



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing  
Cymru

# A Housing Futures Cymru manifesto for fair, sustainable homes in Wales

Good, safe housing is more than shelter, it is the foundation of health, opportunity, and community.



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## Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Futures Cymru Board is a policy and influencing panel made up of members of the CIH Cymru, all under the age of 35. We represent the next generation of housing professionals, those who see the challenges first-hand and are committed to shaping long-term solutions for Wales.

As the 2026 Senedd election approaches, Wales faces a deepening housing crisis. There are not enough homes, and too many of those that exist are unfit for purpose. [Over 1 in 5 people in Wales live in poverty](#), and [1 in every 215 households](#) became homeless in 2023/24. These figures are not improving. Social landlords and local authorities are stretched to breaking point, and those working in housing are under immense pressure.

Wales rightly prides itself on the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Yet without urgent action, housing insecurity will continue to undermine our ambition for a fairer, sustainable future. This is not a time for fence sitting. The [10 warmest years on record](#) have all occurred in the past decade, making the case for well-insulated, safe, and low-carbon homes more urgent than ever. While the [2026/27 budget shows an above-inflation rise for housing and homelessness](#), a [significant funding gap](#) remains between what is needed to decarbonise Welsh housing stock and current investment. In this context, promising regulations like the Welsh Housing Quality Standard risks losing focus with competing financial pressures, rising construction costs, and the scale of retrofit required.

Good, safe housing is more than shelter, it is the foundation of health, opportunity, and strong communities. Any credible political vision for Wales must recognise this, and must include sustained funding and support for grassroots organisations that meet people where they are.

Housing Futures Cymru proudly supports the [Backs the Bill](#) campaign, alongside Shelter Cymru, Tai Pawb, and CIH Cymru, calling for the right to adequate housing to be enshrined in Welsh law. As young professionals working in housing, our asks are grounded in practice and evidence.

A common theme throughout this manifesto is engaging with people, not paying lip-service but genuine co-production. We are eager that whoever successfully forms the new Welsh Government prioritises coalition-forming over exclusion. Sustained investment in sustainable homes is not a 'nice to have'. This manifesto sets out five key areas of focus to address the housing emergency and build a fairer future for Wales:

- Improve housing options for young people
- Strengthen the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)
- Build cohesive communities through placemaking
- Ensure affordable thermal comfort and decarbonisation
- Support and resource housing professionals

## Improve housing options for young people: support improvements to the private rented sector (PRS)

Adequate and secure housing in the PRS is becoming increasingly out of reach, pushing more people towards an already [strained social housing system](#). Private rents have [risen by 8.7%](#) in the past year, far outpacing [wage growth of 4.7%](#). Young, single adults in particular are bearing the brunt of this pressure.

For many young people, rent now consumes over [35% of income](#), leaving little opportunity to build savings and plan for future housing security, including the opportunity of homeownership. Some are able to remain in the family home, sacrificing independence in exchange for a degree of financial security, many others do not have this option.

There needs to be a genuine recognition of the challenges faced by young adults in Wales, particularly single young adults, who do not qualify for social housing and are unable to access homeownership. For many, private renting is the only option, yet rising rents alongside poor living conditions make it increasingly difficult for young people to achieve stability or security.

The PRS accounts for a significant percentage of homes in Wales and must be seen as an important partner in addressing the current housing emergency. But this is not just about housing, it's a question of fairness, opportunity, and the future of Wales. The next Welsh Government must work with the PRS to address issues such as:

- Average one bedroom rents range from [£650-£870 per month](#), up to 43% of the average graduate salary
- Retaliatory rent hikes acting as informal evictions driving tenants into homelessness
- Many Single adults in the PRS face a ['single person surcharge'](#) on bills alongside a shortage of affordable one bedroom homes in both PRS and social housing

### Take action

1. **Stronger measures to challenge unfair and disproportionate rent increases:** Adopt England's approach, as seen in the new Renters Rights Act, allowing First Tier tribunals to reduce rent increases to market levels whilst preventing them from setting rents higher than those originally asked for by the landlord.
2. **Stronger private renting standards and enforcement:** Clearer guidelines on when a tenant can withhold rent under Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 and empower local authorities to enforce this.
3. **Support young adults housing needs:** Embed young adults housing needs in national housing strategy, reframing this issue as a social justice and economic productivity issue. Introduce specific targets for single young adults in Local Housing Market Assessments.

# Strengthen the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF): Supporting sustainable tenancies and wellbeing

The Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) is a vital Welsh Government safety net, supporting people in crisis and helping them live independently. In 2024/25, the fund received over 378,000 applications and spent £24 million across Wales, including over £4 million on [furniture and white goods](#).

Despite this investment, the current framework does not consistently reflect real-life needs. Restrictive rules, limited discretion, and inconsistent decision-making can leave vulnerable people without safe, usable essentials. This undermines wellbeing, recovery, and tenancy sustainability, increasing long-term pressure on housing, health, and public services.

Evidence from case studies highlights that:

- Essential items cannot always be replaced when broken or unsafe.
- Items provided may be unsuitable for a person's age, disability, or health needs.
- Inconsistent decisions and complex processes delay support and deter applications.
- Limited flexibility increases inequality and social isolation.

## Take action

1. **Introduce flexible, needs-led eligibility and replacement rules:** Allow replacement of broken or unsafe essential items and apply greater discretion to reflect real-life circumstances, including age, disability, health needs, and digital exclusion.
2. **Improve fairness, consistency, and access to the fund:** Publish clearer eligibility criteria, strengthen guidance and staff training, and simplify application processes, including enabling trusted partners to fast-track verified cases.
3. **Align DAF with wider anti-poverty and housing outcomes:** Work with housing providers and organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Bevan Foundation to prioritise wellbeing, independence, and tenancy sustainability—not crisis response alone.



# Build cohesive communities through placemaking: learning the lessons of COVID

Housing is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about creating places where people can thrive. Wales faces a stark reality: [poverty polarisation](#), [fragmented and aging infrastructure](#), and [confused strategy](#) have left communities struggling to stay connected.

Simply constructing homes is not enough; developments must sit within sustainable communities and housing must be seen as part of an interconnected solution alongside transport, infrastructure, and local identity.

By embedding [placemaking](#) into housing policy, we can create communities that are connected, resilient, and sustainable. This is not just about homes, it's about belonging, opportunity, and the future of Wales.

- The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) showed the power of community action, with grassroots organisations stepping up where larger systems could not.
- Community Voluntary Councils (CVCs), Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, and third-sector organisations played a vital role in supporting people during crisis.
- Today, these networks face staff fatigue, funding gaps, and a ["compulsive need to reinvent the wheel"](#), weakening collaboration.
- Without intelligent investment and joined-up planning, new housing risks isolating residents rather than connecting them.

## Take action

1. **Embed placemaking in planning:** Incorporate the Placemaking Charter into planning regulations to ensure developments prioritise community cohesion and sustainability. Monitor and evaluate through local authority planning frameworks and Public Service Boards (PSBs).
2. **Sustainably fund community action:** Provide long-term funding for small-scale community developers and facilitators, recognising the voluntary sector as a delivery arm for community resilience, not an afterthought.
3. **Foster collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships between housing providers and third sector organisations to create joined-up solutions. Supporting cooperative and community-led housing models to empower residents and reduce isolation.

## Ensure affordable thermal comfort and decarbonisation: the Net Zero funding gap

Rising energy prices, [inflation affecting the cost of decarbonisation](#), [constrained public budgets](#), [an ageing housing stock](#) and [the challenges this poses for retrofit](#) are all amplifying the thermal comfort crisis. Cold and inefficient homes [undermine health](#), [deepen inequality and increase demand on the NHS](#), making affordable warmth an issue that must be prioritised.

Affordable heating at scale will not be delivered by any single programme or organisation, but through sustained investment, fair prioritisation and a genuinely cooperative approach.

- Wales has had a solid framework and clear targets since the Welsh Government's [Tackling Fuel Poverty 2021-2035](#).
- Since then, programmes such as Nest, the Optimised Retrofit Programme, and the introduction of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard in 2023 have undeniably had a positive impact.
- Wales has also taken important steps to work collaboratively across government, housing providers and [academia](#), as well as [the supply chain](#).
- [The 2025 plan review](#) acknowledges that soaring energy prices and tight public finances are outpacing delivery, meaning that current measures are not yet operating at the scale or speed needed to hit the targets without more focused and increased investment.
- Tenants also reported concerns about the costs, disruption, and unclear communication, highlighting the need for a coordinated, tenant-focused approach.

### Take action

1. **Fund at the right scale, for long enough:** Revisit investment levels and provide multi-year funding certainty so programmes can plan efficiently and deliver at pace across tenures.
2. Embed equity, skills, and collaboration in delivery: Prioritise rural and less-resourced areas, invest in Welsh skills and local supply chains, and build systematic collaboration through a national best-practice framework and a 12-month Best Practice Accelerator.
3. Put tenants at the centre of delivery: Strengthen collaboration with tenants and universities to share what works, improve communications, minimise disruption, and build trust throughout delivery.

## Support and resource housing professionals - ensuring a sustainable vocation

Social housing offers a wide range of rewarding careers, requiring diverse skills and delivering clear social value. The sector plays a vital role in Welsh society, supporting the provision of affordable homes for almost [10% of the population](#). For many, it is work with purpose, improving lives and strengthening communities.

Despite the strength of the sector, workforce challenges threaten its long-term sustainability. While good jobs exist, limitations in workforce insight and support are holding progress back.

Being able to conduct effective labour market analysis is a critical step toward progress - the data is not currently sufficient to understand our housing workforce. Tackling this would allow more accurate demographic mapping, and ensure any research conducted is applicable to the wider population of housing professionals.

Opportunities to develop and progress are hard to find - the sector is losing talent at a time when demand for skilled housing practitioners has never been greater.

- Labour market data is limited, which makes it difficult to make intelligent decisions and map their impact
- Two in five young professionals working in housing have experienced burn-out in the last year
- A resilient housing system depends on a well-supported, adequately resourced workforce with clear routes to develop, progress, and thrive.

### Take action

1. **Improve data accuracy:** Lobby the ONS to refine the National Statistics Standard Occupational Classification for housing to allow more intelligent labour market data analysis.
2. Develop housing talent: Adopt the competence and conduct framework for housing sector professionals.
3. Strengthen support and progression for early-career housing professionals: fund structured entry, development, and leadership pathways for young professionals across the sector.





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