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**Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing**  
Cymru

# Our Future Wales

CIH Cymru response

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple – to provide housing professionals with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world. Further information is available at: [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)

In Wales, we aim to provide a professional and impartial voice for housing across all sectors to emphasise the particular context of housing in Wales and to work with organisations to identify housing solutions.

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## General Comments

CIH Cymru welcomes the opportunity to provide information on Wales's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the role the housing sector can play going forward.

Our response is informed by feedback from our members, our knowledge of the housing industry and expertise from our policy and practice teams.

CIH Cymru supports the development of Welsh policies, practices and legislation that aim to address the key housing challenges we face, to improve standards and supply, promote community cohesion, tackle poverty and promote equality. We promote a *one housing system* approach that:

- places the delivery of additional affordable housing at the top of national, regional and local strategies as a primary method of tackling the housing crisis;
- secures investment to ensure the high and sustainable quality of all homes in a sustainable framework;
- improves standards and develops the consumer voice within the private rented sector
- promotes the concept of housing led regeneration to capture the added value that housing brings in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes;
- recognises that meeting the housing needs of our communities is a key aspect of tackling inequality and poverty;
- ensures that that there are properly resourced support services in place to prevent homelessness and protect the most vulnerable;
- uses current and potential legislative and financial powers to intervene in housing markets and benefit schemes;
- promotes consumer rights & tenant involvement;
- and supports the continued professional development of housing practitioners.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Housing professionals and the work of the housing sector has been at the epicentre of efforts to keep people safe and well during the Covid-19 outbreak. As we continue through further uncertain times the sector will be working tirelessly to ensure services are safe, fit for purpose and of a high quality within the context of Covid-19.
- 1.2 Our submission provides some detail on the key activities that with continued or improved support could make a significant contribution to Wales's recovery in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak.

## 2. The right to adequate housing

- 2.1 The Covid-19 outbreak has reinforced the importance of having a home in the truest sense of the word, where space, quality and the local environment combine to enable people to prosper, feel safe and remain well. The reality for some people in Wales is that home is not a safe place, free from violence or fear, where home is too expensive and impacts of quality of life and happiness and where home doesn't provide quality or the space needed to thrive. It is vital that as we begin the process of recovery, we do so with a mindset that everyone in Wales should be able to access a safe, affordable home.
- 2.2 Working with our partners Tai Pawb and Shelter Cymru and Dr Simon Hoffman of Swansea University our [Feasibility Study](#) outlined the opportunities to enshrine a right to adequate housing into Welsh law through a process of progressive realisation. Apart from greater consideration of housing at a cross-policy level, incorporation could help us:
- Tackle and aim to eradicate issues such as homelessness.
  - Increase the security of tenure.
  - Increase the availability of accessible homes.
  - Address challenges some part of the population may have in accessing housing, like younger people.
  - Maximise the impact providing good housing can have on lifting pressure on other public services, such as health and social care.
  - Ensure tenants have ways to challenge and improve how accessing the right home works in Wales.
  - Future-proof the status of housing as a top priority for any Welsh Government now and in the future.

Importantly, Wales already has legislation to incorporate human rights. The Child Rights Measure is one example of action going beyond rhetoric. Other progressive steps taken by Welsh Ministers include a Declaration of the Rights of Older People in Wales. We believe that a dual approach in incorporating a 'right to adequate' housing offers the greatest benefits.

<b>Indirect incorporation</b>	<b>Direct incorporation</b>
Local Authorities and Minister would need to have 'due regard' in creating policy and delivering services in practice.	Local authorities and Minister could not act in a way that is incompatible with a person's right to adequate housing.

<p>Link between housing policy and rights of more disadvantaged groups would be strengthened.</p> <p>Housing Rights Scheme may need to be established to show how duty is being met</p>	<p>Housing Act 2014 would need amending to include a right of action for individuals and specify solutions</p>
<p><b>The dual approach</b></p>	
<p>Provide a bridge between law and policy (via the indirect approach) but also ensure individual can challenges and enforce their individual right to adequate housing, with clarity in law on the response people can expect.</p>	

### 3. Housing at the foundation of economic recovery

- 3.1 The process improving the quality of existing home and building and managing housing in Wales provides a raft of activity that can revitalise economies and have a considerable impact on local and national prosperity. There are real opportunities to create jobs, grow new and existing industries and offset some of the immediate economic pain caused by the Covid-19 outbreak through placing housing at the heart of the approach to recovery.
- 3.2 Modern methods of construction (MMC) offer real opportunities to support the economic recovery through job recovery and business growth. We were pleased to feed-in our views to one aspect of MMC; Off-Site Manufacturing (OSM). OSM could not only provide a wide range of new jobs but also support the desire to accelerate the delivery of high quality affordable and social housing.
- 3.3 There are also substantial opportunities through the decarbonisation and fuel-efficient agenda to create jobs and support local economies. Particularly considering the impact of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard over the past decade in generating local economic value.
- 3.4 When the above are combined with investment in training and skills development, business incentives, affordable financing, and long-term Government support there will be real opportunities to transform the fortunes of many Welsh communities who continue to face uncertain as various industries struggle in the immediate post Covid-19 environment.
- 3.5 We believe that one practical idea to underpin this activity would be the creation of a workforce strategy for the housing sector in Wales. This is set to become one of our main asks of political parties ahead of the Welsh Parliament elections in 2021. In our view, such a strategy should be underpinned by:
- **Early information:** Ensuring that schools, colleges and higher education institutions have the resources to provide younger people with clear options on routes into careers in the housing sector.
  - **Robust data:** Data collected every two years mapping the housing workforce and highlighting where gaps exist.

- **Skill-mix:** Bridge the gap between our aspirations in areas like decarbonisation and how in practice the right talent, skills and expertise is grown in the sector.
- **Inclusive recruitment:** ensure the workforce truly reflects the diverse make-up of Welsh communities.
- **Public recognition:** recognise and value the huge contribution professionals make to the wellbeing of communities across Wales.

#### 4. Enhancing partnerships across health, housing and social care

- 4.1 The Covid-19 outbreak has demonstrated the importance of having an agile health service that when necessary can increase capacity overnight. We do have some concerns regarding how housing professionals are involved in decisions about getting people home safely, especially when done at such a large scale. We know however that there are some excellent projects working on safe, quick patient discharge in addition to many other areas of meaningful collaboration.
- 4.2 Further to this, as significant providers of social care service in their own right, the work of housing professionals is interconnected with the work of colleagues in health and social care. Earlier this year we completed some work through our Tyfu Tai Cymru project to analyse and draw out some of the aspects present in successful partnerships that could form a blueprint for further success in the future.

These were:

- A shared analysis of issues and solutions
- Person-centred services
- Leadership
- Joint budgets
- Shared interpretation of legislation
- Recognition of power imbalance

- 4.3 The report also reflects on activities that embed further joint working. This included: the need to ensure sustainable long-term funding for well evidenced projects; establish ways of holding joint training and good practice sharing between professionals; and sharing resources underpinned by a strategy where all partners share a common interest in improving outcomes for people. The report can be read in full [here](#).