

Ending homelessness in Wales

Plans to change the law about homelessness



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Youth consultation

Hello

Everyone should have a safe, healthy place to call home.

The Welsh Government wants to **stop homelessness before it happens**. This is called “prevention.”

We want to make sure homelessness is **rare**, as **brief** as possible, and **unrepeated**.



In Wales, we passed a law in 2014 that says local authorities must help and support people who face homelessness. That law has helped, but we want to do more.



This tells you about the main changes we want to make to the law so people don't face being homeless.

We want to hear what you think, so please answer the questions as you go along.



Our goals

We think these changes will:



help people get the support they need quickly, in the right ways



make sure services put people's needs first



improve standards in temporary accommodation



reduce the risk of homelessness



make sure services work together better



use housing and accommodation in the best ways



improve people's experience of support.



Some facts

Facing being homeless can have a huge impact in many areas of someone's life. Homelessness doesn't just mean people sleeping on the streets or rough. It includes people who:

- live in insecure or temporary housing
- live in hostels and night shelters
- live in bed and breakfast accommodation
- live somewhere that you have no legal right to stay—a squat
- move between relatives and friends—'sofa surfing'.

The path towards being homeless can include:

- losing a job
- health problems
- relationship problems
- a disaster like a fire or flood
- getting evicted
- poor, unhealthy or overcrowded conditions
- money issues and the rising costs of living
- mental, physical and/or sexual abuse
- being discharged from the armed services
- experiencing trauma.

Involving people

To develop these proposals, we worked with an independent Expert Review Panel. We also:

- worked with organisations to find out people's experiences of homelessness
- ran events with local authorities, organisations and others
- collected evidence
- commissioned research about housing options in Wales
- attended different conferences, forums and boards.

**Stopping
homelessness
before it
starts.**



1: Helping people in the right ways

We want people to get the support they need when they need it. We don't want them to have to wait until they are in crisis.

Services need to connect people to the right accommodation that meets their needs quickly. We don't want people to stay in temporary accommodation like hotels or hostels for long. This is called Rapid Rehousing. Some local authorities already do this, but others don't.



Getting support sooner

Proposal: We want anyone at risk of becoming homeless in 6 months time or less to get help. Right now, it's 8 weeks.

We think 8 weeks isn't enough time, and people need support before then.

Planning support

Proposal: We want local authorities to have to give people a Personal Housing Plan (PHP) as part of their assessment.

When someone is at risk of homelessness, the local authority talks to them and assesses their needs. Some local authorities give people a PHP, but others don't. We think everyone should have PHP because it helps people know what's happening, when it's happening, and why.

Proposal: We want the PHP to be reviewed at least every 8 weeks.

Things change, and we want to make sure PHPs are up to date.

Proposal: We want to make sure people have a say and their views are included in their PHP.

People should be involved in decisions about their lives, especially about where they live.

Proposal: We want people to have the right to ask for a review or challenge decisions in their PHP.

Not every PHP will be perfect. Local authorities should tell people how to raise concerns and challenge decisions.

Helping people who need it the most

Proposal: We want to end the Priority Need Test.

Removing the priority need test means that people facing homelessness won't have to prove they meet the Priority Need Test before getting the help they need.

Proposal: We want to end the Intentionality Test.

The Intentionality Test checks if someone's making themselves homeless on purpose. If someone fails the test, it might stop them getting the services they deserve. Some local authorities use it, others don't. This isn't fair for people across Wales.

Local connection

Proposal: We want to add more groups of people to the list of exemptions so more people can move out of their area if they need to. We'd like to add people who:

- are care-experienced
- are Veterans
- are at risk of or have experienced domestic abuse, other abuse or exploitation
- are leaving prison.

Sometimes people need a new start because of circumstances in their lives. But the law right now doesn't let this happen.

Stop homeless repeating

Proposal: We want local authorities to help people keep the accommodation they've been given.

Sometimes people need help so they don't keep becoming homeless. When someone gets secure housing, services should work together with landlords to make sure they don't become homeless again.



Making systems easier

Proposal: We want to remove the Relief Duty which means local authorities have to find people accommodation for at least 6 months.

Everyone who's at risk of homelessness will get ongoing support and interim accommodation so we don't need this anymore.

Proposal: We want to set out clearly what an unreasonable failure to cooperate is, and what it isn't.

Being homeless can have a huge effect on people's lives and we want to limit the application of the unreasonable failure to cooperate test. We want to set out clearly that unreasonable means:

- threatening behaviour towards staff.
- consistent non-contact with housing services.

Communication

Proposal: We want local authorities to communicate with people in ways that are easy to understand and meet their needs.



Questions

What do you think of the proposals in this section?

Happy Okay Unhappy Don't know
Why?

Is there anything we've missed?



2: Making sure services work together better

Ending homelessness together

Proposal: We want services like social services, local health boards, prisons and Job Centres to work together with housing teams. We want them to:

- identify if someone is at risk of homelessness and refer them for support
- take the action they can to help someone avoid homelessness
- work locally and across regions
- support people with complex needs to find the right housing.

Ending homelessness is everyone's responsibility. We want services working together, looking at someone's whole situation and referring them to housing services when they need help.



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3: Put support where it's needed the most

Anyone can be homeless. But some groups of people are more vulnerable to homelessness than others and some need more support than others.

Support for children, young people, and care experienced young people

Proposal: We want to make sure:

- young people aged 16-17 get the right support and aren't in unsupported temporary accommodation like hotels
- local authorities give care leavers extra support.

Support for people leaving hospital

Proposal: We want people to get an assessment of their housing needs before they leave the hospital so they don't end up on the streets.

Support for survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)

Proposal: We want to change the definition of domestic abuse to include controlling or coercive behaviour, economic or psychological abuse.

This means more people will get support with housing and be safe.



Supporting disabled people

Proposal: We want all local authorities to have a register (list) of housing that can meet the needs of disabled people.

Supporting veterans

Proposal: We want all local authorities to understand and support the needs of Veterans and their families, and involve them in decisions that affect their lives.

Supporting adults in the Criminal Justice System

Proposal: We want to make sure people get an assessment of their housing needs when they go to prison so they don't face becoming homeless when they leave.

Proposal: We want to make sure all parts of the local authority help children who've been in the youth custody system and are preparing for release.



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4: Matching people to the right homes

The accommodation local authorities offer people should be healthy places to live. It should be close to things people need, including transport, health services, schools, work and family that supports them. They should also meet people's needs in the right ways.

Keeping people healthy

Proposal: We want to make sure no one is given accommodation that has Category 1 hazards like damp, mould, and excess cold. Things like that can seriously damage people's health.

Keeping people safe

Proposal: We want to stop people being offered shared sleeping space, even in temporary or emergency accommodation.

People can share facilities like kitchen and laundry but have their own bedrooms.

Stopping overcrowding

Proposal: We want to make sure that the right number of people are in accommodation and stop overcrowding.

Supporting young people

Proposal: We want to make sure people aged under 25 aren't placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

Challenging decisions

Proposal: We want people to have the right to ask for a review of their accommodation at any time, not just in the first 21 days.

Proposal: We want the local authority to have to complete reviews within 3 weeks so people get decisions quickly.

Location

Proposal: We want to make sure accommodation is only seen as suitable if it is in the right place to meet people's needs.

Proposal: We want local authorities to have to take into account people's health and well-being, any impairments, family needs, and other circumstances if they're offering accommodation outside the local area.



The next changes are all about Social Housing

Social Housing is homes rented out by **local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)**. The landlord decides who can live there.

Social Housing is usually cheaper, and people can rent them for longer. People can apply for social housing even if they are not in need of housing or at risk of homelessness. This means waiting lists are long. It can take months or years to get a property.

Using Social Housing in the right ways

Proposal: We want to make sure Social Housing helps the people who need it the most.

Proposal: We want to make sure RSLs can't refuse a referral from a local authority unless they have valid reasons to.

Removing people from the waiting list

Proposal: We want local authorities to have the power to remove people from the Social Housing waiting list if they're not in need of housing.

Helping people who need it the most, first

Proposal: We want people who are homeless, in targeted groups or have urgent housing needs to be given social housing before others on the list.

Having a housing register

Proposal: We want local authorities to have one Housing Register that clearly shows all the accommodation and social housing available in their area.



Unacceptable behaviour test

Proposal: We want local authorities to be able to stop people having social housing if they are abusive or guilty of unacceptable behaviour.

Being fair

Proposal: We want local authorities to have a 'Deliberate Manipulation Test' that they can use before someone gets social housing.

Even though local authorities will still have a duty to find them accommodation, we don't want people to become homeless on purpose so they can jump the list and get social housing sooner. That isn't fair.

More housing options

Proposal: We want local authorities to have more housing options they can offer like:

- supported lodgings
- supported accommodation
- returning to previous accommodation, including the family home, if this is safe.

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5: Putting changes in place and checking work

Systems

Proposal: We want to use the systems that each local authority has to deliver these changes.

The systems we have right now, work well:

- Local authorities know their areas, they run homelessness services and allocate accommodation. They check how they work, deal with complaints and make sure people get the right support.
- There are already organisations in place who check that services and accommodation are good.
- If there are concerns, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) can investigate.
- We want to find other existing ways we can support our changes.

Gathering information

Proposal: We want to have the power to ask for data collected by local authorities.

We need to understand homelessness better. Information about the number of people needing support across Wales, how services work, and other things would help us meet people's needs and plan for the future.

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Thanks for reading

You can read the larger consultation here:

<https://www.gov.wales/ending-homelessness-white-paper>

Please send your answers to:

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