

Priorities for the Senedd Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

A response from Cymorth Cymru

14th September 2026

Introduction

We look forward to engaging with the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee over the course of this Senedd term. As a charity that represents not-for-profit homelessness and housing support services in Wales, we hope to provide committee members with the information you need to effectively scrutinise the Welsh Government and to advocate for policy, funding and legislation that helps to prevent homelessness and ensure that everyone in Wales has a safe place to call home.

We know that the causes of homelessness are complex, and people using support services have often experienced trauma, adversity and marginalisation during their lives. We approach our work with compassion, and a determination to try and eradicate these inequalities and end homelessness. At a time when tensions are heightened and misinformation has become an increasingly common part of public discourse, it is more important than ever that the work undertaken by everyone in the housing sector is robust and effective. We plan to work in line with the following principles:

1. A focus on understanding root causes, and on finding solutions that are within the devolved powers of the Senedd - led always by good quality data and evidence.
2. Ensuring that the lived experiences of all of the communities of Wales are at the heart of the work of this Senedd Committee.
3. Promoting constructive dialogue that fosters understanding, respect and social cohesion, and which promotes the safety and wellbeing of all of the people of Wales.

As well as engaging with the committee as the representative body for homelessness and housing support services, we are also happy to facilitate engagement with our member organisations who provide vital services in communities across Wales, as well as frontline workers (via the Frontline Network Wales), and people with lived experience of homelessness.

Priority 1: Ensuring homelessness remains a strategic priority during the Seventh Senedd.

Homelessness remains a reality for far too many people in Wales. The latest Welsh Government [statistics](#) show that a staggering 10,339 people were living in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2026, with 2,227 of these being dependent children aged under 16. During June 2026, 1,359 people were placed into temporary accommodation, with 733 people being moved into suitable long-term accommodation. This aligns with the pattern since the pandemic, with significantly more

people entering temporary accommodation than being moved into settled accommodation. On 30th June 2026, there were 158 people were sleeping rough, higher than the number recorded on 30 June in each of the last 3 years.

During the last Senedd term the Welsh Government developed an [Ending Homelessness Action Plan](#), in partnership with key stakeholders such as local authorities and homelessness services. The plan included commitments on legislative reform, housing supply, rapid rehousing, the homelessness workforce, housing support services, early intervention and prevention, inclusion health, and lived experience. This plan was overseen by the Ending Homelessness National Advisory Board, which established a series of task and finish groups, involving key stakeholders, to oversee work on these priorities. This ensured a sustained focus on the necessary actions to end homelessness, held Ministers to account, and facilitated excellent partnership working between homelessness services, local authorities, health professionals and more.

However, despite positive progress in the last Senedd term with regards to these issues, there is still so much more to do.

The implementation of the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Act 2026, will of course be a huge focus for the government – and the committee will need to play an important role in scrutinising implementation of this ground-breaking legislation.

The committee will also have a close eye on progress towards the 20,000 social homes target. However, we would urge the committee to ensure that it does not only scrutinise the total number of houses built, but also whether the right homes are being built in the right place. If this manifesto commitment is to have the greatest possible impact, social housing needs to be built and allocated in line with homelessness need, and closely aligned with the transition to [rapid rehousing](#).

Implementation of the legislation and the social homes target are two important commitments, but it is critical that the new government ensures that progress is made on rapid rehousing, support services, Housing First, inclusion health, and improving the recognition, reward and support for the homelessness and housing support workforce.

All of these issues are intertwined, illustrating the complexity of both the challenges and the solutions to homelessness. The new Welsh Government should set out its vision for prioritising homelessness and make a strategic commitment that ensures that these individual, but connected, pieces of work are driven forward strategically, working in partnership with local authorities, the third sector and other public services to have the maximum possible impact.

We are asking the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee to play its part in ensuring that homelessness remains high on the government's agenda, as well as providing scrutiny on the actions taken, and progress made, by the new Welsh Government in relation to rapid rehousing, support services, Housing First, inclusion health, and improving the recognition, reward and support for the homelessness and housing support workforce.

To enable the Committee to scrutinise the extent to which the Welsh Government is taking the immediate and longer term action needed to tackle the housing emergency in Wales, we ask the Committee to begin its work by establishing a clear and evidence-based view of the scale and nature of homelessness in Wales, locating it within the context of the wider housing emergency; identifying the root causes and where the solutions lie so that in the future everyone in Wales can rely upon a safe, suitable, secure and genuinely affordable home.

Priority 2: Increasing funding for homelessness and housing support services

As outlined above, homelessness continues to affect far too many people in Wales. While building social homes at scale is a critical part of the solution, the provision of advice and support services plays an equally important role in preventing homelessness and helping people to maintain a home. However, funding continues to be a challenge.

The **Housing Support Grant (HSG)** is allocated to local authorities, who commission homelessness and housing support services to meet local needs. The HSG funds the vast majority of homelessness and housing-related support services in Wales, including tenancy support, supported accommodation, domestic abuse refuges, Housing First, and much more. It plays a key role in preventing homelessness, helping people who are at risk of eviction to overcome challenges and remain in their home. It also provides a range of emergency and supported accommodation for people who are homeless or fleeing abuse and violence. These services are critical to helping local authorities to respond to people's needs and meet their legal obligations to provide accommodation and support.

The **Homelessness Prevention Grant** is a smaller grant, but funds vital homelessness prevention services, including the national housing advice service, which supported almost 12,000 households in 2023/24, helping to prevent homelessness in 88% of cases, with 59% remaining in their original home. It also funds other key services such as Housing First and youth homelessness services, helping local authorities and their partners to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

These services will be all the more important as the Welsh Government prepares to implement the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Act 2026.

As well as being critical to homelessness prevention, these services also reduce pressure on a myriad of public services, from health and social services to criminal justice. This is due the holistic, highly skilled approach taken by workers, which reduces demand on hospital and ambulance services, helps people to better manage their mental health and/or substance use, enables families to escape domestic abuse, reduces safeguarding risks, and reduces re-offending. Research conducted by Cardiff Metropolitan University in 2020 found that every £1 invested in housing support services delivers £1.40 net savings to public services in Wales.

Every year, we provide evidence from the homelessness and housing support sector that illustrates the growing demand for services and the increasing complexity of support needs, often linked to experiences of trauma and adversity. The common view among service providers and local authority commissioners is that increased funding is required in order to meet people's needs and ensure that homelessness can become rare, brief and unrepeatable – rather than simply managed. Although there have been funding increases in recent years, the reality is that funding remains at a similar level to fifteen years ago, once inflation is taken into account. It certainly has not kept up with the increases in homelessness and demand for support.

We are currently analysing data from homelessness and housing support services, and will provide the committee with a report in advance of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2027/28.

Housing First in Wales

In addition to continued investment in tenancy support and supported accommodation, there needs to be further investment in the development and expansion of Housing First (including for women and young people), in line with Plaid Cymru's manifesto commitment to embedding '*a Housing First, trauma-informed and person-centred approach to tackling homelessness*'.

Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that is focused on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into a settled home, while providing intensive, person-centred, multiagency support for as long as it is needed. The model has been most successful with people with chronic and complex support needs, for whom traditional models of support have failed.

Over the course of the last Senedd term, the Welsh Government has continued its support for Housing First, as part of a rapid rehousing approach. Partnerships between local government, housing and support providers have seen an increase in Housing First services, with the model delivered in the majority of local authority areas. However, demand continues to outstrip supply.

We have seen other countries, such as Ireland, establish Housing First as a strategic priority and commit to ambitious targets for expanding the number of Housing First tenancies. In March 2022, Ireland launched the Housing First National Office, which is responsible for coordinating and driving a national, cross-Government approach to Housing First, as set out in the Housing First National Implementation Plan, 2022-2026. This plan seeks to extend Housing First to every county in Ireland, and sets ambitious targets for the creation of 1,319 additional Housing First tenancies between 2022-2026.

We believe the committee should consider how Housing First should be expanded and developed in Wales, in order to meet the needs of people who have experienced repeat homelessness and have the most complex, co-occurring support needs.

Priority 3: Improving recognition, reward and support for the homelessness and housing support workforce.

The homelessness and housing support workforce is remarkable. Every day, these incredible people deliver life-changing (and sometimes life-saving) support to thousands of people across Wales. But too often they go unseen and underappreciated.

A day in the life of a support worker is varied, and often unpredictable, requiring them to have expert knowledge, while thinking on their feet and responding to acute crises. They are the compassionate listener who enables people to process their most traumatic experiences. They build trust with people who have been left with no reason to trust anyone, following a lifetime of system failures. They help people to navigate housing law and welfare entitlements, as well as advocating for people within countless services and systems. They intervene in overdoses and suicide attempts, and support people to recognise and escape from abuse. They help people to take the first steps towards recovery and embark on a new chapter of their life.

Despite all of this, they do not receive the recognition, reward or support they deserve. People working in the sector tell us they love their jobs, but low wages and the cost of living crisis means some are struggling to pay their rent and put food on the table. The complexity of their roles means that burnout is a high risk if they don't get the right support. Providers tell us they would love to pay more, but services have to operate within the limited funding envelope they are given.

During the last Senedd term, the Welsh Government's [Ending Homelessness Action Plan](#) included a commitment to developing a resilient and valued workforce. The Ending Homelessness National Advisory Board established a task and finish group to undertake work on this issue. Over the course of the next three years, this group engaged with the sector, conducted research, analysed data, and developed a series of reports and recommendations on pay, support for staff, training and qualifications, and commissioning. These were scrutinised by the Ending Homelessness

National Advisory Board, before being compiled into a final [report](#), which was sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government to consider.

This report set out a clear pathway for the government to improve the recognition, reward and support for frontline homelessness and housing support workers.

It was [shared](#) with the Chair of the Senedd Housing and Local Government Committee, shortly before the election. The committee had asked the Welsh Government to keep them updated on the Workforce Task and Finish Group's work, following its inquiry into housing support for vulnerable people. During this inquiry, the committee was struck by the evidence provided by a number of organisations about the high level of skill, expertise and complexity involved in this work, in contrast to the degree of recognition, reward and support given to frontline workers across Wales.

Given the previous committee's significant interest in the homelessness workforce, and need for the new government to consider the Workforce Task and Finish Group's [report](#) and recommendations, we urge the committee to focus on this issue during the first year of the new Senedd.

Cymorth Cymru is currently conducting a survey with frontline homelessness and housing support workers, and will shortly be analysing the data and producing a briefing for Ministers and Members of the Senedd. The data collected so far indicates that homelessness and housing support workers:

- Continue to have high caseloads and report increasing complexity of support needs
- Undertake highly complex work that requires a huge amount of knowledge and skills
- Face a significant amount of trauma and vicarious trauma in their roles
- Remain poorly paid, given the skill and complexity of their roles
- Are struggling to pay rent, bills, and other essential costs

We will, of course, provide the committee with our analysis of the frontline worker survey data in due course, and would be delighted to arrange for the committee to engage with frontline workers via the Frontline Network Wales.