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Cymru

Back housing 2021

A Manifesto for Homes



Foreword

As we approach the Welsh Parliament elections in 2021 the work of housing professionals across Wales has never been so vital. In recent times the sector has stepped-in to address the impact of many families struggling to afford food during lockdown & school holidays, the devastation caused by repeat flooding and of course, the enormous impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. All the while continuing with the ever-present challenges of delivering social and affordable housing, high quality care and support services and activity to regenerate local communities.

Much of this work supports colleagues in other vital areas, such as health and social care where, during the pandemic, the work of housing professionals has helped underpin the increased capacity within the health service to treat those most in need.

The legislative changes and policy developments in recent years have brought a swathe of improvements to the sector – progress on homelessness, improvement to renting privately and building more sustainable homes. Add to that an independent review of affordable housing supply in Wales in recent times, and we have a real base to deliver radical changes to some of our societal, economic and environmental challenges.

We cannot afford to let this momentum slip away. Under the long shadow that COVID-19 casts, there is still so much to be hopeful about. We've been speaking with our members for some time and I'm pleased that we can outline some of the practical ideas we believe that, if adopted, could be transformative for the sector and wider society.

And we do not shy away from stating that the starting point must be placing the home, the place where our mental and physical well-being begins, firmly at the centre of public policy delivery in the next Welsh Parliamentary term. The home is as central as health, social care, education and economic development to ensuring that we have healthy, sustainable, prosperous and happy communities – and we believe that must start with a legislative Right to Adequate Housing.

Matt Dicks,
National Director CIH Cymru

Commit to providing everyone in Wales with the right to adequate housing

A Wales where everyone can access a safe and affordable home is a vision we can all support. With the right legal framework in place, we can make that the reality.

We are asking all political parties in Wales to:

- Commit to bringing forward legislation within the next Welsh Parliamentary term to fully incorporate the Right to Adequate Housing into Welsh law
- Champion a rights-based approach to housing within your party and community
- Develop a strategy aimed at providing local authorities and their partners with the resources needed to make this approach workable
- Engage the public on how this right can support their ability to access suitable housing

Where could the impact be felt?

Action to end homelessness and rough sleeping - At the sharp end of the housing crisis, a right to adequate housing could significantly reduce and eradicate homelessness in all its forms.

Accelerate the delivery of social housing - Building new social and affordable homes is inescapably a part of providing people with the right to adequate housing.

Raising standards - A rights-based approach heavily links access to housing with housing quality. This could provide a focus to see the resources, expertise and policy drivers needed to ensure consistent progress on quality.

Meeting public expectations - Providing people with a 'right' that they can depend on would also ensure that there's a focus on the resources provided to statutory bodies to adequately meet that right in practice.



Futureproof the housing profession by creating a workforce strategy

We believe that in-line with other professions considered core to meeting the needs of the Welsh public, now is the time to create in collaboration with CIH Cymru and our members a workforce strategy for housing professionals who deliver and manage social and affordable housing and provide services aimed at meeting a wide-range of needs within communities that is underpinned by:

- **Valuing diversity:** Ensure the workforce truly reflects the diverse make-up of Welsh communities
- **Growing career routes:** Identifies pathways into the profession, creating actions to maintain and grow these further
- **Nurturing expertise:** Making sure knowledge is a shared commodity and looks ahead at skills needed for a modern housing sector to work effectively
- **Robust data:** Data collection to underpin the strategy and build a clearer picture of the profession in Wales
- **Promoting impact:** Outline the impact housing professionals have in supporting the work of other key sectors and detail actions to nurture activity further
- **Capacity:** ensuring we have enough capacity and skills to deliver on our shared goal of a green, sustainable and affordable home for everyone in Wales



Establish a Green Partnership

Our members are already at the forefront of building some of the most sustainable, carbon-neutral homes in the United Kingdom. To accelerate progress further we believe the next Welsh Government should establish a 'Green Partnership' with the sector that sets-out:

- **Long-term funding:** The cost of retrofit activity for social housing and homes in fuel poverty is estimated to be £0.5-£1bn per annum over the next decade. Long-term funding certainty must be part of the Welsh Government's ongoing commitment
- **Technical expertise:** A clear plan for ensuring the expertise needed across the construction and housing management workforce is embedded at an early stage
- **Cross-tenure support:** A focus on supporting private landlords and owner-occupiers who will struggle to improve homes without significant investment
- **Modern methods of construction:** A unified approach to growing the MMC industry in Wales, supporting suppliers to become established, increasing use of local supply chains growing economies of scale, and focusing upon replicable processes and technology
- **A learning community:** Joint learning between organisations across all parts of delivery will be vital to ensure the intelligence from testing is shared to drive down costs and provide consistency in methods and approaches
- **Employment & training:** The green economy offers substantial opportunities to create new jobs, increase the volume of apprenticeships, and strengthening Wales's foundational economy



Support improvements in private renting for both landlords and tenants

Private landlords play a vital role in reducing homelessness and meeting local demand for housing. We believe the next Welsh Government must create a long-term strategy to support private landlords so that inequalities between people living in different tenures do not become greater. This strategy should:

- Establish a clear vision for the private rented sector that seeks to nurture and strengthen the relationship between tenants and landlords resulting in a more positive perception of the sector
- Detail the long-term support needed to help private landlords thrive in Wales, alongside clear packages of support
- Outline how data collection will inform improvements in policy across housing conditions and housing management
- Provide clear mechanisms for private landlords and tenants to use their own insight, experience and expertise to improve national policy
- Build on our Tyfu Tai Cymru 'Private Renting and Mental Health' research to ensure that landlords and tenants know how to access timely support



Address stigma against social housing and promote the positive impact of diverse communities.

Through our Tyfu Tai Cymru research that conducted a public opinion poll in 2018 focussing on the Welsh public's perception of housing in Wales we found that:

- Housing and homelessness combined is one of the top five priorities for the public
- Three in five feel it is the government's responsibility to provide a decent home for every citizen
- Just over half of all respondents believed social housing would suffer more from crime and anti-social behaviour
- Two third were either unsure or against seeing social housing built near them

The overall feeling that housing matters is clearly positive, but this contrasts sharply with attitudes towards social housing. We believe that more coordinated action is needed, this could include:

- Public facing campaigns highlighting the added value social housing provides to wider society
- Greater promotion of Wales as an ambitious leader in delivering social housing with a proven track-record, nurturing domestic and global perceptions of the sector
- Local resources aimed at supporting community groups and individuals to share and spread the message locally about the impact of social housing and amplify the voices of their own community
- Greater visibility of social housing as a key component of economic recovery and stimulus within the Welsh Government's ongoing and future plans