



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Cymru

Programme of government - Implementing a plan for housing in Wales

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Foreword

As we look forward to the next four years of the Seventh Senedd it is important to set out how a sustainable housing system can be delivered in Wales - one that ensures everyone can access a safe, suitable and affordable home, in an equitable system where stigma is eradicated across diverse communities, and supported by a housing workforce that is professional and resilient.

Housing should be a foundation mission of this new government, starting with incorporating the right to adequate housing into Welsh legislation. It is this rights-based approach that will drive system-wide change to housing in Wales that transcends political cycles. The right is the catalyst to delivering the sustainable housing system we need for current and future generations. Everyone in Wales should have access to a safe, suitable and affordable home. This document outlines a route map showing how this ambition can be achieved, starting with - and looking through - the lens of a right to adequate housing in Welsh legislation.

The right to adequate housing

CIH Cymru believe that the starting point for any strategic approach to tackling the housing crisis - one that encompasses the whole housing system and its impact on wider public services - should be legislation to incorporate the right into Welsh law. In 1947, legislation was seen as the driving force for the implementation of the NHS. We did not wait for everything to align before free healthcare - at the point of delivery - became a right. On the contrary, we implemented legislation which embedded that universal right into law, and the national consciousness. From that legislation, all governments since have been compelled to ensure that free healthcare is accessible to all at the point of delivery - albeit with varying levels of success. We argue that the same philosophy must apply to housing, with access to a home viewed as a universal right and foundational mission of every government, present and future. We must be ambitious and deliver the legislation needed, using it as the driver and mechanism through which we can ensure everyone in Wales can access a safe, suitable and affordable home. This means the following actions need to be taken by government during the Seventh Senedd:

- Within the first 12 months of the Seventh Senedd, begin work to legislate a Right to Adequate Housing in Wales
- As part of the legislative work for a Right to Adequate Housing in Wales, set out - in a comprehensive housing strategy - how this will be progressively realised and which actions must be taken throughout the housing sector, and more widely, as part of this progressive realisation
- Implement a housing impact assessment for all proposals for new legislation, policy and budget allocations - at both national and local government level - to ensure that cross-government policies do not negatively impact or breach the right.

More social and affordable homes

Wales is in the midst of a deep structural housing emergency. Homelessness levels are at some of the highest in the last decade, there is an acute shortage of social homes, the cost of a private rent property continues to rise, and some areas are impacted by the rise of second homes. The right to adequate housing will be the driver and mechanism to drive action in increasing the supply of social and affordable homes in Wales. The action we need to see from the Welsh government over the next Senedd term includes:

- Establishing an accurate baseline of housing need in Wales, which will include households waiting for alternative types of accommodation or those in unsuitable accommodation.
- Collating data to show the type, size and location of homes needed in Wales over the next decade
- Looking to increase the number of social homes in Wales so that it meets a critical mass of at least 20 per cent of all homes in Wales to rebalance housing tenures, provide more housing options, and help balance out prices in the private market
- Working with the UK government to unfreeze the local housing allowance and restore it to the 30th percentile to help combat rising rental costs and poverty levels in low-income families
- Evaluating the current social housing grant settlement so that it mitigates the rising costs of development and increased cost of borrowing. In addition, exploring ways to make it a multi-year settlement to support a pipeline of development, providing surety of funding for the sector and financial institutions
- Investing additional monies into local planning authorities to increase their capacity, as well as continuing to provide degree apprenticeships, expanding the number available to train the local planning officers of the future
- Establishing an arm's length development body whose remit will be to overcome barriers to increasing development of the homes we need. The body will be responsible for land assembly, speeding up planning consents, together with developing local and national supply chains
- Evaluating current programmes aimed at tackling second homes in Wales, expanding those that work and reworking those that don't
- Ensuring that the needs of rural communities are considered - as we move towards social homes making up 20 per cent of all homes in Wales - as part of a whole system approach to housing affordability in rural Wales.

Improving our homes and tackling fuel poverty

Wales has a legally binding target to meet net zero by 2050. In addition, social housing providers as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards need to ensure that existing homes meet EPC band C by 31 March 2030. Private landlords in Wales also need to bring up their homes to EPC band C by 2030. In addition, we need options for the owner-occupied sector, which makes up 70 per cent of all homes in Wales. There are also high levels of fuel poverty in Wales, with 25 per cent of all households, and 26 per cent of vulnerable households, in fuel poverty. The action we need to see from Welsh government over the next Senedd term includes:

- Evaluating existing levels of capital investment available to social landlords to establish if the level of capital investment is sufficient, considering the rising costs of materials
- Establishing resilient local and national supply chains that embed circular economy principles and invest in local communities and economies. This is important as we seek to meet the rising demand and costs for renewable energy and green technology as part of making Welsh homes more sustainable
- Developing a suite of finance options for owner-occupiers and private landlords to increase the pace of decarbonisation, and include the retention of existing finance options for low-income households
- Working with industry and employers to undertake a robust skills audit to establish a baseline for the number of individuals needed within the construction industry for traditional trades and the rising demand for new skills as part of decarbonisation
- Utilising the findings from the skills audit to develop a training programme to provide the skills we need for the future, developed in partnership with schools, higher education institutions and employers, ensuring sufficient apprenticeships and places to study vocational qualifications are made available
- Evaluating the implementation of the fit for human habitation requirements in the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 to establish if it is improving conditions in the private rented sector. If not, establish why this is - we must ensure that whatever tenure home someone chooses to live in is of good quality.



Address the stigma associated with social housing and promote the positive impact of diverse communities

Many people living in social housing experience stigma because of where they live. The causes of this stigma are varied. They include how the media represents those living in social housing, which can create and reinforce unfair stereotypes. There is also disinformation in the media about who social housing is for, which in turn can negatively impact community cohesion. In order to tackle stigma, promote the positive impact of diverse communities, and strengthen community cohesion, Welsh government should take the following actions:

- Develop a national campaign focussed on ending the stigma around social housing to improve community understanding of what social housing is and the positive impact it can have
- Produce a commonly used terminology guide as part of standardising the language used around social homes
- Continue to embed the anti-racist Wales action plan as part of developing cohesive communities and organisations that reflect the communities they serve
- Involve communities in calculations of housing need to ensure the right homes are built in the right place
- Utilise housing enablers within local authority areas to provide the link between national and local governments and communities to ensure there is an ongoing conversation around the positives of social homes
- Embed the disabled persons rights action plan into housing organisations to ensure everyone can access a home and housing services that meets their needs
- Provide training to housing providers to give them the confidence to tackle misinformation and disinformation around social housing in their local areas.

A professional resilient and competent workforce

Housing, in line with other key professions, should be seen as a key pillar to supporting the delivery of public services in Wales, with housing professionals recognised as such by the wider public service. One way to do this is to look at whether Wales needs its own Competence and Conduct Standard. This framework, which comes into force in October 2026, will require social landlords in England to ensure the people they employ possess specific skills, knowledge and behaviours. It also mandates certain qualifications for senior managers and executives. In order to achieve the goal of a professional, resilient and competent workforce, the Welsh government should undertake the following actions:

- Work with the housing sector to undertake a robust skills audit to establish a baseline for the number of individuals needed within the sector, as well as the skills that are needed now and in the future as part of professionalising the sector and meeting demand
- Utilise the findings from the skills audit to develop a housing workforce strategy for Wales that provides career routes, reflects the diversity of Wales, nurtures expertise, increases capacity and develops resilience
- Evaluate whether Wales needs its own conduct and competency framework as part of a workforce strategy
- Identify key pathways into the housing profession and invest in and develop these pathways to future proof the workforce.





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