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John Griffiths
Local Government and Housing Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Date: 07/02/2025

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee Inquiry on Housing Support for Vulnerable People.

Adra is an LSVT stock transfer organisation and we are the largest housing association in north Wales with 7000 homes, 16000 occupiers and 400 staff.

We operate across urban, rural and coastal areas covering 5 Counties providing good quality affordable homes and we have an ambitious new build programme of 800 new homes at pace. We have high levels of customer satisfaction and trust amongst our partners, stakeholders and tenants. As well as providing homes, we are keen to maximise social value through all our activity. We provide high levels of support to help individuals and communities with independent living, regeneration, employment and skills, health and wellbeing and financial hardship etc etc.

We are pleased to hear that the Inquiry is considering Housing Support for Vulnerable People and in particular the Housing Support Grant (HSG).

We have participated in the sector response via Community Housing Cymru (CHC) and given the importance of these services to vulnerable people we wanted to provide an individual response as well. For ease of reference, we have summarised our points under each of the 4 specific questions from the Committee.

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

This is probably one of the most difficult questions to answer, despite being part of the working groups developing this new legislation there is a lack of clarity about what this will mean in practice. We have observed consistently that points made by both the local authorities and housing associations have not been taken on board and it is unclear what the changes will mean in practice as no drafts have been shared. We have concerns about the rushed nature of the Bill and the impact of this on issues such as unfunded financial demands and migration to Wales for more favourable access to housing. This will put



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further cost and capacity pressures on the Local Authorities, Landlords, the NHS and Police etc. There are also concerns about the impact on safeguarding, Welsh language and ultimately community cohesion. This would be more pronounced in rural areas.

We know from experience with new legislation there are unintended consequences and we would ask Welsh Government to delay the implementation of the Homeless Bill so that organisations can properly assess the impact once the Bill is drafted and allow time to properly co-design effective new policy and legislation.

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

The main pressures on HSG funded support services are the short term nature of the funding, particularly for smaller organisation who can only provide short term contracts. Also the increasingly complex issues including mental health, alcohol, substance misuse, complex disabilities, the funding gap to ensure services can be sustained. Recruitment and retention is an issue, more so for small charities who do incredible work. There is a high staff turnover given the short term nature of the funding, ability to pay competitive/comparable salaries and high levels of stress and trauma for staff dealing with increasingly complex caseloads. There are clear capacity issues within other organisations e.g. NHS and Police to provide essential support and the Homeless Bill appears to extend responsibilities to those already stretched organisations. The time to access mental health services for those in crisis is the biggest concern and we know that prevention and early intervention are far more effective solutions. The expression 'left holding the baby' is an often used phrase by dedicated housing professionals who know their client needs the support of more specialist services who cannot respond due to the level of demand.

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

We know from our own customer service data and feedback, that there are very high levels of customer satisfaction and trust amongst our clients therefore we are confident we are providing excellent services. The data that is collected to report national outcomes is time consuming to collect and there is no feedback at all on this data that is submitted. Our staff question the purpose and value of this exercise.

A large amount of preventive programs are funded through HSG, and therefore deal with "up-stream" rather than "down-stream" problems. This makes better use of resources and enables organisations to intervene early in supporting vulnerable people. We would like to see that there is a clear commitment from Welsh Government to use HSG to support preventative work to avoid the situation where problems escalate and become terribly costly. It is also important that HSG can be used to fund priorities that are identified at a local level



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

There are lots of examples of very effective joint working between housing support and public services. Adra are working with a number of Adults and Children's Social Care Services to review how we can make best use of resources and co-design services around prevention and early intervention. Our Academi Adra and Gwynedd Council Academi Gofal (care) are great examples of how we are tailoring bespoke employment and skills courses for roles supporting vulnerable people. Staff who work in this area have high levels of empathy and want to do their very best for clients. However, we can see the pressures our own staff and partner colleagues are facing. There is a huge mismatch between the demand for service, the complexity of issues being faced by clients and public services capacity to respond. We see this particularly with services such as adaptations where there are increasingly complex needs amongst children. These services provide a great example of an invest to save business case. However, the funding available does not in any way meet the level of new demand. Another example of joint working between Adra and Betsi Cadwallader Health Board where accommodation has been provided for international nurses to meet short term skills gaps. Housing Associations are well placed to provide bespoke accommodation solutions for staff and clients.

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

We would ask that any commissioning of services does not impact negatively on existing services and that any change is kept to a pace that can change can be managed effectively. Also, the importance of partnership working and early intervention. We are proud of our track record of supporting tenants to find and keep a home. Like many landlords we no longer carry out evictions and work hard to overcome any issues faced by our tenants. Our particular concerns is that independent living services for older people will lose funding and this will inevitably lead to failure demand and increased costs for the NHS and Local Authorities. We would ask Welsh Government to ensure that new funding is made available for the homelessness support services. Further concerns are about the length of support available. This cannot stop when keys to a property are handed over. Tenancy support is crucial for many to sustain their tenancy and avoid repeat homelessness. It is important that increased funding is made available for adaptations and suitable housing to meet the needs of children with complex disabilities. Alcohol and Substance Misuse services, Mental Health support particularly for people in crisis and people facing the trauma of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault. This is the core purpose of HSG, early intervention and prevention in turn reduces pressure on homelessness services. We are concerned that new approaches could lead to funding only being made available at crisis point thereby leading to more crisis points.

Thank you for taking the time to consider Adra's individual response. We are fully committed to working with Welsh Government to overcome these significant challenges. We note the that you will also be



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holding a day of oral evidence sessions and we would be delighted to participate in that important debate. Please do not hesitate to contact ourselves at Adra if there is anything more we can do to assist.

Yn Gywir/Yours sincerely,

Sarah Schofield

Sarah Schofield
Cyfarwyddwr Cwsmeriaid a Chymunedau
Director of Customers and Communities