Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

Continuous Professional Development:

A Foundation for Professionalism, Leadership and Organisational Excellence

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from our June and July 2026 survey of Wales' social housing sector, exploring perceptions of professionalism, leadership, organisational culture, workforce development, qualifications and professional standards. Respondents were predominantly current practitioners (96%), with most working in housing associations or registered social landlords (69%) and local authorities (22%). Responses were received from individuals across a range of roles and levels of seniority, including board members, chief executives, executive teams, senior management teams, middle managers, supervisors and those in operational and resident-facing roles.

The findings demonstrate strong support for continuous professional development (CPD) across the Welsh social housing sector. Almost seven in ten respondents (69%) supported a regulatory requirement for social landlords to demonstrate how they provide access to CPD for their employees, suggesting a widespread recognition of the role that ongoing learning plays in maintaining professional standards and supporting organisational effectiveness.

Support for a regulatory requirement was particularly strong among middle managers, supervisors and operational staff, all of whom may experience the direct benefits of structured development opportunities in building knowledge, confidence and career progression. By contrast, board members and some senior leaders were less supportive, which may reflect concerns regarding flexibility, organisational autonomy, resource implications or the effectiveness of formal regulatory requirements in driving meaningful development.

While the support for mandated qualifications remains mixed, with 55% of respondents wanting mandated qualifications, the broader survey findings reinforce the importance of CPD.

The findings also suggest that CPD could play a role in addressing some of the challenges identified elsewhere in the survey. Differences in perceptions between senior leader respondents and respondents in more operational roles on issues such as communication, leadership visibility, employee voice and organisational culture indicate a need for development opportunities at all levels of organisations. Effective CPD can help leaders build the skills required to engage employees, foster inclusive cultures and lead organisational change, while also supporting colleagues in more operational roles to develop professionally and progress within the sector[1].

Respondents identified leadership capability, organisational culture and workforce development as key contributors to organisational performance, and many expressed a desire for additional leadership and management training, coaching and workplace learning opportunities. The strong demand for further development suggests that staff view professional learning as an important mechanism for improving both individual capability and organisational outcomes.

Overall, respondents expressed confidence in leadership and organisational culture, recognising their important contribution to organisational performance. Leadership was widely viewed as providing a clear vision, empowering colleagues, supporting professional development and demonstrating care for both employees and service users. Similarly, respondents identified strengths in the sector's culture, particularly around collaboration, inclusion, equity and a shared sense of purpose.

One of the most notable themes emerging from the survey is the difference in perceptions between respondents in senior leadership roles and those in more operational level roles. Across almost all leadership measures, board members, chief executives, executive managers and senior manager respondents reported more positive views than respondents in operational and supervisor/team leader roles, suggesting that experiences of leadership vary significantly across organisational levels.

[1]Al-Omary H, Soltani A, Stewart D, Nazar Z. Implementing learning into practice from continuous professional development activities: a scoping review of health professionals' views and experiences. BMC Med Educ. 2024

Respondents in chief executive roles, executive or senior management roles and, to some extent, middle management roles generally perceived leadership as providing direction, empowerment and support. Respondents employed in more operational and supervisor/team leader roles were more likely to identify shortcomings in communication, visibility, accountability and engagement. While such differences are not uncommon in large and complex organisations, the findings do indicate a need for organisations to consider how leadership behaviours are experienced at all levels and whether existing communication and engagement mechanisms are effectively connecting those in senior positions with colleagues in junior management and operational roles.

Taken together, the results suggest that respondents view CPD not simply as a compliance requirement, but as a strategic tool for strengthening leadership, improving organisational culture and supporting the long-term professionalism of the Welsh social housing workforce. Ensuring consistent access to high-quality development opportunities is therefore likely to be an important factor in building the capacity and resilience of the sector in the years ahead.



Survey results

Respondent profile

We received a total of 51 responses to our survey. This section provides an overview of these respondents.

Current situation

As shown in Table 1, 96% of respondents were current practitioners in Wales' social housing sector[2].

Table 1: Which of the following best describes your current situation?

Current situation	
Current practitioner within Wales' social housing sector	96%
Former practitioner within Wales' social housing sector	4%
Not a practitioner but have an interest in Wales' social housing sector	0%
Other	0%

Type of organisation

The majority of respondents (69%) work for a housing association or a registered social landlord (RSL). A further 22% work for a local authority[3].

Table 2: Which of the following best describes the organisation that you work in currently?

Type of organisation	
Housing association/RSL	69%
Local authority	22%
Government department or agency	2%
Organisation providing support to Wales' social housing sector	6%
Other	0%

[2]Throughout the report, figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding
[3]Only includes current practitioners

Position within organisation

Most commonly, respondents are middle management (35%) followed by employees at operational level (16%) and executive directors of RSL or senior manager in a local authority housing service (14%)[4].

Table 3: Which of the following best describes your current position within your organisation?

Position within organisation	
Board member	6%
Chief executive of RSL/head of housing service within a local authority	10%
Executive director in RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority	14%
Middle manager	35%
Supervisor or team leader	10%
Operational level	16%
Other	8%

Role within organisation

Respondents are most commonly in housing management roles (29%) or property services (20%)[4].

Table 4: Which of the following functions best describes your role?

Role within organisation	
Housing management	29%
Property services	20%
Development	8%
Community engagement	6%
Finance and governance	14%
Leadership and management	18%
Other	4%

Respondent age

Most commonly respondents are aged 55+ (45%), followed by a further 29% aged between 45-54.

Table 5: Age

Age	
Under 25	2%
25-34	10%
35-44	10%
45-54	29%
55+	45%
Prefer not to say	4%

[4]Only includes current practitioners

Respondent gender

The majority of respondents identified as female (51%) and 41% identified as male.

Table 6: Please select the option that best describes you.

Gender identity	
Male	41.2%
Female	51.0%
Non-binary	3.9%
Prefer to self-describe	0.0%
Prefer not to say	3.9%



Responsibility for leadership and culture

Level of responsibility stakeholders have for the leadership and culture of their organisation

Respondents were more likely to perceive that primary responsibility for leadership and culture of their organisation rested with the chief executive or equivalent (84%) or the senior executive management team or equivalent (74%).

Table 7: What level of responsibility for the leadership and culture of your organisation do you consider the following stakeholders to have?

Stakeholder	Primary responsibility	Some responsibility
An external body such as a regulator or government department	10%	76%
Chief executive or equivalent	84%	10%
All managers/supervisors	53%	43%
Senior executive management team or equivalent	74%	22%
All staff	43%	51%
Board/management committee or similar	68%	24%

The following roles are significantly more likely than average (by 10% or more) to perceive that primary responsibility for leadership and culture rests with specific stakeholders:

- **An external body such as a regulator or government department**: Supervisor or team leader (40%); operational (25%)
- **Chief executive or equivalent**: Chief executive of an RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (100%); board member (100%)
- **All managers/supervisors**: Board member (100%)
- **Senior executive management team or equivalent**: Board member (100%); executive director in an RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority (86%); operational (88%)
- **All staff**: Board member (100%); chief executive of an RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (60%); executive director in an RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority (86%).
- **Board/management committee or similar**: Board member (100%); chief executive of an RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (80%).

Some comments on responsibility for leadership and culture

"All colleagues have a huge responsibility to play in the culture of the organisation. It plays out in how we treat each other, how we connect with and support the communities we work with, and in how we engage with people in services. Leadership roles and boards have a primary responsibility to model this culture and to ensure that decisions are rooted in the values of the organisation. Our tenants also have a huge role in shaping the culture of the organisation when effective working and collaborating happens. I believe strongly in strengths-based community development and that has a huge role to play in culture."

"Tenant representative organisations have some responsibility to highlight good and bad examples of the culture in an organisation."

"Welsh Government have some responsibility. Should be actively promoting staff empowerment; tenant involvement; evidence-based decision-making; excellence in all aspects of public service delivery."

Leadership

Level of agreement with statements about common aspects of leadership within organisation

Most respondents agreed to some extent or agree strongly with all statements about common aspects of leadership within their own organisation, particularly in relation to these statements:

- "Leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future" (84%)
- "Leaders communicate how people's roles contribute to overall goals" (82%)
- "Leaders empower people to make decisions in their role" (84%)
- "Leaders support people's professional development and growth" (78%)
- "Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users" (78%)[5]

Table 8: We have set out some statements about common aspects of leadership. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to your CURRENT ORGANISATION.

Common aspects of leadership	Agree strongly	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Disagree strongly
Leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions	39%	37%	4%	20%
Leaders actively engage stakeholders such as staff and service users in decision making	31%	41%	16%	12%
Leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future	39%	45%	8%	8%
Leaders communicate how people's roles contribute to overall goals	33%	49%	12%	6%
Leaders empower people to make decisions in their role	29%	55%	12%	4%
Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them	18%	45%	25%	12%
Leaders hold themselves accountable for their actions	39%	37%	29%	6%
Leaders lead by example and act according to shared values	39%	29%	24%	8%
Leaders provide regular and constructive feedback	20%	51%	22%	6%
Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users	47%	31%	16%	6%
Leaders support people's professional development and growth	39%	39%	14%	8%

[5]Only includes current practitioners

Board members, chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing services within a local authority were significantly more likely than average to agree strongly or agree to some extent with each statement. In addition, executive directors of RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely to agree that: "Leaders support people's professional development and growth" (100%) and "Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them" (100%).

Respondents working in team leader or supervisor roles agreed strongly or agreed to some extent with the statements: "Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users" (60%) and "Leaders empower people to make decisions in their role" (80%).

In contrast, respondents working in team leader or supervisor roles disagreed strongly or disagreed to some extent with the statements: "Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them" (60%) and "Leaders support people's professional development and growth" (60%). They also did not agree strongly with any of the statements relating to leadership in their current organisation.

Respondents in an operational - level role were more likely than average to disagree strongly with statements about leadership in their current organisation, particularly the statements: "Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them" (50%) and "Leaders lead by example and act according to shared values" (55%).



Level of agreement with statements about common aspects of leadership within the social housing sector as a whole

The majority of respondents also agree to some extent or agree strongly with each statement about common aspects of leadership with the sector, particularly in relation to the statements: "Leaders empower people to make decisions in their role" (84%), "Leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future" (84%), "Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users" (79%) and "Leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions" (77%).

Table 9: Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements, but this time in relation to THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR AS A WHOLE.

Common aspects of leadership	Agree strongly	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Disagree strongly
Leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions	39%	37%	20%	4%
Leaders actively engage stakeholders, such as staff and service users, in decision making	29%	43%	16%	12%
Leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future	41%	43%	8%	8%
Leaders communicate how people's roles contribute to overall goals	35%	47%	12%	6%
Leaders empower people to make decisions in their role	29%	55%	12%	4%
Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them	22%	43%	24%	12%
Leaders hold themselves accountable for their actions	41%	26%	28%	6%
Leaders lead by example and act according to shared values	39%	29%	24%	8%
Leaders provide regular and constructive feedback	20%	53%	22%	6%
Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users	47%	31%	16%	6%
Leaders support people's professional development and growth	39%	39%	14%	8%

When it comes to the housing sector as a whole, board members did not agree strongly with any of the statements about common aspects of leadership. Two-thirds of board member respondents disagreed to some extent with the statement "Leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future" (67%).

With the exception of respondents working at an operational level, most respondents agreed strongly or agreed to some extent with each statement, particularly: "Leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions" (85% on average), "Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them", (74% on average) and "Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users" (85% on average).

Respondents working at an operational level were more likely to disagree strongly or disagree to some extent, though not in large numbers. The particular statements they disagreed with were: “Leaders provide regular and constructive feedback” (44%), “Leaders communicate how people’s roles contribute to overall goals” (33%) and “Leaders actively engage stakeholders, such as staff and service users, in decision making” (44%).

Key points – leadership

Overall, perceptions of leadership were positive, both within individual organisations and across the wider housing sector, particularly in relation to vision-setting, supporting wellbeing, empowering colleagues and helping them understand how their roles contribute to wider goals.

Despite this, there are notable differences between respondent groups, with board members, chief executives and senior leaders generally reporting more positive views than those in supervisory, team leader and operational roles. Respondents in operational roles were more likely to raise concerns about access to resources, communication, engagement and professional development, indicating a perception gap between senior leaders and the wider workforce.

This seems to suggest that, while leadership is viewed positively overall, there is a need to improve communication, engagement and leadership visibility to ensure a more consistent leadership experience across all levels of seniority within organisations and the wider housing sector.



Culture

Common aspects of culture within the whole housing sector

Most respondents agreed strongly or agreed to some extent with all statements about common aspects relating to culture within the whole housing sector. The following statements had a high proportion of respondents agreeing with them strongly or agreeing with them to some extent: "People feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues" (92%), "The sector actively promotes equity in opportunities and treatment" (89%), "People feel included and respected regardless of their background or identity" (82%), "Service users are seen as having a stake in the sector" (77%) and "Innovation and creativity are encouraged" (75%).

Table 10: Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to the social housing sector as a whole.

Common aspects of organisational or wider culture	Agree strongly	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Disagree strongly
Important decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way	8%	59%	28%	6%
Innovation and creativity are encouraged	12%	63%	22%	4%
People feel empowered to show initiative or try new approaches	8%	59%	29%	4%
These values are reflected in day-to-day behaviours	12%	55%	28%	6%
People feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues	28%	65%	2%	6%
People feel safe to express thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences	6%	51%	37%	6%
The sector has a clear mission and values that are well understood	28%	43%	26%	4%
The sector actively promotes equity in opportunities and treatment	22%	67%	10%	2%
There is open and honest communication at all levels	4%	45%	41%	10%
People feel included and respected regardless of their background or identity	18%	65%	12%	6%
Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities	12%	55%	29%	4%
Diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued	22%	55%	20%	4%
Cross-functional collaboration is effective	14%	54%	27%	6%
Feedback is encouraged and acted on constructively	8%	61%	26%	6%
Service users are seen as having a stake in the sector	26%	51%	18%	6%

Board member respondents were more likely than average to agree strongly or agree to some extent with the statements: "People feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues" (100%), "The sector actively promotes equity in opportunities and treatment" (100%), and "Service users are seen as having a stake in the sector" (67%).

Respondents working as a chief executive of an RSL/head of housing service within a local authority, as an executive director in an RSL, or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority, were more likely to agree strongly or agree as to some extent that: "Important decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way" (80% and 100% respectively), "Diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued" (60% and 71% respectively) and "People feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues" (both 100%).

Respondents working in middle management, as a supervisor or team leader and in an operational role, also agreed strongly or agreed to some extent with the statements: "People feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues" (83%, 100% and 89% respectively).

Respondents working in operational roles were more likely to disagree to some extent or disagree strongly with the statements on the culture of the whole housing sector. In particular, they disagreed with: "People feel safe to express thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences" (44%), "Important decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way" (44%), and "Feedback is encouraged and acted on constructively" (44%).

Key points: Culture

Overall, respondents were positive about the culture of the whole housing sector, particularly in relation to camaraderie, inclusion, equity and a shared commitment to service users. However, respondent views on sector culture, like perceptions of leadership, varied by role. Respondents in executive roles, senior management roles and board members were generally more likely to hold positive views. Respondents employed as middle managers, supervisors/team leaders and those in operational roles were more likely to express concerns, particularly regarding communication and transparency.

While the sector appears to benefit from strong cultural foundations, the findings indicate a need to strengthen communication, employee voice and inclusive decision-making to ensure positive cultural experiences are reflected consistently across all levels of the housing sector.

Impact of leadership and culture in the sector

Views on leadership and culture within organisations

Respondents largely agreed strongly or agreed to some extent to all of the statements relating to leadership and culture in their current organisation, particularly in relation to the statements: "Our current senior management already demonstrates a high level of leadership attributes" (76%), "We have access to the support we require to improve leadership and culture within the organisation" (74%) and "We already have a very positive organisational culture" (74%)[6].

Table 11: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about leadership and culture within your organisation.

Statements	Agree strongly	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Disagree strongly
We already have a very positive organisational culture	33%	41%	18%	8%
We have access to the support that we need to improve leadership and culture within the organisation	31%	43%	14%	12%
We provide appropriate leadership development opportunities for our employees across the organisation	25%	37%	31%	8%
We have a robust plan in place to ensure that we have the necessary leadership attributes in the future	27%	35%	22%	16%
Our current senior management already demonstrate a high level of leadership attributes	33%	43%	18%	6%

Board member respondents agreed strongly with all the statements.

[6]Only includes current practitioners

All other respondents, apart from those in operational roles, also tended to agree strongly or agree to some extent with the statements relating to leadership. The exception was the statement: "We have a robust plan in place to ensure that we have the necessary leadership attributes in the future", with the following proportion of respondents either disagreeing strongly or disagreeing to some extent:

- Chief executive of an RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (20%)
- Executive director in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority (43%)
- Middle management (47%)
- Team leader or supervisor (20%)
- Operations (38%).

Half of respondents in an operational role also disagreed strongly or disagreed to some extent with the statement: "We provide appropriate leadership development opportunities for our employees across the organisation" and "We already have a very positive organisational culture."

Impact of quality of leadership on organisational performance

Most respondents agreed that the quality of leadership within their current organisation had a significant positive impact or some positive impact on their current organisation's performance (39% and 33% respectively)[7].

Table 12: What impact do you think the quality of leadership within your organisation has had on the organisation's performance?

Level of impact	
Significant negative impact	4%
Some negative impact	18%
No impact either way	6%
Some positive impact	33%
Significant positive impact	39%

All board member respondents stated that the quality of leadership had a significant positive impact on organisational performance.

Respondents who were chief executives of an RSL or heads of housing service within a local authority, and those who were executive directors in an RSL or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority, were also more likely to say that the quality of leadership had some positive impact or a significant positive impact on organisational performance (80% and 100% respectively)[8].

Respondents who worked in operational roles were more likely to think that the quality of leadership had a significant negative impact or some negative impact (50%).

[7]Only includes current practitioners
[8]Only includes current practitioners

Some comments on impact of leadership on organisational performance

"Our senior leadership can have a very positive influence on the Association's performance, but it would help if communication was better and if there was greater trust in heads/managers in developing appropriate strategies to take us forward."

"Effective leadership must be focused on where the organisation needs to be in the future, while also taking into account the needs and perspectives of staff. Leaders should have a strong understanding of the importance of housing and ensure that it is appropriately prioritised and resourced. Additionally, we need leaders who are willing to take measured, well-judged risks to drive progress and improvement."

"Good leadership has transformed the organisation, both in developing its purpose, driving it forward and developing a culture and climate that makes it possible for people to succeed."

Impact of organisational culture on organisational performance

The majority of respondents feel that the culture within their organisation has had a positive or a significant impact on organisational performance (71%), while a significant minority feel that there has been some or a significant negative impact (22%)[9].

Table 13: What impact do you think the culture of your organisation has had on the organisation's performance?

Level of impact	
Significant negative impact	4%
Some negative impact	18%
No impact either way	6%
Some positive impact	33%
Significant positive impact	39%

The majority of respondents in all roles felt that the culture of an organisation had some positive impact or a significant positive impact on the organisation's performance.

Despite this overall positive view, a minority of respondents in operational roles and team leader or roles felt that the culture of the organisation had a significant negative impact or some negative impact on organisational performance (38% and 40% respectively). This was also seen in some of the comments received on the impact of organisational culture on performance.

[9]Only asked of current practitioners

Some comments on impact of organisational culture on performance

"While promoting a culture of collaboration, this is often sacrificed to reach a target without considering the impact to staff and tenants."

"Where an open and transparent culture exists, where the senior officers live, and are seen to live the values of the organisation, there will be an enhanced feeling of security in individuals' roles and a belief that you are valued, trusted and 'safe'. When this occurs, then performance naturally improves and service delivery really is key to everyone."

"Examples are relatively frequent in multiple organisations of where people have been afraid to raise concerns. We have seen this occur in multiple clients around landlord health and safety concerns, including damp and mould. This is not universal, but there is an evident lack of accountability in the housing sector for performance issues and that is a cultural problem."

Key points: Impact of culture and leadership on performance

Respondents were generally positive about leadership and culture within their organisations, with around three-quarters agreeing that strong leadership attributes are demonstrated and that leadership and culture contribute positively to organisational performance. Yet, as previously seen, perceptions varied by role, with board member respondents and respondents in executive or senior management roles consistently reporting more positive views than respondents in operational or team leader or supervisor roles.

While leadership and culture are widely regarded as organisational strengths, there is scope to strengthen communication, leadership development and succession planning to ensure these positive experiences are reflected consistently across all levels of the workforce.



Recruitment, training and development

Effectiveness of recruitment, training and development practices

The majority of respondents rated all of the practices within their organisation as very good or good, particularly in relation to the statements: "Giving people opportunities to develop on-the-job" (63%), "Recruiting people who have a good fit with the organisation's values" (61%) and "Giving people appropriate training and development to help them progress" (61%)[10].

Table 14: Please rate the effectiveness of each of the following practices within your organisation.

Practices	Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor
Providing appropriate career development paths for people	16%	31%	33%	14%	6%
Recruiting people that have the right technical skills and knowledge for their roles	14%	43%	27%	14%	2%
Giving people appropriate training and development to help them progress	14%	47%	27%	8%	4%
Recruiting people who have a good fit with the organisation's values	16%	45%	27%	12%	0%
Giving people opportunities to develop on-the-job	29%	35%	22%	14%	0.0%

Apart from respondents working as a team leader or within an operational role, all of the practices were rated as very good or good. Board members in particular rated the practices as good or very good.

Respondents who are team leaders or supervisors or who worked in operational roles were more likely to rate the following as poor or very poor: "Providing career development paths for people" (40% and 38% respectively), "Giving people opportunities to develop on-the-job" (40% and 38% respectively) and "Recruiting people that have the right technical skills and knowledge for their roles" (40% and 38% respectively).

Housing-specific qualifications

The largest group of respondents (41%) say that they have CIH qualifications or membership, with a further 33% having a degree level qualification in housing or a postgraduate level qualification in housing. A fifth (20%) of respondents have no housing-specific qualifications.

[10]Only asked of current practitioners

Table 15: Which, if any, of the following housing-specific qualifications do you hold personally?

Housing-specific qualification	
SVQ or modern apprenticeship in housing	1%
Degree level qualification in housing	16%
Postgraduate level qualification in housing	17%
Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) qualification	19%
Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) membership	23%
No qualification	20%
Other housing-specific qualification (please describe)	4%

Respondents in chief executive of RSL/head of housing service roles, and those in executive director of RSL/senior manager roles, were less likely to hold a housing-related qualification (both 43%).

Respondents in a chief executive of RSL/head of housing service within a local authority role were also less likely to hold CIH membership (14%) but more likely to hold a CIH qualification (29%).

Respondents who are supervisors or team leaders were more likely to hold a housing-related qualification, with 91% holding a housing-related qualification. In addition, 81% of respondents in a middle management role and 77% of respondents in an operational role also hold a housing-related qualification.

All operational - level respondents working within a local authority hold a housing-related qualification but only 20% hold CIH membership. Among operational level respondents working in a housing association or RSL, 63% held a housing related qualification and 13% held CIH membership.

Leadership and management qualifications

Fewer respondents held a leadership and management qualification (69%) than a housing-related qualification (80%).

Table 16: Do you hold any formal leadership and management qualifications or similar in the following categories?

Leadership and management qualifications	
Leadership and management qualifications	34%
Entry to middle level leadership and management qualifications	6%
Middle to senior level leadership and management qualifications	13%
Strategic or executive leadership and management qualifications	11%
No qualification	31%
Another leadership qualification (please describe)	5%
Other housing-specific qualification (please describe)	4%

All board member respondents and executive directors in RSLs, as well as senior managers within the housing service of a local authority and team leader or supervisor respondents hold a leadership and management qualification. Team leader or supervisor respondents were more likely to hold an entry to middle level leadership and management qualification.

When we consider chief executives or heads of housing in local authority respondents and middle managers, 38% and 42% respectively do not hold a leadership and management qualification. For respondents in an operational role, 55% do not hold a leadership and management qualification.

To what extent do qualifications improve leadership and culture?

The majority of respondents (67%) felt that the range of qualifications available drives improvements in leadership and culture within organisations to some extent or to a significant extent.

Table 17: To what extent do you think the range of qualifications available to people in the sector drives improvements in leadership and culture within organisations?

	All
Not at all	6%
Only slightly	27%
To some extent	45%
To a significant extent	22%

Respondents who are chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within local authorities, and executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority, were more likely to state that there was some impact or a significant impact on organisational leadership and culture (80% and 86% respectively).

Respondents working in a housing association or RSL were also more likely to agree that the availability of qualifications drove improvements in leadership and culture to some extent or to a significant extent (71%).

Importance of senior management having housing or leadership qualifications

The majority of respondents agreed that it was very important or quite important for senior management to have a formal housing qualification (61%) and/or a formal leadership qualification (78%).

Table 18: How important do you think it is for senior managers (typically at leadership team/executive team and chief executive level) to have each of the following types of qualification?

	Formal housing qualification	Formal leadership
Very important	41%	35%
Quite important	20%	43%
Slightly important	20%	8%
Not important	20%	14%

No board member respondents thought it was important that senior management, the executive team or chief executives had either formal qualification.

Chief executives of RSLs/head of housing in a local authority, and executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority, stated that it was quite important or slightly important for senior management to have a formal housing qualification (80% and 57% respectively) and very important or quite important to have a leadership and management qualification (80% and 86% respectively).

Those respondents working as a team leader or supervisor or in an operational role felt that it was very important or quite important for senior management to have a formal housing qualification (100% and 67% respectively) and also very important or quite important to have a formal leadership and management qualification (100% and 88% respectively).

Aspirations for future qualifications, training and development

Most respondents (70%) aspire for future qualifications, training and development. The most common was additional leadership and management training to develop leadership and management capabilities (36%) followed by on-the-job support to develop leadership and management capabilities (18%).

Table 19: Thinking about your own personal aspirations over the next few years, which of the following would you like to do?

Future aspiration	
Take part in additional leadership and management training and development to develop your leadership and management capabilities (not formally certified as a formal qualification)	36%
Receive on-the-job support to develop your leadership and management capabilities	18%
Undertake an entry to middle level leadership and management qualification	1%
Undertake a middle to senior level leadership and management qualification	3%
Undertake a strategic or executive leadership and management qualification	12%
None of the above	30%

Around half of chief executives of RSLs/head of housing in a local authority (60%), executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority (50%) and supervisor/team leader respondents (43%) wanted to take part in additional leadership and management training to develop their leadership and management capabilities (not formally certified as a formal qualification).

Middle management (30%), team leader/supervisor (29%) and operational level respondents (30%) wanted to also receive on-the-job training to develop their leadership and management capabilities.

Mandated qualifications

Just over half of all respondents (55%) wanted to mandate qualifications for housing managers above a certain level.

Table 20: Do you think that the Welsh government should mandate qualifications for housing managers above a certain level?

Mandated qualifications	
Yes	55%
No	45%

No board member respondents wanted mandated qualifications and the majority of executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority (60%) did not want mandatory qualifications.

Table 21: Do you think that the Welsh government should mandate qualifications for housing managers above a certain level? (Position held by respondent.)

Position held	Yes	No
Board member	0%	100%
Chief executive or RSL or head of housing service of a local authority	60%	40%
Executive director in RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority	43%	57%
Middle manager	61%	39%
Supervisor or team leader	60%	40%
Operational level	67%	33%
Other	50%	50%

When we look at organisation type, just over half of housing association/RSL respondents (51%) wanted mandated qualifications, and just under half of local authority respondents wanted mandated qualifications (46%). All respondents working in an organisation supporting the housing sector wanted mandated qualifications.

Regulatory requirement for evidencing CPD

The majority of respondents (69%) agreed that there should be a regulatory requirement in Wales for social landlords to ensure their employees access CPD.

Table 22: Should there be a regulatory requirement in Wales for social landlords to outline how they will ensure all their staff access CPD?

	All
Yes	69%
No	31%

The majority of board member respondents (67%) did not agree with the proposed regulatory requirement. For respondents working as executive directors in an RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority, there was an almost even split between yes (57%) and no (43%).

Table 23: Should there be a regulatory requirement in Wales for social landlords to outline how they will ensure all their staff access CPD? (Position held in organisation.)

Position held	Yes	No
Board member	33%	67%
Chief executive or RSL or head of housing service of a local authority	60%	40%
Executive director in RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority	57%	43%
Middle manager	72%	28%
Supervisor or team leader	100%	0%
Operational level	67%	33%
Other	75%	25%

When we consider organisation type, 73% of local authority respondents agreed with the proposed regulatory requirement and 66% of RSL/housing association respondents agreed. The majority of respondents working in organisations supporting the housing sector also agreed (75%).

Key points: Recruitment, training and development

Overall, respondents viewed recruitment, training and development practices positively, particularly opportunities for on-the-job learning, values-based recruitment and access to training and development. **Qualifications were regarded as important in supporting leadership and culture, with a small majority (55%) believing that they should be mandated through legislation. Furthermore, most respondents indicated that both housing-specific and leadership qualifications contribute to organisational improvement and that senior leaders should hold relevant professional credentials.**

Yet, reflecting on previous sections, there were differences between respondent groups. Respondents employed as team leaders, supervisors and in operational roles were more likely to express concerns about career development pathways, opportunities for progression and the effectiveness of recruitment practices.

While housing-specific qualifications were common across the sector, leadership qualifications were less prevalent, particularly among some respondents in middle management and in operational roles, highlighting potential gaps in leadership development.

The findings suggest strong support for continued investment in professional development, with many respondents aspiring to further leadership training and a majority supporting regulatory approaches to CPD. **A clear majority (69%) of respondents believed that there should be a regulatory requirement in Wales for social landlords to outline how they will ensure all their staff access continuous professional development**.

Taken together, the results indicate that while existing recruitment, training and development arrangements provide a solid foundation, there is scope to strengthen career progression, leadership development and workforce planning to support future organisational performance and leadership capacity across the sector.

Further respondent comments

Respondents were asked throughout the survey to provide further comments on questions relating to leadership and culture. While most of these comments fitted into the leadership or culture questions, some responses provided a wider view of leadership and culture, its importance and the impact of external factors on organisations. A selection of these comments are provided here.

"Leadership done right has a huge impact on the organisation's performance. Depending on the role of leadership it is quite clear how far removed from operational issues leadership can be. Housing management has become more complex due to changes in legislation with reduction in services to assist. This falls on housing operational staff to bridge the gap with no extra time or support staff. On top of that there is a general lack of professional recognition within or outside this sector for housing management who play an integral role in instigating safeguarding concerns and support or notify police, social services and other professional bodies of concerns needing to be addressed. I have worked in housing management for over 20 years, and the past two years have become extremely difficult to manage. This is worse if the organisation is relatively small compared to larger oganisations."

"Organisational culture is fundamental to long-term success and should be valued above a narrow focus on KPI-setting alone. A strong, positive culture creates an environment where people feel engaged, motivated, and committed – where they genuinely want to be part of the organisation.

"By fostering a culture built on shared purpose, trust, and accountability, leaders can enable staff to work collaboratively and perform at their best to achieve collective goals. Ultimately, a values-driven culture is what sustains performance, drives innovation, and ensures the organisation can deliver on its strategic ambitions."

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings from this survey provide valuable insight into current perceptions of leadership, culture, professionalism and workforce development across Wales' social housing sector. Drawing on the views of 51 respondents from housing associations, registered social landlords, local authorities and organisations that support the social housing sector in Wales, the results indicate a sector that is broadly viewed as professional, values-driven and committed to delivering high-quality services. At the same time, the findings identify several important challenges and opportunities that will require continued attention if the sector is to strengthen leadership capability, improve workforce experience and support future organisational resilience.

Professional development is viewed as essential

The survey highlights a strong belief in the value of qualifications, learning and professional development. Most respondents held either housing-related qualifications, leadership qualifications or both, and the majority believed that qualifications contribute positively to leadership effectiveness and organisational culture.

There is a clear appetite for ongoing development within the sector. Many respondents expressed interest in additional leadership and management training, while others highlighted the importance of coaching, mentoring and workplace-based learning opportunities. This demonstrates recognition across the sector that leadership capability is not static and requires continuous investment.

The findings also suggest that professional development is viewed as an important mechanism for improving organisational performance, developing future leaders and maintaining professional standards. Respondents generally supported the view that organisations should provide opportunities for colleagues to develop throughout their careers and build the skills required to address increasingly complex housing challenges.

Support for CPD is strong

One of the strongest areas of agreement related to the importance of CPD. Nearly seven in ten respondents supported a regulatory requirement for social landlords to demonstrate how they ensure colleagues have access to CPD opportunities.

Support for CPD was particularly strong among respondents working as middle managers, in team leader or supervisor roles and within operational roles, suggesting that employees view ongoing professional development as an important tool for maintaining competence, supporting career progression and improving service quality. Respondents also saw CPD as contributing to stronger leadership and more positive organisational cultures.

The findings indicate that CPD is increasingly viewed not simply as an individual responsibility, but as an organisational commitment and a key component of professional practice within the sector. Ensuring consistent access to high-quality development opportunities could therefore play an important role in strengthening workforce capability, supporting sector-wide improvement and developing the leaders of the future.

Views on mandatory qualifications remain divided

Opinion was more mixed regarding the introduction of mandatory qualifications for housing managers. While a small majority of respondents supported mandatory qualifications, there was significant variation between respondent groups.

Board member respondents were universally opposed to mandatory qualifications, while middle manager respondents, team leader or supervisors and those in operational roles were generally more supportive.

Although no clear consensus emerged on mandatory qualifications, there was wider agreement on the importance of professionalism, leadership development and continuous learning. This suggests that regardless of future regulatory approaches, investment in professional development is likely to remain a key priority for the sector.

Career development and workforce progression require further attention

While respondents were broadly positive about recruitment and training practices, views were more mixed in relation to career development pathways. This emerged as one of the weaker areas of workforce development, with many respondents rating progression opportunities less favourably than other aspects of organisational development.

The findings reveal that respondents in operational roles, in team leader or supervisor roles and front-facing colleagues were more likely to identify shortcomings in career progression opportunities, on-the-job development and workforce capability-building. This suggests that while organisations may be investing in training, employees do not always see a clear pathway for translating development into career advancement.

Given the ageing profile of survey respondents, with almost three-quarters aged 45 or over, establishing effective leadership pipelines and progression opportunities will be particularly important. Developing future leaders, retaining talent and supporting workforce succession planning are likely to become increasingly important priorities across the sector over the coming years.

Leadership is viewed positively but experiences differ across organisational levels

Leadership emerged as one of the strongest themes throughout the survey. Most respondents reported positive perceptions of leadership within both their own organisations and the wider sector. Leaders were generally seen as providing a clear strategic direction, empowering people to make decisions, supporting professional development and demonstrating concern for the wellbeing of colleagues and service users. Respondents also recognised the significant responsibility that chief executives, executive management teams, senior management teams and boards hold in shaping organisational leadership and culture.

Yet beneath these positive findings, a clear difference emerged between the experiences of respondents in more senior roles and those working in more operational roles. Board member respondents and those employed as chief executives, within executive management teams and senior management teams, consistently expressed more favourable views of leadership than respondents employed as team leaders or supervisors and within operational roles. Respondents in operational roles were more likely to question whether leaders provide meaningful feedback, communicate effectively and engage colleagues in decision-making.

This gap is significant because it suggests that leadership may be experienced differently at different levels of organisations. While strategic leadership may be viewed positively by those involved in setting organisational direction, those in operational roles appear more focused on how leadership is translated into communication and support. Addressing this disconnect will be critical if organisations are to ensure that leadership is experienced consistently throughout the workforce.

Culture is a significant strength of the sector

The survey findings indicate that respondents generally view the culture of the Welsh social housing sector positively. Strong levels of agreement were recorded for statements relating to camaraderie, inclusion, equity, collaboration and a shared commitment to service users. These findings suggest that respondents see the sector as one that values people, promotes fairness and encourages positive working relationships.

Particularly encouraging is the strength of support for statements relating to inclusion and equity. Respondents broadly agreed that people are treated with respect, regardless of their background, and that the sector actively promotes fair opportunities. The strong sense of camaraderie reported by respondents also reflects a sector that benefits from shared values and collective purpose.

Nevertheless, respondents identified areas where cultural improvement may be required. Communication, transparency and employee voice emerged as recurring concerns, particularly among respondents employed as middle managers, team leaders or supervisors and in operational roles. Lower levels of agreement relating to open communication, learning from mistakes and psychological safety suggest that some employees do not always feel fully included in organisational conversations or confident about raising concerns. These findings highlight an opportunity to strengthen cultures that encourage openness, learning and constructive challenge.

Leadership and culture are seen as key drivers of organisational performance

One of the clearest messages from the survey is the perceived relationship between leadership, culture and organisational performance. Most respondents believed that both leadership quality and organisational culture have a positive impact on the effectiveness of their organisation.

Respondents highlighted that strong leadership can provide direction, clarify priorities and create an environment that enables staff to perform effectively. Similarly, positive organisational cultures were associated with trust, collaboration, engagement and improved service delivery. The qualitative feedback reinforces this relationship, with respondents describing culture as fundamental to long-term success and emphasising the role of leadership in establishing environments where people feel valued, motivated and supported.

However, the findings again point to differences: respondents in chief executive roles, within executive management or senior teams, and board member respondents, were more likely to report positive impacts on performance. Yet respondents in operational roles were significantly more likely to identify negative effects arising from leadership and culture. This suggests that efforts to improve organisational performance should focus not only on strategic leadership but also on ensuring that organisational culture is experienced positively by colleagues at all levels.

Final reflections

Overall, the survey presents a largely positive picture of leadership, culture and professionalism within Wales' housing sector. Respondents described a sector characterised by strong values, collaborative working relationships and a commitment to professional development. Leadership and organisational culture are widely recognised as important strengths and are seen as making a significant contribution to organisational performance.

However, the findings also reveal several challenges that merit further attention. Most notably, there is a consistent perception gap between those in more senior roles and those in more junior management and operational roles. Issues relating to communication, transparency, trust, employee voice and career progression feature repeatedly throughout the findings and indicate opportunities for improvement.

Looking forward, the most significant opportunities for the sector are likely to lie in strengthening leadership visibility, improving communication across organisational levels, enhancing progression pathways, expanding access to development opportunities and embedding cultures where colleagues feel heard, valued and empowered. By addressing these areas, the sector will be well placed to build a confident, skilled and resilient workforce capable of meeting the increasingly complex demands facing housing in Wales.



Recommendations

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1. Work with the Welsh Government and housing sector to embed a sector-wide commitment to CPD within the regulatory framework for social housing

There is strong support for the Welsh Government to embed a sectoral commitment to CPD withing the regulatory framework, with 69% of respondents supporting that decision. The strong support for CPD demonstrates that professional learning is viewed as a key driver of leadership quality, organisational culture and service performance. Organisations should ensure that all employees have equitable access to structured CPD opportunities and should routinely assess the impact of development activity on individual and organisational outcomes. Consideration should also be given to establishing sector-wide expectations or frameworks for CPD that support consistency across Wales, and which are embedded in the regulatory framework.

2. Promote professional standards through qualifications and professional recognition

While views on mandatory qualifications were mixed, with just over half 55% in favour of mandated qualifications, there was broad agreement that qualifications contribute positively to leadership and organisational culture. The sector should continue to promote housing and leadership qualifications, encourage CIH membership and support pathways into professional accreditation. Rather than focusing solely on mandatory requirements, organisations should foster a culture that values continuous learning, professional competence and evidence-based practice.

3. Enhance communication and create opportunities for colleagues' voice

Organisations should create more structured opportunities for colleagues at all levels to influence decision-making and provide feedback. Regular engagement forums, colleague listening exercises and visible responses to feedback would help address concerns around communication, transparency and trust.

4. Improve leadership visibility and accountability

Senior leaders should increase their visibility with resident-facing teams and demonstrate how organisational values are reflected in decision-making and behaviours. Greater engagement between leadership teams and operational staff could help reduce the perception gap identified in the survey.

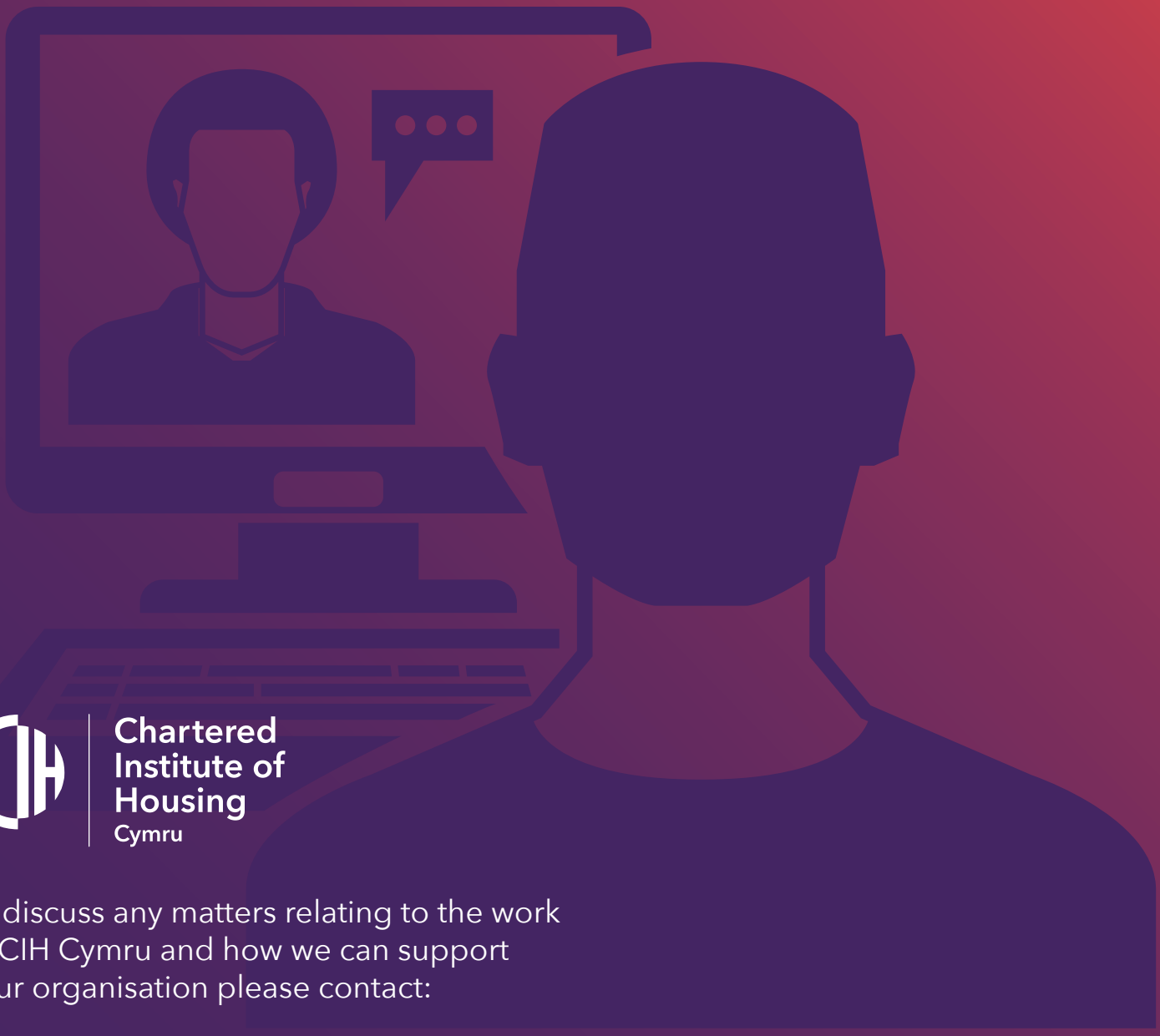
5. Develop clearer career pathways and succession planning

Career progression was one of the weaker areas identified by respondents, particularly among supervisors and operational staff. Social landlords should establish clear development pathways that show colleagues how they can progress within the sector. This should include career frameworks, talent management initiatives, succession planning and targeted support for employees seeking leadership roles. Particular attention should be given to developing future leaders in light of the sector's ageing workforce profile.

6. Invest in leadership development at all career stages

Given the strong link between leadership, culture and organisational performance identified in the survey, organisations should adopt a more systematic approach to leadership development. This should include leadership programmes for aspiring managers, development opportunities for middle managers and ongoing executive development for senior leaders. Coaching, mentoring and action-learning approaches should complement formal training to ensure leadership capability is developed throughout careers.





Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

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