



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Cymru

Housing Voices

Tyfu Tai Cymru regional forums -
September 2018





Tyfu Tai Cymru (TTC) is a 5-year housing policy project with a focus on providing insightful analysis and filling evidence gaps to support policy progression. Funded by the Oak Foundation the project is managed by the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru. TTC works across three key strands:

- Building the right homes to meet demand
- Making sure housing is always a priority for local government
- Demonstrating housing's role in keeping people well and healthy

Building the right homes to meet demand

is vital given the current housing need in Wales, the increase in the ageing population and the need to prepare the right homes for future generations. We welcome the Welsh Government's 20,000 affordable homes target and the emphasis on housing within 'Prosperity for All' - working towards this ambition alongside accelerating delivery should also drive up standards, quality and accessibility.

Making sure housing is always a priority for Local Government,

particularly as local authorities continue to deliver high quality public services against the backdrop of austerity. For us, understanding how housing functions within local authorities operate in this climate is imperative, particularly given the varying picture of housing functions across Wales, and the recent drive for local authorities to begin building homes again.

Demonstrating housing's role in keeping people well and healthy

is something that is recognised as vital by many people from the housing sector across Wales. Innovative practices have led to reductions in delayed discharges from hospital, less pressure on GP services, and the speeding-up of the installation of vital home adaptations. The TTC project will focus on how this practice can be spread and shared across Wales to ensure everyone is able to access fair and consistent services no matter where they live. Mirroring the remit of CIH Cymru, the TTC project operates on a cross-tenure basis, recognising the need to ensure that whether renting or buying, people should have access to a safe, secure, affordable home. In addition to a governance group made-up of experts from across the housing sector, the project team comprises:

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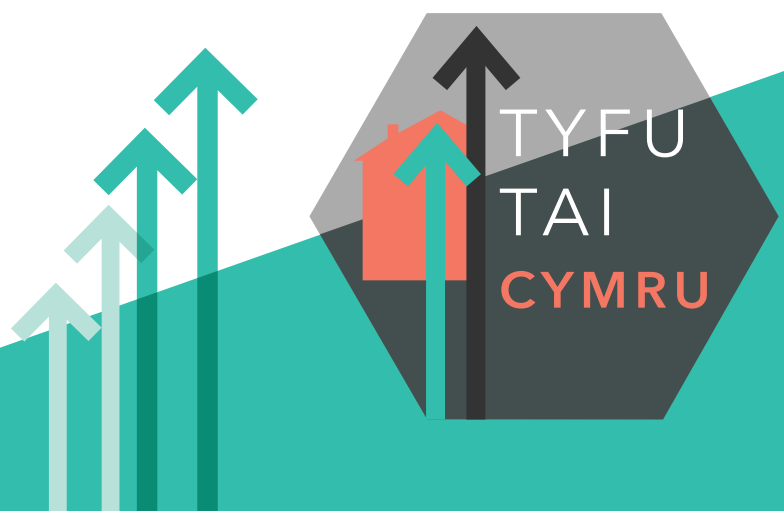
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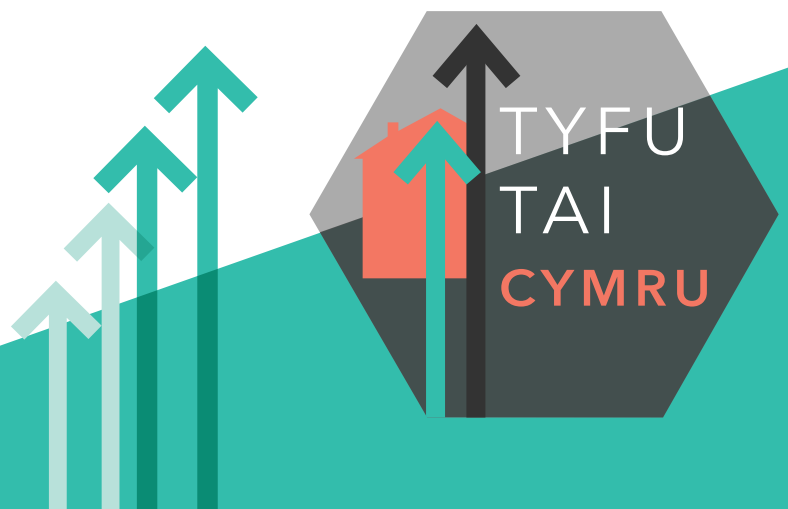




Background

In September 2018, the Tyfu Tai Cymru (TTC) team held 3 events in Aberystwyth, St Asaph and Cardiff with over 70 attendees. This report is a summary of the discussions at those workshops, with the priorities as picked by the different regions.

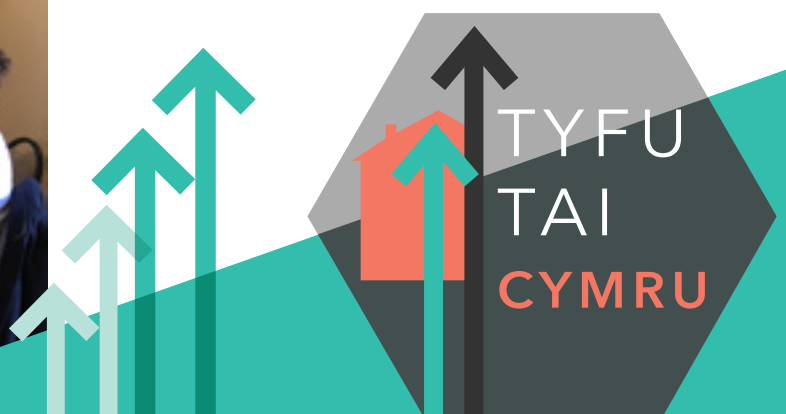
Attendees came from a range of organisations and positions, including housing associations, local government and tenant's organisations.





We asked attendees to discuss a series of questions and then vote on the issues that most resonated in their lives and work. We wanted to concentrate on the themes of TTC, while also ensuring we spent time learning about what matters most to people. We covered the following areas during the sessions:

1. What is the biggest issue in housing today?
2. Health and Housing (HH)
3. Local Government (LG)
4. Boosting supply (BS)





What should be the priorities of Tyfu Tai Cymru?

In this section we have divided responses into common themes to map topics raised in all areas and then delved deeper into some of the regional differences.

TTC theme		West Wales	North Wales	South-East Wales
BS	Tackling negative attitudes towards social housing	X	X	X
BS	Standards in the PRS	X	X	X
LG	Planning department capacity	X	X	X
HH	Working in collaboration with health colleagues	X	X	X
HH	Positive messages of healthy homes, promotion of good practise	X	X	X
BS	Public sector land redevelopment		X	
BS	Repurposing land for greater flexibility		X	
LG	LAs need to build communities, not houses Understand demand and mix tenures	X		X
LG	Analysis of local housing registers and link with waiting lists			X
HH	Raise prevention agenda in social care, health and housing		X	
HH	Housing and mental health - do we make things worse for people?	X		
HH	Promotion of good practice where health, social care and housing do work together			X
BS	Understanding of rural issues and links with other services (transport/health)	X		
LG	Amplify the voice of housing professionals in Local Government		X	
BS	Use of B and Bs to accommodate young people and families at risk of homelessness		X	



Themes

In all discussions there was a clear message that organisations need to plan and deliver effectively through meaningful engagement with members of the community, housing professionals and staff from other sectors in the decisions about how best to meet housing need.

The role of the **private sector** was highlighted, with the need for private renting landlords, and developers (including small firms) to be around the table. In the South East, there was a resounding call for the need to **understand demand** and to **mix tenures** when building new homes and communities, to tackle the ongoing **skills shortage** (as echoed in other areas) and to use what we have to bring **empty homes** back into use.

Stigma

In all three areas, attendees told us their concern about **negative attitudes** towards social housing. People told us that they want to promote the message that social housing is a good place to live because of the quality and standards, the security of the tenure and the need to reframe as a community asset. This message should also be applied to the occupants of social housing, people's views being skewed by portrayals on TV rather than the reality (eg. that most tenants of social housing are in employment). We were told that the power of this negativity was such that developers are put off building social housing because of the perceptions they hold about the profitability of such builds.

Private Rented Sector

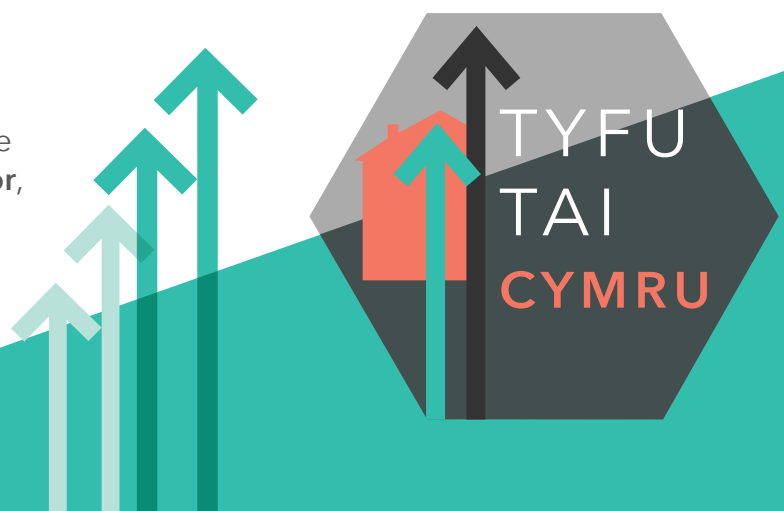
A common theme of the workshops was the standards found in the **private rented sector**,

participants asking the question, "would more regulation lead to higher standards or would that deter people from renting out properties?" The support available to tenants and landlords was also raised as a concern, being far less than in the social housing sector. In the West, participants had suggestions including the need for advocacy for all private rented tenants, increasing the role and resources for social letting agencies and the suggestion that consistent quality standard should be the standard in all sectors.

In both the West and the North, the issue of distribution of housing in **coastal** areas was a concern, as was the role in second home ownership pushing out local people. We were told that the biggest issue in West Wales is the need for incentives to use **empty homes** through renting or selling.

Planning

The **planning system** was raised in all three areas and the ability of small developers to work with the planning system and a sense that this acts as a deterrent. In West Wales, the system was also criticised for failing to incorporate demographic changes. In the South East, there was mention of the complexities around section 106 applications and a sense that this impacts on delivery. In addition, the need to analyse the **current local housing registers** and ensure these were linked with **waiting lists** was highlighted.





Collaboration

A further unifying theme was the need for better working in **collaboration**, focusing on the need for a common-sense approach to working together across sectors with some frustration that this continues to be a barrier to delivering holistic services. In North and West Wales, people wanted to explore the potential of staff from health boards being **trained in housing**, and how to improve the joint control of **budgets** and **integrated services boards**, in both these instances questioning if the current operations were too complex. In West Wales, attendees told us that they were concerned about the perceived **complexity** of bringing people together, and how to improve **dialogue** between health and housing.

We were also told about the need to **challenge the obsessions with new homes**, and similarly to look at how we can **repurpose buildings and land** for greater flexibility - the lack of flexibility being identified as a key barrier along with the need to **redevelop public sector land**.

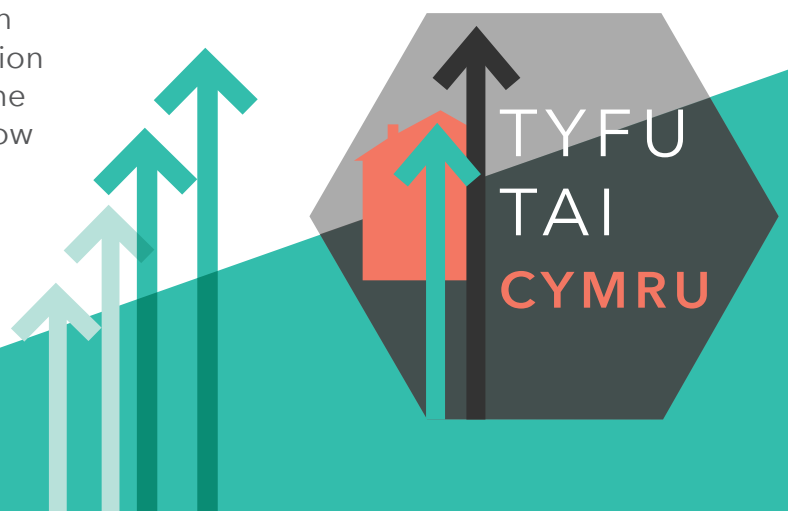
Bureaucracy

The discussion of the **complexities of accessing funding** for improvement schemes was identified in the North, with a sense that the number of separate pots puts people off applying for funding to improve schemes. In West Wales, the concern was around how to improve the system for matching empty homes with waiting lists, the need for better management of waiting lists was also raised in North Wales. In the South East, discussion recognised that we have innovative legislation in Wales (such as Future Generations and the Renting Homes Act) but questions about how these are being implemented in practise.

Future proofing

Future proofing was a common feature across all areas. In the South East, people told us of their sense that we are not planning for the homes that people will want, that we need to get better at understanding people's needs and to build homes that are easily adaptable. Beyond this, we need to find a system of housing that allows people to move seamlessly between properties as their needs change and ensure a continuity of housing options. A barrier to this was identified as the Key Performance indicators (KPI) set by local authorities and housing associations which can fail to plan for the longer term needs of residents.

In West Wales we were told that people were concerned about the limited supply of sheltered housing schemes and a sense that there is inadequate provision of housing for people now and in the future. In North Wales, a fear was identified that professionals in social housing are developing business models that ignore their sense of social responsibility.





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Tyfu Tai Cymru -
Because Housing Matters