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**Chartered
Institute of
Housing**
Cymru

Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019-2022

CIH Cymru consultation response

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple – to provide housing professionals with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world. Further information is available at: www.cih.org

In Wales, we aim to provide a professional and impartial voice for housing across all sectors to emphasise the particular context of housing in Wales and to work with organisations to identify housing solutions.

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General Comments

CIH Cymru welcomes the opportunity to provide information to inform Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019-2022.

Our response is informed by feedback from our members, our knowledge of the housing industry and expertise from our policy and practice teams.

CIH Cymru supports the development of Welsh policies, practices and legislation that aim to address the key housing challenges we face, to improve standards and supply, promote community cohesion, tackle poverty and promote equality. We promote a *one housing system* approach that:

- places the delivery of additional affordable housing at the top of national, regional and local strategies as a primary method of tackling the housing crisis;
- secures investment to ensure the high and sustainable quality of all homes in a sustainable framework;
- improves standards and develops the consumer voice within the private rented sector
- promotes the concept of housing led regeneration to capture the added value that housing brings in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes;
- recognises that meeting the housing needs of our communities is a key aspect of tackling inequality and poverty;
- ensures that that there are properly resourced support services in place to prevent homelessness and protect the most vulnerable;
- uses current and potential legislative and financial powers to intervene in housing markets and benefit schemes;
- promotes consumer rights & tenant involvement;
- and supports the continued professional development of housing practitioners.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Housing professionals working across the housing sector in Wales, within local authorities, housing associations and the private rented sector have a pivotal role to play in enabling and supporting positive mental health within communities. In many areas we know that housing services are sensibly intertwined with mental health support services to ensure individuals can be supported in their own home, living independently. However, we also know that there is considerable inconsistency in how these services are linked across Wales and the good practice does not always translate to services being replicated nationally. We believe this trend must change.
- 1.2 At present the delivery plan highlights housing as one of the areas recognised as a key part of cross-departmental working at a Welsh Government level; as a provider of housing related support through the supporting people programme; and encourages the exploration of the housing first model as a means for supporting people experiencing mental health and substance misuse issues.
- 1.3 In response to the consultation question below, we reflect on the framing of housing's role outlined above and suggest ways to improve the robustness of the delivery plan in maximising the positive outcomes of working closely with housing professionals in a variety of settings.

2. Responses

Question 3: Do you agree with the priority areas identified? Are they fit for purpose?

- 2.1 Partly.

Question 4: Could you please provide any additional information to support your response, relating to why you consider the priority areas to be appropriate or suggesting additional key areas or changes you would wish to see?

- 2.3 We strongly welcome all of the priorities identified and in particular those focus on preventing poor mental health and out of hours/crisis support. Prevention is at the heart of the supporting people programme (now the housing support grant) that has been delivered by professionals through housing associations, local authorities and the third sector for many years. Despite the challenges in protecting and maintaining the level of funding at a national level, it remains one of the most important sources of preventative support for a wide variety of potentially vulnerable individuals.
- 2.4 Whilst the supporting people programme largely reflects efforts to provide floating support and supported accommodation there are a number of initiatives happening outside of its remit that impact positively on mental health and maintaining wellbeing. Examples include:
- The regeneration of local community space and infrastructure
 - Timely or/and rapid repairs and adaptation work
 - Collaboration with GP services to address issues around debt, isolation, digital skills.
 - Collaboration with hospital discharge service to support appropriate housing and ongoing/seamless support between hospital and home

This list is not exhaustive but provides a sense of the exciting initiatives being taken forward across Wales as a result of the enthusiasm from both housing, health and social care professionals/organisations. At the end of our response we have provided specific case studies further detailing this work.

- 2.5 The delivery plan mentions housing but there is not detail around working with specific tenures/types of landlord where there may be scope for making improvements at pace and scale. The private rented sector (PRS) in Wales accounts for around 13 per cent of the overall housing stock. (Compared to 11 per cent for housing associations and 7 per cent of local authorities. One of the key measures implemented under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was the introduction of the means for local authorities to discharge a duty to someone who may otherwise become homeless by identifying accommodation in the PRS.

The report found that:

- One in three support organisations feel there is ‘never’ enough mental health support for tenants renting privately
- 62 per cent of landlords have had, or currently have a tenant with a mental health problem
- Almost half of private landlords felt they ‘never’ had enough support or information to support tenants living with mental health problems
- Landlords would like to access more information and support
- Early intervention is key to helping people maintain their tenancy
- There are suggestions that people with mental health problems sometimes face discrimination when trying to access private rented sector housing
- Private landlords told us that the solutions to the problems are straightforward; that there should be better advice available online for what landlords and tenants can do to access support. The landlords who were best able to manage the tenancies were those who had their own experience of mental health problems within their families and knew how to access support.

CIH Cymru makes the following recommendations:

- Welsh Government to provide comprehensive information for private rented sector landlords and letting agents regarding local and national mental health support
- Relicensing through Rent Smart Wales should require all private sector landlords to complete a module on mental health to improve their knowledge of how to access support for tenants with mental health problems.
- Local authorities should develop crisis/emergency housing-related support services for people with mental health problems in the private rented sector to support tenants to stay in their own homes
- Services should be shaped and delivered with the expertise and insights of tenants living with mental health problems in the private rented sector

- 2.6 Whilst we continue to work closely with the Welsh Government in ensuring these recommendations are taken forward, we believe that in the interest of collaborative working across Welsh Government, there needs to be specific reference to working and supporting the private rented sector within the delivery plan.

Question 5: Do you agree these are appropriate work streams to prioritise?

2.7 Partly.

Question 6: Could you please provide any additional information to support your response, relating to why you consider these work streams should be prioritised or suggesting additional work streams or changes you would wish to see?

2.8 There is a good opportunity, through the workstream focussing on the mental health workforce to increase knowledge, understanding and explore the capacity for further joint working between the professions. Whilst there are numerous examples of good practice where projects jointly convened by organisations across health housing and social care there is not a consistent picture across Wales. We believe that information on what good practice looks like and the methods/means underpinning it should be shared as standard across those commissioning mental health services to those operating on the front-line.

3. Good practice examples

Brynteg Road United Welsh with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

- 3.1 Brynteg Road is a supported housing scheme in Blaenau Gwent delivered by United Welsh in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB). The purpose of the scheme is to support patients in the transition from living in secure forensic psychiatric long-term hospital ward placements back to living in the community. This helps them to develop life skills and move toward resilient independent living, while also creating bed space on wards for those in need and creating significant cost savings for the health board. Consisting of five separate apartments, each with a living and kitchen area, a bathroom and bedroom, Brynteg Road has United Welsh staff on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- 3.2 This model gives the five tenants their own home and independence for the first time in many years, but has also enabled staff to develop therapeutic relationships with tenants to support their social needs and minimise the risk of mental health relapse, thus assisting the work of the ABUHB Community Mental Health Team. Brynteg Road was established as part of the In One Place initiative – a collaboration between ABUHB, eight housing associations and the Gwent local authorities which aims to develop and provide accommodation and care for those with Continuing Health Care (CHC) needs for individuals in ward placements that are no longer suitable. In 2015, a United Welsh property became available and was offered to the In One Place collaboration as it was deemed suitable to house people who have been assessed as having a primary, complex health care need. United Welsh worked closely with ABUHB to refurbish the property and to identify the support requirements for the new tenants, and the housing and care model established at Brynteg has produced meaningful outcomes since the first tenants moved to the scheme in October 2016.

- 3.3 Outcomes and achievements: The housing and support provided by the Brynteg Road scheme has resulted in several positive outcomes; significantly improving the lives of the tenants and their families and creating efficiencies for the agencies involved. Each apartment is saving £119,668 per year in hospital costs; a total saving of £598,340. Brynteg is also creating ward bed spaces for those in need and providing an environment for tenants to thrive, enabling them to regain their independence and maintain good mental wellbeing.

Ty Cyfle, Bron Afon Housing Association

- 3.4 Young People are increasingly marginalised within the housing and welfare systems, facing the challenge of house prices that continue to rise, lack of affordable social housing and impact of Welfare Reform. Affordable housing has never been more critical to improve the lives of future generations. Bron Afon could predict the human and financial impact that Welfare Reform would have in Torfaen, especially on young people. Continuing to learn from Own 2 Feet Living,
- 3.5 Ty Cyfle, the housing co-operative for young people, Bron Afon is confident that young people are able to drive forward the housing and support solutions that they need. The empowerment of young people and lessons learnt continue to create a 'step change' within the housing sector and shape their approach to engaging and supporting young people. Affordability is the primary dilemma for young people, would it be possible to extend further and roll out the Own2Feet Living co-operative approach...?
- 3.6 Without a place to call home, people are less likely to obtain and maintain employment with their physical and mental health adversely affected. For Bron Afon it makes business sense to work with their future clients who will be their long-term customers to provide housing solutions that meet their needs, creating sustainable tenancies and settled communities. Working with Afon Youth, using co-productive principles, Bron Afon has developed the Own2Feet Living Housing Strategy for Young People, recognising that the dual strand of housing supply and appropriate support is vital to deliver young people's housing solutions.
- 3.7 No one understands the needs and challenges of young people better than them and tenancy sustainability is embedded throughout ensuring the housing solutions are affordable, linking with Bron Afon's 'That Works Academy', maximising the income of young people and providing potential job opportunities. The young people are excited to explore models of intergenerational living, promote shared housing and provide new builds with alternative and flexible methods of construction. This first strand is now under construction providing 12 homes that are flexible with low rents and are energy efficient. Bron Afon are testing innovative approaches using alternative housing sources oppose to traditional bricks and mortar.

Movement 2025 – North Wales collaborative

- 3.8 The 2025 Movement is a placed based partnership in North Wales with a mission to end avoidable health inequalities in the region by 2025. It was formed in 2015 in response to figures which showed that people living in areas of higher deprivation in North Wales are likely to live 11 years less than those in other areas. It is made up of senior leaders and practitioners from North Wales local authorities, housing

Providers, including: Cartrefi Conwy, North Wales Housing, Clwyd Alyn, Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, Conwy County Borough Council , Flintshire County Council, Grŵp Cynefin , Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), Wrexham Glyndwr University, North Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Public Health Wales, North Wales Police

3.9 Since its launch in 2015 its membership has grown to over 500 people and organisations, which all joined together because they share a belief that most health and housing inequalities experienced by people in North Wales are avoidable, and that, by organisations taking a new approach to working together to address shared challenges, much more can be delivered to transform health and wellbeing for communities across the region. The 2025 Programme Management Group meets bi-monthly and is overseeing several work areas or 'Just Do' teams, including;

- Healthy Homes – Healthy People – tackling energy poverty, particularly in the private rented sector
- Tackling Health Inequalities for Homeless Rough Sleepers
- Flint Regeneration (focusing on youth physical inactivity and food poverty)
- Mental Health & Hoarding
- Facilitating Improvements in Hospital Discharge
- 'Made in North Wales' Social Prescribing Network
- Public Services Leadership Programme

3.10 The 2025 Movement also regularly holds very successful conferences and events to share and promote the work underway by the Movement.

