyfi Bridge.		
8	Temporary pump/storage drainage system for the low spot beneath the rail bridge.	The draft report concludes that a pumped system is difficult to justify especially as alongside the writing of the report, works have been carried out to improve the drainage systems north of the railway bridge. These works and further works to be carried out south of the bridge will greatly improve the efficiency of the drainage systems to help cope with flood conditions but should also help reduce the impact of the floods.	Draft report under review June 2014. Existing works north of railway bridge complete. Works to south of bridge complete by end 2014.
Longer term			
9	New bridge option	Following a recent site visit and a review of previous options, funding will be provided to progress work to develop options for a new crossing upstream of the existing bridge. This will not include a bypass of Machynlleth.	Upstream option to be investigated.
10	Observations during flooding events.	My officials will contact the Town Council to discuss their concerns and observations during flooding events	

P-03-315 New Dyfi River crossing – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Deputy Clerk, 04.07.2014

For the attention of Kayleigh Driscoll

Petitions Committee Deputy Clerk

on behalf of South Meirionnydd Older People's Forum

Thank you for your E-mail on this subject.

I refer to Section 9 of Appendix 1. (Progress)

If the positioning of the 'New Bridge' is upstream and not allowing for a by-pass of Machynlleth, all traffic including large, sometimes very large and long lorries will encounter, not only extensive delays, but also difficulty in negotiating the 'T' junction at the Machynlleth Clock Tower.

This could be worse on Wednesdays, which is Market Day in the town and throughout the holiday season.

Any new bridge must be positioned where a by-pass can be planned and built with economic viability.

The whole idea of a new bridge is not only to avoid the flooding problem but to effect a speedy route for ambulances, from South Meirionnydd to Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth, in an emergency. To meet traffic congestion at Machynlleth Clock Tower will inevitably present it's own problems and possibly cost lives.

Agenda Item 3.6

P-04-399 Slaughter Practices

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to ban the practise of slaughtering animals without pre-stunning them.

Petition raised by: Royce Clifford

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 June 2012

Number of signatures: 400

Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-399/P &
04399

Ein cyf/Our ref July 2014

William Powell AM
AM for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

20 June 2014

P-04-399 - Petition to ban the practice of slaughtering animals without pre-stunning

P-04-433 - Petition calling for the compulsory installation of CCTV in Welsh slaughterhouses

I write to provide an update concerning petition numbers P-04-399 and P-04-433.

P-04-399

The Welsh Government introduced the Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014 (WATOK) on the 20 May. The Regulations put in place the enforcement provision of EC Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at time of killing.

The WATOK Regulations combine the new standards introduced by the Council Regulation whilst also retaining the pre-existing stricter national rules that were already in place under the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter and Killing) Regulations 1995 that have been replaced.

The provisions apply to slaughter and related operations in Food Business Operators (Slaughterhouses) and seasonal slaughter and related operations outside a slaughterhouse.

The Regulations provide extensive animal welfare protection through national rules and include the derogation to disapply the stunning provisions at time of slaughter to provide for the needs for communities of faith.

Defra were scheduled to make consequential amendments to UK legislation upon introduction of the English implementing Regulations, however, without prior notice to officials or Welsh Ministers, they laid and revoked their regulations on the same day. This caused some concern in relation to taking forward the consequential amendments in a timely fashion. My officials are working with the Food Standards Agency to introduce short term mitigation action to allow the industry to function in Wales. I intend bringing forward the minor technical amendments to domestic legislation regarding the change of reference to "a Certificate of Competence" contained within our Regulations.

I am committed to ensuring that a high standard welfare for all animals kept in Wales is maintained at all stages of their life, including at the point of slaughter. Now that the EU Regulation 1099/2009 has been implemented in Wales, Welsh Government will give further consideration to the welfare of animals at time of killing.

Having reviewed the legislative powers available to Welsh Government, it is recognised that animal welfare is one aspect of this complex and sensitive area of policy; I also have to be mindful of the Welsh Government's legal duties under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Welsh Government will need to take account of the scientific evidence available and the wider implications that include equality and human rights, whilst consumer, retailer and European developments on the subject of food labelling will also be considered.

A European Commission study that includes the feasibility of method of slaughter labelling, is due this summer that may provide Member States with recommendations for future labelling provisions.

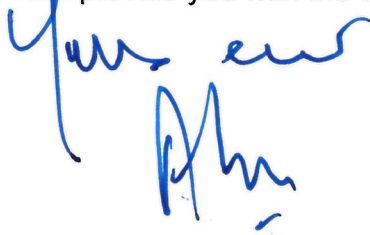
P-04-433

Following a request by the Welsh Government the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) is preparing advice for the Welsh Government about unobserved monitoring at slaughterhouses that include the use of CCTV.

A FAWC consultation on CCTV and other methods for monitoring and/or verification of the welfare of farm animals in slaughterhouses closed on the 16 May 2014.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/fawc/files/Consultation-on-CCTV-and-other-monitoring-and-verification-methods-in-slaughterhouses.pdf>

FAWC propose that the advice will be presented to the Welsh Government and other devolved administration in this winter, my officials will then review and consider the advice and I will provide you with the outcome of the review.



Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food

Agenda Item 3.7

P-04-433 : CCTV in Slaughterhouses

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to introduce mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses to help vets with better regulation and monitoring, to provide footage for training and retraining, to deter some of the animal welfare abuses filmed by Animal Aid, and to provide evidence for prosecutions should they be necessary.

Petition raised by: Animal Aid

Date petition first considered by Committee: 6 November 2012

Number of signatures: 1066

Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-399/P &
04399
Ein cyf/Our ref July 2014

William Powell AM
AM for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

20 June 2014

P-04-399 - Petition to ban the practice of slaughtering animals without pre-stunning

P-04-433 - Petition calling for the compulsory installation of CCTV in Welsh slaughterhouses

I write to provide an update concerning petition numbers P-04-399 and P-04-433.

P-04-399

The Welsh Government introduced the Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014 (WATOK) on the 20 May. The Regulations put in place the enforcement provision of EC Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at time of killing.

The WATOK Regulations combine the new standards introduced by the Council Regulation whilst also retaining the pre-existing stricter national rules that were already in place under the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter and Killing) Regulations 1995 that have been replaced.

The provisions apply to slaughter and related operations in Food Business Operators (Slaughterhouses) and seasonal slaughter and related operations outside a slaughterhouse.

The Regulations provide extensive animal welfare protection through national rules and include the derogation to disapply the stunning provisions at time of slaughter to provide for the needs for communities of faith.

Defra were scheduled to make consequential amendments to UK legislation upon introduction of the English implementing Regulations, however, without prior notice to officials or Welsh Ministers, they laid and revoked their regulations on the same day. This caused some concern in relation to taking forward the consequential amendments in a timely fashion. My officials are working with the Food Standards Agency to introduce short term mitigation action to allow the industry to function in Wales. I intend bringing forward the minor technical amendments to domestic legislation regarding the change of reference to "a Certificate of Competence" contained within our Regulations.

I am committed to ensuring that a high standard welfare for all animals kept in Wales is maintained at all stages of their life, including at the point of slaughter. Now that the EU Regulation 1099/2009 has been implemented in Wales, Welsh Government will give further consideration to the welfare of animals at time of killing.

Having reviewed the legislative powers available to Welsh Government, it is recognised that animal welfare is one aspect of this complex and sensitive area of policy; I also have to be mindful of the Welsh Government's legal duties under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Welsh Government will need to take account of the scientific evidence available and the wider implications that include equality and human rights, whilst consumer, retailer and European developments on the subject of food labelling will also be considered.

A European Commission study that includes the feasibility of method of slaughter labelling, is due this summer that may provide Member States with recommendations for future labelling provisions.

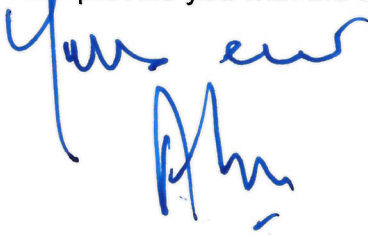
P-04-433

Following a request by the Welsh Government the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) is preparing advice for the Welsh Government about unobserved monitoring at slaughterhouses that include the use of CCTV.

A FAWC consultation on CCTV and other methods for monitoring and/or verification of the welfare of farm animals in slaughterhouses closed on the 16 May 2014.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/fawc/files/Consultation-on-CCTV-and-other-monitoring-and-verification-methods-in-slaughterhouses.pdf>

FAWC propose that the advice will be presented to the Welsh Government and other devolved administration in this winter, my officials will then review and consider the advice and I will provide you with the outcome of the review.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alun Davies', with a stylized flourish below it.

Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food

P-04-537 Planting Trees to Reduce Flooding

Petition wording:

We call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to reduce flood risk to thousands of homes across the country by supporting the planting of at least 10 million trees over the next 5 years, creating hedges, tree belts and wooded areas targeted where they will best help soak up rainfall and slow down water runoff. This tree planting will count towards the 100,000 hectare tree planting target the Welsh Government has already set, to soak up CO2 from the atmosphere.

Petition raised by: Coed Cadw

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 18 February 2014

Number of signatures: 2708

Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-537
Ein cyf/Our ref AD-/00629/14

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

21 April 2014

Dear Bill,

Tree Planting and Flooding

Thank you for your letter regarding the above. Welsh Government is aware that flood risk management is not only about building defences and we have set out a range of approaches in our National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales, including making more use of the natural environment.

The Welsh Government intends to introduce support for tree planting under the Glastir scheme as soon as we are able to under the next Rural Development Plan programme. This is due to start in January 2015 but depends on approval of the Wales Rural Development Plan which will be submitted this summer.

The support for woodland creation will be based on a revised woodland opportunities map which will replace the 'red, amber and green' map that was used under the previous programme.

Welsh Government is working on the development of the revised map now and are in discussion with stakeholders, including the Woodland Trust about the most beneficial places to plant trees. There will be a new 'green' zone on the revised map. Within this zone we are looking for a positive commitment from stakeholders to promote planting in that zone.

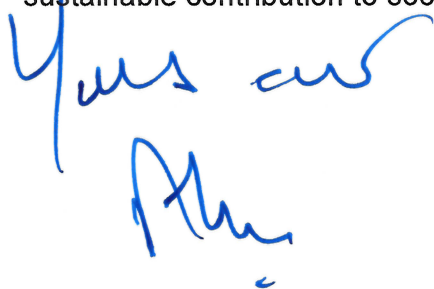
As part of the process of agreeing this new green zone, we want to ensure that we are using the latest work from DEFRA and Forest Research which identifies places that woodland creation can contribute to flood prevention and water quality improvement, building on the work done with Coed Cymru and the Pontbren Farmers.

We will also be taking into account social and ecosystems issues when compiling the map.

Once we have achieved a consensus with stakeholders, including Natural Resources Wales, local authorities, Coed Cadw, National Parks and others we will prioritise resources, both grant and advisory, to the green zone.

In addition Welsh Government continues to work on ways in which woodland creation can be expanded, such as through our Plant! project which aims to plant a tree for every child born or adopted in Wales. Since its launch in 2007, 200,000 native broadleaf trees have been planted on 8 sites across Wales and we continue to support its delivery by Natural Resources Wales in partnership with Coed Cadw.

In summary therefore, I confirm that Welsh Government is fully committed to increasing woodland creation, as stated in our Wales Forestry Strategy '*Woodlands for Wales*' as woodlands can provide a full range of ecosystem services and benefits which provide a sustainable contribution to society as a whole.



Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food

P-04-537 Planting Trees to Reduce Flooding, Correspondence from the petitioner to the Clerking Team, 17.02.14

Morning Kayleigh,

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you on this. Here are some comments which could be forwarded to the committee for the next time they discuss this item as I understand it's too late for tomorrow's meeting.

The natural environment and trees in particular can play a huge part in helping to absorb surface water run-off and thus reduce peak flooding flow.

Broadleaved woodland is on average 67 times more effective than improved, grazed grassland at absorbing surface water run-off

- To coincide with the handing in of our Petition, we have Published a major report 'Holding back the waters', showing the huge potential for the Welsh Government and its new environmental body Natural Resources Wales, to use woodlands and trees as an effective, and cost effective means of reducing flood risk to some of the 357,000 properties in Wales, a sixth of the building stock, that are currently at risk from flooding, alongside more traditional hard engineering flood defences where appropriate.
- 10 million trees - high density planting
- The report highlights three case studies of how this is already happening across Wales, two in Powys, one in Denbighshire - this includes the Pontbren Project.
- The Welsh Government is already spending, directly or indirectly, £44m a year on flood defences and this is forecast to rise to £135m by 2035. Yet planting native trees and woodland in the right places, for example in the form of shelter belts in upper river catchments, can be a more economic way to reduce general flood risk. Broadleaved woodland is on average 67

times more effective than improved, grazed grassland at absorbing surface water run-off. If tree shelter belts are located in the right places on improved land, reductions in peak flow of around 40% may be achievable.

- The scientific data collected at the Pontbren scheme in Powys, has shown conclusively that strategically planted, narrow, fenced shelterbelts of trees across slopes capture water run-off from the pasture above and allow it to soak more rapidly into the soil.
- The Pontbren Scheme in Powys provided an excellent example of what this approach might mean in practice. Here, ten farmers have worked together to plant over 120,000 trees and shrubs, to create or restore over ten miles of hedges and create numerous ponds. Now nearly 5% of the Pontbren land is woodland, pond and hedgerow. Crucially, this has been achieved with no loss of agricultural productivity. Indeed the aim was to reduce costs, make farming more sustainable and improve prospects for the next generation on these family farms.
- Coed Cadw have already announced that we are ready to put our money where our mouth is and provide £20,000 towards the cost of a scheme, or schemes, in Wales, which can help demonstrate the effectiveness of using trees to reduce flood risk and improve water quality. we already have agreed to support one project. Perhaps WG could match our fund?
- We welcome the move towards river catchment plans and the current round of workshops and we hope that these will see experienced staff on the ground working with landowners to provide real impetus towards modifying land management to address water quality and flood management issues. We don't have the capacity to engage in all 14 catchments but we hope to be directly involved in work in several of them.

- We'd also like to draw attention to porous cities – large areas of impervious concrete and tarmac contribute to flash flooding. Suitable urban drainage design incorporating tree planting and other vegetation can provide solutions and make the urban environment much more attractive and healthy. The forthcoming report on urban tree cover in Wales, shortly to be published by NRW highlights the extent of the opportunity to greatly increase tree cover in Wales's towns and cities.

Kind Regards,

Angharad

Agenda Item 3.9

P-04-532 Improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that Health Boards implement the investment proposed by the Welsh Neuromuscular Network Vision Document for improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales.

Additional Information:

The Welsh Neuromuscular Network is recommending the following priority developments: 1. Increase in Family Care Advisors and support. 2. Specialist adult neuromuscular physiotherapists. 3. Appointment of consultant in adult neuromuscular disease. 4. Increase in clinical psychology. 5. An equipment budget to enable minor purchases and lease arrangements.

Petition raised by: Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 4 February 2014

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-532
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/01261/14

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

Stephen.George@wales.gov.uk

Dear William

7 April 2014

Thank you for your letter of 17 March on behalf of the Petitions Committee seeking my views on the petition you have received from the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign.

We recognise it is important that people who have a neurological condition, such as Muscular Dystrophy, receive the right care and treatment at the right time and in the right setting. There has been substantial progress made in the last few years in taking forward the recommendations of the Thomas Report to improve neuromuscular services across Wales, such as the appointment of key workers and specialist physiotherapists.

At a meeting with the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign to discuss the Welsh Neuromuscular Network Vision Document, I highlighted the significant challenges facing the NHS in Wales and that these challenges would continue for some time to come. While I fully support the work of the Network and their ambitions, as I explained during the meeting any developments in services will have to come about from new ways of working, as it is unlikely any additional financial resource will be available.

It is, therefore, appropriate that you are seeking the views of Local Health Boards on the petition.

I understand that patients with a long term neurological conditions such as muscular dystrophy need access to complex and well co-ordinated services. This is why we held a consultation on a draft Neurological Conditions Delivery Plan, which closed on 31 January 2014.

*Best wishes
Mark.*

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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Mr William Powell AC / AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

stephen.george@wales.gov.uk

Ein cyf / Our ref: GL/AM/1593/938

Eich cyf / Your ref:

☎: 01248 384910

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Geoff Lang

Ffacs / Fax: 01248 384937

E-bost / Email: geoff.lang@wales.nhs.uk

Dyddiad / Date: 10 April 2014

Dear Mr Powell

RE: PETITION RECEIVED FROM THE MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY CAMPAIGN

Thank you for your e-mail dated 25 March 2014 regarding the petition received from the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign and asking for our views on the Petition.

The Welsh Neuromuscular Network has recommended a number of priority developments as highlighted below:

1. Increase in Family Care Advisors and Support

It is agreed that these posts can benefit patient and family by acting as advocates and can help patients and families through health, social and voluntary care services to ensure optimum treatment and experience as highlighted.

2. Specialist Adult Neuromuscular Physiotherapists

North Wales does not specifically have a Specialist Adult Neuromuscular Physiotherapist. We do, however, have Specialist Neurological Physiotherapists who have the appropriate training and skills to manage adults with neuromuscular conditions.

Our physiotherapy services support the role Neurological Physiotherapist to work with people with neuromuscular conditions, participating in further training specific to neuromuscular conditions, and continually improve the quality and efficiency of services provided.

Physiotherapy intervention for people with neuromuscular conditions involves developing a programme alongside the person with a neuromuscular condition, for example:

- to minimise the development of contractures and postural deformities through a programme of positioning, stretches and exercises;

- to anticipate and minimise any secondary physical complications through the above to include seating;
- to identify and prescribe aids and equipment, including positional equipment, and working with wheelchair services on seating equipment;
- to advise on moving and handling;
- to monitor respiratory function and advise on techniques to assist with breathing exercises and methods of clearing secretions.

The above therapeutic interventions could be carried out safely and effectively by neurologically trained Physiotherapists; which is a specialism within Physiotherapy. Depending on the clinical presentation, Physiotherapists with different specialisms have the most appropriate knowledge and skills to treat the person (for example, a Physiotherapist Specialist in respiratory care if the current problem is a chest infection).

It is important that there is a Specialist Neurological Physiotherapist with the awareness and knowledge of neuromuscular conditions involved in the care of people with neuromuscular conditions to ensure that these people receive maximally effective therapy. The Neuromuscular Specialist Physiotherapist would have a more in depth knowledge of those conditions, (such as muscular dystrophy), increased awareness and knowledge about the amount/intensity of exercise appropriate for these conditions. Treatment techniques are the same as other neurological conditions; stretches, positioning, exercise but knowledge of suitable intensity is an acquired skill. The evidence base is less than supportive currently to the profession in this remit, hence each case is considered individually and experience is invaluable.

Our Neurological Physiotherapists will hold the core principles of treatment, and if treating this group of patients they are professionally required to develop the necessary additional knowledge required of the condition. They would be supported by the organisation in this regard.

It would not be effective use of time to employ one Physiotherapist to treat adult neuromuscular conditions in North Wales given the low volumes and excessive travel time, however we would wholly support additional training/teaching/workshops for professionals working with people with this group of conditions to increase knowledge and skills to highlight any differences in therapeutic management to optimise the quality of the service provided, as suggested.

3. Appointment of Consultant in Adult Neuromuscular Disease

It is recognized that Consultants specialising in neuromuscular disease could provide leadership within multidisciplinary teams, focus on education and support for partners, and also lead the development and implementation of care pathways. We do however believe that further assessment would need to be undertaken to determine whether the



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Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

appointment of a consultant in adult neuromuscular disease would be the best way forward in this regard.

4. Increase in Clinical Psychology

We recognise the valuable contribution made by Clinical Psychologists to the care provided to both adults and children with neuromuscular disease. We employ over a 100 qualified clinical psychologists in the Health Board with a range of expertise and are working hard to meet the needs of patients in a timely and appropriate way.

5. Equipment Budget

We note the recommendations from the Welsh Neuromuscular Network for the provision of designated equipment budget to enable minor purchases and care arrangements. We will continue to work with partners across health and social care to support patients in promptly accessing the vital equipment needed.

Once again, I would like to thank you for seeking the views of the Health Board on the Petition.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Lang'.

GEOFF LANG
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

P-04-532.



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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg
University Health Board

Our Ref: SIJ/JT/JN
Date: 14th April 2014

ABMU Health Board
Headquarters
One Talbot Gateway, Seaway Parade,
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SA12 7BR

01639 683302
WHTN: 1787 3302

Private and Confidential

William Powell
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF991NA

Dear Mr Powell,

I am writing in response to your letter to the Health Board dated 17th March 2014 about the recommendation commended by the Welsh Neuromuscular Network (WNMN) in their vision document published in late 2013.

Before responding to the specific recommendations outlined in the vision document, I thought it would be helpful to provide you with an overview of the significant progress that we have made in improving care for this patient group over the last 12 months.

Last year we established an Adult Muscle Clinic within the Health Board. This clinic is held every 6 weeks in the specialist rehabilitation centre at Morriston Hospital, is led by a consultant neurologist, co-ordinated and supported by the neuromuscular care advisor with input provided from a specialist physiotherapist, ECG and lung function services. The aim of the clinic is to provide a 'one stop' service for patients, with a multi-disciplinary meeting after each clinic to discuss every patient and agree individual care plans.

The clinic was created by redesigning existing resources to provide a more patient focused service: patients and their families tell us that they welcome it. We have noticed that a high

-
- Chairman/Cadeirydd: **Andrew Davies**
 - Chief Executive/ Prif Weithredydd: **Paul Roberts**

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Bwrdd Iechyd ABM yw enw gweithredu Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Abertawe Bro Morgannwg

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www.abm.wales.nhs.uk

number of patients being seen are residents of Hywel Dda Health Board and so we are working with colleagues in Hywel Dda for options to develop a similar specialist clinical locally.

We also started a Transition Muscle Clinic in May 2013. Held four times a year, the clinic supports patients transferring from the paediatric neurology muscle Clinic to adult services. This Clinic is run jointly with a consultant in neuro-rehabilitation and the transition palliative physiotherapist.

We are also planning to commence a therapy-led Charcot Marie Tooth (CMT) clinic in ABM to provide one stop physiotherapy, occupational therapy and orthotic input for CMT patients on an annual review basis. The first pilot clinic is due to take place in June 2014 and will take place quarterly thereafter if it proves successful. We are co-designing this clinic with service users.

During 2013 the south west neuromuscular care advisor organised a multi-disciplinary neuromuscular training day for ABMU and Hywel Dda staff as well as an annual Welsh patient support day, organised in conjunction with the Muscular Dystrophy campaign. Which was attended by over 60 patients.

The following section focuses specifically on the recommendations within the vision document.

a. Family care advisors

In ABMU Health Board we have one neuromuscular care advisor, Sarah Harris, who works 30 hours per week. Funding for five of these hours has recently been provided by the chair of the Neuromuscular Care Group to improve advisor availability. Sarah supports the south west Wales region which includes Hywel Dda Health Board. We are aware that the vision document recommends a full time advisor post for the South West patient population along with administrative support.

As a first step we are looking at options for administrative support to the care advisor so that she can make best use of her 30 hours of work each week.

b. Specialist adult neuromuscular physiotherapists

We have redesigned access to existing specialist adult physiotherapy expertise to provide focused support to the adult muscle clinic, which was established during 2013. However, there has been no new specialist physiotherapy appointment in ABMU.

Providing specialist advice for more complex patients from an expert remains to be resolved.

c. Appointment of a consultant in adult neuromuscular disease

Within ABMU Dr Jon Walters, Consultant Neurologist is the lead neuromuscular patients, supported by other consultant neurologists who will also see adult muscle patients as part

• Chairman/Cadeirydd: Andrew Davies

• Chief Executive/ Prif Weithredydd: Paul Roberts

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of their service for example, Dr M Hill has a special interest in Myasthenia Gravis. The Neurology team also have weekly multi-disciplinary meetings in place, to allow for case discussion/review with colleagues about individual patients.

d. An increase in clinical psychology

There is currently no service provision for clinical psychology for patients with Muscular Dystrophy in ABMU or within Wales. There are meetings within the Health Board to look at the provision of psychology services across a range of neurological conditions and we have examples in some services of other members of the MDT being supported to develop their skills and experience, to provide basic support for patients through a cascade model.

e. An Equipment Budget

ABMU recognise that there are issues about equipment for patients with a neuromuscular conditions, for example cough-assist machines. We are pleased that a bid by members of the Neuromuscular Network to Welsh Government was successful and that funding has been made available for 2014/15 for various necessary items of equipment.

We recognise that as a Health Board there is more for us to do to deliver all the recommendations outlined in the vision document. I hope that in sharing with you the progress we have made over the last 12 months that you will see that much of our initial focus has been on redesigning and utilising existing resources and expertise to allow us to provide more targeted access for neuromuscular patients.

The next few months will see ABMU and all other Health Boards in Wales completing its Neurological Delivery Plan. We will be working closely with Hywel Dda Health Board to develop an integrated delivery plan for neurological conditions and the recommendations included in the vision document will form a key part of that plan.

In 2014-5 our focus is on developments such as the CMT clinic, purchasing of essential equipment in line with the agreed WG funding and identifying administrative support for the care advisor. We will be using resources developed through The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign 'Invest to Save 2011' to identify the opportunities we have within south west Wales to release local resources for reinvestment into our local services.

Yours sincerely



Paul Roberts
Chief Executive



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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Our Ref: AG/SG/cb Direct Line: 01633 435958

20 May 2014

Mr Stephen George
Petitions Committee Clerk
C/o Email: Stephen.George@wales.gov.uk

Dear Mr George,

Re: Petition from Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

Further to the letter from the Committee Chair on the above petition, dated 17 March 2014, I apologise for the delay in responding and would offer the following comments.

You may be aware that Aneurin Bevan University Health Board currently hosts the Wales Neuromuscular Network and that I Chair the Network Board. I have, therefore, been centrally involved in the development of both the Network Vision Document and associated business case for investment, which are referenced within the recently launched Neurological Conditions Delivery Plan. I have worked closely with my Health Board Chief Executive colleagues in championing the work of the Network and the requirements of the Delivery Plan going forward.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board has also demonstrated practical support for the Network by agreeing to temporarily fund an increase in hours for the two part-time Family Care Advisors, a funding priority within the Vision Document, and in leading the necessary organisation processes for the allocation of Welsh Government capital funding to the Network for 2014/15.

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan

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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan yw enw gweithredol Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan
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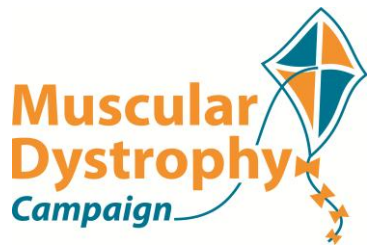
Clearly, in responding to the investment priorities cited within the petition, Health Boards face difficult decisions in balancing competing priorities against a background of significant current and forecasted financial challenges.

I trust that the information provided is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Goodall', written in a cursive style.

Dr Andrew Goodall
Prif Weithredwr/ Chief Executive



Muscular Dystrophy Campaign comment for the Petitions Committee – 9th July 2014

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign welcomes the responses from the Minister for Health and Social Services and Health Boards so far.

We would particularly like to place on record our thanks to Dr Andrew Goodall in his role as Chair of the Welsh Neuromuscular Network – steering the Network through its Vision Document, identifying priorities for investment in the Network’s business case presented at the National Assembly for Wales in November 2013, and the progress made with allocation of £358,000 to be used for the procurement of equipment for patients with neuromuscular conditions.

With Dr Goodall taking up the position of Chief Executive of NHS Wales, it is now vitally important that a new Chair is identified and appointed as quickly as possible so that the progress already achieved does not stall, but instead is maintained and built upon so that the remaining priorities for investment are supported and implemented by each of the Health Boards in Wales as a matter of urgency:

- **increased neuromuscular care advisor support**
- **specialist adult neuromuscular physiotherapy**
- **long-term dedicated neuromuscular consultant time**
- **specialist neuromuscular psychology support**

The Welsh Neuromuscular Network has recognised that unplanned emergency admissions to hospital for people with muscular dystrophy and neuromuscular conditions cost nearly £4million per year in Wales and that “access to high quality, specialist multi-disciplinary care would **significantly reduce** the considerable cost of these **unplanned emergency admissions.**” The Network is recommending £650,000 for service improvements and

therefore presents a compelling case for investment in specialist neuromuscular care in Wales to save NHS Wales money.

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign hopes that the urgent need for neuromuscular service development can be scheduled for a debate in the Assembly at the earliest available opportunity.

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign strongly urges each of the Health Boards to commit to the investment recommended by the Welsh Neuromuscular Network in its business case for improving neuromuscular services in Wales.

Agenda Item 3.10

P-04-545 Aneurin Bevan Hospital Procedures

Petition wording:

We the undersigned call upon the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to order a review into Aneurin Bevan LHB procedures regarding the following:

1. Discharging vulnerable patients late at night without hospital transport
2. The Virtual Inpatient Scheme
3. Aneurin Bevan LHB Complaints Procedures, especially when a patient is still in poor health or pain
4. Dealing with mental health patients in general hospitals

Petition raised by: Paul Ward

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 29 April 2014

Number of signatures: 20

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-545
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/02250/14

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

Stephen.George@Wales.gov.uk

23 June 2014

Deu William,

Thank you for your letter of 30 May on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding petition P-04-545 about Aneurin Bevan hospital procedures.

I will attempt to respond to each point in turn.

Regarding the point on the discharging of vulnerable patients late at night without hospital transport, I would expect patients to be discharged only into an appropriate and safe environment. I hope the Health Board will be able to respond fully to this point.

In relation to the third point regarding the Health Board's complaints procedure, you will be aware that in February, I announced a review of the way NHS Wales handles concerns and complaints. The review is due to conclude shortly and a report of the findings and recommendations will be published. Following the conclusion of the review, I will expect all Health Boards to realign their complaints procedure in accordance with the review's recommendations.

Finally, in relation to the second and fourth points, I regret I am unable to comment without further clarification of what these points refer to. I am not aware of the virtual inpatient scheme and given the diverse needs of mental health patients, I would require more detail regarding the specific objections being raised in order to respond to the final point.

I hope you will appreciate that as the issues raised by the petition fall entirely within the remit of the Health Board, it would be more appropriate for the Health Board to respond.

I note you have written to the Health Board and would be interested to have sight of the response you receive from them.

Best wishes

Mark

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

P-04-545 Aneurin Bevan Hospital Procedures – Correspondence from Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council to the Clerking Team, 25.06.14.

Dear Stephen,

Regarding the above request from the Petitions Committee our response is as follows:

1. Discharging vulnerable patients late at night without hospital transport.

We have no complaints specifically on this area, the main issues on discharge are without medication or a care plan.

Discharging vulnerable patient during the night without hospital transport – although we recognise that this has been an issue with all A&E departments, where elderly patients have been discharged in the early hours of the morning from Accident and Emergency departments following emergency transfer to hospital. This practice has caused the CHC concern regarding patient safety and cost. We have however received assurances from Aneurin Bevan Health Board that all older vulnerable patients will be assessed for support to go home and patient transport arranged where there is a specific need. Unfortunately Patient Transport services are not provided on a 24 hour basis, so many older patients without carer or family support will be delayed in going following discharge until Transport Services can be arranged.

On average over the last five years we have only received eight direct ‘informal contacts’ from patients on this particular issue for the following hospitals;

Prince Charles Hospital – 4 contacts

UHW – 2 contacts

Royal Gwent – 1 contact

Nevill Hall Hospital – 1 contact

Each of these have been addressed by the CHC with responsibility in the Health Board area. Aneurin Bevan CHC have taken up this issue with Aneurin Bevan Health Board in relation to the Royal Gwent and Nevill Hall hospitals to seek a more appropriate discharge time for older vulnerable adults where safe and appropriate transport can be offered where necessary.

2. The Virtual Inpatient Scheme:

We are aware of only one case in the last two years of a VIP being unable to access an appointment as a VIP and was treated as an out-patient.

3. ABHB Complaints Procedures, especially when a patient is still in poor health or pain:

We acknowledge that is difficult for people who are in poor health or pain to make a complaint, the hospitals and ABHB complaints procedure sign post them to ABCHC for advice or support. We have supported a number of people suffering ill health with their complaints and chasing up hospital appointments.

4. Dealing with mental health patients in general hospitals:

We have only one case recorded of an Mental Health case being dealt with on an acute ward.

I hope this information is of assistance to your committee.

Kind Regards

Martyn Dew

Deputy Chief Officer

ABCCHC



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Our Ref: JP/RB/ses

Direct Line: 01633 435958

2 July 2014

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Powell

Re: Petition – P-04-545 Aneurin Bevan Hospital Procedures

Thank you for your letter dated the 30th May 2014 with regard to the above Petition currently being considered by the Petitions Committee. As indicated in your letter, the Committee considered the petition for the first time at your meeting on 29th April 2014.

Further to your request, as you will be aware, the Health Board contacted the Committee to seek further information with regard to the Petition. This was to assist with the development of the Health Board's response in order to ensure that the Health Board provided the most relevant information to the Committee with regard to the Health Board procedures highlighted in the petition.

The Committee was able, with the permission of the lead petitioner, to provide the name of the lead petitioner to assist with the investigation for our response and to provide the Committee with the most pertinent information relating to the request.

Cont/d.....

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan

Pencadlys,
Ysbyty Sant Cadog
Ffordd Y Lodj
Caerllion
Casnewydd
De Cymru NP18 3XQ
Ffôn: 01633 436700
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Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Headquarters
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South Wales NP18 3XQ
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Email: abhb.enquiries@wales.nhs.uk



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan yw enw gweithredol Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board is the operational name of Aneurin Bevan University Local Health Board

Firstly, as you will be aware, the Health Board and lead petitioner have been engaged in correspondence and discussions over an extended period of time. This correspondence has sought to respond to the lead petitioner's concerns and complaints with regard to the Health Board's services and procedures and the treatment received. This engagement has been undertaken through correspondence with the Chief Executive and officers and clinicians within the organisation and the lead petitioner's concerns have also been fully considered through the Health Board's Putting Things Right processes and have also been subject to a referral to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. However, the Ombudsman's Office decided that the referral was not one which the Ombudsman would investigate, but asked the LHB to review this matter and remind staff of the requirement to follow procedures and ensure that patients are aware from the beginning what procedures will be used and this further reinforcement of procedures and practice has undertaken by the Health Board with our staff.

In relation to the four specific statements made within the petition regarding the Health Board's procedures, I should be grateful if you would find below as response to each from the Health Board. I hope this information is helpful to you in your consideration of the petition.

1. Discharging vulnerable patients late at night without hospital transport:

After a decision to discharge a patient has been made, be that during the day or at night, it is part of the duty of the nurse organising the discharge of the patient to ensure that a patient has the ability to arrive home safely. This primarily would be through arranging for ambulance transport, or determining whether a patient has their own transport or assisting with the booking of a taxi if other means of transport are not available. However, on some occasions especially at times of high demand for services, ambulance transport might not be available for some time due to the need to support emergency calls and this can result in patients having extended delays whilst waiting for ambulance transport. On these occasions the option to use other means of transport to return home safely will be explored with the patient. It is always the concern of Health Board staff to ensure that any patient being discharged can arrive home safely.

2. The Virtual In-Patient Scheme:

The Virtual In-Patient Scheme is used for those patients who have been admitted as an emergency either to Accident and Emergency Departments or an Emergency Assessment Unit, but their condition at that time is not assessed as serious enough to remain in a hospital bed waiting for investigations to be undertaken. The virtual inpatient service is a service which allows patients to continue to receive diagnostics and treatment whilst being discharged to their home environment. This is a

Cont/d.....

dedicated service within specialities to which it is most suited. An example would be when a patient is waiting for a diagnostic test for which a follow up treatment can be initiated out of hospital or via a future planned admission. The advantage of this is that the patient is allowed to return to their home environment and avoid the stress and risks of remaining in a hospital bed. It also improves bed availability for those patients who cannot be cared for as virtual inpatients. Virtual inpatients are 'tracked' by dedicated clinical staff to ensure their priority is maintained and their diagnosis and treatment occurs in a timely manner.

3. Aneurin Bevan LHB Complaints Procedures, especially when a patient is still in poor health or pain:

The Health Board in line with the Putting Things Right regulations are required to look into the concerns raised by individuals making concerns or complaints and respond accordingly within specific timeframes. However, the Health Board recognises that in some instances the individuals raising concerns or complaints might have ongoing health issues and therefore, might be continuing to be in our care and receiving services from the Health Board. I would like to assure the Committee that a patient raising a concern or complaint should not in any way be affected in the level or timeliness of the care that they receive because they have also raised issues with regard to the Health Board. The ongoing care of the patient would carry on through our duty of care in the usual ways and the Putting Things Right process would run in parallel.

4. Dealing with mental health patients in general hospitals:

The Health Board has identified this as a key issue for the organisation to ensure that the Health Board can effectively care for and support patients with mental health issues who are admitted to our general wards. The Health Board, as part of 1000 Lives initiative, has established a working group to look further into the Health Board's co-ordination of care for mental health patients on our general hospitals.

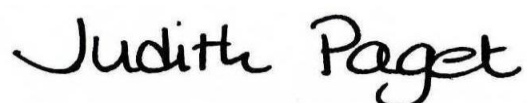
However, the Health Board also has mental health liaison nurses on site at both the Royal Gwent and Nevill Hall Hospitals for support and advice. Also, the Divisional Nurse for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities has strong links with all Divisional Nurses and support with leadership and environmental walk-arounds in wards and other facilities. The Health Board is also undertaking a pilot project in Newport to support patients on discharge who have cognitive impairment and/or dementia.

Cont/d.....

The Health Board is also undertaking a range of work specifically on dementia care and support including the rolling out of the 'This is me' document and approach. Dementia Champions have been identified across all wards in Scheduled and Unscheduled Care. Dementia training has been carried out by Mental Health staff to over 500 general staff and the 'daisy' has been adopted as the sign to recognise patient's with dementia and is being used across Royal Gwent and Nevill Hall Hospital sites. Dementia information Boards are also evident across both Nevill Hall and Royal Gwent Hospital sites with clinics for carers also operating across both sites.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee in your consideration of the petition you have received and are currently considering. However, if you would like any clarification on any elements of this response or any further information with regard to the issues raised, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Paget". The script is cursive and fluid.

Judith Paget
Interim Chief Executive/ Prif Weithredwr Dros Dro

Agenda Item 3.11

P-04-543 No Increase to University Tuition Fees

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government not to increase tuition fees for Welsh students for a minimum of five years.

Petition raised by: A LEVEL STUDENTS / MYFYRWYR LEFEL A

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 29 April 2014

Number of signatures: TBC

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-543
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/01215/14

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

11 June 2014

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 30 May on behalf of the Committee about university tuition fees.

The Welsh Government has set a clear strategy in terms of its tuition fee and student support policies - the policies we introduced in 2012-13 will remain in place at least until the end of the current Assembly term. As for the future, my Written Statement of 19 February contained details of the review by Professor Sir Ian Diamond which I have established to look at the future funding of higher education and student finance in Wales. The review has been tasked with providing the Welsh Government with a report containing advice and recommendations for future funding arrangements in Wales that are deliverable, affordable and sustainable and focussed on the Welsh Government's priorities of widening access, supporting the skills needs of Wales, strengthening part-time and postgraduate provision and providing long-term financial sustainability. The review will consider evidence from stakeholders, including prospective students, and gather and evaluate data, research and other evidence to inform its advice and recommendations to the Welsh Government.

Sir Ian will report his findings in September 2016. I have asked my officials to forward the Petitions Committee's letter to Sir Ian and the review panel so that they may take this into account alongside other evidence submitted to the review.

Yours sincerely

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff

Pack Page 104

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence.Huw.Lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Printed on 100% recycled paper

P-04-540 Stop Sexism In Domestic Abuse

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to stop Domestic Abuse (DA) by treating it as a gender inclusive and human phenomenon in which many men and women share both suffering and responsibility.

Practical NOT Politics

The current proposal blames men, and only men, for all violence and puts a radical gender based prejudice before the real needs of women, men and children and where 97% of men do NOT fit this profile.

Fear of repercussions and lack of publicity in Wales have prevented open and vocal dissent.

This Petition invites an alternative approach that recognises that 86% of DA is the responsibility of both women and men. It also offers greater protection to children and removes the discrimination that arises solely from radical gendered prejudice against those people in same sex female relationships.

Petition raised by: Healing Men

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 11 March 2014

Number of signatures: 238



Linell Gymorth Camdriniaeth yn y Cartref
a Thrais Rhywiol Cymru Gyfan
All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual
Violence Helpline

0808 80 10 800




Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid
Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First

19th June 2014

The Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear William Powell AM,

RE: RESPONSE TO 'PETITION – P-04-540 STOP SEXISM IN DOMESTIC ABUSE'

Thank you for your letter seeking Welsh Women's Aid's views on the statistics provided in the petition referenced above, along with our other views on this topic.

In regards to the statistics this petition provides, these are not any of the generally accepted statistics that I am familiar with, and in fact directly contradict them. As these figures are not referenced or explained, I am unfortunately unable to comment further. However, in regards to the correct and commonly accepted statistics I can provide the following:

- According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, between 2012-13 there were an estimated 1.2 million female victims of domestic abuse and 700,000 male victims,¹ with at least 29.9% of women and 17% of men in England and Wales having experienced it at some point.² However, women are much more likely to be high risk victims than men,³ and women make up around 89% of all those who have experienced four or more incidents of domestic violence;⁴
- Studies have shown that women suffer a greater amount and more severe abuse from male partners;⁵
- Women were victims in 94% of the domestic abuse cases reaching conviction in 2010;
- Nearly 2500 sexual assaults against women are reported in Wales each year;
- Some 30 women in Wales will report honour-based violence, with 23 reporting forced marriage;

¹ Office for National Statistics (2013) Focus on violent crime and sexual offences 2012/13, Chapter 4: Intimate Personal Violence and Partner Abuse.

² Smith, K., Osborne, S., Lau, I. et al (2012) Homicides, Firearm offences and intimate violence 2010/11: Supplementary Vol. 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11. London.

³ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (2014) Everyone's Business: Improving the Police Response to Domestic Abuse.

⁴ Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004) Home Office Research Study 276: Domestic Abuse, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey. Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

⁵ M. Hester (2009) Who Does What to Whom? Gender and Domestic Violence Perpetrators, Bristol: University of Bristol in association with the Northern Rock Foundation.

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Linell Gymorth Camdriniaeth yn y Cartref
a Thrais Rhywiol Cymru Gyfan

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0808 80 10 800



**Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid**

Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First

- FGM is a well-known practice in some communities in Wales. It is estimated 18 or more will be victims each year;⁶
- On average two women a week are killed by their current or ex-partner in England and Wales, and each year, 7 women will die at the hands of a male partner or family member.

You may have also come across the statistic that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience domestic abuse to describe the prevalence of gender violence, however, this statistic is misleading.⁷ Its origin is a report into domestic abuse conducted ten years ago for the Home Office. The definition of domestic violence used was gender neutral, including 'those incidents involving household members or other relatives regardless of where they took place. The report used findings from the British Crime Survey, which showed that 23% of women and 15% of men had 'ever' experienced violence, but the 'type' of violence was therefore not necessarily just 'intimate partner/domestic abuse. This definition also included one-off as well as repeated incidents, but the defining factor in domestic abuse is that it is persistent, so the over statistic does not give a picture of the gender divide of domestic abuse.

In regards to the gendered nature of the proposed Bill, our understanding was always that this was not a Bill about violence in general. This is a piece of legislation aimed at addressing the worrying levels of gender-based violence towards women in Wales; whether it is sexual violence, domestic abuse, stalking, harassment, forced marriage, trafficking or female genital mutilation, it is far too high.

It is a well-researched and internationally accepted fact that women the world over suffer these particular types of violence disproportionately to men, because they are women⁸.

The World Health Organisation's figures show that violence causes more deaths and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined amongst women aged 15–44 worldwide.⁹ This follows international definitions of violence against women, such as CEDAW¹⁰ and the UN Declaration on the Elimination of VAW¹¹. CEDAW, for example, defines VAW as 'violence that is directed towards a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately.' We must recognise this in how we deliver government policies and new legislation. It would be unreasonable to ignore the huge difference in the level of this violence against women in Wales.

We understand that the Bill will not lead to significant increases in funding for women-only services. All the services available to men will continue, and many of the positive changes we expect to see will also benefit men. We hope to see the issue of domestic abuse and violence against women itself being raised higher up the agenda in public bodies, so organisations like local authorities have to take account of the policies they have in place to tackle violence against women.

⁶ Wales Violence Against Women Action Group (2012). 2013 Calendar. Available online at www.walesvawgroup.com.

⁷ N. Charles (2010). 'Developing a Domestic Abuse Strategy in Wales'. In N. Charles, C. A. Davies and S. Jones, *Gender and Social Justice in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press).

⁸ UNIFEM estimates that up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime — the majority from husbands, intimate partners or someone they know.

⁹ WHO 1997.

¹⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

¹¹ UN General Assembly Declaring on the Elimination of VAW.



Llinell Gymorth Camdriniaeth yn y Cartref
a Thrais Rhywiol Cymru Gyfan

All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual
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Welsh Women's Aid

Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First

We are hopeful that the result will be a more strategic, better researched way of commissioning services across Wales, so that victims do not suffer a postcode lottery of provision – and this will undoubtedly also help male victims.

Schools will have better trained specialists available to help young men and women who want to talk about gender-based violence, and both boys and girls will learn about healthy relationships.

There has never been any dispute that men also suffer from violence in Wales, however, the numbers of men suffering from these forms of violence are significantly lower than women and the reasons for the violence are very different. There are a number of criminal justice strategies to tackle violent crime in our community, as well as a number of programs and services designed to help men who are victims of sexual or domestic abuse. This is a targeted and proportionate use of resources aligned with the level of need for male victims. This provision will not be affected by the proposed Bill, and targeted services will continue to be provided.

The Bill will not mean that male victims will be overlooked or that the services will stop in favour of women only services. It will however raise the issue of violence against women up the agenda in public bodies and make sure that they take steps to tackle it because the number of women who suffer is so significant. It will also seek to address some of the underlying social factors that have created the disproportionate suffering of women from violence by providing a framework for education and prevention work.

I hope that the information provided has addressed your queries, but please do not hesitate to get in touch if I can provide further clarification or information.

Yours Sincerely,

Tina Reece
Public Affairs Manager

Pendragon House, Caxton Place | Pentwyn, Cardiff | CF23 8XE

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Registered Charity Number: 1140962 | VAT REG No. 922 7943 07

William Powell AC/AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

11th July 2014.

Dear Mr Powell,

Petition P-04-540 Stop Sexism in Domestic Abuse

I would like to address two issues with the committee in connection with the above petition. Firstly I would like to address the letter from Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) dated 19 June and received by me by e-mail on the 9th of July last and secondly a potential misunderstanding with Ms Watson of the committee.

Firstly I am assuming that the response from WWA to members of the National Assembly of Wales will have been viewed and have the authority of senior management at WWA. My comments are necessarily preliminary with a view to submitting a more formal and complete response to the committee in September. I confine my comments to issues in connection with domestic abuse (DA) and the human suffering that arises.

- WWA has been asked to clarify a rather puzzling statement about the petition's "... figures are not referenced or explained...". It is hoped to address this issue for the meeting in September.
- The letter heading for WWA states very clearly "putting women and children first". This raises a question "Who comes second?". One answer is boys who, unlike girls, are excluded by WWA from refuges from quite a younger age. Is this a violence against boys only because they are boys. Or do we not care.
- WWA logos also include the statement and logo "children matter" and yet there are no references to protecting boys and girls and keeping them safe from all forms of DA and thereby risks perpetuating DA through intergenerational transmission. Please also note that in the focus on women it is stated "two women a week are killed", 18 will be victims of FGM are seven will die at the hands of a male partner etc. There is no awareness or recognition of the 60 to 70 children who are killed each year by their parents. Surely this shocking fact in connection with domestic violence should be clearly recognised by those proclaiming "children matter".
- The WWA does not seek to address the human suffering and distress caused by DA in female same-sex relationships. Surely this would be a priority in "putting women ... first"?
- The WWA response is framed entirely as women as victims and makes no reference to addressing, and alleviating the human causes of DA. Indeed, it is clear that WWA have a commercial imperative to ensure DA continues in order to protect the £4,000,000 budget in Wales. Alleviating the human suffering caused by DA requires a new approach with new and more closely aligned dynamics.
- Suicide amongst men is an issue in Wales. Recent research has shown that men kill themselves after suffering domestic violence and that this brings the number of deaths attributable to domestic violence to something like equality between men and women. Shaming of men will have an impact on these grim statistics and the WWA approach

i.e. “men second” can only make matters worse. This should also be considered in the “gender-based violence” indoctrination of the vulnerable and innocent young girls and boys and one may usefully consider what effect the concept of “... men second” may have on young Welsh boys and how young girls may feel about what is, or is not, it is an acceptable way to relate to boys. Dr Erica Bowen at Coventry University reveals that it is seen to be OK to hit boys “*he probably deserves it*”.

I apologise for the rather hurried and inadequate response to this letter. There is much more work to do and I hope to provide the Committee with a more adequate and satisfactory response in September.

Secondly, I refer to the televised proceedings of Committee meeting on the 1st July last and I thank the Committee for considering my Petition and providing me with an opportunity to respond to the Minister’s letter.

However, the comments made by Ms Watson about the presentation of my Petition and some important statistics cause me some very considerable concern. They do not correspond with my recollection of events and do not reflect that fact that all the statistics quoted in my Petition are fully referenced and supported. I stand solid and steadfast by all of them but would appreciate guidance and advice if there is a mistake or something incomplete.

I wonder if there has been some confusion? Please refer to the cover of my Petition as follows;

I agreed with Ms Watson on what I feel to be a somewhat technical argument that the words “... *half the problem* ...” were not strictly correct as women, as a group, are shown to be slightly more violent than men in relationships and that the proposition being made would, therefore, solve slightly less than half the problem. However, I feel the statement made is within the bounds of reasonableness and materiality and is helpful in making a controversial and essential point in a concise and effective way. I apologise to the Committee if the Committee does not share my view.

The Committee may be interested in a recent paper given to the British Psychological Society on the 26th June 2014 by Dr Elizabeth Bates from the University of Cumbria “**Women more aggressive to partners than men**” and which reports;

“ ... Furthermore, women engaged in significantly higher levels of controlling behaviour than men This study found that women demonstrated a desire to control their partners and were more likely to use physical aggression than men ... This suggests that [domestic abuse] may not be motivated by patriarchal values and needs to be studied within the context of other forms of aggression, which has potential implications for interventions ... ”

The study has been reasonably widely reported, for example in “The Times” and “The Huffington Post” and supplements the very well established research and proven evidence quoted in my Petition.

It is somewhat troubling that the current policy of the Welsh government, as affirmed by the Minister, continues to be based on the neo-Marxist “patriarchal” theory which, I respectfully suggest, is increasingly inappropriate to new legislation looking forward into the 21st century in Wales, in particular in its “... *implications for interventions* ... ” as touched on above.



Solid, evidence based research and practice that protects children and subsequent generations from all sources of domestic abuse (including violent women) must be the central principle that guides government policy and new legislation in Wales moving forward into the 21st century.

The introduction of the new legislation is noted. Whilst the Explanatory Memorandum makes it clear that the principles of the new legislation remains deeply sexist, the removal of “*Violence Against Women*” from the title of the Bill is welcomed as is the commitment by the Welsh government to “... *supporting all victims of ... domestic abuse ...*”. However, the neo-Marxist “patriarchal” theory clearly remains in that the Welsh Government has not undertaken to treat all victims (both men and women) “equally” in accord with the Equality Act 2010 and its obligations under its Gender Equality Duty.

Dr Amanda Robinson, the lead author of the report underpinning the Welsh government’s view; has confirmed the following as a definition of the neo-Marxist theory of domestic abuse;

“The gender paradigm of [domestic abuse] argues that domestic violence is a result of patriarchal social systems where men are exclusively the batterers and females are exclusively the victims of male dominance and privilege.

This Neo-Marxian model posits the masculine (bourgeoisie) as occupying the upper rungs of privilege, authority, and power over the feminine (proletariat).

Thus, domestic violence is the physical manifestation of his social dominance as it is forcibly imposed on her submissive feminine body.

Conversely, female violence is initiated reactively, purely as a form of self-defence.”

Female instigators of, and active participants in, domestic abuse in Wales must be recognised equally and correspondingly with male victims in order to formulate interventions that help break the generational cycle of learned dysfunctional and abusive behaviours that perpetuates domestic abuse. The WWA approach will not help even with £4,000,000 of annual grant.

Violent women and male victims must not be ignored or marginalised in the formulation of new legislation in the 21st century in Wales because of blind, radicalised dogma and Marxist theories that date back to 50 to 150 years ago. It is time to take a new approach.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. Please let me know if I can provide any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Stott

Healing Men