

HSVP 02

Cymorth tai i bobl sy'n agored i niwed

Housing support for vulnerable people

Ymateb gan: Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

Response from: Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru



Senedd's local government and housing committee inquiry on housing support for vulnerable people.

Introduction

Housing support is a key part of Welsh government's aim to ensure that homelessness in Wales is rare brief and un-repeated. Yet this support must be seen as part of a whole system strategic approach to ending Wales' current housing emergency including increasing the supply of secure suitable and affordable homes and ensuring our housing workforce is adequately resourced and supported. CIH Cymru in its response to the inquiry on housing support highlight the need for housing to be a foundation mission of government. This right will provide the strategic whole sector approach that will ensure that individuals can not only access a home in the right place but if needed can access the right level of support at the right time to ensure that they can maintain that home.

How effectively is the Welsh Government planning for the future of HSG in light of rapid rehousing transition and the forthcoming Homelessness Bill.

Welsh government's rapid rehousing guidance sets out that the priority is preventing homelessness but when homelessness occurs rapid rehousing is to become the default approach which is made up of the following main elements:

- Everyone is assumed to be 'housing ready' with the right support.
- People spend as little time as possible in temporary accommodation.
- When people do need temporary accommodation, it is of a high standard.
- People are able to access the right home in the right place for them.
- For most people, an independent, mainstream home will be the default approach, but others may choose supported accommodation.
- People are able to access high quality, multi-agency support, tailored to individual needs, where this is required¹.

¹ Rapid Rehousing: guidance. <https://www.gov.wales/rapid-rehousing-guidance-html>



Yet key to this will be the supply of suitable, secure and affordable homes for individuals at risk of, or currently, homeless. Supply and housing support are key components of the rapid rehousing approach. Our members have highlighted the pressures being faced by support services in Wales currently with some outlining that floating support contracts are being reduced due to an increasing need for supported accommodation. Part of this is a longer period being spent in temporary accommodation due to a lack of suitable move on accommodation. Part of this is the increasing complexity of individuals support needs with 94 per cent of housing support providers stating that the complexity of support needs has increased². This increased complexity requires more intensive and higher levels of specialist support which comes at a higher cost³, reducing the monies available to provide floating support services. Floating support is a vital tool for homelessness prevention and assisting individuals to maintain their tenancies.

The provision of floating support as part of relieving homelessness is a proposed new statutory duty within the ending homelessness white paper. This proposed new statutory duty is to provide support in order to help an applicant retain accommodation. Whether this be where homelessness is prevented, and the applicant can remain in their home, or an offer of accommodation is accepted in order to relieve homelessness. This is not to be a universal duty but rather the duty will apply to those individuals who the local authority assesses as requiring support. The length of time for the support is proposed to be twelve months⁴. Yet the regulatory impact assessment that accompanied the ending homelessness white paper did not set out the likely cost of this proposal. Rather it set out the

² Senedd Finance Committee Consultation. Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26. A response from Cymorth Cymru. December 2024. <https://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Cymorth-evidence-for-Finance-Cttee-Draft-Budget-2025-26.pdf>

³ Supported Housing Review 2023.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6724bd9bf7cd25d5997c6fe1/Supported_Housing_Review.pdf

⁴ Consultation on the White Paper on Ending Homelessness in Wales.

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-10/ending-homelessness-white-paper_0_0.pdf



current monies paid to provide housing support grant services in Wales and that additional resource is likely⁵.

Welsh governments draft budget for 2025/26 included an uplift of £21 million in funding for the housing support grant. Yet due to inflation the budget for the housing support grant has in real terms reduced by £13 million since 2012. Even though there have been uplifts in the budget according to Cymorth Cymru, 81 per cent of providers are currently running services at a deficit⁶. HSG services are now being subsidised from the following sources:

- 64 per cent are using income from other parts of the organisation.
- 52 per cent are using their organisations reserves
- 27 per cent are using fundraising income

Some organisations have now handed back contracts due to them not being financially sustainable or are considering whether they will need to hand back contracts in the near future. This is concerning especially against the backdrop of a 91 per cent increase in demand for housing support grant services⁷ and members have highlighted that some floating support services are being reduced to provide supported accommodation.

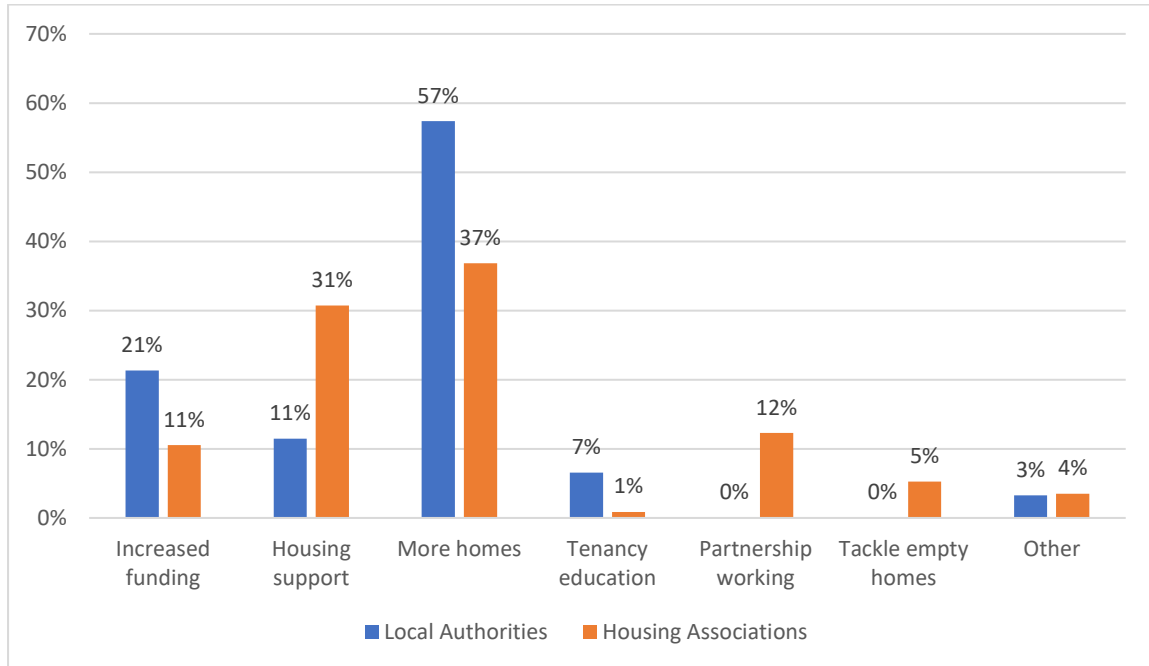
Our 2024 sector snapshot asked a specific question on what additional measures would be needed to tackle homelessness in Wales. As shown in figure one respondents outlined that we need housing support coupled with more homes if we are to tackle homelessness in Wales.

⁵ Consultation on the White Paper on Ending Homelessness in Wales. Draft Regulatory Impact Assessment. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-10/ending-homelessness-integrated-draft-regulatory-impact-assessment.pdf>

⁶ Senedd Finance Committee Consultation. Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26. A response from Cymorth Cymru. December 2024. <https://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Cymorth-evidence-for-Finance-Cttee-Draft-Budget-2025-26.pdf>

⁷ Senedd Finance Committee Consultation. Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26. A response from Cymorth Cymru. December 2024. <https://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Cymorth-evidence-for-Finance-Cttee-Draft-Budget-2025-26.pdf>

Figure one: Additional measures needed to tackle homelessness.



It is clear from the responses to the sector snapshot that the housing sector sees housing support and an increased supply of homes as key measures to tackle homelessness in Wales.

If we are to truly provide a rapid rehousing approach, we cannot tackle these in isolation. Rather we need a whole system strategic approach to ending homelessness in Wales. CIH Cymru sees this whole system strategic approach being legislating for a right to adequate housing and will provide a cost benefit. As shown in #back the bills independent cost analysis undertaken by Alma economics for every £1 spent on the right to adequate housing, there will be £2.30 in benefits. It will:

- Save £5.5bn in improved wellbeing
- Save £2bn from local council budgets
- Save £1bn for the NHS
- Save £1bn for the criminal justice system

⁸ 2024 Sector Snapshot: Survey of Housing Professionals In Wales. <https://www.cih.org/media/zqpb5xmw/cih-cymru-sector-snapshot-2024.pdf>



- Generate £1bn in additional economic activity⁹.

The right to adequate housing must be a foundational mission for government as we work towards ensuring everyone can access a safe, suitable and affordable home together with the right support at the right time to maintain that home.

The current and anticipated pressures in the delivery of HSG-funded support services, including pressures on the workforce.

Whilst we appreciate the inquiries main focus is on housing support grant services, we also need to consider the increasing pressures seen across the housing workforce including statutory homelessness services provided by local authorities. These two services are not mutually exclusive. They often work in collaboration to meet the shared goal of ensuring homelessness in Wales is rare, brief and non-repeated.

As previously outlined there has been a 91 per cent increase in demand for housing support grant funded services¹⁰. Homelessness across Wales is also continuing to rise. The 2023/24 homelessness data showed that 13,539 homeless households became homeless in a twelve-month period¹¹. This is the highest number of homelessness households in a twelve-month period since 2015 and is equivalent to one in every 100 households in Wales becoming homeless in 2023/24¹². On 31 March 2024 there were 6,447 households accommodated in temporary accommodation this is a 177 per cent increase on the 2,325 households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2020¹³.

⁹ The right to adequate housing in Wales: cost-benefit analysis. <https://www.cih.org/publications/the-right-to-adequate-housing-in-wales-cost-benefit-analysis/>

¹⁰ Senedd Finance Committee Consultation. Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26. A response from Cymorth Cymru. December 2024. <https://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Cymorth-evidence-for-Finance-Cttee-Draft-Budget-2025-26.pdf>

¹¹ Households for which assistance has been provided by outcome and household type. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/householdsforwhichassistancehasbeenprovided-by-outcome-householdtype>.

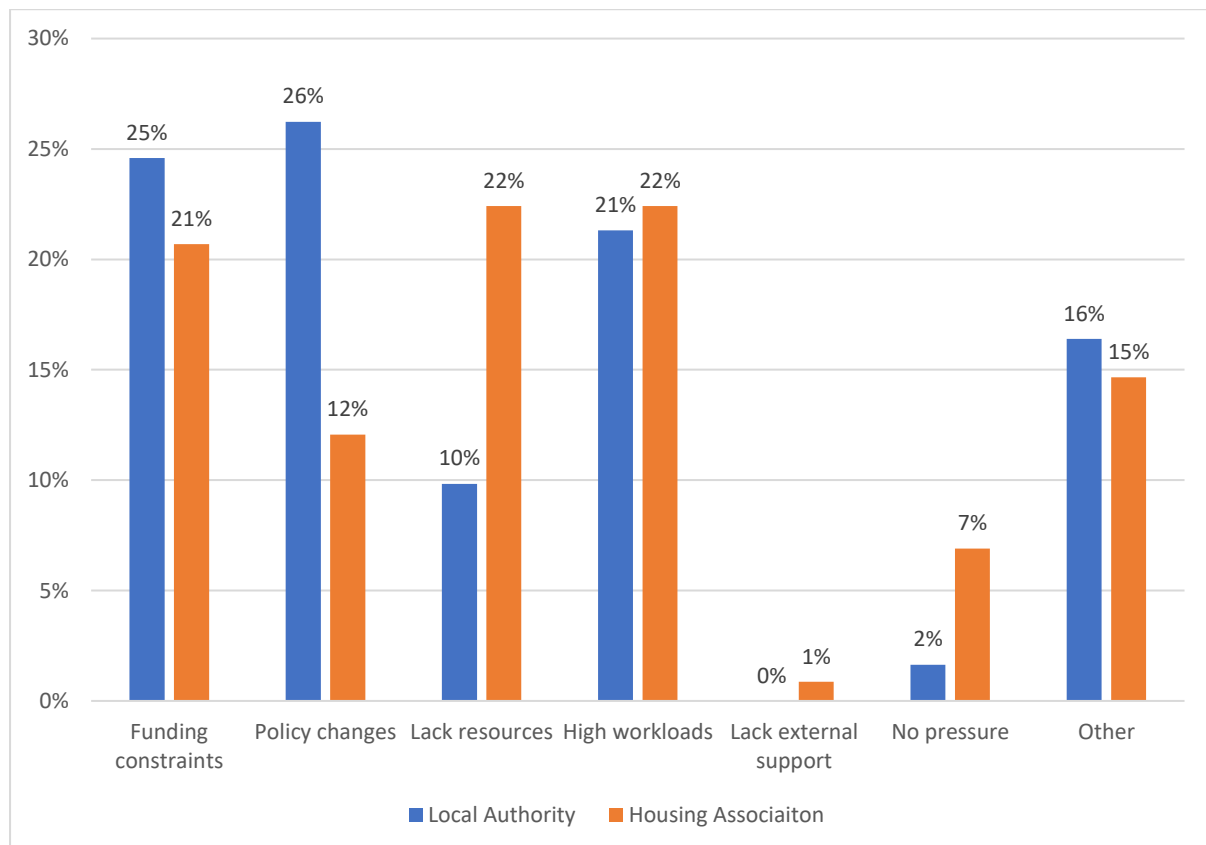
¹² Homelessness: April 2023 to March 2024. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2024/9/1/1726473445/homelessness-april-2023-march-2024.pdf>

¹³ Households accommodated temporarily by accommodation type and household type (Post 2015-16). <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Temporary-Accommodation/householdsaccommodatedtemporarily-by-accommodationtype-householdtype>



The increased levels of homelessness, increased demand for housing grant services coupled with rising demands across the housing sector more widely is having a significant impact on our housing workforce. Our 2024 sector snapshot report highlighted that people work in housing as they want to make a difference with 77 per cent of respondents stating this was the reason they worked in housing. Yet the housing sector is also at breaking point with 68 per cent of respondents working in local authorities and 31 per cent of respondents working in housing associations stating that the current pressures were having a negative impact on their mental health. As shown in figure two the main pressures faced are funding constraints, lack of resources and high workloads.

Figure two: current pressures faced by housing workforce.



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¹⁴ 2024 Sector Snapshot: Survey of Housing Professionals In Wales. <https://www.cih.org/media/zqpb5xmw/cih-cymru-sector-snapshot-2024.pdf>



Respondents to the survey were clear that additional funding was needed in order to ease some of these pressures. This funding would help increase the size of the workforce as the current high workloads and size of caseloads were significantly impacting people leaving some feeling at breaking point. The following quotes from our sector snapshot highlight the impact within the housing sector:

We need to future proof our business with young skilled eager professionals however year after year we are being told we cannot increase resources. Caseloads for officers are reaching breaking point and we cannot offer the quality service we once did despite staff trying their best. Just like the NHS we are at breaking point. We also have an ageing workforce; staff cannot work to the pace they were and cannot retire due to the increase in state pension age.

"We cannot change government policy overnight, so we have to find the best way to work around the policies. The high workload is a real issue - we have been facing this for some years now and have stripped back provision where possible, there isn't a lot more than can be stripped back. Best case scenario would be additional staff, but this is unlikely."¹⁵

Housing support and statutory homelessness services are also to be delivered in a person-centred trauma informed way. Whilst there is a very real need to address the trauma experienced by those experiencing homelessness, we also need to consider and address the impact of visceral trauma¹⁶. To what extent is hearing the

¹⁵ 2024 Sector Snapshot: Survey of Housing Professionals In Wales. <https://www.cih.org/media/zqpb5xmw/cih-cymru-sector-snapshot-2024.pdf>

¹⁶ Aliénor H. Lemieux-Cumberlege, Helen Griffiths, Emily Pathe & Adam Burley (2023) Posttraumatic stress disorder, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout in frontline workers in homelessness services: risk and protective factors, Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness, DOI: 10.1080/10530789.2023.2191405



experiences of those they are supporting having a negative impact on our frontline housing professionals. Especially at a time when morale is low, and they are already under pressure from increased workloads. Welsh Government's high level action plan to end homelessness included an action to develop a resilient and valued workforce recognised for their expertise¹⁷. If our workforce is to be truly resilient, we need to consider how we can provide funding for clinical supervision and/or wellbeing support for our frontline housing professionals who may experience trauma through their work.

Our housing workforce makes a huge difference in peoples lives but they need the right level of support and the right level of resource. Now is the time to invest in the housing workforce to ensure it is sufficiently resourced to deliver the wider piece of work required to resolve the housing crisis in Wales. This includes the delivery of housing support grant funded services together with statutory homelessness services.

How much is known about service performance, including data on outcomes?

Welsh government has produced a housing support grant outcomes framework for local authorities and housing support providers. This is used to evidence the support that has been provided by the grant within the local authority area. This framework considers primary outcomes the activity that relates to the core purpose of the housing support grant and the secondary outcomes that reflect the supplementary benefits of services funded by the housing support grant¹⁸. Local authorities will use the outcomes recorded from the outcomes framework to produce a housing support programme strategy based on an assessment of support needs within the local authority area. This assessment of needs will

¹⁷Ending homelessness in Wales: a high level action plan 2021 to 2026. https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-11/ending-homelessness-high-level-action-plan-2021-2026_0.pdf

¹⁸ housing-support-grant-outcomes-framework. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-03/housing-support-grant-outcomes-framework%20%282%29.pdf>



consider levels of homelessness in an area, the main support needs, the current levels of support provided and the outcomes for the support provided¹⁹.

The homelessness outcomes framework contains a detailed outcome to evaluate the number of people who can access suitable support tailored to their needs. The data to monitor progress on this outcome is captured within the housing support grant outcomes framework which Welsh Government uses to monitor the use of the housing support grant. Yet the framework does not outline how or where progress on meeting the outcomes will be published.²⁰

The proposed new statutory duty within the homelessness white paper to provide individuals with support needs with appropriate support to maintain their tenancy²¹, will provide an opportunity to provide publicly available data on the efficacy of housing support grant services. Ideally data on the meeting of this proposed duty should show:

- The number of people receiving support in a local authority areas
- The type of support received.
- The length of time the support has been placed.
- Reason for the support coming to an end.

It is hoped that this will provide the appropriate level of scrutiny for the housing support grant and how it is helping the sector meet the aim of homelessness being rare brief and non-repeated.

¹⁹ housing-support-grant-practice-guidance. https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-02/housing-support-grant-practice-guidance_0.pdf

²⁰ Ending Homelessness Outcomes Framework: Baseline Report. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-07/ending-homelessness-outcomes-framework-baseline-report.pdf>

²¹ Consultation on the White Paper on Ending Homelessness in Wales. https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-10/ending-homelessness-white-paper_0_0.pdf



How effective is joint working between housing support services and public services such as health and social care?

We need to consider, when looking at operational practice around co-operation and joint working between health and housing, consent from the applicant. Consent from the individual is needed to allow for sharing of health information including how any unmet health needs will be addressed and/or are affecting retention of the applicant's home. Too often local authorities face the additional barrier of information sharing being insufficient so that support needs cannot be accurately assessed even when explicit consent is given. If we are to ensure effective co-operation and joint working between health and housing, we need to have an information sharing mechanism that allows the applicant a say in what is shared whilst also ensuring appropriate and current health needs information is available to frontline housing professionals so it can be considered as part of any housing support needs assessment.

Yet even when appropriate information is shared there can be barriers to accessing help and support from health-based services by housing professionals. Welsh government's report on the allocation of social housing in Wales highlighted some of the issues registered social landlords (RSL's) were having. Some individuals working in RSL's felt that housing officer roles had become unofficial social work. This was particularly challenging following discharges from hospital and prison. The report outlined that there seemed to be an expectation that RSL's manage cases that health has no provision for, yet they are being placed into communities with the expectation of people with no experience to support them²².

The recent mental health and wellbeing strategy made little to no reference to housing even though public health Wales sees housing as one of the foundational

²² Exploring the allocation of social housing in Wales. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2024-12/exploring-the-allocation-of-social-housing-in-wales.pdf>



building blocks to good health outcomes²³. Housing is a key social determinant of health. A lack of housing or poor-quality housing can negatively affect health and wellbeing. Having a safe, suitable and affordable home can reduce financial stress, increases opportunities to engage with a wider community and enables individuals and families to invest in social ties. Which when considered as a whole can significantly improve the health and wellbeing of individuals²⁴.

Research undertaken into the right to adequate housing outlined how housing can impact an individual's psychosocial status. Individuals who live in poor quality housing are 2.7 per cent more likely to report bad or poor physical or mental health. The research also found that that improving the quality of homes does improve long-term wellbeing of individuals. An affordable home can lead to housing stability which in turn reduces stress, increases wellbeing and gives individuals a sense of security²⁵. Housing is vital to good health outcomes, so it is vital that health and housing work in partnership to improve outcomes for individuals.

We welcome the proposed duty to identify, refer and co-operate for public sector bodies included in the ending homelessness white paper. Though this will rely on strong collaboration and partnership working. Our Tyfu Tai research into hospital discharges highlighted how effective partnership, collaboration and planning can improve outcomes for individuals. the Care and Repair Cymru project Hospital to a Healthier Home which is run in partnership with the NHS, Care and Repair Cymru, Hospital staff the patient and family. These all work together to identify and resolve housing and environmental issues that would prevent a hospital discharge. The service saved 25,000 bed days in 2021 and 100 per cent of patients using the

²³ Investing in a Healthier Wales: prioritising prevention. <https://phwwhocc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Investing-in-a-Healthier-Wales-prioritising-prevention.pdf>

²⁴ Rolfe, S., Garnham, L., Godwin, J. et al. Housing as a social determinant of health and wellbeing: developing an empirically-informed realist theoretical framework. BMC Public Health 20, 1138 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09224-0>

²⁵ The right to adequate housing in Wales: the evidence base. An independent research report by Alma Economics. Commissioned by Tai Pawb, the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru and Shelter Cymru. <https://www.cih.org/publications/the-right-to-adequate-housing-in-wales-the-evidence-base/>



service said that they were key in helping them return home²⁶

²⁷. An example of how by housing and health working together

we can improve outcomes for individuals and work towards enabling someone to retain their home as part of a whole system approach to preventing homelessness.

What services should be commissioned in future to effectively support people with complex needs to find and keep a home.

There are some examples of good practice already in place for effectively supporting people with complex support needs find and keep a home. Cardiff county council have a homelessness multi-disciplinary team. The team is made up of clinicians and practitioners from different organisations. The support provided includes help with substance use, mental health support, nurses, probation and social workers. There is also an ambition to increase the GP time given to the project so that GP services can also be provided within hostels²⁸.

Marsh House supported accommodation in Merthyr Tydfil provides supported and temporary accommodation for up to 32 residents. The scheme provides comprehensive support services for individuals which is person centred and includes assessments of physical and mental health together with their long-term housing plans. Within the building is a community hub that provides support for the wider community. There are also key links to other local support agencies to provide employability support, budgeting, and access to an inhouse counselling service²⁹.

Both these examples have seen positive outcomes for the individuals receiving the support of the service and shows that in order to help individuals with complex

²⁶ From hospital to home; planning the discharge journey. <https://www.cih.org/media/vdplutxt/from-hospital-to-home-final.pdf>

²⁷ Good Practice Compendium Sharing the lessons learnt from the Welsh Housing Awards 2022. <https://www.cih.org/media/euhkp544/0359-wha-gpc22-english-v1.pdf>

²⁸ Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 - 2026. <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Social-care-and-Housing/Cardiff-housing-support-programme-strategy-2022-to-2026/Documents/Cardiff%20Housing%20Support%20Programme%20Strategy%202022%20to%202026.pdf>

²⁹ Excellence in housing innovation. <https://www.cih.org/knowledge-hub/good-practice-compendium-library/wha-good-practice-compendium-2024/excellence-in-housing-innovation-wha-gpc-2024/>



support needs we need to ensure that a range of support can be accessed in one place. This will ensure that the support provided is where the person is at and can be person centred, and trauma informed. A key part of ensuring homelessness in Wales is rare, brief and non-repeated.

About CIH

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple - to provide housing professionals and their organisations with the advice, support, and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world. Further information is available at: www.cih.org.

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