



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Cymru

CIH Cymru partnership report 2020-2021

May 2021

Dear partner

Firstly, I hope I find you and loved ones well, and that you and your organisation are successfully navigating the many challenges thrown up by the pandemic!

I would also like to thank you for your continued support as a CIH Cymru Partner, both before and throughout the current public health emergency we are navigating - your support has been invaluable.

I wrote to you at this time last year - when we had been in the first lockdown for just over a month. Many of us at that time still believed, or at least hoped, that the enforced confinement to our homes would last for no more than a month or two. Little did we realise back then that the impact and the challenges that COVID-19 has created for us all as individuals and our organisations, would remain stark and in place more than a year later.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how proud I am of housing professionals in Wales. A sector, without exception, which has stepped up to the plate to meet the challenge, demonstrating absolute commitment and support to the task of ensuring that everyone has a roof over their heads during the pandemic where they could isolate and feel safe.

As CIH Cymru, our number one task now will be to work with the new Welsh Government to ensure that there is no going back - that we do everything we can, working in partnership with each other, with government at all levels and through wider cross-sector collaboration to ensure that we truly provide sustainable and affordable housing options for all.

With your support and insight we have been working throughout the pandemic to aid housing professionals by providing immediate and up-to-date information, advice and support to frontline staff and feeding into the wider policy on behalf of our 800-strong membership in Wales, whilst at the same time continuing to ensure we are supporting housing professionals in our core role as the sector's home for professional standards, sharing good practice and providing engaging learning, and training opportunities across a range of disciplines.

We have also been working hard to deliver forward-thinking research that deals with timely topics - to this end, our Tyfu Tai Cymru project has forthcoming research on the impact of the pandemic on local authority housing professionals, the role of housing advice during hospital discharge planning and a study of how tenants who live in overcrowded or under occupied housing could be supported to move should they wish.

Furthermore, we have spent many hours talking with the political parties throughout the past year as they developed their manifesto pledges in the lead up to the Welsh Parliament Elections on May 6 - presenting our five key manifesto asks which we produced in consultation with our Wales membership and the wider sector. And we will continue to focus on influencing the newydd Welsh administration's programme of government as we move beyond the election and hopefully the pandemic.

Our capacity to ensure that the voice of Wales' housing professionals is represented in this way is a direct result of your continued support through the CIH Cymru Partnership Levy, which I personally want to thank you for.

However, like all organisations, CIH Cymru, and CIH more widely, has faced some difficult questions about its business model and we have had to adapt. We have taken all our events, qualifications and learning online - being one of the first organisations to utilise modern digital-events software that provided space not only for the learning and practice-sharing to continue, but a much valued space in which to network and catch-up. Our belief is the impact of the pandemic is unlikely to allow us to return to the face-to-face events format for a while to come.

We have also launched our new Professional Standards Framework which we will continue to engage with the sector and Welsh Government on to embed a professional standard into the sector once again - not just in Wales but across the UK - and not only in response to the Grenfell tragedy but to allow us once again to shout loudly and proudly that we are a profession and should be given the recognition and respect due to us all, not least because of the central role that frontline housing professionals have played in avoiding the potential human tragedies that could have arisen as a result of the pandemic.

That's why we are undertaking a paradigm shift in the way we manage our relationship with our members. We are putting members, and the membership offer front and centre of our business plan moving beyond COVID-19. It means members will have free and exclusive access to our events and other products - the value of individual CIH membership will be significantly enhanced.

We hope that will encourage you to support more of your staff into CIH membership but I want to make you aware that it also changes the context of the CIH Cymru Partnership Levy offer slightly.

The offer will retain all the discounts on qualifications and training, as well access to policy briefings throughout the year. Your partnership contribution will continue to support our policy and influencing work as we move into the next Welsh Parliament term. The discount on TAI will no longer apply but the cost of buying a member of staff CIH membership is less than it'd cost to send them to TAI under the old partnership levy discount - and of course they will be able to attend other CIH conferences as well, free of charge as part of that enhanced CIH personal membership offer.

However, the CIH Cymru partnership fee has remained the same for the past five years or more, so we are also taking the opportunity to account for inflationary pressures, which I hope you will not find too burdensome. I thank you, in advance, for your continued support!



Matt Dicks
Director, CIH Cymru

Responding to COVID-19

Practical support

As a policy team across the UK, we've worked to provide guidance and disseminate good practice throughout the COVID-19 crisis. This has included guidance relating to tenancy management, undertaking maintenance and repairs and supporting vulnerable tenants. (View the full suite of resources [here](#)).

Our USP is that we are cross-tenure but we are also a pan-UK organisation which has enabled us to use the expertise and experience of members across all four nations to draw together good practice. We held pan-UK roundtables on issues ranging from homelessness, housing supply, to de-carbonisation around "building back better" to inform our policy influencing of governments across the UK and our practice briefing papers. This work included our joint governmental submission on immediate steps to be taken to "[Protect tenants from arrears, evictions and homelessness](#)" - the vast majority of which has since been adopted, in Wales at least.

We will continue to utilise this extensive knowledge-base to continue to feed into our policy work in Wales as we move out of the pandemic and attempt to meet the Welsh Government's ambition

of "not going back" and finding more permanent housing solutions for the more than 5,000 people housed in temporary accommodation during the pandemic.

We have also been feeding our members' queries and questions directly into Welsh Government throughout the pandemic, attending various WG stakeholder groups including the housing-sector group which was meeting weekly at the height of the pandemic.

We have also made a point of working collaboratively with various partners in the sector, including Community Housing Cymru, Tai Pawb, Shelter Cymru, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and many more. We have met jointly with the Minister to push for increased investment into Social Housing Grant, as well as lobbying the Lords during the passage of the Internal Market Legislation - both resulting in relative success in terms of increased Social Housing Grant and amendments to the legislation.

We also met weekly with colleagues at the WLGA to ensure that our messaging and goals were aligned in order to best serve the needs of our members across tenures and have met regularly with representatives of the National Residential Landlords Association.



Re-thinking our priorities

Through our Tyfu Tai Cymru research project we have refocussed our resources to focus more on the issues facing our members. This has included undertaking work surveying local authority housing professionals, unearthing the views on how the pandemic has impacted working conditions and housing delivery. And commissioning our largest piece of research to date looking at the role of housing advice during the hospital discharge process with a view to improving the consistency and awareness of the role housing does and can play in keeping people well at home and protecting vital capacity in the NHS.

We were also in the middle of producing research focussing on social housing allocations when the pandemic hit. This piece of work was paused and re-focussed to ensure its recommendation reflected on the COVID-19 context. We're continuing to

work closely with Welsh Government over the findings of this report to shape how access to social housing can be made as fair and transparent as possible for anyone wishing to access it in Wales.

Finally, we continued our strong track record of engaging with and supporting the fantastic students undertaking their Housing Studies degree at Cardiff Metropolitan University by enlisting the help of three final year students to use their knowledge and skills to undertake research on how the use of community-led solutions to addressing empty homes could be used more frequently. Having had the students present this work directly to senior representatives in Welsh Government's regeneration directorate we're continuing to work on how the practical steps outlined can be adopted in practice.

Political influencing

Back Housing /Cefnogi Tai 2021

As political parties have been campaigning ahead of the Senedd election, we've worked with members to help inform and amplify the voices of housing professionals by:

- launching our Back Housing / Cefnogi Tai 2021 manifesto
- meeting with political representatives shaping each party's respective commitments
- providing briefing sessions for candidates from each main political party on our manifesto and wider housing-related issues
- creating a digital engagement pack for Welsh members to use when engaging prospective candidates locally

Back the Bill campaign

To elevate the impact of our call around a right to adequate housing in Wales, we have worked to co-produce a campaign alongside Tai Pawb and Shelter Cymru aimed at realising the right in practice - 'Back the Bill'. The campaign is centred around draft legislation that would pave the way for a right to adequate housing to be enshrined in Welsh law.

Capturing public feeling

To aid our influencing work we commissioned public opinion polling which found that 77 per cent of people in Wales would support in principle, a right to adequate housing. The survey also revealed housing was seen as a prominent issue by the Welsh public, with a majority (83%) believing the Government should provide housing at a decent standard for [everyone](#).

Shaping the Welsh housing policy landscape

Alongside our work linked to the election and the pandemic we've been busy contributing the views of housing professionals to help shape the housing policy landscape by:

- **responding to Welsh Government consultation and Senedd inquiries**, including views on making Wales more age-friendly, how the Well-being of Future Generations Act has impacted the sector, and future considerations for addressing fuel poverty.
- **working in collaboration to raise the profile of housing issues** – for example we collaborated on a response on the future
- **providing opportunities to professionals to directly engage decision-makers** – for example we recently held a number of roundtables for members with expertise in building safety to help inform and shape thinking on the new building safety white paper.

of housing standards with Public Health Wales, emphasising the link between housing quality and people's well-being.



Looking ahead

Ongoing COVID-19 based support –

We'll continue to monitor and update our factsheets and best practice documents for members as and when government's change advice and further learning it captured through our engagement with professionals.

Influencing the programme for government

We'll engage with the newly elected Welsh Government as well as on a cross-party basis to ensure the work of housing professionals remains front and centre of plans across economic, environmental and social development goals.

Progressing the right to adequate housing

As our primary election call alongside our partners Tai Pawb and Shelter Cymru we'll

continue to champion the role that a rights based approach to housing should play in Wales and demonstrate the steps needed to see this realised in practice.

Tyfu Tai Cymru research – Maintaining our busy programme of research we'll be completing the delivery of our housing advice and hospital discharge work in the coming months. In addition we'll deliver new research uncovering how social housing tenants can be better helped to move to a more suitably sized home when they wish to. We'll also be profiling our work supporting the private rented sector and our role in authoring a Health Impact Assessment on Housing Security on behalf of Public Health Wales through new digital events.

Helping your workforce to become better housing professionals

Learning and development

In Wales, CIH Cymru is the home of professional standards. We continue to offer partners discounted rates on our full suite of qualifications (level 2 to level 5) and our suite of tailor-made training solutions.

Membership

We continue to place member value at the heart of our organisation:

- We have shared an array of best practice and knowledge through the delivery of more than 70 free member webinars providing sector-led content across a wide range of key topics affecting the sector, including a number of sessions dedicated to supporting housing professionals through the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 crisis
- we have delivered a programme of 'owning your future' sessions, free for members, supporting professional development and career enhancement opportunities
- the introduction of our new 'building better boards' membership offer links board members to ongoing developments across the sector, providing the information and support required to stay ahead of the curve and react quickly.

- in partnership with the Institute of Leadership and Management (TILM) we have developed a joint membership offer allowing paying CIH members access to full TILM membership for just £90 whilst enjoying all of the usual CIH benefits

Events

Doing things differently has become the new normal for everyone, our new web-based event programme has replicated many aspects of traditional place-based conferences and continues to allow opportunities to network and share experiences.

- Our premier event TAI 2020 connected the sector across Wales virtually, bringing housing professionals together for two days of networking, learning, best practice sharing and collaboration.
- In partnership with Erosh we virtually delivered our eighth Older People's Housing Event exploring new ways to provide affordable housing to support the health and wellbeing of an ageing population. Through a series of five short digital events we provided the usual timely high-quality content combined with the space to reflect and digest between sessions.

CIH Cymru partner organisations 2020-21

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| Adra | Monmouthshire County Council |
| Aelwydd Housing Association | Monmouthshire Housing association |
| Ateb Group | Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council |
| Barcud | Newport City Council |
| Bro Myrddin Housing Association | Newport City Homes |
| Bron Afon | Newydd Housing |
| Cadwyn Housing Association | North Wales Housing Association |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | Pembrokeshire County Council |
| Cardiff Community Housing Association | Pobl |
| Cartrefi Conwy | Rhondda Housing |
| Clwyd Alyn Housing | Swansea City Council |
| Coastal Housing | Taff housing Association |
| Conwy County Council | Tai Calon Community Housing |
| Cynon Taff Community Housing Group | Tai Pawb |
| Denbighshire County Council | Tai Tarian |
| Family Housing Association | Torfaen County Borough Council |
| First Choice Housing Association | Trivallis |
| Flintshire County Council | United Welsh |
| Grwp Cynefin | Valleys to Coast |
| Gwynedd County Council | Wales & West Housing |
| Hafod Housing | Wrexham County Council |
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | |
| Linc Cymru | |
| Melin Homes | |
| Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council | |
| Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association | |
| Merthyr Valleys Homes | |



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