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Consultation - Summary of Responses

Homes for Wales

A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities

October 2012

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Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	1
2 Responses summary	2
3 Full list of respondents	19

1 Introduction

Homes for Wales: A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities was launched on 21st May 2012 and was open for responses until 17 August 2012. The consultation document included a set of suggested questions on which respondents were invited to give their views. A wide range of views were expressed in the consultation responses and many helpful suggestions were made in relation to further developments of policy as well as comments specifically relevant to the development of the detail of the Housing Bill.

Alongside the publishing of this overall summary of responses to the White Paper, all responses are being fully considered in developing policy instructions for the Housing Bill, as well as in ongoing development of non-legislative action to support the vision set out in the White Paper.

This document sets out a summary of responses using the same overall structure as the White Paper.

2 Responses

In total, 194 responses were received. The responses were drawn from the following:

- Local authorities – 22 (11%)
- Housing associations – 24 (12%)
- Private sector organisations – 10 (5%)
- Voluntary sector organisations – 24 (12%)
- Other organisations – 63 (32%)
- Individuals – 52 (26%). 43 of these were identical responses

A full list of respondents is included in Section 3.

The format of responses varied considerably. A significant proportion of responses from individuals focused on one of the proposals set out in the White Paper, e.g. a significant number of private sector landlords and tenants who only responded to the proposals on the private rented sector. Most organisational responses provided comments on a number of the proposals.

A summary of the key issues raised in the responses are set out below under the following themes:

- Overall comments
- Increasing the supply of homes
- Improving the quality of existing homes
- A better private rented sector
- Better services and support
- Preventing homelessness

Significant further work is being undertaken by policy teams which will include both detailed analysis of consultation responses and further engagement with relevant stakeholders. This further work will also take account of the many interesting and useful suggestions submitted along with consultation responses, some of them supported by reports and case studies.

Overall comments

The vision set out in the White Paper and the whole housing system approach adopted were welcomed by the majority of responses from all types of organisation. A number of respondents from across the different types of organisation, as well as individuals, commended the Welsh Government for its approach and for tackling issues that were not being addressed by the Westminster Coalition Government. The proposals were seen as helping to raise the profile of housing.

A significant number of responses welcomed the system stewardship role set out for the Welsh Government. Some responses questioned whether the Welsh Government has sufficient resources, (both people and financial), to implement the wide range of proposals included in the White Paper. A number of responses also identified the ambitious nature of the targets included in the White Paper.

The shortage of housing, in particular affordable housing, was raised by a significant number of respondents as a crucial contextual factor for the White Paper proposals. The need to support the supply of housing across all sectors was consistently emphasised, with significant innovation required given the context of the economic downturn and associated reductions in Welsh Government capital budgets.

A number of factors were identified as being important in delivering the vision set out in the paper:

- strong leadership from the Welsh Government in raising the profile of housing and working across Government
- the need for this to be reinforced and delivered at a local level
- prioritising of actions and resources, recognising the degree of housing crisis we are collectively facing
- ensuring legislation is used proportionately
- the need for effective joining up between housing and other relevant legislation, in particular that being developed on planning, domestic abuse, youth offending and public health, that already in development on social services and that already in place in relation to the rights of children and young people and mental health
- the need to cross reference proposals to other Welsh Government frameworks and strategies such as the Single Equality Plan, the draft Framework for Independent Living, the Fuel Poverty Strategy, Tackling Poverty Action Plan, Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action, Cohesion Strategy, forthcoming draft Regeneration Framework etc
- undertaking cost benefit and impact analyses of specific proposals to ensure value for money and reduce the chance of unintended consequences
- the availability, and effective use, of adequate resources
- the co-operation of a wide range of stakeholders to engage their skills and resources in delivering the desired outcomes
- the need for effective and proportionate systems of monitoring to track progress

- further action to ensure housing engages effectively with other sectors such as health and education.

In addition, a number of responses identified areas which they felt the White Paper had not adequately addressed. These included:

- recognition of the significant impact of welfare reform on organisations, individuals and communities and how these might affect proposals within the White Paper
- recognition of the specific needs of rural areas and innovations that address this need
- the range of housing options and related support that need to be in place in order to respond to our ageing society
- adequate consideration of the needs of people who fall within the various protected characteristics under equalities legislation.

A number of respondents took the opportunity to promote their services or products, to request assistance from the Welsh Government in furthering their work and to offer their services and expertise in further developing the proposals set out in the White Paper. A number also identified their wish to be involved in the further development of proposals as the detail of the Housing Bill and the non-legislative proposals are developed.

Increasing the supply of homes

System stewardship

11 respondents commented specifically on the proposal to strengthen the strategic housing role of local authorities of which roughly half were local authorities. Around two thirds of respondents were supportive while the remaining third sought more detail on implementation. The strengthening of links with non-housing duties of local authorities, particularly planning and health was identified as important.

Regional collaboration was considered to be best fostered through organic strategic and operational arrangements rather than being imposed through legislation.

80 responses commented on the proposal to require housing and other organisations to co-operate with local authorities in the discharge of their duties in relation to the strategic housing role. 42% were in favour and 39% were opposed.

In relation to co-operation between local authorities and housing associations, strong evidence was provided of existing co-operation and regulation was felt to be the appropriate means to achieve the desired scope of co-operation.

In relation to other organisations, such as health and probation, the need to support closer working relationships with housing was recognised but differences in opinion were expressed as to whether placing a duty on organisations to co-operate would achieve this outcome.

The role of planning in increasing supply

72 responses made comments on making the production and regular updating of Local Housing Market Assessments a statutory requirement for local housing authorities. 70% of these were in support of the proposal and a further 15% expressed qualified support. 9 local authorities were supportive of a strengthened duty. Significant benefits were identified in responses including raising the profile of housing within local authorities. However, a number of concerns were raised, including the implications in respect of resources, capacity and expertise required to implement the duty. The concept of a centralised resource to undertake assessments rather than being done at local authority level was identified as a possible way forward, with this being a partnership approach between Welsh Government and local authorities.

Respondents raised a large number of issues about the interface between planning and housing and the impact on housing supply, emphasising the need ensure effective links between the two Bills.

Innovation and new finance

The majority of respondents that made reference to the target of 7,500 new affordable homes were positive about the target. A small number considered that the target fell short of the level of need identified at a national level and was therefore not ambitious enough. However, the majority considered the target to be challenging and needing significant focus in order to achieve. The Home Builders Federation called for a target relating to private sector housing.

A number of respondents commented on the definition of affordable housing, some calling for a broader definition that includes shared or limited equity forms of housing, while others wanted greater clarity on what constitutes an affordable rent.

The commitment to taking a cross-Government approach was universally welcomed.

Those responses that welcomed innovation in finance noted that it would play an important role in contributing to the delivery of the affordable housing target. It was considered important that the benefit of any new mechanisms developed was spread across Wales and that over-reliance on mechanisms that might only work in a small number of areas or for a small number of organisations should be avoided. A number of local authority and housing association respondents noted the need for their sector to be involved in the development of proposals and for new funding models to ensure that they address local needs. Evaluation of new approaches was considered important as was the sharing of learning amongst all relevant stakeholders; the evaluation of the Welsh Housing Partnership was welcomed.

More land-more homes

Respondents held different opinions as to whether the target of 500 homes built on surplus public sector land is achievable. It was acknowledged that releasing public sector land for the building of affordable housing is a complex matter. However, there was significant support for the use of public sector land to support the delivery of affordable housing, particularly in the context of reduced levels of grant. Clarification of which public sector bodies are expected to participate in this initiative was sought.

The database of public land was supported; one respondent considered that it should be made available to relevant stakeholders.

The importance of local authority land was identified, although the tensions between securing best value and using it for affordable housing was recognised.

Co-operative housing

The majority of those respondents who commented on the proposals to define community land trusts and enable a new co-operative tenure were in support. Both community land trusts and co-operative housing were seen as expanding the potential options for those in housing need. It was considered that defining community land trusts will help to improve understanding of the structure and contribute to them being more widely utilised. However, some respondents noted that such developments should not be a priority, would not be likely to deliver significant additional affordable housing and as such, the focus should be on delivery of affordable housing by existing organisations.

A number of respondents emphasised that the focus of these options should be on those in housing need and on low incomes. It was emphasised that alongside the legislative proposals, significant awareness raising amongst the public and support for emergent schemes would be required. A number of respondents considered that the most difficult factor in relation to such schemes was likely to be the low degree of public interest. In that context, it is important that the co-operative tenure is simple and easily understood. Existing mutual organisations were considered to be particularly well placed to support co-operative developments.

In order for schemes to be affordable, it was noted that the input of finance and/or land would be required. In order to gain the confidence of lenders, some underwriting may also be required.

Supporting home-buyers and house builders

The proposal to provide guarantees for mortgages for first time buyers of up to 95% cent loan-to-value for new build homes was welcomed by the majority of those who commented on this aspect, with the important principle that the money to fund the initiative was not being taken from the Social Housing Grant budget. A small number of respondents expressed concern about the potential of the scheme to keep house prices artificially high and/or to encourage people to take out mortgages that they could find unsustainable.

There were differences of opinion as to how the scheme might be focused, with calls for it to be available for second hand homes and for buyers re-entering the housing market as well as for first time buyers of new homes. However, there was also recognition that a significant amount of work has been undertaken in England to develop the NewBuy scheme and that there is therefore benefit to adopting a scheme as close to that scheme as possible, ensuring that Welsh lenders and house builders are able to participate.

Bringing empty homes back into use

The target of bringing back 5,000 empty properties into use was welcomed, although a number of respondents considered that it was not achievable.

The majority of respondents who commented on the proposals to give local authorities the discretionary power to levy a higher rate of Council Tax on properties empty for more than a year were in favour of the proposal. Those who opposed the proposal considered that other regulatory powers are available to local authorities which are better ways to bring empty homes back into use.

It was noted that flexibility is needed to enable local authorities to make appropriate exemptions and consider individual circumstances so that the power is applied in a fair and proportionate manner. It was also noted that this power would be just one of a range of tools that local authorities can use in order to bring empty homes back into use, including engagement with landlords/owners.

A significant proportion of those in favour of the proposal noted that the funding generated should be ring-fenced for investment in housing, either for affordable housing or for bringing empty homes back into use.

A minority of respondents considered that this provision should be extended to second homes.

A minority of respondents commented on the proposal to require local authorities to identify the number of empty properties in their area and take action to bring them back into use and there was mixed views on the proposal. The existing performance indicator on empty homes was identified.

Make better use of the existing stock

The proposal to build on existing initiatives to address under-occupancy and ensure that learning and good practice is disseminated widely was welcomed by those who commented on it. Accessible Housing Registers were considered to play a part in ensuring the best use of the housing stock.

Leasehold

A minority of respondents commented on the proposals to extend the role of LEASE which was welcomed. It was considered important to have a good evidence base in relation to the issues affecting leaseholders before embarking on a consideration of leasehold reform.

Reforming the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System

There was universal support for reforming the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System from those who commented on these proposals. The potential for increased resources for local authorities to improve their housing stock (where appropriate) and/or build new homes was welcomed. However, it was noted that the extent to which this would be the case would depend on the settlement negotiated with HM Treasury. The distribution of monies once the settlement has been achieved was of concern to authorities. The involvement of local government in discussions about both of these issues was called for.

A new approach for social housing rents

The principle of having standards for rents and service charges for local authorities was considered by non-local authority respondents to be a good one. A consistent approach to rents, service charges and standards across the social housing sector was felt to be beneficial and potentially supported by domain regulation. A question was raised as to what the sanctions would be for non-compliance.

Views amongst local authority respondents varied. Some supported the proposals, while others considered that the proposals were not detailed enough to provide a view. The recent DWP consultation on eligible service charges was identified as important in deciding appropriate action on service charges.

Some concerns were raised about rents being set above social rents in terms of affordability for tenants.

A small number of housing associations took the opportunity to raise their concerns about the new rent policy that applies to them, noting that it is flawed in relation to the extent to which it supports the development of affordable housing. One association called for housing association rents to rise to the level of Local Housing Allowance.

Leading the way to smart living

The review of Design Quality Requirements was welcomed by those who commented on this proposal. A number of respondents raised the need for a debate about the balance between quality, cost and the number of new homes that are being built. A small number of respondents raised the issue of inadequate space standards in private sector homes.

The increasing cost of development was identified by private sector respondents as impacting on the viability of some schemes.

Tenancy reform

62 of the responses to the White Paper included comments on the proposals for tenancy reform (29 voluntary sector organisations, 12 registered social landlords, 10 local authorities, 7 other organisations and 4 individuals). Of these 69% of the comments made were positive, 10% were negative and 21% were mixed.

The negative comments largely focused on whether tenancy reform is required at all, whether, as proposed, it will achieve the desired aim of simplicity and transparency and the significant resources that will be required from individual housing organisations in order to implement tenancy reform. A small number of private sector respondents noted that tenancy reform would result in private sector landlords selling their properties and could destabilise the buy-to-let market.

Positive responses welcomed the proposed updating of the work carried out by the Law Commission and raised a range of detailed policy issues for consideration. These include suggestions for relatively minor legislative changes which would address some current issues such as welfare reform, e.g. making it easier to let accommodation to house sharers. The decision to have a separate Bill for tenancy reform was welcomed, enabling sufficient time to ensure proposals are fit for purpose and sufficient scrutiny of the proposals. However, clarification in relation to the timing of the second Housing Bill was sought.

Park and Mobile Homes

Those respondents who commented on this aspect were supportive of new legislation on Park Homes, with the exception of the British Holiday and Home Parks Association which strongly opposed the proposals.

Meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities

A wide range of respondents commented on the proposal to introduce a statutory duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsy and Traveller communities where need has been identified. The majority of these were in favour of the proposal. Meeting the needs of these communities was considered to be an intrinsic part of the strategic housing responsibilities of local authorities. The need to link this to the existing duty on local authorities to assess the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities in order to inform Local Development Plans was highlighted as was the need for the assessment to be part of local housing market assessments.

Flexibility to provide sites on a regional basis was called for by a number of local authorities along with the need for additional strategic support for authorities planning and developing a site to overcome public objections and associated planning issues. The importance of engaging the settled community and elected members was highlighted.

The potential for increased Welsh Government funding for new sites was raised if demand exceeded the available grant.

A number of organisations working with Gypsy and Traveller communities responded to this proposal identifying a range of practical issues and suggestions. These included the need for enforcement of the duty, the use of surplus public sector land for sites where appropriate accommodation has not been provided and the involvement of the Gypsy Traveller community in the assessment of need. In addition, the issue of families wishing to purchase their own sites was identified; local authorities and the Welsh Government could provide support for them in choosing the location of land to maximise the chance of obtaining planning permission.

Improving the quality of existing homes

Improving all housing

The majority of respondents who commented on property improvement loans supported their introduction. The requirement for capital investment to support the loans was identified as was clarification about the administration of the scheme. Some local flexibility was called for by a small number of local authorities. Careful design of the scheme would be needed to ensure its accessibility by potential beneficiaries and appropriate targeting.

There was support for improved information about stock condition, as providing a basis for targeting of investment for, e.g., improvement and energy efficiency. A national survey developed in partnership between the Welsh Government and local authorities was considered to be a positive development.

Securing the expertise of organisations such as the Design Commission for Wales to promote the benefits of good design was welcomed by those who responded to this proposal.

Improving social housing

Responses recognised the challenges for those authorities that have, to date, achieved a low level of compliance with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. The proposals to work with landlords unable to achieve full compliance and set up a Ministerial Task Force were welcomed. However, it was felt important that the way forward did not disadvantage those local authorities that have achieved WHQS, or are close to doing so.

Monitoring was acknowledged as important, but the need for meaningful data was emphasised, as were efficient data collection methods.

Helping people to live independently in their own home

Respondents supported the review of aids and adaptations, recognising that there are several systems in place and that the user experience of these can vary significantly in terms of both process and access to funding. It was noted that the review needs to link to the draft Framework for Independent Living, the Strategy for Older People, the National Service Framework for Older People, National Dementia Vision for Wales and the Domestic Abuse Bill. The centrality of the social model of disability to service provision was emphasised.

Responses noted that there is much good practice readily available. There were differences of opinion as to the most appropriate delivery mechanism, with some local authorities noting that they are the appropriate strategic lead in relation to adaptations. The Rapid Response Adaptations Programme administered by Care & Repair Cymru was acknowledged as an effective scheme in terms of keeping service user waiting times to a minimum.

While there was acceptance of the value of Accessible Housing Registers, there were differences of opinion as to whether a stand-alone Accessible Housing Register was the best way to achieve the aim of effective matching of accessible properties and households with specific mobility needs. Some local authorities and housing associations

were working to integrate Accessible Housing Registers with common housing registers and considered that this approach would provide more options for people requiring accessible homes.

Housing-led regeneration

Respondents expressed support for the review of renewal areas and alignment with regeneration. However, a number of local authority respondents noted the need to be able to access funding for existing renewal areas in order that commitments could be met.

Tackling fuel poverty

A minority of respondents specifically addressed fuel poverty. Tackling fuel poverty was acknowledged to be a complex area, one in which a Welsh Government target (to eliminate fuel poverty amongst vulnerable people by 2010) has not been met. The White Paper proposals were considered to be crucial in getting things back on track and the recognition of the importance of tackling fuel poverty was welcomed.

Support was considered to be required for local authorities to make the best of the range of existing schemes to tackle fuel poverty, along with greater partnership working and better quality information. Accessing European funding was welcomed. However, a need to ensure the Arbed scheme can be linked with the strategic housing priorities of local authorities was identified as were consideration of specific measures for rural areas. Tackling fuel poverty involves changing behaviours as well as technical solutions to improve energy efficiency. Supporting occupants to be efficient in their use of fuel was identified as a crucial component of tackling fuel poverty. Income maximisation was also identified as an important part of the picture.

The particular challenges facing people with cancer living in fuel poverty were emphasised.

Creating jobs and training opportunities

Those respondents who commented welcomed the proposal for the Welsh Government to work with Value Wales to embed the creation of jobs and training opportunities in public sector procurement practice. It was noted that procurement and commissioning practices may need to change in order to achieve this and that individual housing organisations would benefit from support to make appropriate changes. The creation of jobs and training opportunities through procurement processes will help children out of poverty, contributing to the Welsh Government's tackling poverty agenda. The recognition of the role of housing in getting people into work and training is welcome.

A better private rented sector

Of the 194 responses to the White Paper, 107 included comments on the proposals for a mandatory registration and licensing scheme for the private rented sector (PRS). Comments were made by landlords (84 – 43 of these responses were identical responses from members of the Cardiff landlord forum), letting/management agents (18), local authorities (11), other organisations (28) and individuals (16)).

The majority of the responses received were supportive of the proposals to introduce a registration and licensing scheme for all landlords and letting and management agents that operate in the PRS in Wales. There were differences of opinion between different types of respondent, with landlords and lettings agents raising most objections to the proposals. However, objections from this sector were not universal; a number of both landlords and lettings agents welcomed the scheme as a means of improving standards in the PRS. The majority of local authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association welcomed the proposals as a step forward in modernising the PRS.

Responses identified the need for any action taken to improve the PRS to be balanced and effective. Whilst there were a significant number of reservations from all representative groups about whether a mandatory registration and accreditation scheme will tackle all the problems acknowledged to be present in the PRS effectively, there was general agreement that implementing the scheme will underpin progress in tackling a range of issues.

A number of the concerns raised in responses to the White Paper were subsequently addressed via the PRS consultation paper (issued on 6th July 2012 with a consultation deadline of 17th August 2012) in which more detail on how the registration and licensing scheme would operate was provided.

Financing the scheme

A number of responses raised the issue of how the scheme will be financed and whether it would place additional burdens on local authorities. However, some local authorities considered the proposed scheme to be an extension of current activity and that it would enable enforcement to be more effectively targeted.

Publicity for the scheme

The need for good publicity of the scheme was raised, particularly in relation to landlords and agents who are based in England but own property in Wales.

Public availability of information required by the scheme

A majority of landlord responses objected to the proposed listing of each property within a landlord's portfolio, with objections focused on privacy. A number of landlord responses also raised the issue of potential disclosure of a landlord's private residential address.

Jointly owned properties

A number of responses raised the issue of jointly owned properties and the potential ambiguity this presents in relation to the requirements of the scheme.

Passporting currently accredited landlords

It was clear from a number of responses that our intention that landlords currently accredited will be passported into the licensing regime was not as clear as it could have been.

Interface between licensing regime for Houses in Multiple Occupation under Housing Act 2004 and proposed registration and licensing scheme

Some landlords owning Houses in Multiple Occupation licensed through mandatory, additional and selective licensing schemes raised concerns that they would be subject to a further level of fees under the new scheme.

An annual administration fee

Most responses from landlords and agents were not in favour of an annual administration fee associated with the operation of the scheme.

Duration of licence

Most respondents considered that the 3 year licence period for landlords proposed in the White Paper was too short and there should be parity between the licence period for landlords and for letting and management agents. A 5 year licence period would also be on a par with current licensing arrangements for Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Exemptions from the scheme

A number of respondents made the case for accommodation that is regulated by educational establishments to be exempt from the scheme. Some respondents felt that local authorities and housing associations should be included in the scheme.

Penalties for non-compliance

The majority of respondents supported the range of penalties for non-compliance set out in the White Paper. A number of landlords considered that the financial penalties were far too high while some other respondents considered that a visible deterrent for non-compliance is needed.

Better services and support

More integrated services and support

The proposal that housing needs are considered by Local Service Boards as part of the strategic needs analysis for single integrated plans was welcomed by those respondents who commented on this issue. This was seen as a means of raising the profile of housing at the corporate level within local government.

Better services and support

Local authority respondents noted the need for a proportionate set of performance monitoring arrangements that fits in with the principles underpinning the Wales Programme for Improvement.

They also noted that a voluntary approach to self-assessment and reporting of delivery outcomes is in line with these principles.

Involving tenants, leaseholders and service users

A number of respondents noted that service user involvement is central to the way that they work.

Improving health and well-being and reducing inequalities

Respondents identified a strong case for strengthening the links between housing and health; there is potential for health related cost savings from housing investment.

The proposed review of the health and homelessness standards was welcomed. It was noted that, to date, they have been implemented only to a limited extent and inconsistencies in how they are applied across Wales are evident.

Supporting vulnerable people: a new model of delivery

A small number of respondents explicitly supported the development of appropriately constituted Regional Collaborative Committees to deliver the Supporting People programme.

Helping children gain a good start in life

Children's advocacy organisations noted that a greater prominence to the Rights of Children and Young People's Measure might have been expected.

Meeting the needs of an ageing society

The principles set out were welcomed but a number of responses noted that more detail and substance is required in relation to identifying the range of housing and service options required to meet the needs of older people. Whilst Lifetime Homes are to be welcomed, they are only one option and many older people live in older homes which do not have the adaptability of Lifetime Homes.

It was noted that specific consideration needs to be given to diversity within the older population; older people can experience multiple forms of discrimination. Specific research has been undertaken to identify the needs of older people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender older people which can inform practice.

Promoting equality and inclusion

The proposal to implement the commitments within the Welsh Government Strategic Equality Plan was welcomed by those respondents who commented on this issue.

Reducing anti-social behaviour

The proposal to ask the Wales Anti-Social Behaviour Group to make a robust assessment of the current situation and good practice that exists, and to recommend further action for housing organisations on anti-social behaviour was welcomed by those respondents who commented on this issue.

It was noted that the relatively low take up of the Wales Housing Management Standard for Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (14 organisations meeting or working towards the Standard) should be explored as part of the proposed evaluation.

Tackling domestic abuse and violence against women

The significant good practice from the modernising domestic abuse project was identified as being able to be built upon but specific action is required to ensure other landlords are aware of what is involved and move to implementing the measures.

The importance of gender specific services for women and men experiencing domestic abuse was emphasised by a number of respondents.

The need to recognise the diversity of those experiencing domestic abuse was noted, e.g. there is a need to take account of older people's experience of domestic abuse when designing housing and related services aimed at older people.

Tackling poverty through jobs and training and by creating strong, supportive and enterprising communities

Lenders recognised the need for housing associations to diversify funding streams but noted that such activity needs to be compatible with the organisation business plan and core business.

A number of third sector organisations called for a recognition of the role that they could play in developing jobs and training opportunities.

Preventing homelessness

Of the 194 responses to the White Paper, 95 included substantive comments on the homelessness proposals (21 local authorities, 21 housing associations, 22 representative organisations, 25 other organisations and 6 individuals).

Nearly all respondents were in support of the principles behind the proposals, specifically in relation to the importance of, and emphasis on, prevention. Many respondents set their comments in the context of wider issues of housing supply, in particular the lack of affordable housing, which needs to be addressed in order to tackle homelessness.

There was a general divergence between the views of local government and voluntary sector organisations, with the former being concerned about the resource implications of the proposals and the latter focusing on improving the rights of homeless people.

Many organisations said that they required more detail in order to fully understand the proposals.

The housing solutions approach

About half of the local authorities that responded and the Welsh Local Government Association expressed concerns in relation to the housing solutions approach, the main issue identified being the potential resource implications. By contrast, most voluntary sector organisations supported the solutions approach, although the need for guidance and regulation was identified, as well as recognising that more resources may be needed. The Welsh Local Government Association submitted alternative proposals for legislation which set out an incremental approach, with the solutions approach being introduced as a second of three stages.

Emergency duty to provide safe accommodation

Local authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association expressed particular concern about this proposal. They felt that it would overburden a system already under strain and lead to large increases in the number of people in temporary accommodation. However, the proposal was broadly supported by voluntary sector organisations.

Extending the duty to prevent homelessness from 28-56 days

This proposal was supported by nearly all organisations, although one umbrella organisation felt that it would increase uncertainty for applicants.

Enabling local authorities to discharge their full priority need duty into the private rented sector without consent of applicants

This proposal was universally welcomed by local authorities and by most voluntary sector and national organisations. A small number of organisations and individuals disagreed with the proposal, noting that insecurity in the PRS meant that it was not suitable as an offer of accommodation where not acceptable to the applicant.

Some authorities called for the 12 month minimum period without consent to be reduced to 6 months, noting that it would be difficult to access 12 month tenancies.

Changing the intentional homelessness test from a duty to a power

This proposal was universally supported.

Ending intentional homelessness for families from 2019

This proposal brought criticism from local authorities. They felt that removal of this perceived deterrent would lead to increased breaches of tenancy such as non-payment of rent and anti-social behaviour. Some responses noted that this was potentially contradictory to the proposal to introduce mandatory repossession for anti-social behaviour. Housing associations were also not in favour of this proposal. However, voluntary sector organisations and some national organisations particularly those focused on children, strongly supported this proposal. A number of responses noted that implementing this proposal would not end family homelessness, rather it was changing the response to family homelessness.

Priority need groups: prisoners

The potential removal of priority need from former prisoners was broadly supported by local authorities and registered social landlords, with many responses highlighting the substantial and increasing burden created by this group of homeless people and a lack of evidence in terms of improved outcomes in terms of reduced levels of reoffending. Some voluntary sector organisations expressed concern about such a move as did criminal justice agencies who supported the proposal to gather more evidence about the link between priority need status and reoffending rates.

Priority need groups: rough sleepers

Very few respondents commented specifically on rough sleepers. Two voluntary sector organisations supported the inclusion of rough sleepers as a priority group, but recognised that there would need to be adequate support as part of successful resettlement.

Corporate duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness

This was broadly welcomed by respondents, including local government and the Welsh Local Government Association. However, a number of respondents noted that all duties on local authorities are corporate in nature and do not apply only to one department or team.

Duty on housing associations to co-operate with local authorities on homelessness duties

This was welcomed by local authorities and most other respondents with the exception of housing associations and Community Housing Cymru. These respondents were opposed to the proposal on the basis that they already worked in constructive relationships with local authorities and any legal change was unnecessary. They did, however, generally support the need for stronger regulation in regard to homelessness to reinforce co-operation between the two sectors.

3 Full list of respondents

Local authorities

Anglesey County Council
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Bridgend County Borough Council
Cardiff Council
Carmarthenshire County Council (through AWCHOP)
Caerphilly Council
Ceredigion County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council/Gwynedd Housing Partnership
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Monmouthshire Council
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Newport City Council
Pembrokeshire County Council
Powys County Council
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
City and County of Swansea
Torfaen County Borough Council
Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council
Wrexham County Council

Housing associations

Bro Myrddin Housing Association
Bron Afon Community Housing
Cadarn Housing Group/Newydd Housing Association
Cadwyn Housing Association
Tai Calon Community Housing
Tai Ceredigion
Cartrefi Conwy
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group
Family Housing Association (Wales)
First Choice Housing Association
Gwalia Group
Melin Homes
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association
Merthyr Valleys Homes
Mid Wales Housing Association
Newport City Homes
North Wales Housing
NPT Homes
Pembrokeshire Housing Association
RCT Homes
Seren Group/Charter
Taff Housing
Valleys to Coast Housing
Wales & West Housing

Private sector organisations

Building Societies Association
Council of Mortgage Lenders
Country Land and Business Association
Home Builders Federation
McCarthy and Stone
National Landlords Association
Nationwide Building Society
Redrow Homes
Residential Landlords Association
Rockwool

Voluntary sector organisations

Age Cymru
Caer Las Cymru
Cardiff and Vale Parents Federation
Cardiff Chinese Elderly Association
CDS Co-operatives
Children in Wales
Citizens Advice Cymru
Coed Cymru
Community Justice Cymru
Crisis
Emmaus South Wales
End Child Poverty Network Cymru
Friends, Families and Travellers
Friendly Housing Action
Fuel Poverty Coalition
Gofal
Hafan Cymru/Llamau
Macmillan Cancer Support
Save the Children
Save the Children Participation Unit
Save the Children: Travelling Ahead project
Shelter Cymru
Stroke Association
Wrexham CAB - Gypsy & Traveller Community Ambassador Project

Other organisations

Adfer Ban a Chwm
All Wales Chief Housing Officers Panel
All Wales Forum of Gypsy Traveller Education Co-ordinators
Bryn Hall Gypsy and Traveller Community Ambassador, Wrexham
Building and Social Housing Foundation
British Holiday and Home Parks Association
Building and Social Housing Foundation
Cardiff Gypsy and Traveller Project
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Ceredigion Monitoring Group

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru
Children's Commissioner for Wales
CITB Construction Skills
College of Occupational Therapists
Community Housing Cymru Group
Community Law Partnership
Consumer Focus Wales
Countryside Council for Wales
Cymorth Cymru
Cwm Taf Health Board
Cwmni Masnachol Clicennin
Design Commission for Wales
Dyfed Powys Police
Dwr Cymru
Electrical Safety Council
Environment Agency Wales
Federation of Private Residents Associations
Friends of the Earth Cymru
Gypsy Council
Health Protection Committee Wales
Home Accident Prevention Wales
Housing Law Practitioners Association
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Land Registry
Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE)
National Union of Students Wales
NOMS
Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Plaid Cymru Butetown and Penarth branches
Public Health Wales NHS Trust
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Rough Sleepers Cymru
Royal British Legion
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Society of Architects in Wales
Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru
Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group
Tai Ceredigion Monitoring Group
Tai Pawb
Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru
The Dispute Service Ltd
Town and Country Planning Association
Wales Co-operative Centre
Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People
Wales Rural Housing Enabler Network
Welsh Local Government Association
Welsh Refugee Council
Welsh Tenants
Welsh Women's Aid
Wrexham Gypsy and Travellers Multi-Agency Forum

Youth Justice Board Cymru
Young Plaid Cymru Penarth

52 individuals (including 43 identical responses)