

Call for written evidence: Housing for vulnerable people

Response from Housing Services, Isle of Anglesey County Council

The Welsh Parliament's [Local Government and Housing Committee](#) is holding an inquiry into [housing for vulnerable people](#), with an initial focus on housing-related support services, funded by the Housing Support Grant.

Terms of Reference

The Committee will be looking to examine:

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

The Welsh Government's expectations of local authorities are made clear through the requirement to have in place a housing support grant strategy and rapid rehousing scheme. The Welsh Government aims to collaborate to prevent homelessness and ensure, in instances when it is not possible to prevent homelessness, that it is brief, rare and unrepeated. Changes to rapid rehousing and the homelessness Bill present opportunities and challenges for the housing support grant (HSG). Although the strategic direction aligns with homelessness prevention and the provision of long-term housing solutions, concerns remain regarding the sufficiency of HSG funding to meet increasing demand.

The Welsh Government has ensured that housing support grant guidance is aligned with these requirements and that the grant funds services that prevent or help to tackle homelessness. A major challenge is to ensure that short-term support services remain viable while investing in preventative models that are housing-led in the long term.

The proposed homelessness Bill will place local authorities under a great deal of pressure as they will be expected to support everyone without taking into consideration whether a person has intentionally made their situation worse. Local authorities want to help everyone, and constantly seek opportunities to do so, but there will be financial and resource implications if there is an expectation that support can be offered to all. This will also place the housing support grant under increased pressure due to an increase in the number of those requiring support.

Cymorth Cymru can attest to the fact that every £1 spent through HSG saves £1.40 for other public services. The Welsh Government should ensure a sustainable funding model that allows flexibility in terms of service provision.

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

The pressure on the workforce is increasing in terms of the number and complexity of clients that need to access services. Intensive support needs: an increasing number of service users present with complex needs, including mental health issues, substance abuse and neurodivergence, which call for more specialist interventions that are not currently covered

by current funding structures. This increases the depth of support needed, which impacts on individual HSG allocations and leads to extended periods of involvement.

While the Welsh Government has been able to maintain and increase the level of the grant, this does not reflect the true costs that providers face in terms of meeting service costs and paying a fair wage to workers.

We welcome the three-year funding cycle that has been in place, but we need certainty that this will continue so that we can commission services with a guarantee that funding will be provided.

There has been some coverage recently that the increase in HSG does not reflect the true cost of providing services:

[Charities facing National Insurance hike have 'nowhere left to cut' - BBC News](#)
[Homelessness charities warn National Insurance changes could take £60m away from frontline services | News | Housing Today](#)

[Cymorth Cymru](#) has published a report on the impact of HSG and the need to increase funding.

Workforce challenges: issues of staff burnout and retention are being exacerbated due to onerous caseloads, emotional demands and insufficient remuneration within the sector. A workforce-development strategy is urgently needed, along with enhanced training opportunities and sustainable remuneration strategies, to ensure that services continue to be provided. The matter of recruitment and maintaining an experienced, high-quality workforce is increasingly proving to be a challenge, with other sectors able to attract staff on better terms and conditions working in roles that are less pressured.

The 'Right Care, Right Person' model introduced by the police service: there is a lack of clarity regarding who bears responsibility for individuals with complex needs, particularly those who require housing and health support / specialist social care. It is crucial to define lines of responsibility between housing support, health services and social care to avoid gaps in services and ensure that individuals receive the appropriate interventions.

- **How much is known about service performance, including data on outcomes;**

Local authorities report on HSG outputs on a six-monthly basis and provide detailed data on the numbers accessing services and the outputs delivered. On Anglesey, we also gather data on satisfaction levels via an online survey. Feedback and comments are used by providers to improve their services and assist with the design and commissioning of services.

Through our 'single point of access' process for HSG, we measure the number of people accessing services, what services they require and the output of these services.

We convene a Providers' Forum and share information on outputs and outcomes on a regular basis. We also review services and report back to providers on their achievements.

A report on the housing support grant's impact was published in 2020
[Evidencing-the-Impact-of-HSG-ENG.pdf](#)

Although the outcomes data are gathered through the results framework, there is room for improvement, including:

Understanding the long-term success of the outcomes.

Integration with other sources of data, linking with health, social care and justice data to assess the wider impact of housing support interventions.

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

We work hard to foster and maintain links with other public services to ensure that they understand and contribute to homelessness prevention.

A partner event was recently held on Anglesey to raise awareness of the relevant issues and the way that we are collaborating on the island. Here is a copy of the agenda:



Housing
Homelessness Partn

There is a great deal of work still to be done to improve relationships and to encourage services to collaborate to prevent homelessness.

On Anglesey, we have an example of good practice in our Complex Cases Co-ordinator, and we have seen significant improvement since this role was introduced, as it has led the provision of housing-related support in complex cases involving vulnerable individuals, either those who are at risk of becoming homeless or those who have been placed in emergency and/or temporary accommodation. The co-ordination of these cases by convening multi-disciplinary meetings (which are increasing) also highlights the pressures faced by HSG services and the associated workforce.

Improvement could be made by developing integrated funding methods that encourage joint commissioning across housing, health and social care.

More work could be done to ensure that health and social care services are accountable for their role in supporting individuals with housing needs to challenge the perception that 'Housing is everyone's problem, but nobody's responsibility!'

We are currently strengthening multi-agency protocols to provide clear pathways between services; for example, a discharge pathway for hospitals to prevent homelessness after discharge.

The rapid rehousing agenda has contributed to an emphasis on partnership working.

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

Local authorities should be able to commission the services they need according to the needs assessment. Local authorities should receive the funding they need to commission the right level of services according to need. There is a risk that a lack of investment will

mean that providers decide not to provide services due to salary costs and overheads, leaving local authorities to deal with higher levels of homelessness and complex cases.

Specialist support services should be expanded, particularly services for those facing mental health or substance misuse challenges.

Trauma-based models of support that focus on the individual and that recognise the long-term engagement required to provide stability should be expanded.

Preventative approaches should be strengthened, including early intervention targeted at individuals who are at risk of homelessness.

Move-on pathways should be improved to ensure that individuals do not remain in temporary supported accommodation due to a lack of appropriate alternative housing options.

An holistic approach, led by the individual, supported by sufficient and flexible funding, is vital to the provision of effective support services related to housing under the HSG framework.

The Committee would be very keen to hear your views and would be grateful if you could provide written evidence by **Friday 7 February 2025**. Further information on how to provide written evidence can be found [here](#).