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# Senedd Election 2026: Hearing the Housing Professionals' Voice

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# Introduction

Cardiff Metropolitan University was commissioned to undertake research to support CIH Cymru's campaign for the Senedd 2026 election. This work aimed to gather data on housing professionals' current experiences of working in housing, as well as their views on the potential impact of forthcoming legislative changes on their role. This qualitative data sits alongside CIH Cymru's quantitative data from their Sector Snapshot surveys and their Senedd 2026 election manifesto.

The data presented here outlines a set of facilitators and barriers to the work of housing professionals in Wales and a set of asks for the new government. Data was collected through the World Café method and participants were housing professionals working in housing associations and local authorities across Wales. World Cafés are a participatory approach to data collection, where individuals are asked to share and co-create knowledge in small groups. The data generated is the output of these small group, collaborative, discussions. The World Café was structured around an introductory activity, followed by three structured activities. A more detailed methodology can be found in appendix 1.

Similar issues were drawn out across the different activities within the workshops, but two core themes emerged. These were:

<b>The housing workforce</b>	<b>The policy-making process and housing professionals</b>
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A brief overview of the academic and policy literature on the role of the housing professional in the UK will be provided, followed by the presentation of primary data gathered through this research project. This presentation of data is structured according to the activities that were completed within the World Cafés and refer to:

1. Current facilitators and barriers for housing professionals
2. Future potential facilitators and barriers for housing professionals
3. Asks for the future Welsh Government to improve the experiences of housing professionals

Section 5 of the report provides a discussion of the data in relation to the literature, drawing out key themes for consideration.

# Context: The role of the housing professional

There has long been debate about the role and status of housing professionals. Furbey, Reid and Cole (2001, p. 36) describe housing as having a “fragile professional domain” and others have argued that it can be considered a ‘semi’ or ‘incomplete’ profession (Casey and Allen 2004). This can be seen as related to a set of changing priorities around the role of, and demands on housing professionals, as well as an historical lack of mandatory housing qualifications (Manzi and Richardson 2017).

The status of housing professionals is often discussed in comparison to other established welfare professions such as Teachers and Social Workers, where there is a clearer and more singular understanding of their scope and purpose. For housing professionals, there is much more diversity in roles and associated responsibilities. As Casey (2008, p. 762) outlines, the “perennial debate” about housing management in particular, is whether the role of the housing manager is to manage people or properties (or both). This can be seen as an indicator of the contested nature of both the housing professional and the provision of social housing in the UK. In part, this can be linked to the growing diversity in organisations that are delivering social housing (Marsh 2018).

Broadly, social housing can be delivered by local authorities or housing associations. Diversity exists both between and within these two different delivery mechanisms, particularly within housing associations. Housing associations can be community-based organisations which hold a small number of properties and work in a particular local area. They can also be large-scale associations that work across a number of different geographical areas, delivering different types of housing products (for social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership etc), or anything in between the two. Housing associations need to balance social heart and commercial head (Richardson et al. 2014) and this hybridity can manifest in different ways in different organisations. Some organisations can be strongly driven by social purpose and a commitment to a particular community, whereas others prioritise income generation and diversification. The structure of an organisation can therefore, impact on how individuals view their role as a housing professional.

Research on this shows that individuals must balance both of these elements in their roles as housing professionals, with their work being motivated and defined by both social values and business or managerial aspects of their roles (Casey 2008; Richardson et al. 2014). Individuals can also identify as housing professionals from beyond local authorities and housing associations, and they might work delivering housing or housing support through third sector, private sector, or social enterprise organisations.

As Furbey, Reid and Cole (2001) note, changes in the operating environment of social housing have contributed to further issues with providing a clearly delineated definition of a housing professional. They describe “plasticity” in the definition of this profession (Furbey, Reid and Cole 2001, p. 430) where there is a lack of an easily definable knowledge domain. This has been further challenged by the context of public sector austerity since 2010 which has added demands onto housing organisations, including “plugging the gap” for the decline in other services (Richardson et al 2014, p. 13). These external challenges have further extended the types of activities that are included in definitions of being a housing professional. The diversity of roles contained within the definition of a ‘housing professional’ is reflected in the participants for this research. These included local authority housing officers, managers of older persons housing for housing associations, directors of development for housing associations, and housing strategy managers for local authorities amongst others. The range of activities that these individuals engaged in is significant, yet they all participated as they self-identified as housing professionals.

Increasingly, data is showing that housing professionals are experiencing growing challenges in their work, including burnout and vicarious trauma. Ryder (2026) found that almost a third of their participants reported experiencing burnout often, or very often, in the last 12 months. 66% of the participants in CIH Cymru’s 2025 Sector Snapshot stated that their work had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Although this was down from 80% as reported in the 2024 survey, 100% of the participants of the 2025 survey reported that they felt some pressure in their jobs (whereas some reported no pressures in 2024). In the Winter 2026 Sector Snapshot, 74% of participants reported a negative impact on their wellbeing. Significantly, 21% of respondents stated classed this as having a major impact on their mental health and wellbeing, up from 6% in the 2025 data (CIH Cymru 2026). Research on this negative impact on wellbeing also included data on professionals experiencing vicarious trauma (CIH Cymru 2024).

The CIH Cymru Senedd 2026 election manifesto calls for the next Welsh Government to foster a professional and resilient workforce. The data presented here shows the views of housing professionals on the current pressures facing them in their day-to-day roles, and the commitments they want the new government to make in order to support them and their work.

## Findings: current facilitators and barriers for housing professionals

Activity 1 of the World Café asked housing professionals to identify the current facilitators to their day-to-day work as well as the barriers that prevent them achieving what they need to or having the impact that they want to.

### 2.1 Facilitators

Participants outlined three key themes that supported their work.

The workforce (making a difference)	The availability of grant finance	Welsh Government aspirations
Housing professionals make a significant positive impact on individuals’ lives.	There is a positive impact from Welsh Government grant funding schemes.	The Welsh Government has housing high on their agenda and their aspirations are well-intended.

#### 2.1.1 The workforce

Participants strongly emphasised that there was an established and committed housing workforce in Wales that has a positive impact on individuals’ lives. This impact involved building new homes, preventing homelessness, enabling individuals to maximise their income and to find employment, providing appropriate support for individuals, and housing people in need. Participants highlighted their experience of a positive tenant relationship and noted that their work was not just about providing housing but creating and supporting communities. It was emphasised that housing professionals “make a difference” and “change lives”.

## 2.1.2 The availability of grant finance

Participants outlined that the availability of grant finance enabled them to make the intended difference to individuals and communities. The Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF), Social Housing Grant (SHG), and the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) were highlighted as areas of good practice, where there were clear impacts from the availability of Welsh Government grants. Participants particularly emphasised the positive engagement with, and impact of, TACP funding on their ability to meet housing need.

## 2.1.3 Welsh Government aspirations

The aspirations of Welsh Government around the provision of social housing and tackling homelessness were commended and participants stated support for the aims and intention of government. They welcomed that housing seemed to be high on the Welsh Government's agenda and noted a significant increase in investment in housing.

## 2.2 Barriers

Participants outlined a set of barriers that impacts their current day-to-day work:

The workforce	Complexity and expectation of customers	Working with associated support services	Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)	Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016	Policy- making process	Development
There needs to be more investment in the workforce and recognition of the work they do.	There is an increasing complexity in the needs of housing customers, as well as expectations of housing staff.	Other services in the third and public sectors are depleted, leading to an increase pressure on housing services.	The cost of implementing WHQS is too high.	There is still a lack of clarity about the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.	The housing sector does not get enough of a say in the policy-making process.	Issues around cost and funding are impacting on the ability for organisations to develop suitable housing.

### 2.2.1 The workforce

Several key points were raised under this theme.

Participants highlighted the requirement to engage in joint working to undertake their work but commented that their role and status as a professional is often not recognised by those working in other public services and “not valued like other professionals”. They noted that the role of a housing professional is very broad and therefore can be difficult to define.

A lack of investment in the workforce was outlined, and this was particularly emphasised in relation to increased demands on the housing sector such as implementing WHQS and increasing activity around compliance. The lack of availability of contractors was frequently cited here as impacting on the ability of the housing sector to deliver. Participants noted that there was not a clear pathway from school through the education system to become a housing professional and this impacted on individuals choosing housing as a career.

Participants shared that some housing professionals are experiencing vicarious trauma due to the increase in needs of tenants and the complexity of the support that they are required or expected to provide.

## 2.2.2 Complexity and expectations of tenants

Linked to the above point, participants pointed to the increased complexity in the needs of tenants and the impact that this had on those providing support. This relates to the broad, or expanding, role that some housing professionals have and the vicarious trauma they experience because of this. Participants also noted that alongside the increase in complexity of tenants' needs there was an increase in the expectations that tenants had of the support delivered by housing professionals, and "tenant expectation is at an all-time high - customers expect housing to be all services".

## 2.2.3 Working with associated support services

Participants reported that other services that would have historically supported some tenants (for example mental health services) have been "depleted" and lots of services are rolling back their support. This is occurring across both statutory public services and third sector provision. This depletion of other services is leading to an increase of pressure on housing services to provide this support, in addition to the current housing-related support they traditionally provide. Participants asked for increased funding for support with issues of hoarding and with food poverty. Linked to the previous theme about the workforce, participants noted that there were difficulties with joint working with other services.

## 2.2.4 WHQS

Participants asserted that the cost of implementing WHQS, in particular the decarbonisation element, was too high. They described this as "ambitious" and a "pipedream" that might "bankrupt us". They highlighted the high level of standard that WHQS imposed and said that adequate funding to complete this work has not been made available as the cost of upgrading properties is significant.

## 2.2.5 Understanding of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

Participants reported a lack of understanding of the legislation including among legal professionals. They called for more specific training for judges on the implications of the Act and a general lack of clarity amongst all professionals who are involved in its use. Participants also highlighted the significant cost of legal advice related to the use of the legislation.

## 2.2.6 Policy-making

The involvement of housing professionals within the policy-making process was criticised for not being robust enough. Participants noted that Welsh Government does consult with the sector and there are existing mechanisms for this, but the level of engagement is not sufficient. Participants again welcomed the aspirations and intentions of the Welsh Government around housing but asserted that the full implications of changes around policy and legislation are not understood prior to them being implemented. Participants also stated that often changes are implemented without recognition of the full cost implication of these on housing providers. Participants noted that this could be addressed through a more robust engagement from Welsh Government with the housing sector.

## 2.2.7 Development

Issues related to planning and development were highlighted by participants as barriers to meeting housing need and Welsh Government targets. Participants outlined that there is a lack of funding for development, and where grant funding is available sometimes the formula is not flexible enough to meet the specific needs of a particular tenant or geographical area. Participants highlighted delays in the planning system having an impact on development as well as the availability of land and increased cost of building properties.

# Findings: future potential facilitators and barriers for housing professionals

Participants were provided with an overview of areas of forthcoming legislative and policy change in housing in Wales. In Activity 2 of the World Café they were asked to describe whether these changes are likely to decrease or increase the pressure on housing professionals in their day-to-day roles.

## 3.1 Future potential facilitators

Participants outlined three key themes which they thought could alleviate (or not increase) the pressure on housing professionals in the future.

Importantly, these themes mirror the themes that were outlined as the facilitators which currently enable housing professionals to do their jobs. This could suggest that the participants didn't see any of the forthcoming policy and legislative changes as having an impact on making their role easier but could equally suggest that individuals were not clear about the impact that these would have on their work.

Availability of TACP	Welsh Government aspirations	Workforce
TACP is a good facilitator to meet housing need.	There are good intentions from Welsh Government around safety, homelessness, tenant power, reducing stigma.	There is a committed and dedicated workforce in place.

## 3.2 Future potential barriers

Participants also identified a range of potential impacts from proposed legislative and policy change that could act as barriers to their day-to-day work.

Although not a future impact, participants again emphasised the lack of clarity around the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. They noted that confusion around this was adding to professionals' workloads and noted that tenants were being given misinformation by other professionals around the ability to withhold rent.

Building Safety (Wales) Bill	Homelessness and Social Housing Allocations (Wales) Act 2026	Policy-making process	Workforce
There are concerns that the proposed Bill will add bureaucracy and not have intended affect.	There are already pressures on the homelessness system, and these could be exacerbated by the new legislation.	Housing professionals do not have enough involvement in the creation of legislation, leading to increased pressure from unintended consequences.  There is a lack of confidence in forthcoming legislation based on the experience of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.	Forthcoming changes will add pressures to a workforce where there are already gaps and high workloads.

### 3.2.1 Building Safety (Wales) Bill

Participants were concerned that the Bill as drafted would create added bureaucracy and not have the intended effect of improved safety. Particular concerns were raised about the level of responsibility that those professionals who take on the 'responsible person' role would face, as well as the need for sufficient training for individuals around this. Questions were also raised around how the implementation and adoption of the legislation was going to be regulated.

### 3.2.2 Homelessness and Social Housing Allocations (Wales) Act 2026

- **Note:** Data was gathered during the final scrutiny period for this legislation. It captures participants' concerns about proposed changes to the legislative system before Stage 4 of scrutiny and Royal Assent.

Participants raised concerns about the proposed approach to lettings. They questioned who would be eligible to be included on the waiting list and highlighted that they have experience of housing registers being out of date, leading to a lag in the time it takes for individuals to be registered. Participants asserted that the proposals around 'ask and act' weren't strong enough, neither were housing professionals' ability to evict tenants when they needed to due to breaching contract terms.

More generally, participants were concerned about additional pressures on and use of emergency and temporary accommodation in order to meet new duties.

### 3.2.3. Policy-making process

Participants outlined that based on their experience of the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, they had limited confidence in the Welsh Government's ability to create appropriate future legislation for the housing sector. They highlighted the potential impact of unintended consequences from future legislation and linked this to comments around a lack of robust engagement with the housing sector in the policy-making process.

### 3.2.4 The workforce

Participants highlighted several areas where there is not the sufficient workforce to adequately implement the proposed legislation:

- Contractors - particularly in the context of tackling damp and mould, the lack of availability of contractors would undermine the ability to meet the proposed timelines
- Housing Solutions teams - these teams are already under pressure, and the proposed homelessness legislation would put further pressure on this group
- Development workforce - there aren't enough professionals in this area to meet housing-building targets

More generally, concerns were raised about the capacity of the workforce as a whole to deliver the new proposals as "anything new adds bureaucracy". Participants reported feeling that the proposed pieces of legislation would add an "awful lot more pressure" and this was "very scary".

# Findings: asks for the new Welsh Government

The final activity within the world cafe workshops required participants to synthesise the ideas they had raised across the previous activities and outline specific 'asks' for the new Welsh Government.

These fitted into the core themes that have already been outlined, but included a new theme around allocations:

Working with other services	WHQS	Grant funding	Policy-making process	Allocations	The workforce
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## Ask 1:

**There needs to be better joint working between public services including a recognition of the role of housing professionals.**

**Further funding needs to be provided to other associated support services, so the need doesn't fall on housing providers.**

- Funding needs to be made available for associated support services in both the public and third sectors that work with tenants that sit outside the housing sector. This includes mental health services as well as partnership working around services such as food banks.
- Data sharing protocols need to be put in place with other public services to enable better joint working (particularly for the implementation of the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocations (Wales) Act 2026). Often GDPR is a blocker to providing appropriate support for individuals across different organisations. Joint working between housing and other services in general needs to be improved.
- Statutory services (for example social services and the police) should be more accountable for individuals which would relieve the pressure on housing providers.

## Ask 2:

**The requirements of WHQS need to be reviewed and revised because they are too costly and onerous.**

- There should be wholesale review of WHQS following the submission of data to Welsh Government from providers.
- In particular, the decarbonisation element should be revised, and the requirement should be to work towards SAP69 like in England

## Ask 3:

**Successful grant funding schemes should be continued and further rolled out.**

- There should be a further roll out and investment in TACP and the Social Housing Grant.

**Ask 4:**

**There should be more input from housing professionals in the policy-making process particularly around the impact and implementation of legislation.**

- There should be improved mechanisms for enabling direct input from current housing practitioners in the legislative process
- There should be transitional timelines on policies and better communication around these so organisations have more time to align systems
- Policy and legislation should be created in a way so that it is able to respond to geographical need and respond to local barriers
- There should be more thorough mapping of the potential consequences of policy and legislation, and how it will be implemented by housing professionals.

**Ask 5:**

**More information, informed by housing professionals, should be made available on how the new allocations process within the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocations (Wales) Act 2026 might work.**

- There needs to be a focus on the availability of suitable homes for individuals with disabilities and how the needs of individuals with additional support needs will be met through the proposed new legislation
- Local authorities need to listen to housing associations about suitable allocations to create cohesive communities
- More clarity needs to be provided about who will be able to be included on the allocations list.

**Ask 6:**

**The current workforce needs to be recognised and valued, particularly in relation to the vicarious trauma they might experience.**

**There needs to be further investment in the number of housing professionals in Wales and the training and education available to them.**

- There should be suitable investment in the Housing Solutions workforce in terms of number of staff and appropriate training
- There should be an increased investment in the planning workforce
- Welsh Government should commit to addressing the skills gap within the housing sector in the broadest sense, including the construction sector, compliance sector, training providers, and housing management professionals
- Alongside investment in growing the workforce, the existing workforce needs to be more highly valued through proper recognition of their roles and the impact they make on individuals and communities
- There needs to be a recognition that housing staff can experience vicarious trauma and that supporting complex customers and experiencing second-hand trauma can lead to burn out
- Apprenticeships for housing professionals and contractors should be further developed.

# Discussion

The data gathered through this research project aligns with other data recently published. The CIH Cymru Winter Sector Snapshot 2026 published in February 2026 showed that there were concerns and a lack of clarity about whether the housing sector could afford to complete decarbonisation works on their properties. It also showed an increased negative impact of work on housing professionals' wellbeing (74%). In particular, those respondents working in local authorities reported a significant increase in a major (rather than moderate or minor) negative impact of their work on their wellbeing (29%). Respondents to this survey also called for an increased focus on partnership working with other public services within the housing sector and a more robust approach from Welsh Government to engaging with housing professionals as part of the policy-making process.

Some of the asks from the research have been addressed by the Welsh Government during the progress of this project. During the course of the research, the Welsh Government announced a further rollout and investment into TACP funding which speaks to Ask 3 of this research. An additional £50m for TACP funding will be released which enables the scheme to open for 2026/27 (Welsh Government 2026). The Homelessness and Social Allocations (Wales) Act 2026 also went through Stages 2 and 3 of scrutiny before being passed, with changes being made at Stage 2 on the detail of 'qualifying persons' for allocations processes which responded to sector concerns (Bibbings 2026).

As noted in the Introduction, two core themes emerged from all of the data collection:

<b>The housing workforce</b>	<b>The policy-making process and housing professionals</b>
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## 5.1 The housing workforce

This research shows further evidence of the contested nature of the housing professional, particularly in the context of the impact of austerity. As discussed, the profession already experienced a sense of "plasticity" (Furbey, Reid and Cole 2001, p. 430) in the type of work it had to engage with and the knowledge that defined a 'housing professional'. This research captures the impact of the retrenchment of other public services on housing professionals, leaving them to pick up additional areas of support for their tenants. This in turn has led to increased expectations from tenants that housing professionals can and should provide this support, and a subsequent increase in pressure felt by housing professionals. The reference to vicarious trauma and burnout in this research mirrors that which is found in CIH Cymru Sector Snapshots (2025; 2026) as well as broader research into the experience of housing professionals in similar welfare systems (Batterham et al. 2026).

This is informed by, if not compounded by, the fact that a large number of individuals have vocational reasons behind being a housing professional (CIH Cymru 2025, 2026). Throughout this research there was a strong sense of pride about the work that professionals engaged in, and the positive impact that they had on individuals and communities. Participants outlined "we are making a difference to people's lives" and "changing lives". When asked about facilitators to enabling their work, the respondents emphasised the committed and dedicated housing workforce that was already in place. This vocational element is reflected in Sector Snapshot data, with 67% of respondents outlining that they worked in the sector to make a difference in the 2026 survey.

However, the data also shows that housing professionals do not consider the current workforce to be sufficient in the context of ongoing and forthcoming legislative priorities. Participants outlined that there needed to be further investment in the workforce in terms of increasing staff, that there were going to be increased duties from forthcoming legislative changes on an already pressured workforce, and they wanted improved approaches to partnership working. This indicates a need for a more robust public services workforce plan around housing and homelessness. The Welsh Government has stated that homelessness is seen as a responsibility of the wider public service (Welsh Government 2019). This research indicates that a more robust consideration of the workforce (in the broadest sense) needs to be taken to be able to meet the government's policy aspirations. This would involve looking beyond the housing sector workforce and considering both quantity of workforce and support needed for them in their roles.

## 5.2 The policymaking process

Participants outlined that the Welsh Government does engage with the sector but that the level by which they do is not sufficient. In particular, participants emphasised the lack of recent operational housing experience in developing policy and legislation in terms of implementation; Ask 4 reflects this. The Welsh Government has shifted its approach to policymaking within housing and homelessness to robustly include the voices of those who have experienced housing issues. The process of the creation of the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocations (Wales) Act 2026 reflects this. Participants in this research highlighted the lack of a voice around the implementation of housing legislation from an operational point of view. This could be framed as a call for the inclusion of 'experts by experience of implementation' within the Welsh Government's collaborative approach to policy design.

This call for a more involved approach to understanding issues of implementation of legislation was often discussed by participants with reference to the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. From these discussions, there was a sense that the ongoing issues around this legislation had a broader impact on professionals than just the immediate. Participants were hesitant about the implementation and impact of new legislation more broadly, particularly when they were still trying to seek clarity on the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. These points around stronger engagement with and representation from the sector are mirrored in the 2026 Winter Sector Snapshot survey where 28% of respondents outlined 'listening to the sector' as the one thing they would ask the Welsh Government to do in relation to housing (CIH Cymru 2026).

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## Conclusion

This research adds a qualitative dimension to the quantitative work completed by CIH Cymru. It outlines a set of asks for the new Welsh Government following the Senedd 2026 election in relation to the implementation of new legislation and the ability of housing professionals and the broader workforce to enable this.

# Appendix 1: methodology

## Method

This research used the World Café method to gather data. This a qualitative approach to data collection, which was intended to complement the quantitative data captured by CIH Cymru in their Sector Snapshots.

The World Café method is an example of a participatory approach to research which is intended to support the possibility of and recognise the importance of involving various stakeholders in knowledge creation (Recchia et al. 2022). This structured and inclusive method involves small groups of individuals discussing a topic around a table in order to generate new knowledge. This discussion is supported by a predefined set of topics and questions and there is a clear structure to the event. The method “allows the involvement of people in a meaningful group dialog on complex issues, in which all participants are considered experts, based on their different experience and knowledge” (Recchia et al. 2022, p. 222).

For this research, three World Cafés were held. One in-person in South Wales and two online (the North Wales event had to be moved online due to adverse weather). In the in-person event, participants were allocated tables to ensure a diversity in roles and organisations within each discussion group. This was replicated in the online sessions through breakout rooms. World Cafés normally begin with a low-risk discussion activity in order to create relationships between participants. For this activity participants were asked to introduce themselves and their role, before outlining the types of activities that they were involved in their day-to-day work. This created a sense of shared understanding around individuals’ roles within the housing sector. The participants then engaged with three structured activities based on a short presentation of information from the facilitator. The first activity required participants to consider barriers and facilitators of their current work. They had to discuss these in their small groups and write a list of ‘rocks’ (barriers) and ‘balloons’ (facilitators). The second activity focussed on the pressures facing housing professionals in relation to forthcoming legislative/policy changes. Participants were asked to identify changes that are likely to relieve pressure, increase pressure moderately, or increase pressure significantly. Finally, participants were asked to synthesise the outcomes of their discussions so far into tangible asks for the new Welsh Government.

## Participant recruitment

Participants were recruited through the CIH Cymru membership mailing list and via their social media channels. Participants did not have to be a member of CIH Cymru, but it is likely that most were due to the recruitment method. There were 20 participants in total, spread evenly across the three events. Although this is a small sample size, it is appropriate for the World Café method where the focus is on the quality of the collaborative discussions between participants rather than the quantity of data gathered.

14 of the participants were from housing associations and 6 from local authorities. 7 participants were based in north Wales organisations, 12 of the participants were from organisations that worked across south Wales and the Valleys and 1 worked in the Swansea area. Roles ranged from strategic, such as Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration to more operational roles such as Housing Officer. This diversity of role and organisation enabled the collaborative approach of the World Café to work well; individuals were talking about similar priorities and challenges but from different local and organisational contexts.

## Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis followed the 6-stage approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). An initial inductive analysis was undertaken identifying themes within each activity. Responses to each activity were grouped under these themes. This provided the structure for the responses to each activity. The second stage of analysis looked for repeated themes across the activities. There was significant overlap in the issues and responses identified through each activity so a set of themes across the different activities was clearly identifiable. The core themes of the housing workforce and the policy-making process were highlighted in the responses to all activities. The researcher was aware of their positionality in terms of interpreting the data but, in relation to the asks activity in particular, checked the exact wording and meaning behind the data created by the discussion groups within the world café events.

## Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the Cardiff Metropolitan University School of Education and Social Policy ethics committee prior to the research taking place. Funding was provided by CIH Cymru for this research.

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