

14 September 2015

Welsh housing charities call on politicians to protect support services for vulnerable people

A coalition of Welsh housing charities is calling on Assembly Members to protect funding for Supporting People – a crucial programme working towards a Wales where nobody is homeless and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish.

The Supporting People Programme supports over 60,000 people in Wales each year, and around three quarters of a million lives have been transformed through the programme during the past twelve years. By providing high quality support, Supporting People services prevent greater harm and potentially significant additional cost further down the line, reaching people before they hit crisis point and reducing unnecessary pressures on statutory services.

Last year, the programme received a £10m reduction in funding. People working in the sector are concerned about potential further cuts and how these would impact on services for vulnerable people. Cymorth Cymru, Community Housing Cymru, CIH Cymru, Tai Pawb, Welsh Tenants Association, Shelter Cymru, TPAS Cymru and Citizens Advice Cymru have written to party leaders calling for this funding level to be restored so that more people are prevented from becoming homeless and are supported to achieve their potential.

In England, Supporting People funding lost its ringfence and suffered a corresponding fall in funding. Without the protection of this programme, organisations have seen an increase in rough sleeping, homelessness, offending, self-harm, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour¹. A similar situation here in Wales would be disastrous for our many already disadvantaged communities, and the letter's signatories are committed to doing all they can to prevent this from happening.

Auriol Miller, Director of Cymorth Cymru, said, 'We know that Welsh Government and the Communities Minister, Lesley Griffiths, are both hugely supportive of Supporting People and recognise the benefits it brings to our communities. However, with difficult budgetary decisions on the horizon, we want to ensure that this support continues for what really is a vital programme. We are at the stage when any further cuts would do irreparable damage to prevention services, leaving many vulnerable people with nowhere else to turn.'

Stuart Ropke, Group Chief Executive of Community Housing Cymru, said: "The Supporting People programme is a vital preventative measure, reducing pressure on the NHS and social services. Now more than ever, it is absolutely vital that the Supporting People budget is protected to ensure the continued delivery of services that support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities.'

This letter is part of a wider 'Let's Keep on Supporting People' campaign by Community Housing Cymru and Cymorth Cymru to raise awareness of the benefits of Supporting People and make the case for its continued protection. You can follow the campaign on social media using #supportingpeoplewales.

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¹ Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/12/housing-services-cuts-supporting-people-fund>

Notes

1. To arrange an interview with Auriol Miller (Cymorth Cymru), Stuart Ropke (CHC), or a case study, please contact Jodi Cox at Cymorth Cymru 029 2055 3687/07788314733, jodicox@cymorthcymru.org.uk or Edwina O'Hart on 02920674808, Edwina-ohart@chcymru.org.uk
2. More information on the Let's keep on Supporting People campaign can be found here <http://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/en/policy/campaigns/lets-keep-supporting-people>
3. The Supporting People (SP) Programme is a flagship Welsh Government programme that supports more than 60,000 people each year to live as independently as they can. It funds a variety of services to support a wide range of marginalised people at risk of housing crisis, including people at risk of homelessness; families fleeing domestic abuse; people dealing with mental or physical health problems, or learning disabilities; ex-service personnel; care leavers; and older people in need of support. <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/supporting-people/?lang=en>
4. Cymorth Cymru is the umbrella body for providers of homelessness, housing related support and social care services in Wales. Our members provide a wide range of support to enable people to live as independently as they possibly can, or build a positive future after a difficult period in their lives. We act as the 'voice of the sector', working in partnership with members, policy makers and other stakeholders to prevent and alleviate homelessness and improve the quality of life for people who are marginalised or at risk of housing crisis across Wales. www.cymorthcymru.org.uk
5. Community Housing Cymru (CHC) is the representative body for housing associations and community mutuals in Wales, which are all not-for profit organisations. Our members work closely with local government, third sector organisations and the Welsh Government to provide a range of services in communities across Wales. Our conference, training and networking opportunities, along with our publications and website, ensure that the Welsh social housing movement is kept fully informed. www.chcymru.org.uk