

HSVP 12

Cymorth tai i bobl sy'n agored i niwed
Housing support for vulnerable people
Ymateb gan: ClwydAlyn
Response from: ClwydAlyn



ClwydAlyn

ClwydAlyn is a Registered Social Landlord managing over 6,500 homes in North and Mid-Wales.

With around 800 staff, we provide housing management services in Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Powys, and Wrexham.

Our mission is together to beat poverty. We want everyone in North Wales to have access to excellent quality housing, and we want to work with partners to address the causes and impacts of poverty.

Local Government and Housing Committee inquiry response: Housing for Vulnerable People

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

The transition to rapid rehousing is admirable, however, WG need to consider how we address whole system change with infrastructures in place to enable citizens to manage independently as part of the transition. From delivering a range of services within North Wales, we see individuals and families entering our services with little or no independent living skills. On top of this, nearly all are suffering from one or more complex issue e.g. ACE's, mental health, substance misuse etc. To make rapid rehousing work, you are going to need support teams that are agile (outside of Mon to Fri 9/5), resilient, recompensed. Equally as important, we need to consider fast track routes for health services as required. To make rapid rehousing work, all services need to be better aligned and working toward a common goal that is dictated by individual budgets that often stifle progress.

An additional challenge in the unintended consequences of other policy decisions. A report issued by Savill's in November 2024 showed that 'housing supply is likely to remain constrained, as UK Government proposals to mandate landlords upgrade their properties to an EPC C by 2030 may push landlords to leave the sector. With capacity for further rental growth limited by affordability there is a perfect storm. The report from Savill's also highlighted that rental supply is low with the number of available properties down by 32 % (in September 2024) when compared with the average for the whole of 2018/19.

Moving forward, as the approach in Wales moves towards a system of Rapid Rehousing, with the pressures on the private rental sector, most of the rapid rehousing will fall to Housing Associations. To make this work, it would be beneficial for a full assessment of needs – each year. At the minute, inflation has far exceeded HSG increases in recent years, so there needs to be a review of what the baseline is and is it right. The RSL sector could evidence the proportion of tenancies where support services are needed short/medium and long term to enable people to maintain their tenancy and prevent future homelessness. These are preventative services which are really cost effective in taking pressures away from other systems such as health, criminal justice, etc.

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

From speaking to our own local authorities' partners in North Wales, pressures on services are only increasing and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. With North Wales, the cost of temporary accommodation has risen exponentially in recent years;

County	Spend 23/24	
Wrexham	£2.5 million	2.5 times higher than 4 years ago
Debigshire	£6 million	70 % higher than 4 years ago
Flintshire	£5 million	9 times higher than 4 years ago
Conwy	£4 million	6 times higher than 4 years ago
Ynys Mon	£0.5 million	Double what it was compared with 4 years ago.
Gwynedd	£6.5 million	Double what it was compared with 4 years ago.

Austerity measures have put LA's under increased pressure to manage homelessness. At the same time, we have seen longer waiting lists for mental health services, pressures on police, increased problems via county lines and exploitation and insufficient housing supply. What is interesting from the above statistics is why Ynys Mon's spend is so much lower than other Council's. From an observational point, they are far more proactive in building new social housing at a faster rate.

Given the vulnerability of residents, this put huge pressure on staff teams that are often dealing with complex situations daily. Within ClwydAlyn, we have developed 'job families' and when you look at comparable roles (not in Supported Living), it shows that staff are not recompensed to the same level .i.e the difference in market salary between a Support Living Officer compared to a Housing Officer is circa £6-7k. Traditionally, we lose a lot of staff from Supported Living internally as they can improve earning potential in other areas of the business. It is important that we value the contribution of HSG services more given the challenges (and shift patterns) that staff deal with. There has been talk of 'professionalising' the sector (with qualifications), again this is admirable, however, if it doesn't come with improved pay, it seems a little disingenuous.

The current reality from pay analysis of 2000 support workers shows real fragility. Not addressing pay overtime places real threat around achieving WG ambition to end homelessness. HSG budget, although increase this year is welcomed; leaves risk around meeting legal minimum pay requirements, alongside NI increase. Small providers very vulnerable with services at risk of closure/reduction. The survey of staff showed that;

- 18% of the workforce are struggling to pay their rent
- 56% struggling with bills
- 12% at risk of homelessness

Fundamentally, WG's aspiration should be for a valued and resilient homelessness and housing support workforce where people are:

- Fairly rewarded for the skilled, life-changing work they undertake
- Supported to thrive within a safe, healthy, inclusive, psychologically-informed working environment
- Secure in their roles, supported to develop and able to progress
- Recognised, respected and listened to by employers, public services and government

Delivery of this vision is a key requisite for achieving the Welsh Government ambition and policy objectives to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and un-repeated, and that we move towards a model and provision of rapid rehousing

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

All the data is available however, Contract monitoring varies from Local Authority to Local Authority. Some are very robust in their reviews whilst others complete a review that is more to do with ticking boxes (this is largely due to capacity within their own teams).

Regarding the HSG framework, currently, there are 4 Primary Outcomes (with 14 indicators) and 7 Secondary Outcomes (with 25 indicators). Overall, having 39 separate indicators makes for a very complex review process. Having a more streamlined outcome framework would enable services to spend more time working with citizens on a 121 basis.

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

There are many examples of positive joint working when a resident is in crisis. Different services pull together and have the resident at the heart of decision making. Some of the current challenges are budgets within LA's which can cause some delays in finding solutions i.e who pays is it housing budget or social care budget. The other issue is that too often, safeguarding referrals are made, however the response is that it is 'resident behaviour, they have capacity, and it is their choice to live the way they are'. Again, I believe this is largely due to capacity of resources, but it doesn't help when we know people are struggling. From a WG perspective, recognising the problem isn't enough, it needs to take positive action to address route causes. Simply providing a 'rapid rehousing' won't work for many and citizens will fail until we find better more dynamic solutions to address the current crisis (as demonstrated by the increasing LA spend on temporary housing).

There needs to be a greater emphasis on prevention to reduce pressures on statutory services as at that point, costs escalate. If there are dedicated resources to get further upstream, many challenges can be resolved at an early stage.

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

For the next generation, there is still going to be a need for traditional supported living services as rapid rehousing isn't the solution for everyone. Some SL accommodation is not great so LA's need to work with HA partners to improve stock. We have some recent examples of this in WBC where we developed a purpose-built parent and baby service and redeveloped an old night shelter which has been replaced by 20 walk up apartments. This development has an exit strategy in that they could be general needs accommodate if rapid rehousing has the impact that is hoped from WG.

WG need to invest in more preventative services and look at joint initiatives with local health boards, for example the success of ICAN hubs (funded by BCU) that are located across North Wales. In terms of citizens who pass through this service, the numbers are far greater than other services that are commissioned by LA's to solely offer floating support.

For rapid rehousing to work, there needs to be fast track routes for individuals with complex issues, otherwise there is a risk that people will be set up to fail. Several years ago, we had floating health services – so health checks at schemes, access to dentists for people, specialist workers visiting schemes to support/advise...this wrap around community approach is lacking now and this needs to be reviewed (i.e what was the cost of this versus what LA's are now spending on temporary accommodation).