

HSVP 06

Cymorth tai i bobl sy'n agored i niwed
Housing support for vulnerable people

Ymateb gan: Tai Pawb

Response from: Tai Pawb



promoting equality in housing
hybu cydraddoldeb ym maes tai

Tai Pawb

Response to:

Housing Support for Vulnerable People

Local Government and Housing Committee

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Who we are

Tai Pawb (housing for all) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Our vision is a “Wales where everyone has the right to a good home.” We operate a membership system which is open to local authorities, registered social landlords, third (voluntary) sector organisations, other housing interests and individuals.

What we do

Tai Pawb works closely with the Welsh Government and other key partners on national housing strategies and key working groups, to ensure that equality is an inherent consideration in national strategic development and implementation. The organisation also provides practical advice and assistance to its members on a range of equality and diversity issues in housing and related services, including QED – the equality and diversity accreditation for the housing sector. We are also part of a coalition called “[Back the Bill](#)”, which seeks to establish the legal right to adequate housing for **all citizens** in Wales.

For further information visit: www.taipawb.org

Charity registration no. 1110078

Company No. 5282554

1 Introduction

- 1.1. Tai Pawb welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation regarding housing support for vulnerable people. The inquiry is timely given the upcoming focus on the Welsh Government’s Bill to End Homelessness. Since the Covid pandemic, driven by our housing crisis, there has been an increased spotlight on homelessness – including funding, policy, legislation, and lack of adequate accommodation, both temporary and permanent. Meeting the current needs of vulnerable people, including through the Housing Support Grant (HSG), and planning for the services to do this in the future is essential to delivering the Welsh Government’s goals to make homelessness, “rare, brief and unrepeated.”
- 1.2. Our response highlights the scale of the housing crisis in Wales – reflecting the need to consider who the vulnerable people are in our housing system.
- 1.3. We highlight the structural challenges of HSG and question whether this can be to the detriment of the people supported by the funding, as well as the services and staff employed within them.
- 1.4. Lastly, we explore the potential of the right to adequate housing and incorporation to help resolve these challenges.

2 Housing for Vulnerable People in Wales

- 2.1. Over the past few years, Tai Pawb have responded to consultations on proposals to [End Homelessness](#) and your Committee’s inquiry into [Temporary Accommodation](#). We also undertook research amplifying the voices of people with protected characteristics [experiences of homelessness](#), as part of the Welsh Government’s Expert Review Panel Review into Homelessness.

- 2.2 The number of vulnerable people needing support for their housing has increased in recent years. We have seen record numbers of people in Temporary Accommodation and there are nearly 100,000 households waiting for social housing. Members are telling us that as these numbers rise, so do the depth and breadth of support needs.
- 2.3 While homelessness can affect anyone, we know people from some communities are more likely to be affected than others. These include people from some minoritized backgrounds, disabled people, and the LGBTQ+ Community.
- 2.4 In 2021, the [Public Sector Ombudsman report](#) highlighted a number of issues within homelessness services including:
- No overt consideration of local authority’s duties under the Equality Act – including people with protected characteristics around ethnicity, and disabled people who may need specific, supported, larger or adapted accommodation.
 - No overt consideration by local authorities of human rights when placing people in temporary accommodation.
- 2.5 Personalised support is an important element of homeless support, including Rapid Rehousing. Our Rapid Rehousing [Equalities Briefing](#) identifies why considering protected characteristics is so important for the approach to succeed. A recent review into Rapid Rehousing in Scotland, recommended guidance should be revised to ensure “it is equalities proofed. ” While evidence from the USA has shown support “must be attentive and informed to address the unique needs of... the programme’s target subpopulations such as youth, survivors of domestic abuse or persons who experience chronic homelessness.”

- 2.7 HSG (and other Housing Funding streams) must consider and fund these considerations when designing and delivering service, for approaches like Rapid Rehousing to succeed.

3. Housing Support Grant meeting the needs of vulnerable people

- 3.1 Funding for housing, including HSG, needs to have the ability to meet the depth and breadth of the Welsh Governments aspirations for supporting vulnerable people. The Welsh Government has set out ambitions goals in relation to making homelessness, “rare, brief and unrepeated” as well as their White Paper on ending homelessness. These recognise the need for bespoke considerations to certain communities and vulnerable people to address additional challenges around their experiences of homelessness. A breakdown on our thoughts on some of the proposals on the White Paper for ending homelessness from an Equalities perspective can be found [here](#).
- 3.2 Achieving these goals (as well as the wider proposals within the White Paper) will require sustained increased funding, long-term planning and joined up working to support vulnerable people. Unfortunately, we don’t believe HSG as it is funded currently, has the capacity to deliver this. Currently HSG is reliant on annual campaigns to boost funding to a level deemed acceptable to the sector – leaving the support of vulnerable people to a discretionary approach to Government funding. We do not believe this approach is commensurate with the challenges facing our housing sector and the needs of those who need its safety net. Or indeed with the Welsh Governments stated objectives around homelessness. Failure to change our approach risks our housing crisis continuing, with the costly social and economic effects on individuals and society.
- 3.3 We believe the only way to protect and grow HSG and other housing funding streams to deliver on existing and future plans, is to incorporate the right to adequate housing. Incorporating a right to housing would offer extra levers to truly invest in housing and homelessness. Welsh Government would be duty bound to evidence how they have

considered the impact of any budgetary decisions on the right to housing. This includes the duty to use maximum available resources, progressive realisation, no retrogression, and impact on any plans. In short, the cabinet would be more accountable for the decision it takes on housing. Currently on average since 2006, only 2.2 % of our budget has been spent on housing, despite housing and homelessness emergency and despite evidence that investment in housing produces big savings in other areas.

4. Support for Vulnerable people beyond HSG

4.1 It's important to recognise that HSG is not the only pot of funding that exists for supporting vulnerable people and their housing needs. Last year Tai Pawb chaired a subgroup of the Ending Homelessness Advisory Board on Race. Stakeholders told us that for some of the people they support, often the funding does not come from HSG, or even the Housing Department. This means when there are conversations around funding levels, standards or commissioning, certain funding streams may be excluded. If we want better funding and mechanisms for supporting vulnerable people, we should recognise that not all funding for these groups comes from HSG. This is particularly crucial if we want to end homelessness in Wales for all communities.

4.2 The Race Stakeholder Group's recommendations to the Board and Welsh Government can be found [here](#). Further relevant recommendations to the work of this inquiry include:

- Generating better data on homelessness amongst ethnic minority groups in Wales, including people who have NRPF.
- Boosting supply of Traveller sites
- Developing pathways for newly granted refugees
- Continuous training on anti-racism for staff involved in housing vulnerable people.

5. The need to protect specialist services

- 5.1 HSG service providers face many challenges in delivering services, including dealing with increased demand, service expectations and the cost-of-living crisis. It is expected proposals in the new Homelessness Bill will raise expectations further, while the costs associated with increased National Insurance contributions will place further financial pressure on services.
- 5.2 The difficulties in delivering services in this context are obvious. Some members have expressed concern as to how they can meet these while maintaining services and standards. A concern raised was that specialist services which meet the needs of some communities within the homelessness population, may be at particular threat. The fear being that more bespoke services, which for instance meet the needs of disabled people or ethnically diverse people, will be subsumed into wider service delivery due to financial constraints. Doing this will have a negative effect on some people who are more at risk of homelessness, reducing success rates and outcomes for people.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 We welcome the interest of the Local Government and Housing Committee into the funding of housing and homelessness services for vulnerable people.
- 6.2 We believe better outcomes will be achieved through the ability to plan in the long-term and design bespoke services and activities based on the needs of people using the services. Unfortunately, the way HSG is funded currently undermines this. The focus on HSG solely can also distract people from other services for housing vulnerable people, which are funded from different pots.
- 6.3 We believe that if the Welsh Government wants to achieve its homeless goals and make it, “brief, rare and unrepeated” and resolve the wider challenges of the housing crisis, incorporating of the right to adequate housing is the solution. Doing this will ensure longer-term planning, a

return of housing to a key mission of government with increased and more consistent funding.