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Homelessness charity urges Welsh Government to act on Assembly rough sleeping report

Cymorth Cymru, the representative body for providers of homelessness and housing-related support services in Wales, has today welcomed the publication of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee report on rough sleeping - but has urged the Welsh Government to act on the recommendations.

The report has been published following the Committee's inquiry into rough sleeping, which took oral and written evidence from Cymorth Cymru, several other homelessness and housing charities, local authorities, academics and the Welsh Government.

Key findings and recommendations include:

- **Supporting People (SP) funding:** The report states that the committee shares concerns expressed by Cymorth and other organisations about the risk of removing the ring-fence around SP funding. It has called for more information from Ministers about their plans and **recommended retaining the ring-fence** if there is doubt that service delivery will be maintained without it.
- **Priority need:** The report recommends that legislation and guidance is changed to ensure that rough sleepers and prison leavers are automatically determined to be in priority need for accommodation. It also recommends that the Welsh Government should assess the implication of abolishing priority need entirely.
- **Housing First and assertive outreach:** The report recommends that the Welsh Government strengthens its guidance so that Housing First and assertive outreach services are developed and delivered by all local authorities.
- **Universal Credit:** The report recommends that the Welsh Government should consider seeking powers over Universal Credit, similar to those of the Scottish Government, in order to mitigate the impact of welfare reform on people at risk of rough sleeping.
- **Trauma informed approaches:** The report recognises the value of a trauma informed approach to supporting people who are rough sleeping and recommends that Cymorth's PATH training is more widely delivered.

Cymorth Cymru Director Katie Dalton said:

"We welcome the publication of this report but urge the Welsh Government to act on the recommendations as soon as possible in order to reduce rough sleeping in Wales.

"One of the critical issues raised by this report is the current threat to the Supporting People Programme, which supports 60,000 people every year to avoid homelessness and live independently in their communities. We are pleased that Assembly Members share our concerns about proposals to remove the ring-fence protection around this vital funding and merge it with nine other grants. We urge the Housing Minister to ensure that this funding continues to be ring-fenced specifically for homelessness and housing-related support services.

"We really welcome clear recommendations to ensure that rough sleepers and prison leavers are automatically regarded as priority need for housing, as many will have multiple, complex health and support needs. It's also good to see the Committee making a bold recommendation about Universal Credit and seeking to establish evidence-based models such as Housing First and assertive outreach across all parts of Wales.

"We also welcome the recognition of our PATH training programme, which has now been delivered to over 1000 people working in the homelessness and housing sector, supporting them to deliver psychologically informed services to people with homelessness and housing problems."

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Availability for interviews: Katie Dalton is available for interviews. Please contact her on 07807 137505 or katiedalton@cymorthcymru.org.uk to arrange interviews.

About Cymorth: Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for homelessness and housing-related support services in Wales, influencing the development and implementation of policy that affects our members and the people they support. Cymorth has around 100 members across Wales, made up of third sector organisations, housing associations and local authorities. We work in [partnership](#) with members and other stakeholders to prevent and reduce homelessness and improve the quality of life for people who are marginalised or at risk of housing crisis across Wales.

About the Supporting People Programme: The Supporting People programme provides housing-related support to prevent homelessness and help vulnerable people to live as independently as possible. The Programme is funded by the Welsh Government, commissioned by local authorities and delivered by a range of charities and housing organisations across Wales. Services include supported accommodation schemes and tenancy support to people in their own homes. The Programme supports approximately 60,000 each year, including vulnerable young people and care leavers, older people, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, people fleeing domestic abuse, people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities and people with substance misuse problems.

The threat to SP funding: The Welsh Government is currently considering merging SP with nine other grants in 2019/20. This would remove the ring-fence around SP funding and therefore remove the guarantee that it would be spent on homelessness and housing related support services. It could put SP services in direct competition for funding with other services in the merged grant, such as health visitors and childcare provided by Flying Start, Families First and other schemes. The housing sector is concerned that this would lead to SP services being cut in the medium to long term, as they provide services to people who could be viewed as less politically popular in the eyes of the public. The ring-fence was removed in England a number of years ago and led to significant cuts in funding for SP services.

About the PATH Training Programme: This programme has been developed and delivered by a partnership of Cymorth Cymru, the ACEs Hub and the WLGA Homelessness and Supporting People Network. It is funded by the Welsh Government's Homelessness Prevention Grant and aims to reduce homelessness by embedding psychologically informed approaches in the delivery of homelessness and housing-related support services. There are three strands included in the training: a one-day Foundation course, a 3-day training course, and a training course for Leaders and Commissioners. The training is aimed at third sector homelessness and housing-related support providers, housing associations and local authority housing and homelessness teams. Over 1000 people have attended the training during February, March and April this year.