Consultation Analysis for the White Paper on Ending Homelessness in Wales

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Summary of responses to the Consultation on the White Paper for Ending Homelessness in Wales

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
Allocations	The system by which social housing is provided to those who have applied for it.
Applicant	The person applying to a local housing authority for help due to being threatened with homelessness or homeless.
Ex-armed forces personnel/veterans	Anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.[1]
Care experienced	A person who has been accommodated by a social services department for a period of 24 hours or more, before their 18th birthday.
Care leaver	A care leaver includes a young person who falls within one of the categories specified in section 104(2) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 who is entitled to support under sections 105 to 115 of that Act.[2]
The Code of Guidance	Refers to The Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness[3]; the supporting guidance document for the Housing Act 2014.
Disability	A physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities. 'Substantial' is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed. 'Long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g., a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

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[1] Veterans Factsheet 2020
[2] For further definitions see para 397 - Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 - Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children)
[3] allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-guidance-for-local-authorities.pdf (gov.wales)

Experts by experience	People who have lived experience of homelessness and who have shared those experiences in order to inform the work of the Expert Review Panel and the development of this White Paper.
HWA 2014	Housing (Wales) Act 2014
Local Housing Authority	Refers to the council for a county or county borough in Wales and for the purposes of this document; the specific function of the local authority delivering the statutory homelessness service.
Main duty	Section 75 of the HWA 2014 – the duty to secure accommodation for an applicant in priority need when the duty in section 73 (duty to help secure accommodation for homeless applicants) ends.
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements are in place to ensure the successful management of violent and sexual offenders.
Mental health problems	Health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses can be associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.
No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)	A person will have No Recourse to Public Funds when they are 'subject to immigration control', as defined by section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. A person who is subject to immigration control cannot claim public funds unless an exception applies.
Nominations	A nomination is where a local authority puts forward a person from the waiting list to be considered for a social housing property.
Prevention duty	Section 66 of the HWA 2014 – the duty to help to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless.
Protected characteristics	Characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and

	civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
Rapid Rehousing	Rapid Rehousing aims to reduce the use of temporary accommodation to the absolute minimum and improve access to settled housing as rapidly as possible. This will help avoid the destabilising and marginalising effects of prolonged homelessness or prolonged stays in emergency or temporary settings while remaining homeless.
Registered Social Landlords and Housing Associations	Means a social landlord registered under Part 1 of the Housing Act 1996. Independent, not-for-profit organisations who strive to deliver affordable housing to meet demand while investing in communities.
Rent Smart Wales	Rent Smart Wales assists those who let or manage rental properties in Wales to comply with their HWA 2014 obligations and provides advice on renting out safe and healthy homes. They also process landlord registrations, grant licences and deliver training for those involved in the rental market across Wales.
The secure estate	The secure estate includes prisons, approved premises, bail accommodation and youth detention accommodation.
Sofa surfing	Staying temporarily in a series of other people's homes, typically by sleeping on their sofas.
SSWB Act	The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
Street homeless	A person who has no accommodation available for their occupation in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which the person a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a court, b) has an express or implied licence to occupy, or c) occupies as a residence by virtue of an enactment or

	rule of law giving the person the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of another person to recover possession.
Violence against women and girls (VAWG)	An umbrella term used internationally for a wide range of abuses, such as domestic homicide, domestic abuse, sexual assault, abuse experienced as a child, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and harassment in work and public life. While men and boys also suffer from many of these forms of abuse, they disproportionately affect women and girls and happen because they are women. VAWG is a term adopted from the United Nations 1993 declaration that includes "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

Summary of responses

In total, 140 responses were received to the White Paper consultation, submitted by a range of local authorities, public services, third sector organisations and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Generally, respondents welcomed the ambition of the White Paper and agreed the proposals provide appropriate measures to support the prevention and relief of homelessness in Wales. Responses reflected a widespread, shared commitment to working with Welsh Government to further develop the proposals and achieve a holistic, multi-agency approach to address the complex causes and effects of homelessness.

This sentiment however, was underpinned with requests for caution, particularly from local authority and RSL respondents. In most cases, responses that expressed support for the proposals were heavily caveated by the scale of resource as well as widespread cultural change, which stakeholders perceive to be necessary in order to achieve the shared vision of the White Paper.

Reported concerns stemmed largely from the perceived initial increase in demand for support across services, which the proposed changes may trigger through enhanced awareness of the risks and signs of homelessness (leading to increased referrals).

There was a majority agreement in relation to consultation questions on:

- the proposals and their (combined) ability to increase the prevention and relief of homelessness
- the proposal to abolish the tests (priority need and intentionality)
- the proposed amendments to the local connection test
- the proposed duty of identify, refer and co-operate (applied to a relevant set of bodies) to prevent homelessness
- the proposals targeted towards supporting 16 and 17 year olds who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness

Overall, the responses indicate that the core proposals represent a fairer, more consistent, and inclusive approach to relief and prevention, which reinforces the understanding that homelessness is a shared responsibility among public service

partners. Local authorities expressed the greatest concern however, surrounding the 'tests' and the perceived gap between the ambition of an inclusive support system, and the realities of the housing crisis. It was emphasised that the proposals will have different consequences across different areas, owing to practical factors such as population size and needs, and the availability of local housing supply.

A wealth of well-considered, high-quality evidence was shared in response to the consultation, providing the supporting rationale for comments of concern and caution. In most cases, this evidence served to highlight the scale of need observed by services supporting those in crisis and/or those at risk, the scale of resource required by services in order to meet these needs, and additional evidence that highlights the experiences of those who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

In particular, third sector respondents also provided strong evidence to support the consideration of additional groups (across the White Paper proposals) who are disproportionately impacted and in need of additional targeted prevention activity.

The proposed duty to identify, refer and co-operate was well received by respondents. The proposed set of bodies (to which the duties should apply) was, however, viewed as a minimum standard by many. This proposal received strong calls to expand the list and subsequently, to expand the expectation for more services and stakeholders to play an important role in homelessness prevention. For example, respondents reiterated the Expert Review Panel's recommendation - that the private rented sector should have an obligation to give legal notice to local housing authorities when there is an intention to bring forward a possession claim.

The consultation also asked respondents to consider whether proposals go far enough to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless (or at risk of homelessness) received joint support from social services and local housing authorities. The majority of responses to this question were inconclusive, with respondents providing numerous suggestions to support the strengthening of practice in this area.

Whilst a majority of respondents agreed that the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 should be amended to allow 16 and 17 year olds to be able to hold occupation

contracts, a broad range of detailed comments expressed caution in relation to this proposal. Children's organisations highlighted particular concerns around safeguarding and the measures that would be taken to support implementation of this change, citing evidence that children and young people also share concerns about the potential consequences for them and their peers.

To support the implementation of the White Paper proposals, respondents emphasised the importance of regular monitoring and accurate impact assessments (given the existing scale of demand, the volatility of the socio-economic context and the housing market) and the need for a tangible increase to resources. Enhanced efforts to improve coordination between agencies was recognised as integral, however this is associated with increased administrative and staffing costs to allow for the development of new processes, training, referral mechanisms and reviews. Numerous proposals were raised by respondents to improve the efficiency and quality of homelessness support and housing services in the introduction of proposals, such as a full implementation plan, common IT platform and integrated training programme.

As a result of the volume of evidence, requests for clarification and proposals (recommendations) shared by respondents to support their answers, an extensive breakdown has been shared with the Welsh Government policy team (accompanying this summary report) to support further development of the White Paper.

1. Background to the consultation

1.1 This document summarises the responses to the Welsh Government consultation on the White Paper on ending homelessness in Wales.

1.2 The White Paper on ending homelessness in Wales sets out a range of proposals which form part of a long-term transformation strategy to end homelessness in Wales as set out in the [Programme for Government](#) and [Cooperation Agreement](#).

1.3 The consultation sought feedback across the five main themes of the White Paper, which are:

- reform of existing core homelessness legislation
- the role of the Welsh public service in preventing homelessness
- targeted proposals to prevent homelessness for those disproportionately affected
- access to housing
- implementation

1.4 The White Paper proposals are intended to support the Welsh Government's aim that homelessness is prevented in the vast majority of cases and, where it cannot be prevented, it is rare, brief and unrepeated.

1.5 The publication of the White Paper followed 14 months of development work, informed strongly by the recommendations of an Independent Expert Review Panel and engagement with over 350 people with experience of homelessness and widescale input from stakeholders across Wales.

1.6 The consultation period ran between 10th October 2023 and 16th January 2024 and invited c feedback through the following formats:

- [consultation document](#)
- [consultation document: children and young people's document](#)
- [consultation document: easy read version](#)
- [British Sign Language (BSL) video](#)

1.7 The consultation also provided the following reference documents, which formed part of the consultation and were used as supporting evidence by respondents:

- allocations: understanding more, in the context of homelessness in Wales
- draft Regulatory Impact Assessment
- Welsh Government Integrated Impact Assessment

1.8   Partners in local authorities, third sector organisations, public services, and other relevant groups were notified of the consultation and invited to share their feedback. The consultation was advertised on Welsh Government social media channels and its launch was covered in the wider Welsh media.

1.9   The main consultation document asked 28 questions in total, which produced a high standard of detail in relation to specific proposals and suggested areas of reform. Most respondents provided 'complete' responses, sharing considered answers across the full range of consultation questions.

1.10   Due to the level of evidence and the standard of detail provided in response to the consultation, this document intends to summarise the main arguments and key themes raised by those who participated. A separate, appendix document has been shared with Welsh Government alongside this summary report, aggregating the specific references to evidence, proposals (suggestions) and clarifications raised by respondents, to help inform the next steps of development following the White Paper.

1.11   All written responses submitted as part of the consultation can be accessed in full on the consultation page.

1.12   The consultation also involved five thematic stakeholder engagement events, in addition to engagement opportunities provided to specific stakeholder groups, which were used to develop a deeper understanding of the specific considerations, opportunities, concerns, and practical challenges that stakeholders associated with the White Paper proposals. Feedback from these events has been summarised as part of a standalone section of this report (chapter 4).

1.13   Finally, some stakeholders submitted feedback on the White Paper proposals in the form of letters or emails as well as or instead of answering the standard consultation questions. These 'non-standard' responses have been analysed and summarised separately from the formal consultation responses and are set out in chapter 5.

1.14   For navigation purposes, this summary report is arranged as follows:

- **Chapter 2** – overview of responses / approach to the analysis
- **Chapter 3** – full breakdown of responses (for each consultation question)
- **Chapter 4** – summary of findings from the stakeholder engagement events
- **Chapter 5** – summary of non-standard responses
- **Chapter 6** – young person and easy-read responses
- **Chapter 7** – next steps

2.   Method and overview of responses

Response summary

2.1   The table below provides a breakdown of response types to the consultation:

Response types to the consultation on the White Paper on ending homelessness

Response type	No. of respondents
Full consultation (standard responses)	115
Children and young people's consultation	6
Non-standard responses	19
Total	140

2.2   Four responses were received in Welsh and all other responses were received in English.

2.3   In addition, five stakeholder engagement events were facilitated by Welsh Government in November and December 2023 as part of the consultation. Engagement opportunities were also provided to specific stakeholder groups, including bespoke events run for RSLs and 1:1 meetings with every local authority in Wales. Notes taken by Welsh Government at these events were included in the analysis and summarised in Chapter 4 of this report.

2.4   The full consultation also achieved a good range of stakeholder types; a breakdown of responses by stakeholder grouping is provided below:

Response types by stakeholder grouping

Stakeholder group	No. of respondents
Local authority	20
Third sector	18
Health	12
Other public sector (Community Safety Partnerships, Policing in Wales)	3

Private sector	2
Political party	2
Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	10
Academic	4
Children's organisations	10
Individual	34
Total	115

2.5   All responses to each separate consultation question (and sub-questions) were individually reviewed by the analysis team, before being aggregated and thematically grouped, to provide insights on overall sentiment of feedback across the consultation.

Quantitative Analysis

2.6   The consultation analysis team conducted a review of the consultation document to identify questions where quantitative analysis was feasible based on whether it was possible to establish clear approval or disapproval in relation to specific proposals.

2.7   This review identified the following questions as suitable for quantitative analysis:

- 1. Do you agree these proposals will lead to increased prevention and relief of homelessness?
- 4. Do you agree with our proposal to abolish the priority need test?
- 5. Do you agree with our proposal to abolish the Intentionality test?
- 6. Do you agree with our proposal to keep the local connection test but add additional groups of people to the list of exemptions to allow for non-familial connections with communities and to better take account of the reasons why someone is unable to return to their home authority.
- 8. Do you agree with the proposals to apply a duty to identify, refer and co-operate on a set of relevant bodies in order to prevent homelessness?
- 9. Do you agree with the proposed relevant bodies, to which the duties to identify, refer and co-operate would apply? Would you add or remove any services from the list?

- 17. Do our proposals go far enough to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness receive joint support from social services and local housing authorities? What more could be done to strengthen practice and deliver the broader corporate parenting responsibilities?

- 18. Do you agree or disagree that the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 should be amended to allow 16 and 17 year olds to be able to hold occupation contracts?

- 20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the short-term proposals to increase the suitability of accommodation? Are there additional immediate actions you believe should be taken for this purpose?

- 21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals around the allocation of social housing and management of housing waiting lists? What do you believe will be the consequences of these proposals?

- 22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for additional housing options for discharge of the main homelessness duty? What do you foresee as the possible consequences (intended or unintended) of this proposal?

2.8   All questions that invited a closed response, even where partial, were reviewed for suitability of quantitative analysis. In some cases, however, responses were too nuanced to categorise, and were either coded as 'inconclusive' – or subjected to a fully qualitative analysis process.

Qualitative analysis

2.9   The majority of responses were analysed using a qualitative approach. Many of the questions in the consultation were compounded, i.e.: posing a primary question followed by a subsequent question, and many of the legislative areas referenced were multi-faceted and complex. On this basis, qualitative analysis was concluded to be the most suitable method for understanding overall responses to proposals.

2.10   An initial 'blind' sample of 68 responses was reviewed to assess the general sentiment of respondents in relation to the proposals, as well as the key emerging and recurring themes.

2.11   Themes were grouped and 'branched' for each individual question, using virtual mind mapping software[4] to aggregate responses. This visualisation of responses helped to produce a 'picture' of sentiment (e.g.: highlighting the range of concerns or clarifications raised in response to a proposal, in contrast to the comments that may indicate support).

2.12   Full analysis (of the remaining responses) was then conducted, which provided additional nuance to the sample, and generated more evidence to either confirm or challenge the initial sentiment observed.

2.13   At this stage, responses were also considered in conjunction with their stakeholder grouping (e.g.: what type of experience is this person's response speaking from?), which helped to build a better assessment of how different sectors view the proposals.

2.14   It is worth noting that in responding to question 24[5] in Chapter 5, some respondents referred to specific proposals in other chapters (either in support of these other proposals or against them). To avoid misrepresenting this feedback, however (i.e.: by combining it with the responses to the relevant question(s) in other chapters being referenced), this feedback on proposals in other chapters is included (in a separate subsection) in the summary of responses to question 24.

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[4] Miro – virtual collaborative software

[5] To what extent do you think the proposals outlined above will support the implementation and enforcement of the proposed reforms?

3. Findings – Full Breakdown of Responses

Question 1 – Do you agree these proposals will lead to increased prevention and relief of homelessness?

3.1   As shown in Table 2.1 sentiment towards the proposals and the likelihood of the proposals to increase the prevention and relief of homelessness was generally positive with the majority respondents (64) expressing their support.

Table 2.1: Sentiment analysis of answers to question 1

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	64
No	24
Inconclusive	13
Total	101

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.2   The breakdown of sentiment by organisation type saw 8 local authorities in agreement with the question, 4 disagreeing that the proposals would increase prevention and the relief of homelessness, and 4 uncertain. Third sector organisations unanimously agreed with the question, while those organisations specifically representing the interests of children and young people were split between those who agreed and those who were unsure. The majority of registered social landlords (RSLs) who responded to the consultation were in agreement with the question while responses from the wider public sector, including the health sector, were split with 5 agreeing, 4 disagreeing and 3 unclear. Individuals responding to the consultation were split between those who agreed and those who disagreed.

3.3   As question 2 directly asked the reasons for the respondents answer to question 1 all the qualitative responses were taken into consideration as a part of the analysis of question 2.

Question 2 – What are your reasons for this?

3.4   The themes that emerged from responses to question 2 included the role of Personal Housing Plans, the proposed increased statutory time period, the importance of external factors, and the need to adequately resource the policy.

Comments in agreement

3.5   Responses in agreement with the proposals particularly focused on the increased statutory time period and the requirement to complete Personal Housing Plans. Over a dozen respondents specifically mentioned the (positive) effect that changing the statutory time period from 56 days to 6 months would have on increasing the prevention of homelessness. They suggested that the increased time period would give local authorities longer to work with clients and enable them to more effectively assess housing need and support clients in finding alternative housing options. One respondent suggested that in the current climate it is taking far longer than it has in the past to find alternative housing in the private or social housing sector, stating that this extended time period would give local authorities the time they need to properly support clients.

3.6   Others agreed on supported alignment of timelines with the private occupation contract notice period of 6 months. Finally, respondents suggested that the longer time period would allow for a more collective and meaningful approach to developing Personal Housing Plans, and providing support.

3.7   The proposals around Personal Housing Plans were the second most specified reason for agreeing that the proposals will result in increased prevention and relief of homelessness. Reasons mentioned included:

- improved chances of support being successful in preventing homelessness
- increased consistency across local authorities
- the proposed introduction of an additional right to request a review.

3.8   It was suggested there is an increased chance of successfully preventing homelessness through a process of co-designing support through Personal Housing Plans, giving clients a genuine stake in their support and making it more likely that they will maintain tenancies, or take action to find suitable accommodation. One

respondent felt that introducing a degree of choice into housing allocation meant that future tenancies were more likely to succeed, for example, with the case of newly granted refugees who would prefer to live close to their communities and places of worship. A final point on the efficacy of the new Personal Housing Plan approach was that it would ensure that people were given the appropriate advice and would evidence this process alongside the reasonable steps they are asked to take themselves rather than relying entirely on the local authority.

3.9   In addition to the above, it was mentioned that a duty for local authorities to create Personal Housing Plans would provide greater consistency between local authorities in taking a person-centred approach, and a holistic assessment of the needs of the individual, which would also support the individual to access other services. With the desire for consistency in mind there were requests for clarity on a number of points, and the desire for the Welsh Government to produce templates and best practice guidance to support local authorities. Finally, the review process was cited as good practice, prompting suggestions that it would improve the communication and performance of housing departments, and would build trust between local authorities and people with multiple or complex needs. It is worth noting that several proponents of the Personal Housing Plan proposals suggested that a corresponding increase in resource would be needed for local authorities.

3.10   The other reasons that respondents gave for their (affirmative) answer to question 1 include the additional support provided to applicants and the proposed approach being more co-ordinated and pro-active. In relation to additional support, language support was specifically mentioned with respondents emphasising the need for communication to be accessible and tailored to individual needs, reporting that written communication with applicants is often in legal terms, which can be difficult for applicants to understand. Added to this was the suggestion that more support should be provided for proper translation and interpretation services, to enable accessibility.

3.11   Furthermore, respondents were in favour of the additional support proposed for particularly vulnerable groups including young people generally, care-experienced young people, and those in contact with the criminal justice system, including

prisoners. Respondents who mentioned young people generally felt that the proposals would support young people to stay in their own communities. However, one respondent suggested that more needs to be done to support care-experienced young people and that sections of the White Paper should be strengthened through specific requirements around the Corporate Parenting Charter.

3.12   It was suggested by some that the proposals would provide a range of essential benefits to those in contact with the criminal justice system. Those in favour suggested that a whole-system and multi-agency approach would be the most effective method, commending the White Paper for moving towards this approach. A number of additional proposals were made, including adapting the resettlement panels used in the youth justice system and ensuring that support criteria is clear and well communicated by local authorities.

3.13   Veterans were an additional group suggested for inclusion in the proposals due to the "unique disadvantages" they face in securing and maintaining accommodation.

Comments that agree in principle but with caveats

3.14   While there was general agreement that the proposals in the White Paper would lead to greater prevention and relief of homelessness, some respondents included a number of caveats to their agreement:

- the external factors and context in which the homelessness sector operates
- the need for guidance and training
- the impact of the proposals on resourcing
- whether they were achievable in full, and,
- whether they truly represented a preventative approach

3.15   The primary external factor cited as a challenge to delivery of the proposals was the availability of affordable housing in both the social housing and private rental sectors and the myriad of issues contributing to this; such as increasing mortgage rates, rising rents, insufficient housebuilding rates and the residual impacts of historic social housing policies. Related to this was the frozen local housing allowance and the role this has on limiting housing options within the current context. While it was felt that the White Paper's proposal for a statutory requirement

for a common housing register, and relationship to other policies (e.g.: the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (2023) and the Green Paper on Securing a Path towards Adequate Housing – including Fair Rents and Affordability (2023)) would mitigate these issues, respondents felt that without addressing these external factors, the White Paper would be difficult to implement effectively.

3.16   The viability of the proposals itself was a common theme, prompting suggestions that it would be more achievable, for example, on a 10-15 year basis rather than in the near future (i.e. the suggestion was that the proposals should be worked towards in the medium-long term, but are perceived as an unrealistic ambition in the short term). A couple of respondents suggested that the White Paper risks setting housing officers up 'to fail' for this reason.

3.17   The second primary reason that respondents felt the need to caveat their approval was concern surrounding the level of existing resource available for services. Respondents strongly perceived that the proposals would require an increase in resource. These respondents highlighted the need for additional funding due to the risk of burn-out for staff in recognition of the pressures they face, and the amount of time needed to be spent on each case, in particular those relating to Personal Housing Plans. Written responses and in-person engagement undertaken with local authority housing teams (by the Welsh Government team) suggested that caseloads amongst housing stuff are already significantly higher than they should be, with one local authority reporting an average caseload of 120 cases per officer in the Housing Options team. A respondent to the main consultation suggested that the proposal to extend the statutory time period from 56 days to 6 months is likely to further increase the number of cases.

3.18   As well as the local authority Housing Options Teams, a lack of resource in the third sector and education sector were identified as impacting the likely efficacy of the proposals. One respondent suggested that despite significant investment over the past five years, the Welsh Government has failed to provide adequate funding to support services, evidenced by the "*failure to uplift the Housing Support Grant*" reflecting frustrations at the time observed among consultees in response to the draft budget. However, the Welsh Government's final 2024-2025 budget (published

since the live consultation period) has now allocated an uplift for the Housing Support Grant[6].

3.19   Education services were also identified as a crucial component of prevention through early intervention. Respondents stated that cuts to education services has diminished resources for support programmes for young people and children and has implications for the success of the proposals.

3.20   This is linked to a concerns that the proposals do not represent a truly preventative approach as the aim of prevention is to prevent people from presenting in crisis, rather than extending the support available to them when they are in crisis. A local authority respondent expanded, for example, that when someone presents to a support service as being at risk of homelessness it is very difficult to maintain the tenancy or in some cases ensure they can safely return to their family home. These respondents sought a wraparound approach to support individuals who struggle to cope with "unforeseen socio-economic shocks" and proposed a whole system change rather than focusing specifically on homelessness support services. This would involve significant support targeted towards young people and as well as educating families.

3.21   Finally, those who supported the proposals in principle included the caveats that they would need to be accompanied by specific guidance and training to facilitate their implementation. This included training on taking a trauma-informed approach to engaging with applicants, on issues such as neurodiversity and mental health, and the provision of clear guidance on how local authorities should apply "the consistent non-contact" clause in the unreasonable failure to co-operate test. This was particularly highlighted due to the level of support some people experiencing homelessness need in order to maintain contact with the local authority due to having no fixed address or access to a mobile phone, or having communication challenges.

Comments in disagreement

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[6]

3.22 Responses that disagreed that the proposals would lead to an increase in prevention and relief of homelessness focused specifically on;

- the proposals related to the Personal Housing Plans
- their achievability due to external factors and resource availability
- the need for additional support above and beyond what was included in the proposals.

3.23 Respondents' concerns around Personal Housing Plans related to a number of aspects such as the proposed right to request a review, the balance of responsibility, the plans' achievability, and their lack of flexibility.

3.24 The reviews were a particular area of concern, reflected by some respondents who suggested that in order for the 'right to request a review' to work, there is a need for clear guidance on the grounds under which a right to review could be "triggered". There were concerns that an applicant could request a review if they did not like a particular step, leading to increased workload. This is related to the suggestion that Personal Housing Plans should also focus on achievability and should manage the expectations of the applicant and the input they can expect to have in Personal Housing Plans. It was expressed that without this, on account of the current housing crisis and the consequential need to use unsuitable accommodation, the volume of reviews would create increased pressure on resources. One local authority suggested that there is a high likelihood of "being inundated with punitive requests". Another respondent suggested that it was "unrealistic to provide any significant choice on type of accommodation" and that doing so would set "unfair and unrealistic expectations".

3.25 The 8-week review timeline was also highlighted as an area that was likely to increase the burden on staff and was described as "unachievable". This was, however, coupled with suggestions that the 8-weekly review would likely become a tick box exercise and might not be necessary or suitable for each applicant. Rather, respondents suggested that the time-period for review should be agreed as part of the Personal Housing Plan, and that this would allow for a more person-centred approach suitable to the needs of the case.

3.26   The second concern related to the review process was the right to request a review beyond 21 days, and the implication this had for the "end of duty". While one respondent agreed that a household should have the right to request a review at any time while in temporary accommodation, they suggested limiting the ability when a household was in settled accommodation. Multiple respondents were concerned by the potential for a household to request a review of their case months or years down the line, should a change of circumstance alter the suitability of their home. Another respondent suggested that an alternate period of 56 days might be more suitable but re-emphasised a need to have an end-date to the duty.

3.27   Another theme identified, particularly by local authorities, was the balance of responsibility between the applicant and the local authority. These respondents suggested that the proposals represented a switch from dual responsibility to sole reliance on the local authority. They offered examples around the right of the applicant to request a review should the authority fail to complete steps agreed on the Personal Housing Plan, yet not a subsequent right for the authority to discharge duty should the applicant fail to complete their agreed steps. A particular proposal highlighted as being of concern was the narrower failure to co-operate test. One respondent suggested that the proposals run counter to aims of the current Welsh homelessness legislation (the Housing (Wales) Act (2014)) which aims to empower and support individuals to find their own solutions.

3.28   The perceived increased reliance on local authorities was stressed particularly by respondents who emphasised the limitations of existing resources. They responded that local authorities would be unable to make the changes or offer the services proposed due to funding cuts and increased pressure on local authority resources. Similarly, it was suggested that those funded by the Housing Support Grant would be unable to provide the likely floating support and early interventions that would derive from the proposals. While one respondent welcomed the proposals they emphasised that without additional investments they would have limited impact as many of the services they depend on are "already at breaking point".

3.29   Factors external to the White Paper were reiterated throughout, in particular the lack of affordable housing in the social housing and private rental sectors. One

respondent pointed to a local authority that already assists people 6 months out from homelessness, yet struggle due to the lack of housing. Respondents suggested that there was not enough legislative change regarding long term accommodation and that more had to be done by Welsh Government to support local authorities to provide adequate affordable housing. One respondent suggested that the Welsh Government acted as a barrier to housing development in their area due to conflicting policy demands.

3.30   The final theme from those who disagreed that the proposals would lead to more prevention and relief of homelessness, was the suggestion that the legislation did little to change the root causes of homelessness. These causes covered policy areas including economic development, spatial planning, housing policy, welfare administration, education, employment and health services to support people with complex needs and mental health issues. Further suggestions included the need to deal with those who were "difficult to rehouse" due to losing multiple accommodations through "their lifestyle choices".

Question 3 – Are there additional legislative proposals you think we should consider to improve the prevention and relief of homelessness?

3.31   In addition to this report, Miller Research provided the Welsh Government with a separate appendix document, which detailed all proposals shared by respondents across the consultation. For the purpose of this summary report, the broad themes of the legislative proposals shared by respondents are outlined below.

3.32   A number of proposals suggested additional legislation to better safeguard and support specific vulnerable groups such as refugees, members of the LGBTQ+ community, young people, veterans, prisoners, ethnic minorities and domestic abuse survivors. There was a focus on better enforcement of existing laws, as well as introducing more guidance, training and support to enhance the implementation of existing laws. Additional legislation to regulate the private rented sector, as well as proposals on improving the relationship between the private rented sector and local authorities were also common themes.

3.33   A shared theme across responses and sectors was also an emphasis on developing alternative housing models, improving the supply of housing, and

improving financial support to people in need with a particular focus on local housing allowance, universal basic income and specific housing support packages. Finally, the role of the wider public sector was highlighted with proposals relating to education and health as the most prominent and recommendations for additional duties and responsibilities to support the Ending Homelessness White Paper.

Question 4 – Do you agree with our proposal to abolish the priority need test?

3.34   As shown in Table 2.2, sentiment towards the proposal to abolish the priority need test was generally positive with the nearly two-thirds (64 out of 103) of respondents expressing their support.

Table 2.2: Sentiment analysis of answers to question 4

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	64
No	31
Inconclusive	8
Total	103

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.35   The sector breakdown in relation to the priority need test's abolition saw local authorities split with 7 in favour and 7 against the abolition of the test. The majority of the third sector supported the abolition of the test, as did RSLs. The wider public sector, including health services, also supported the removal of the test, while organisations who represented young people and children were split. Finally, individuals who responded to the consultation were divided on whether the priority need test should be abolished or not.

3.36   The themes that emerged through analysis of the consultation responses related to:

- vulnerable groups
- the importance of a consistent approach across Wales
- the need for an appropriate timeline for the policies implementation.

Comments in agreement

3.37 Those who were in favour of the policy identified consistency and inclusion as the primary reasons to abolish the priority need test. They suggested that following the Covid-19 pandemic the priority need test is rarely used, and that it is interpreted by local authorities at their own discretion. A respondent also highlighted that the Welsh Government's Review of Priority Need in Wales in 2019 showed the test was used inconsistently across Wales. Other respondents emphasised the role that the priority need test has in excluding people from assistance, and stated that it was used to "gatekeep". Respondents suggested that this caused a breakdown in trust with homelessness services, and hopelessness for those experiencing homelessness with no potential solutions, as well as the experience of "proving vulnerability" being a traumatising one.

3.38 Further, there was evidence provided that suggested the test placed specific vulnerable groups at risk, such as survivors of violence against women and girls, and young people.[7] The evidence reported that VAWG is not properly considered or understood when assessing priority need (particularly in cases of sexual violence and exploitation). Conversely, evidence provided by children's organisations suggested that the priority need system can create a perverse incentive to 'game' the system as part of efforts to be viewed as 'priority need'.

3.39 Finally, respondents suggested that with less time devoted to tests, staff could provide greater support.

Caveats

3.40 Several respondents supported the removal of the priority need test, but included caveats about the lead-in time necessary, resourcing, training and guidance, and further consideration given to particular groups. Those focusing on the need for an appropriate timeline drew comparisons to Scotland where this change included a long lead-in time, with one respondent suggesting at least 5 years was necessary. They also highlighted the current resource pressures and "unprecedented demand" as a reason to delay any changes, as well as the need for increased financial and resource support to implement the change. Improved training and guidance were

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[7] If the annex is intended to be published we could include footnotes where it is alluded to directing the reader towards Annex A

suggested, in particular guidance "to establish who is to be given first refusal of an offer of accommodation when two applicants are eligible with similar levels of need". Additionally, it was felt that health services may require additional training and support due to the role the priority need test has in the complex discharge planning arrangements. Specific issues related to care-experienced young people were identified as a concern with a need to provide greater support for this cohort, as well as monitor of the effects of the change on vulnerable groups in general.

Comments in disagreement

3.41   Those who opposed the abolition of the priority need test stressed:

- the need to prioritise some groups
- potential clashes with other policies
- existing and potentially future pressure on local authorities
- the need for an appropriate timeline

3.42   The phrase that embodies the opposition to this proposal used by one respondent is "*if everyone is a priority, no one is a priority*", which the respondent felt would result in an increase in time spent in temporary accommodation. Numerous variations of this phrase were cited across the consultation in relation to priority need. Another respondent suggested that local authorities need to be able to identify, protect and support the most vulnerable individuals and households and the removal of the test could result in this ability being lost, particularly due to the volume of demand. One local authority accepted that the inclusion of "street homelessness" widened priority need groups to the point that they operate as "priority neutral"; however, they suggested that retaining the test allowed for the specific application of resource to those most in need.

3.43   The concern about the lack of prioritisation of resource was stressed in relation to a number of groups, including veterans, families and children, care-experienced young people, young people generally, LGBTQ+ youth, neurodivergent youth, domestic abuse survivors and offenders. The socio-economic context that forms the backdrop of the consultation, the housing crisis and cost of living crisis, were cited as reasons why respondents who would support the abolition of the priority need test were raising these concerns. A related concern for a couple of respondents was

that it conflicted with other proposals, namely the proposal to given additional rights to "certain categories of persons to overcome local connection criteria". Another raised the issue that elsewhere in the White Paper certain groups, such as care leavers, were proposed to be awarded priority need status.

3.44   The lack of suitable accommodation, and resources within local authorities to meet current demand were common reasons for opposing abolition of the priority need test. One respondent raised the example of the removal of the test in Scotland, stating that this triggered 'demand for temporary accommodation to triple'. Others pointed to this example in order to emphasise Scotland's inclusion of a 10 year timeline to accompany changes, whilst reflecting on current pressures on the system in Wales.

3.45   Similarly, another raised the experience of including street homelessness as a priority need group which saw an increase in applications of 37.5 %. Another related sub-theme is the perception that the White Paper, particularly this proposal, increases reliance on local authorities and that individuals or communities will "*take no responsibility for seeking to find a solution themselves*."

3.46   Demonstrating the nuanced nature of responses, those who opposed the proposal echoed sentiments of those who supported it, in terms of the need for an appropriate timeline. One respondent suggested that legislating the "current status quo" would be a useful first step to monitoring the impact of this.

3.47   Overall, while the proposal was generally supported by respondents due to its ability to reduce exclusion and improve consistency, there were concerns about the resources available (to local authorities particularly) to implement it, and the need for a clear and lengthy timeline for its implementation.

Question 5 – Do you agree with our proposal to abolish the intentionality test?

3.48   There were 102 responses to question 5, presented below:

Table 2.3 Sentiment analysis of answers to question 5

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	62
No	35

Inconclusive	5
Total	102

<div align="right">Source: Miller Research consultation analysis</div>

3.49   The majority of respondents (62) agreed with the proposal to abolish the intentionality test. All local authority respondents except one (where the response was inconclusive) disagreed with the proposal. Most RSLs and all but one third sector respondent (whose response to this question was unclear) agreed with this proposal.

Comments in agreement

3.50   Seven responses used safeguarding considerations to support their answers, detailing the potential impacts of the intentionality test on women and children.

> 'No child or young person should experience homelessness even if their parent or carer is found to have 'intentionally' made themselves so'

(Children's Commissioner for Wales)

3.51   This was also seen to have relevance to young adults experiencing homelessness, who can encounter discrimination where their housing arrangements are not treated as seriously as a family household would typically be treated. This applies, for example, to young adults who leave shared properties due to non-romantic relationship breakdowns and other forms of abuse/hostility perpetrated by other members of a shared household.

3.52   Respondents also described examples of intentionality being misused, particularly in the case of survivors of domestic abuse. In these cases, intentionality was linked to inaccurate perceptions of individual circumstances, and a failure to understand trauma. For some, the intentionality test is therefore associated with misinterpretation and inconsistency.

3.53   The inconsistency of the application, at the discretion of local authorities, was also raised as an equalities issue, as disparities in the way that the test is applied produces an 'unequal level of opportunity for families across Wales'.

3.54   Four responses suggested that abolishing the test would reflect a more holistic view of homelessness, which recognises the complexity of contributing factors affecting an individual's circumstances. Respondents cited examples of circumstances which are harder to evidence and may be viewed as intentional to the un-informed. In such cases, the test contradicts a trauma-informed approach.

3.55   Other comments in support of the test's removal suggest that the decision would be a 'UK-leading move', signalling the Welsh Government's reputation as leaders in homelessness prevention. Another recognised that it would remove the possibility of misuse in the form of deterrence, mitigating the risk of applicants being deterred from taking action (e.g. removing themselves from an abusive household) for fear of being considered intentionally homeless.

Comments in disagreement/inconclusive comments

3.56   There were 4 main themes across the responses which did not state an explicit agreement with the proposal to abolish the intentionality test, including:

- perception that it is an unsustainable approach
- implications for social housing
- the need for personal responsibility
- the need to incentivise good behaviour

3.57   The majority of respondents who disagreed/shared inconclusive comments were local authority stakeholders.

3.58   Responses that perceived the removal of the test to be an unsustainable approach were linked to the possible unintended risk of supporting 'cycles of homelessness'. This was attributed to further dependence on local authorities and public services to support intentional and unintentional cases alike, amidst shortages of funding and resource. Others were concerned about this contributing to a serious increase in rent arrears, leading to rising debts for housing departments across Wales. In worst case scenarios, comments highlighted that this could create further demand on the social housing sector, as well as impacting the abilities of housing departments to continue borrowing and to meet targets for new-build social housing.

3.59   Comments on social housing more broadly were concerned about the amendment
        being misused, enabling people to 'leapfrog over others' on waiting lists. Cardiff
        Council demonstrated this concern within their response:

> 'Cardiff has seen cases recently where individuals have deliberately withheld
> their rent, despite having the means to pay, so that they can enter homeless
> services. In many instances, this is to secure social housing as opposed to
> remaining in the private rented sector. Not applying intentionality decisions sends
> the wrong message to those who present as homeless and encourages poor
> behaviour in a minority of homeless applicants'

3.60   Though a recognised minority, respondents raised an increasing phenomenon
        within the context of current economic crisis and the housing emergency, wherein
        households in private rented accommodation have forcibly ended or jeopardised
        tenancies in order to join social housing waiting lists. Without the mitigation of the
        intentionality test, which is seen to hold individuals accountable to financial
        commitments, one respondent raised a risk that the abolition of the test becomes
        'common knowledge' thus creating more issues than it is proposed to solve.

3.61   Other comments reiterated the themes of personal responsibility and accountability
        for individuals and their actions. Balancing rights and responsibilities was viewed as
        part of the process of ensuring that those who can take control of their life choices,
        do, but they are appropriately supported during events beyond personal control.
        Whilst these responses acknowledged the importance of understanding different
        vulnerabilities, the low numbers of the test's actual application was referenced as
        evidence that it is used reasonably and proportionately. Additionally, the
        intentionality test was also described as an 'important tool' for clarifying
        expectations and options with those being supported by local authorities and their
        partner organisations.

3.62   Similarly, some responses framed the intentionality test as a preventative tool,
        which can counter 'impulsive' or 'retaliatory' behaviour and encourage individuals to
        work with support agencies to find sustainable resolutions.

3.63   To a lesser extent, the issues of intentionality and personal responsibility were also
        connected with the wider issue of justice, which was particularly explicit in one

response. The following response posed that perpetrators of violence may be awarded the same degree of priority need as survivors of abuse and victims of crime as a consequence of the proposal, which would be further exacerbated should the removal of priority need be enacted:

> 'Are we to accept a duty to assist perpetrators of domestic violence and award them the same degree of priority for rehousing as the victim, especially if the removal of priority need is enacted? There is a possibility that local communities will fail to understand this and see it as rewarding violence.'

(Wrexham Council)

Deliberate manipulation

3.64   Four respondents (who agreed with abolishing the test) raised similar concerns in relation to the proposal of a 'deliberate manipulation' test however, noting that the distinction provided in the White Paper consultation is not sufficiently clear. Whilst Crisis acknowledged the proposed test to be less punitive than the intentionality test, respondents were unconvinced that the new proposal would address the recognised issues of inaccurate and inconsistent application.

3.65   One comment detailed a specific concern surrounding the point at which the deliberate manipulation test would be applied, based on the understanding that it would be removed from the earlier part of the process (homelessness assessment) and towards the latter stages (allocation) – which was stated to be 'too late in the process'.

3.66   Conversely, others viewed the deliberate manipulation test as an unsuitable substitution. In particular, local authorities shared concerns that the removal of the intentionality test would present them with an 'impossible task'. If RSLs retain the right to refuse housing, the task of sourcing accommodation in the private rented sector without a positive reference would be substantial and the likelihood is increased that local authorities would be accommodating people in temporary accommodation for long periods of time.

3.67   Even if the deliberate manipulation test is adopted, one respondent commented that the 'intentionality' term should remain in use, such is its perceived value as a

preventative measure.

Question 6 – Do you agree with our proposal to keep the local connection test but add additional groups of people to the list of exemptions to allow for non-familial connections with communities and to take better account of the reasons why someone is unable to return to their home authority?

3.68   As can be seen in Table 2.3, there was broad agreement with the proposal to keep the local connection test with additional amendments.

Table 2.4: Sentiment analysis of answers to question 6.

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	61
No	21
Inconclusive	11
Total	93

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.69   The majority of respondents agreed with the proposal to keep the local connection test but add additional groups of people to the list of exemptions. Broadly, responses welcomed improved consideration of the variety of reasons that affect the suitability of someone returning to their home authority. Amongst local authority respondents, a small majority were opposed to the proposal, whilst all RSL respondents agreed with the proposal. Third sector respondents were fairly evenly split between those who agreed with the proposal and those who disagreed with it.

3.70   Themes identified in responses to this question included alternative suggestions to amendments on the local connection test, resourcing concern, unintended impacts and requested guidance or clarity on the proposals

Comments in agreement

3.71   Central themes for those agreeing with the proposal included:

- maintaining a person-centred approach

- agreement with the inclusive nature of the proposal

- the need for distance (from a 'home' authority)

- support of the need for additional exemptions

3.72   Responses that perceived the proposal to support a person-centred approach shared the sentiment that the need to be placed wherever someone feels a sense of safety, security and connection is equally valid to the need to be close to local communities (e.g.: for those with children). Maintaining a local connection will not, by default, be the right approach for everyone and the proposal is seen to recognise this.

3.73   Comments also shared support for the proposed exemption for care-experienced people, appreciating the importance of 'found families' and other factors that enable those who have moved around frequently to feel comfortable and connected.

3.74   Responses acknowledged that the need for distance can be relevant in a variety of circumstances. The proposal is therefore considered to demonstrate understanding of the correlation between homelessness and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). In such cases, a local connection can have a detrimental, rather than positive impact on mental wellbeing.

3.75   Many respondents agreed with the proposals but strongly supported the additional consideration criteria. Reinforcing the proposal to consider how 'special circumstances' criteria might be better considered (paragraph 166), respondents frequently suggested the following inclusions:

- LGBTQ+ people

- asylum seekers and those with No Recourse to Public Funds

- all young people

- those requiring access to specialist health services (for example a dialysis or cancer patient)

- those who would benefit from placement in a shared language or shared faith community

3.76   Some respondents expressed disappointment at the exclusion of refugees and former asylum seekers who have been granted leave to remain in the country,

which was viewed as in contradiction with the Welsh Government policy commitment to be a Nation of Sanctuary.

3.77   On the consideration of shared language, responses indicated that this may be a factor both in locating an individual in a preferred, as opposed to a home authority, as well as 'safeguarding' the Welsh language in cases where the test is retained.

3.78   Conversely, some disagreement was noted in relation to the special circumstances criteria, on the basis that current approaches would already qualify an 'at risk' categorisation for the suggested groups, therefore existing processes should enable individuals at risk to be assisted appropriately.

3.79   Some comments provided a direct response to the implications of retaining the local connection test (albeit with exemptions). Respondents were particularly concerned about the inconsistency of the test's application, which was reflected in comments including:

> 'We also believe that out of the 3 tests, the local connection test is the most inconsistently applied'

> Neath Port Talbot Council

> 'Paragraph 152 explains that "there is no set period an applicant has to live in an area to be regarded as having a local connection." With this in mind, I would anticipate considerable regional variation in the implementation of the local connection test'

> Dr Jonathan Taylor, University of Oxford

3.80   In order to ensure consistency and mitigate the risk of disparities in application, there were multiple requests for guidance and clarification. These should provide further information on timeline expectations, identifying the priority groups, and the types of connections deemed to be acceptable.

3.81   Moreover, certain local authorities raised specific concerns surrounding their capacity to respond to an expanded list of exemptions. In particular, Wrexham Council noted the following attributes which could place a disproportionate burden of demand on the area, in comparison to other local authorities:

> 'Wrexham's position as a border local authority having the only prison in North Wales being the location of one of the major hospitals in North Wales; and
>
> being the location of a university
>
> The potential cost of this amendment could be exceedingly high'

3.82   Similarly, other respondents commented that expanding the exemptions list could result in disproportionate pressure on some local authorities, particularly in more populated areas.

3.83   Some respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal on the basis that relaxing criteria and introducing exemptions could pose an adverse impact on Welsh residents, particularly in local authority areas that are closer to the Wales/England border. This issue is perceived to be less relevant in relation to the Scottish context, where proximities are not as geographically close to high population areas in England. As such, responses express the need for caution around the unintended impacts of a more 'liberal interpretation' of local connection, on levels of demand for Welsh local authorities.

Implications for prison leavers

3.84   The majority of concerns raised in relation to the proposal surrounded exemption 'e'; prison leavers who require a move to a new area as part of their rehabilitation. These comments emphasised the complexity of factors influencing a prison leaver's rehabilitation, including issues such as retaining a local connection but being subject to exclusion zone conditions, probation area and familiarity gained in areas due to time spent in approved premises.

3.85   Other distinctions were based on the importance of making assessments on a case-by-case basis. In the case of prison leavers particularly, it was emphasised that rehabilitation in an alternative authority should be independently determined by a range of suitability factors, making individual context the priority, not the exemption group.

3.86   Comments also highlighted a need for further investigation of unintended consequences in relation to this exemption group, particularly for the local authorities who have prisons and high prison populations.

Implementation

3.87   With regards to implementation, respondents wished to see support and guidance, that could ensure unlawful applications are avoided, suitable verification checks are carried out, and a pan-Wales / consistent approach to using the test are established. Concerns amongst applicants on the consistency of approach and regional variation partly stemmed from the lack of detail given in certain sections of the White Paper, such as Paragraph 152: "There is no set period an applicant has to live in an area to be regarded as having a local connection".

3.88   Others in favour of the proposal stressed the need for a person-centred and trauma-informed approach that can account for holistic personal experience. Specific proposals and clarifications requested in response to this question are provided in summary below:

Proposals

3.89   The following proposals were made in relation to this proposal.

- the inclusion of refugees, people with NRPF, and other former asylum seekers to the special circumstances criteria
- consideration of religious and cultural preferences as part of a more flexible approach to local connection
- consideration of proximity to health support services (both physical and mental health support)
- if the test is retained, a renewed focus on reconnection and a 'genuine offer' of support to help people engage with support in their home county
- strengthening local connection in order to ensure the prioritisation of Welsh residents
- if local connection criteria is to be truly relaxed, guidance on 'special circumstances' should not be too prescriptive, so that it is not perceived to be rare or unusual
- further research into the reasons and motivations for applying to an alternative authority

- monitoring of developments in Scotland to determine how Wales might move towards the abolition of the local connection test

Clarifications

3.90   Responses included the following requests for clarification:

- caution must be exercised with prisoners where there is a need to formulate this via Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
- in relation to prison leavers, what specific criteria would be considered to determine whether a certain authority is suitable or not? How will this be implemented if the crimes committed were over a number of different authorities?
- clarity on whether the inclusion of veterans and their families would be subject to a maximum time since leaving the forces (e.g. 10, 20+ years later)
- clarity on whether the inclusion of veterans extends to divorced or separated partners, variable household/family dynamics, and whether reservists are eligible
- better definitions of 'at risk' so that any assessment made is proportionate to level of need
- clarity of the rules surrounding Universal Credit and place of residence
- clarity on whether the same test will be applied at homelessness duty and allocation of social housing.

Question 7 – The accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment sets out our early consideration of the costs and benefits of these proposals. Are there any costs and benefits we have not accounted for?

3.91   Respondents identified several costs and benefits they felt were not accounted for in chapter 1, including:

Costs

- analysis based on pre-pandemic data does not reflect current demand on services or associated costs
- estimate of 2 hours' work to produce a Personalised Housing Plan is misjudged

- underestimation of the cost impact of removing intentional homelessness decisions
- insufficient funding for acquisition and regeneration of long-standing empty/abandoned buildings for development into social housing
- increased pressure on health services due to trauma-informed service provision
- upfront and ongoing training costs not specified but could be impactful
- significant housing costs spent on temporary accommodation until rapid rehousing model is in place

Benefits

- prevention of homelessness leading to reduced expenditure
- reduction in reoffending costs if basic needs are provided to people
- potential reduction in costs due to preventing massive increase in applications to homeless departments

Question 8 – Do you agree with the proposals to apply a duty to identify, refer and co-operate on a set of relevant bodies in order to prevent homelessness?

3.92 Responses to question 8 presented a clear consensus: the White Paper proposals to apply a duty to identify, refer and co-operate on a set of relevant bodies to prevent homelessness were supported by the majority (88 responding yes).

Table 2.5: Sentiment analysis of answers to question 8

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	88
No	5
Inconclusive	0
Total	93

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.93 Those who did not agree with the proposals were all individual respondents, who did not respond as representatives of organisations.

Question 8a – reasons supporting your response

3.94 Respondents agreed with the proposals to apply a duty to identify, refer, and cooperate on a set of relevant bodies in order to prevent homelessness for several reasons.

Comments in agreement

3.95 Firstly, they believed that a multi-agency approach is essential in addressing the complex issue of homelessness. They argued that homelessness is not solely a housing issue but is interconnected with various factors such as health, education, criminal justice, and social care. By involving multiple public services, there is a greater opportunity for early intervention and prevention of homelessness. Respondents emphasised the need for a holistic understanding of homelessness and the importance of collaboration between different sectors.

3.96   Secondly, the duty to identify, refer, and cooperate was seen as a valuable tool to promote cross-sector collaboration and accountability. Respondents argued that by placing a duty on relevant bodies, professionals will be more accountable for their actions and take their responsibilities seriously. This duty ensures that all services are working together towards the same standards and goals, reducing duplication and ensuring effective cooperation.

3.97   Thirdly, respondents highlighted the benefits of timely and responsive information-sharing between relevant bodies. They argued that by sharing information, agencies can identify individuals at risk of homelessness earlier and provide them with the necessary support and interventions. This proactive approach aims to prevent homelessness before it occurs or address it quickly when it does happen.

3.98   Lastly, respondents stressed the importance of a person-centred and trauma-informed approach in preventing homelessness. They believed that by adopting this approach, services can better understand the needs and experiences of individuals at risk of homelessness and provide tailored support. Respondents also emphasised the need to tackle health inequalities and discrimination experienced by people who are homeless, advocating for training public health services to recognise signs of homelessness and provide appropriate assistance.

3.99   Overall, respondents supported the proposals to apply a duty to identify, refer, and cooperate on relevant bodies to prevent homelessness because it promotes a collaborative, proactive, and person-centred approach to addressing the issue. They believed that by involving multiple sectors, sharing information, and adopting a trauma-informed approach, it is possible to prevent homelessness and provide timely support to those at risk.

Comments that agree in principle but with caveats

3.100   Multiple caveats were raised by respondents regarding the proposals to apply a duty on relevant bodies to identify, refer, and cooperate to prevent homelessness. These caveats highlight potential challenges and considerations that need to be addressed for the successful implementation of such a duty and included:

- managing consistency, recognising that application can be inconsistent and may face resistance from other agencies, particularly if the issue is perceived as solely a housing problem

- widespread expression of concerns about the resource capacity of organisations involved

- inclusion of a framework that outlines consequences for relevant bodies failing to adhere to the duty and carry out their statutory responsibilities

- concerns that the duty might place a disproportionate burden on housing teams when a more collaborative and multi-agency approach is needed

- the duty's reliance on the availability of specialist health services, consistency around 'thresholds' and early co-operation between health services and housing teams to facilitate prevention

- risk that referrals are used as a means to transfer responsibility for wider support needs to homelessness teams

- the need for consistent referral mechanisms (e.g.: use of templates or standardised formats) to ensure uniformity and efficiency in the process

- the need for a commitment to enhancing the knowledge of UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) rights across all participating sectors, enabling workforces to better support children in realising their rights.

3.101   These caveats highlight the complexity and potential challenges associated with implementing a duty to identify, refer, and cooperate on relevant bodies to prevent homelessness. Addressing these concerns will be crucial in ensuring the effectiveness and success of such a duty.

Feedback on the duties

3.102   Some respondents shared specific feedback on the potential implications of the specific duties.

3.103   On the duty to identify, respondents expressed a positive sentiment, highlighting that it would have a profoundly positive impact on addressing homelessness. They emphasised the need for awareness and knowledge about the risk factors

associated with homelessness, suggesting the implementation of pre-birth risk assessments as a potential model to learn from.

3.104 Regarding the duty to refer, there was a general agreement among respondents that such a duty would encourage partner agencies to consider homeless risk at an earlier stage, allowing more time for resolution. However, concerns were raised about the potential increase in demand on homelessness services and the possibility of passing responsibility once a referral is made. Respondents suggested careful consideration to avoid duplication of case coordination meetings conducted by other arenas such as MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements), MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference), IOM (integrated offender management), and Child Protection Conference.

3.105 In terms of the duty to co-operate, respondents emphasised the importance of complete cooperation between different bodies to effectively end homelessness. They highlighted the need for joint accountability and specific legislation defining roles and responsibilities. Some respondents proposed strengthening future legislation to ensure that public bodies are duty-bound not to discharge individuals into homelessness. However, concerns were raised about enforcement challenges and the potential initial increase in caseloads.

3.106 Overall, the feedback indicated support for the duties to identify, refer, and co-operate in preventing homelessness, but also highlighted the need for careful consideration of potential challenges and the development of clear definitions and legislation to ensure effective implementation.

Comments in disagreement

3.107 Four of the 5 respondents who disagreed with the proposals failed to support their answers with reasons; one respondent expressed an opinion that homelessness cannot be prevented in the current climate and therefore the White Paper proposals would be ineffective.

Question 9 - Do you agree with the proposed relevant bodies, to which the duties to identify, refer and co-operate would apply? Would you add or remove any services from the list?

3.108   Responses to question 9 were more nuanced, reflected in the quantitative analysis below.

Table 2.6 Sentiment analysis of answers to question 9

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	53
No	3
Inconclusive	19
Total	92

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.109   It must be noted that differences were observed in respondents' interpretation of this question, meaning that in some cases responses indicated agreement in sentiment (to the listed bodies) but disagreement could be expressed with the perceived limitations of the list. This is reflected in the comparatively large number of responses coded as 'inconclusive'. Amongst third sector respondents and those RSLs and local authorities that answered this question, more agreed with the proposed relevant bodies.

3.110   The analysis of the consultation responses provides a good level of insight into the reasons respondents agreed with the suggested relevant bodies to which the proposals would apply.

3.111   Firstly, there was a consensus that social services departments, health boards, and RSLs are in the best position to support the early referral of individuals at risk of homelessness. These bodies have specific responsibilities within the devolved powers of Wales and may possess crucial data on rent arrears or factors such as disabilities or poor health outcomes that increase the risk of homelessness.

3.112   Secondly, these bodies are already actively involved in addressing homelessness-related issues and have been working towards preventing homelessness. Including them in the list of relevant bodies formalises and underpins their existing efforts.

3.113 Additionally, respondents believed that schools, further education settings, and pupil referral units should be added to the list of relevant bodies. However, they noted that it is important to streamline the referral process to avoid adding unnecessary workload and bureaucracy to education staff.

3.114 Furthermore, the proposed list was seen as comprehensive and a good starting point for promoting a partnership approach to reducing levels of homelessness. Respondents generally expressed agreement with the identified bodies on the list.

3.115 Overall, respondents agreed that the proposed relevant bodies have the necessary expertise, resources, and responsibilities to effectively contribute to preventing homelessness. However, they also emphasised the need for adequate funding and resources to ensure these bodies can carry out their duties effectively.

Suggestions for the addition of services

3.116 Organisations/services that respondents suggested should be added to the list included education, probation and youth justice services, private rental sector, and wider third sector provision.

Education

3.117 There was a consensus among respondents regarding the inclusion of education in the proposed list of services with a duty to identify, refer, and cooperate . Several key reasons were consistently highlighted by the respondents:

- education settings, particularly schools, have regular and consistent interaction with children and young people and so staff are well-positioned to develop trusted relationships with learners and identify early signs of homelessness or challenges faced by learners and their families
- schools already play a crucial role in safeguarding children and identifying signs of abuse or neglect and are in a position to intervene at an early stage to address underlying issues that may lead to homelessness.
- schools already receive referrals related to homelessness and work with other services to provide support including education in the duty would formalise and streamline this process, ensuring that schools and education

settings have clear guidelines and pathways for identifying, referring, and cooperating.

3.118 Overall, respondents believed that excluding education from the proposed relevant bodies would be a missed opportunity to address youth homelessness effectively.

Probation and youth justice services

3.119 Respondents also expressed a strong belief that probation and youth justice services should be included in the proposed list of bodies to which the duties would apply, for the following reasons:

- the interconnectedness between homelessness and criminal justice involvement, recognising that individuals involved in the probation and youth justice systems are particularly vulnerable to homelessness
- the inclusion of probation and youth justice services signifies a recognition of the need for holistic support, especially for individuals with complex needs
- probation and youth justice services are in direct contact with individuals at risk so can play a crucial role in identifying early signs of housing instability and refer them to appropriate support services
- including probation and youth justice services in the proposed duties is seen to promote collaboration between different agencies and organisations

Private rental sector

3.120 There were several key reasons why respondents felt that the private rental sector (PRS) should be included in the proposed list of bodies with a duty to identify, refer, and co-operate to prevent homelessness, including:

- high number of homelessness presentations resulting from evictions in the PRS
- the majority of referrals for homelessness support come from the private rental sector; as such they should play an active role in identifying individuals at risk of homelessness and referring them to the appropriate authorities
- private landlords have obligations to report rent arrears and anti-social behaviour, which can compromise tenancies and lead to homelessness

(including private landlords in the duty would therefore create a holistic approach to support and prevention)

- private landlords, as housing providers, have a crucial role in preventing and relieving homelessness and should be under an obligation to give notice to the local housing authority when they intend to bring forward a possession claim(which would help sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness)

Third Sector

3.121   Respondents also suggested that including third sector and voluntary organisations in the duty to identify, refer, and co-operate to prevent homelessness is crucial due to their considerable experience and expertise, their potential for greater involvement in prevention efforts, their ability to provide holistic support, the need for collaboration with other stakeholders, their role in early detection of homelessness risks, and their capacity to offer support and advice to landlords.

Primary care

3.122   Some respondents expressed that the approach would be strengthened by the inclusion of primary care services, encompassing GPs, community pharmacies, dentists and optometrists, 'which are the first point of contact for more than 90% of people's initial experience with the NHS', presenting a further possible opportunity for early intervention.

3.123   Additionally, respondents stressed the importance of mental health services, health visitors, and community nursing, who can be seen as a trusted point of contact. Specifically, antenatal care services were also seen to present an important opportunity for the identification of at-risk young mothers, especially in the case of care-experienced women.

Emergency services

3.124   Two responses suggested that the emergency services should be added to the list of proposed bodies, with one highlighting the repeat contact that the police and paramedics often have with vulnerable individuals and those at-risk of homelessness.

3.125   Conversely, one respondent suggested that emergency services should *not* be placed under the expectation to identify and refer, due to the lack of ongoing relationship or responsibility that staff in these roles hold for service users once discharged.

Other

3.126   One respondent supported exploration of the role that creditors might play in making referrals, citing evidence of their responsibilities in Scotland under certain conditions (e.g. serving a notice of default or raising proceedings to eject a proprietor).

3.127   Another recommended that youth services should be included, due to increasing numbers of young people engaged in youth services in Wales.

Importance of co-operation from/with the UK Government

3.128   Respondents acknowledged the challenges of applying duties to non-devolved areas, such as policing or the asylum seeking process. They expressed hope that the Welsh Government would negotiate with the relevant bodies to ensure a consistent approach across Wales but acknowledged the approach could not be definitively proposed at this stage.

3.129   Generally, it was stressed that agencies like the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Home Office and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) could all play a significant role in preventing and relieving homelessness. By effectively identifying, referring, and cooperating with relevant organisations, these agencies could contribute to a more proactive, rather than reactive, approach to addressing homelessness.

Proposals

3.130   Beyond the above organisations suggested by respondents for inclusion in the proposed list, key suggestions to support the implementation of this proposal are included below:

- the development of a full implementation plan, to sit alongside guidance on new duties and responsibilities

- firm use of language and accountability mechanisms so that relevant bodies understand their responsibilities (and the expectations placed on them)

- options to allow additional organisations and agencies to refer into services, with the consent of the applicant

- awareness training

- honouring the Expert Review Panel's recommendation that private landlords should be under obligation to give legal notice to the local housing authority when they intend to bring forward a possession claim

- further representation from non-devolved services and a multi-agency plan for those in criminal justice services

Clarifications

3.131   In response to question 9, the following key questions and requests for clarification were raised:

- as the local health board covers a vast number of services, which sections do the Welsh Government envisage would be able to co-operate in order to help prevent homelessness?

- will other council services be included, such as Public Protection services?

- clarification of the duty to co-operate and in what circumstances, as well as how to determine 'good reason' for not doing so.

Question 10 – In your view have we struck the right balance between legislative requirements and operational practice, particularly in relation to health?

3.132   Responses to this question were inconclusive, and therefore unsuitable for quantitative analysis.

3.133   The high volume of concerns and clarifications revealed through the analysis is indicative of a perceived **imbalance** between legislative requirements and operational practice.

Supportive comments

3.134 Those who expressed that the right balance has been established through the proposals highlighted the positive aspects of the legislation in relation to health. Some recognised that the White Paper adequately addresses health-related concerns, particularly through the adoption of legislation around early discharge planning. This was seen as crucial for facilitating patient flow and ensuring appropriate environments for recovery and well-being.

3.135 Additionally, respondents appreciated the focus on coordination and collaboration among various organisations and bodies subject to control, such as social services departments, health boards, and RSLs. They believed that expanding responsibilities would support fulfilment of the duty of care which is core to health services, contributing to better identification and support for homelessness, emphasising the connection between public health, prevention, and homelessness.

3.136 Respondents also highlighted the desire for a greater emphasis on mental health issues and dual diagnosis, as well as the need for a clear framework and a person-centred approach. The importance of a cohesive approach and improved understanding of housing needs by clinicians was also recognised. However, it was acknowledged that implementing the legislation will require additional resources and accommodation options.

3.137 Overall, the legislation was seen as supportive but there was a call for more focus on health and the integration of homeless services within specialist health inclusion services – even among those who suggested the proposals have struck the right balance.

Concerns

3.138 The respondents to this question provided several pieces of evidence to support their concerns about the balance between legislative requirements and operational practice in addressing homelessness.

3.139 For example, they highlighted the lack of acknowledgement of how certain types of accommodation, such as refuge provision, may be affected by the proposed legislation. They argued that flexibility is needed in certain circumstances, particularly for survivors of domestic abuse who may need to leave rapidly due to

safety concerns but may not be willing to do so. This evidence suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be suitable for all types of housing, and that specific considerations should be taken into account.

3.140   Respondents also expressed concerns about the lack of detail on how the proposed measures would be incorporated into local strategies and commissioning structures, as well as how regional variations would be mitigated. They emphasised the need for additional guidance and expansion upon the details of this guidance to ensure that the legislation is operationally meaningful.

3.141   Furthermore, respondents raised concerns about the capacity and funding of service providers to meet the requirements imposed by the legislation. They argued that without sufficient resources, organisations may struggle to provide the necessary support and services to individuals experiencing homelessness. This evidence underscores the need for a realistic assessment of the operational implications and the allocation of adequate resources to support the implementation of the legislation.

3.142   Additionally, respondents pointed out the challenges faced by public services that are under severe pressure. They argued that imposing further duties on organisations would be contentious and may result in calls for more resources. This evidence highlights the need to carefully consider the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed legislative requirements.

Health specific considerations

3.143   Responses which specifically addressed the implications for healthcare services were conflicted. Health was simultaneously acknowledged by respondents to be both one of the most significant sectors presenting opportunities for homelessness prevention, whilst encompassing some of the most resource-stretched and pressurised services.

3.144   Health specific concerns were raised in relation to the widespread cultural change believed to be necessary to successfully implement the proposed duties, and the subsequent gap between legislation and tangible changes in practice. It was recognised that multi-agency collaboration is dependent on a range of factors, such

as differences in approach, processes, and prioritisation. Respondents were also concerned that additional responsibilities may compromise the existing workload of health professionals.

3.145   Respondents expressed particular caution in regard to the processes surrounding patient record sharing and personal data. These comments detailed how disjointed information sharing between primary and secondary care is currently undermining abilities to share information effectively and support patients in the way perceived to be set out by the White Paper. The barriers posed to joined-up working are seen to be a persistent problem, which should be addressed in order for the proposals to take effect. It was also felt that the reference to key areas of intersection, such as mental health service provision, would be an appropriate starting point for the application of the proposed duties – before expanding out further.

3.146   Generally, while some respondents advocated for stronger legislative requirements to ensure consistency and collaboration, others emphasised the need to consider the practical challenges faced by health professionals in delivering individual healthcare alongside homelessness prevention efforts.

Clarifications

3.147   A number of requests were noted for clarification in relation to this consultation question, summarised as follows:

- would the same expectations and requirements apply to private healthcare providers, who should also have the same duty of care?
- further clarification of the specific health professionals to which the duties would apply
- further clarification on the requirement to 'co-operate' and what this entails for all parties
- explicit clarification on the expectations for the NHS – and their expected operational contribution
- clarification and guidance on what the duties mean for patients, which are requested to be made accessible in easy-read formats

Proposals

3.148 Respondents suggested the following recommendations and actions in response to question 10:

- inclusion of health clinics and GP surgeries (to increase early identification)
- reviewing of thresholds for risk of homelessness in relation to mental health services
- processes to trigger immediate notification to homelessness teams when risk of homelessness is identified prior to hospital discharge
- shared electronic health and social care records that enable better understanding of patient histories and reduce the need for the 're-telling' of personal circumstances
- electronic referral systems and risk assessment tools
- review of the D2RA pathway development across mental health in-patient services with due consideration given to housing and homelessness factors from point of admission
- accompanying evidence of any unintended consequences to enacting the duties proposed for all organisations expected to be included

Question 11 – What practical measures will need to be in place for the proposed duties to identify, refer, and co-operate to work effectively? Please consider learning and development needs, resources, staffing, location and culture.

Training and development needs

3.149 Respondents placed the most emphasis on training and development needs when considering practical measures required to support the proposed duties and identified some core areas of focus, outlined below.

Development of a comprehensive integrated training programme

3.150 Respondents emphasised the importance of developing a comprehensive integrated training programme for professionals working in healthcare, social services, and housing support sectors. It was suggested this programme covers various aspects, including identifying signs of homelessness, understanding

complex health needs and familiarising professionals with the legal and policy framework. It should also provide information on local referral pathways to ensure a multi-agency and holistic approach to support individuals in need. It was suggested that relevant training should not be viewed as a course to 'complete' but rather a process to support continuous learning and development.

General awareness raising and understanding

3.151　Respondents pointed to the need to raise awareness and improve understanding of homelessness among frontline health professionals and staff in in other public sector organisations to ensure they can identify early causes of homelessness, recognise signs of domestic abuse and understand the social and emotional drivers of homelessness.

Trauma-Informed training

3.152　Respondents highlighted the specific need for trauma-informed training to support people experiencing homelessness, that is focused on providing empathy and understanding of client needs. Respondents suggest leveraging existing training programs being rolled out to Welsh public services, for example, training on the Trauma-Informed Framework for Wales and existing safeguarding training could potentially have significant cross-over with new training around homelessness identification

Importance of reliable and secure data sharing

3.153　Multiple respondents identified the need for a common IT platform, to enable seamless communication and information sharing between different organisation s involved in assessing homeless presentations.

It was also suggested that clients themselves could have access to their accounts, possibly through a Welsh Government website, where they could track the progress of their cases. This transparency was seen as crucial in empowering clients and keeping them informed. It was also suggested that a shared system, accessible to multiple relevant organisations, could help to prevent miscommunication, communication breakdown or 'lost' communication between different organisations.

3.154 One respondent proposed that such an IT platform could store details of temporary accommodation properties online, making them easily accessible to the Welsh Government through the client's account. This centralised information repository could also eliminate the need for monthly returns or WHO 12 data, as performance indicators could be instantly accessed through live data. This real-time access to data was seen as a significant advantage in reducing administrative burdens and improving decision-making processes.

3.155 It was recognised that such a platform would require investment in IT systems that can seamlessly communicate with each other. However, the potential benefits in terms of improved collaboration, streamlined processes, and enhanced service delivery were deemed worth the investment.

3.156 Similarly, respondents shared broader feedback on the importance of mechanisms to facilitate personal identifiable data sharing between sectors, which is a recognised barrier to homelessness prevention at present. This is particularly relevant in the linkage (or lack thereof) between health and housing services. Respondents noted that this undermines cooperation between agencies. Some, (a minority) of respondents cautioned that 'little benefit' would be seen in setting the new measures if this ongoing challenge could not be appropriately resolved. Finally, it was also suggested that the development of standardised notification letters and referrals forms to other authorities could help to reduce the number of challenges to decisions, avoid errors and non-cooperation issues and contribute to a more efficient and effective system.

Budgetary/funding considerations

3.157 Respondents identified several key points regarding the budgetary and funding considerations required to implement the new duties.

3.158 Firstly, respondents felt that adequate funding is crucial for the effective implementation of the new duties. The feedback emphasises the need for long-term funding to ensure sustainability and continuity in supporting individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness. It is highlighted that without sufficient funding, the proposed duties may not be able to achieve their intended outcomes.

3.159   Furthermore, the feedback underscores the importance of better investment in support providers. Respondents emphasise that allocating resources towards support providers will enable organisations to invest in staff and training for the long term. This is seen as essential in reducing turnover rates and ensuring quality services.

3.160   Additionally, there is a need for additional funding for other (non-housing) organisations involved in addressing homelessness.

3.161   Moreover, the feedback emphasises the requirement for increased resources and funding to ensure that homeless teams are adequately staffed and equipped to manage realistic workloads. Several respondents shared evidence[8] highlighted substantial challenges to staffing and resourcing. It was noted more than a quarter of staff working in HSG funded services were working below the new minimum wage and that grant funding has not increased enough to address the shortfall for service providers, who are continuously re-evaluating to meet increased demand despite decreased resource. The compounded issues of low pay, increased demand, and long-term pressures were acknowledged to have negatively impacted staff recruitment and retention. Respondents therefore stressed that appropriate staffing is key to the effective implementation of the duties.

Specialist roles

3.162   Some additional comments proposed the introduction of new and specialist roles. These included 'referral leads' across teams to indicate a central point of responsibility, as well as the integration of third sector housing and homelessness organisations in statutory service teams/settings, such as primary health care.

3.163   Other suggestions included the creation of a multi-disciplinary housing coordinator in each local authority area, and the commissioning of specialist health inclusion services – drawing on examples of effective co-location of these services in prisons and hospitals.

Culture change and collaboration

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[8] This can be accessed via the full publication of responses and/or corresponding appendix document

3.164   Respondents also referred to cultural change perceived to be necessary to enact the duties successfully, which was closely connected to a theme of collaboration between organisations and services. Respondent comments referenced the detail in the consultation document, which acknowledged the lack of joined-up working between departments, organisations, and sector – providing additional evidence of their own experiences.

3.165   It was noted that the required transition to collaborative working, in order to effectively 'co-operate' under the proposed duty, would present a marked shift to sectors such as health, which has had long-term issues with siloed working.

3.166   Responses detailed numerous proposals aimed towards supporting the cultural change and collaborative approach required to facilitate the duties including:

- the introduction of collaborative frameworks
- clear communication protocols
- interagency agreements
- co-production of services through multi-disciplinary teams
- improving the consistency of services
- promoting a shared understanding of the different functions and relative expertise of different sectors and organisations
- consistent use of terminology across sectors

Respondent concerns

3.167   The analysis identified a number of respondent concerns, which were stronger in sentiment than the proposals and suggestions made in relation to specific practical measures that could be introduced.

3.168   The concern over the likelihood of establishing clear referral routes and mechanisms to ensure efficient and effective communication between relevant organisations was persistent. Respondents emphasised the importance of identifying who is responsible for making referrals and who is responsible for accepting them in the appropriate organisation.

3.169   Respondents also stressed the importance of addressing non-engagement from clients and developing strategies to encourage their participation. Additionally, there was a call for guidance on different approaches to handling cases where clients may have varying levels of cooperation.

3.170   Lessons learned from previous initiatives, such as the prevention duty introduced under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, were cited as valuable in informing the implementation of the new duties. Respondents emphasised the need for comprehensive training programs to equip staff across various organisations with the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil their roles effectively.

3.171   Finally, it was noted that the proposed reforms should not overlook the wider systemic barriers to preventing homelessness, particularly the need for an adequate supply of decent homes. Respondents emphasised that addressing supply and demand issues holistically is crucial to effectively tackle the current crisis.

Question 12 – In addition to the broad duties to identify, refer and co-operate, this chapter contains proposals to provide enhanced case co-ordination for those with multiple and complex needs. To what extent will the proposals assist in preventing homelessness amongst this group?

3.172   The consultation feedback indicates that there was a general consensus among respondents that the proposed legislation has the potential to assist in preventing homelessness amongst individuals with multiple and complex needs. The majority of respondents expressed support for enhanced case coordination, formalised partnership structures, and multi-agency involvement as key strategies to address the unique challenges faced by this vulnerable population.

3.173   Respondents highlighted the importance of recognising that the involvement of relevant partners should be mandatory rather than optional, ensuring that all necessary services are engaged in providing comprehensive support. They emphasised the benefits of complex case management models, which offer flexible and responsive approaches to managing challenging behaviours and achieving positive outcomes for individuals.

3.174   It was suggested that case coordination and multi-agency collaboration could help prevent homelessness by providing tailored support, reducing duplication and delays, and avoiding the need for individuals to repeatedly disclose their personal circumstances to different agencies. The concept of a lead professional or coordinator who can advocate for the individual's needs and ensure effective communication between agencies was proposed.

3.175   Some concerns were raised regarding the criteria for determining the number of services required for case coordination. While the proposed threshold is 3 or more services, respondents suggested that the focus should be on the needs of the individual rather than an arbitrary number. The importance of including non-statutory services and community groups in the definition of services involved was also stressed.

3.176   Additionally, respondents highlighted the need for adequate resources and service provision to effectively implement the proposed legislation. They emphasised the importance of addressing gaps in health and social services, removing barriers to accessing support, and providing specialised care for individuals with complex needs.

3.177   Overall, the feedback suggests that the proposed legislation, if implemented with clear guidelines, sufficient resources, and a person-centred approach, has the potential to significantly improve outcomes and prevent homelessness among individuals with multiple and complex needs.

Question 13 - The accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment sets out our early consideration of the costs and benefits of these proposals. Are there any costs and benefits we have not accounted for?

3.178   Several costs and benefits were identified that respondents felt were not fully accounted for in the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). These additional costs and benefits are summarised follows:

Administrative burden on hospitals

3.179   It was suggested that the proposal to assist individuals at risk of homelessness upon discharge from hospitals may impose an administrative burden on healthcare

facilities. This includes creating new procedures, staff training, data collection, reporting mechanisms, and potential legal reviews for compliance. It was suggested that these costs are factored into the overall assessment.

Impact on youth homelessness prevention organisations

3.180   It was noted that the proposals may require additional personnel, staff training, resource allocation, data management systems, and administrative support for organisations involved in youth homelessness prevention, whilst coordination efforts between healthcare providers and housing authorities may also increase workload and costs.

Wider societal costs

3.181   Respondents noted the importance of considering the wider societal costs associated with homelessness, such as lost revenue due to individuals being unable to work, impacts on education, and the strain on community resources.

Financial sustainability of residential placements

3.182   Respondents highlighted the need to ensure that residential placements remain financially sustainable, especially when adult social care services attempt to end expensive placements and expect housing to provide accommodation. Monitoring methods and adequate funding allocation should be in place to prevent housing from supporting individuals with complex needs beyond the capacity of housing support services.

Co-operation and joint working systems

3.183   The costs associated with joint working systems, including databases for housing and relevant partners like social services, probation, and HM Prison Service, need to be considered. The use of outdated communication methods like faxes, emails, and paper may not be sufficient for managing complex cases, leading to potential GDPR issues.

Training and staff turnover

3.184 Ongoing training costs for staff, including refresher training and training new team members, should be considered. Additionally, provisions need to be made for staff turnover and the cost of training replacements

Funding allocation and flexibility

3.185 Adequate resources and flexible budget allocations are crucial for implementing the proposed reforms effectively. Prevention budgets and allocations should be increased to allow local authorities to deliver prevention duties in a more flexible manner. The use of grants from the Welsh Government should be more discretionary and aligned with the needs and demands of local authorities.

Temporary accommodation costs

3.186 It was suggested that estimated costs for temporary accommodation considered were significantly underestimated. The increasing number of people and households requiring temporary accommodation necessitates additional funding and a review of current models and allocations.

Enhanced research

3.187 'New burdens' funding should be provided to enable enhanced statistics and research to assess the impact of the changes on local authorities. This would help to understand the demand for resources, evaluate the effectiveness of the reforms, and identify areas that require further attention.

Capacity and capability testing

3.188 Respondents suggested conducting small-scale pilots to assess the capacity and capability of health professionals to effectively identify and refer patients at risk of homelessness. It was felt that this would help determine the level of complexity within the referral process and ensure that implementation is iterative and manageable.

3.189 These additional costs and benefits highlight the importance of conducting a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to ensure that the proposed legislative reforms effectively address the complexities of homelessness while considering the broader impacts and resource requirements. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation was also

deemed to be essential to refine the implementation strategy and ensure the intended preventive measures are successful.

Question 14 – Are there other groups of people, not captured within this section, which you believe to be disproportionately impacted by homelessness and in need of additional targeted activity to prevent and relieve this homelessness (please provide evidence to support your views)?

3.190 Table 3.1 displays the sentiment analysis towards whether there should be any groups additional to those in the White Paper who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness and need further activity to prevent or relive homelessness. Whilst many of the groups mentioned are referenced in the White Paper, respondents generally felt that there were groups missing. Local authority and RSL respondents who answered this question were evenly split between those who felt the White Paper already fully captured the appropriate groups and those who identified additional groups. The majority of third sector respondents who answered this question felt there were other groups that were missing from the White Paper.

Table 3.1: Sentiment analysis of answers to question 14

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	46
No	17
Total	**64**

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.191 There was not a significant pattern of stakeholder groups mentioned in common between organisations for this question.

3.192 The groups that emerged from this question are summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Groups identified by respondents as not captured in the White Paper when answering question 14

Answer	No. of respondents
Children and young people	11
Refugees and asylum seekers	8

Those with multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities	8
Those who identify as LGBTQ+	7
Prison leavers	6
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people	6
Those with additional learning needs	6
Elderly and older people	5
Those living in unsuitable accommodation	4
Gypsies and the Traveller community	4
Rural homeless	3
Those with complex health needs	3
Ex armed personnel	2
Survivors of abuse	2
Other	16

3.193　The detailed evidence to support the groups identified by respondents has been aggregated within the separate Annex document for the Welsh Government. For the purpose of this summary report, an overview of the respondents' reasoning for the most frequently identified groups is provided below.

3.194　**Older people**: The retirement, loss of a partner, or limited income can contribute to homelessness among older individuals. Affordable housing options, access to healthcare, and tailored social services were identified as crucial measures for this group.

3.195　**LGBTQ+ individuals**: LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience homelessness, with reports indicating particularly high rates among transgender individuals. Tailored support services, anti-discrimination measures and awareness campaigns were suggested as measures to address their unique challenges.

3.196　**Refugees and asylum seekers**: refugees and asylum seekers face significant barriers to accessing suitable accommodation due to financial constraints, lack of guarantors, and limited timeframes. Respondents reported a three-fold increase in

homelessness among refugees once they are granted status. Targeted support during their transition into the community was recommended to fulfil commitments for Wales as a nation of sanctuary.

3.197 **Children and young people**: the specific needs of children and young people at risk of homelessness were emphasised, including tailored responses based on age and characteristics Support for care-experienced young people and those aging out of care was also highlighted.

3.198 **Individuals in the criminal justice system**: people leaving custody and those in the criminal justice system were identified as being at heightened risk of homelessness(proactive and planned approaches during the first 30 days of release were recommended to prevent re-incarceration)

3.199 **Ethnic minority communities** respondents emphasised the need to address racial disparities in homelessness- integrating culturally sensitive support services, anti-racism measures, and recognising the intersectionality of race with other factors were proposed.

3.200 **Disabled people and those with additional support needs**: targeted support, including counselling, mentorship programmes, and collaboration with youth organisations, was suggested for individuals with mental health and additional learning needs Accessible housing options and specialist support services were also deemed essential for older adults with care and support needs

3.201 **Rural populations**: respondents highlighted the challenges faced by homeless individuals in rural areas, including reduced availability of affordable and suitable housing and difficulties accessing services - bespoke services tailored to rural homelessness were recommended

Question 15 - What additional legislative or policy actions could be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness for the groups captured by this White Paper?

3.202 The analysis provided several key themes in broad response to the legislative and policy actions that could be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness for the referenced groups. A full list of the specific actions recommended by respondents

has been provided in the corresponding appendix document. These are presented as follows:

3.203   For survivors of abuse, there were calls for group-specific measures, including ring-fenced housing and increased funding for refuge services. Respondents emphasised the need for mandatory VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence) awareness training for local authority housing teams and areas outside of the devolved powers of the Welsh Government including extending all housing benefits to migrant survivors, including those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). The exemption from the shared rate of local housing allowance was also recommended to be extended to survivors of all forms of VAWDASV.

3.204   Regarding care-experienced young people, respondents highlighted the importance of strengthening the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (SSWB Act) to explicitly protect and support this group. They suggested clear governance and reporting requirements, as well as targeted youth homelessness prevention programmes. The establishment of a distinct youth homelessness strategy and action plan was proposed, recognising the need for tailored preventative measures.

3.205   For disabled people, the analysis indicated a need for improved coordination between health and housing services. Respondents stressed the incorporation of housing into health assessments and electronic records to inform need and enable effective planning. They called for enforcing disability accessibility standards for housing and conducting a review of older people's housing to enhance accessibility.

3.206   Respondents also emphasised the necessity of multi-disciplinary approaches and person-centred interventions for individuals facing mental health issues, substance misuse, and complex needs. They recommended legislation to strengthen coordinated efforts in addressing these interconnected challenges and ensuring appropriate service responses.

3.207   Furthermore, there were proposals to increase resources and support for homeless individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), and expand access to safe accommodation for survivors of VAWDASV. The creation of dedicated support

services for ex-armed services and alternative means of support for those with NRPF were also suggested.

3.208   Several themes and distinct proposals were raised in relation to homelessness prevention and support for prison leavers. In summary, these comprised of:

- conducting a full review of the prisoner pathway (to identify areas where duplication can be reduced and processes can be streamlined)
- addressing the 'clash' between housing duty and probation supervision (to overcome a perceived conflict between the local connection requirement for housing assistance and the supervising probation area
- applying local connection at the prevention stage (acting sooner to determine which council should provide aid to the prisoner)
- developing re-entry programmes for prison leavers, to support and assistance to help them successfully reintegrate into society
- clarifying the role and responsibilities of HMPPS, on the basis that responsibilities should remain with them but where/if existing services are found to be ineffective, more resource is directed to address shortcomings
- measures to address any impacts that the White Paper proposals may have on gender equality, due to the lack of female prisons in Wales – it was suggested that further consideration is needed to minimise or address this inequality

Question 16 - Our proposals related to children, young people and care experience seek to improve and clarify links between homelessness legislation and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. Significant policy development is required to assess the practicality of this. What, in your views are the benefits and challenges of our approach and what unintended consequences should we prepare to mitigate?

Comments on the benefits of the approach

3.209   Based on the analysis of the consultation responses, several benefits have been identified in relation to the proposed alignment of homelessness legislation with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. These benefits include:

3.210 **Improved partnership work**: respondents noted that the proposals would lead to better collaboration and partnership work between social services, housing/homelessness teams, and other relevant stakeholders. This would strengthen long-term partner relationships and facilitate better sharing of capacity, knowledge, intelligence, and resources.

3.211 **Enhanced support for vulnerable populations**: the alignment of legislation is expected to result in improved support for vulnerable populations, particularly children, young people, and care-experienced individuals. It would ensure that they receive appropriate care, support, and response, reducing the risk of them 'falling through the cracks'.

3.212 **Trauma-informed services**: promoting trauma awareness was identified as a crucial benefit of the proposed alignment. By acknowledging the profound impact of trauma on young people, services can respond more appropriately and deliver better trauma-informed care. This would contribute to the overall wellbeing and support of individuals.

3.213 **Comprehensive support framework**: the alignment aims to provide a more comprehensive support framework to address the specific needs of individuals facing homelessness. By aligning homelessness legislation with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, it is anticipated that a holistic and person-centred approach can be achieved, ensuring that no young person gets 'lost in the system'.

3.214 **Cost-effectiveness**: respondents highlighted that investing in early identification, prevention, and support measures can prove cost-effective in the long run. By reducing societal costs associated with homelessness, such as increased demand on healthcare, social services, and the criminal justice system, the proposed alignment can lead to significant cost savings.

3.215 **Culture change and improved partnerships**: the alignment of legislation is expected to bring about culture change within local authorities, where every department understands its responsibility for the care and support of children, young people, and care leavers. This would foster improvements in joined-up ways of working between different departments and services, reducing stigma and

improving outcomes and opportunities for young people transitioning out of services.

3.216 **Prohibition of homelessness system as a route out of care or youth justice**: respondents expressed support for clarifying legislation to expressly prohibit the use of the homelessness system as a route out of care or youth justice. They emphasised the importance of planning and making accommodation arrangements in advance for those leaving social care or the youth justice system, ensuring a smooth transition and preventing homelessness.

Comments on the challenges of the approach

3.217 **Coordination and collaboration**: respondents highlighted the lack of coordination and collaboration between local authority housing and social care teams. They emphasised the need for better engagement with housing and social services to ensure effective delivery of the proposals. Buy-in from both housing and social services was seen as crucial, along with setting clear lines of roles and responsibilities.

3.218 **Resource allocation and funding**: respondents expressed concerns about securing the necessary funding and resources to implement the proposed changes effectively. They highlighted the need for significant additional resources to increase accommodation capacity and support services for young people. The lack of adequate funding for local authorities was identified as one of the causes of the problem.

3.219 **Legal and policy complexity**: aligning homelessness legislation with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act was seen as a complex task that requires a thorough understanding of legal and policy complexities. There was also an identified need for further guidance and monitoring to ensure the existing law and any changes are fully communicated and implemented.

3.220 **Housing availability and provision**: respondents raised concerns about the supply of suitable affordable accommodation, especially for young, single people. Increasing the supply of supported housing specifically for young people was seen as necessary, along with appropriate revenue funding for support services.

3.221 **Staffing and service demand**: respondents mentioned workforce and budget constraints within local authorities. They highlighted the challenges of working short-staffed with increased workloads, which may impact service provision.

Comments on unintended consequences

3.222 Based on the analysis of the consultation responses, several potential unintended consequences have been identified in relation to the proposed changes, including:

- resource shifting: the risk of shifting resources away from other vulnerable populations in need of housing and support services(It is therefore important to consider the broader impact and ensure that the provision of support remains comprehensive and inclusive)

- potential delay in implementation: respondents expressed concerns about the time-consuming nature of the policy development process and alignment of legislation, which may result in delays in providing necessary support for young people and care-experienced individuals

- displacement: the risk that prohibiting temporary accommodation for certain age groups before suitable alternatives are in place could lead to displacement, this may result in individuals seeking alternative, less safe living arrangements

- resistance to change: respondents highlighted the potential resistance to change as a consequence

- increased pressure on services: the proposal may put additional pressure on youth, tenancy and social services to ensure that children and young people do not fall between services, especially those aged 16 and 17 years

- staff shortages and workload: respondents noted that some services are already short-staffed with increased workloads, the added pressures resulting from the proposals may be unrealistic and set people up to fail

- adverse effects on other vulnerable young people: it is important to ensure that accommodating young people who have left the youth justice system does not adversely affect the well-being of other vulnerable young people with whom they may be placed

3.223   To mitigate these unintended consequences, respondents emphasised the importance of conducting thorough impact assessments and continuously monitoring the implementation of the proposed changes. By addressing these concerns and taking proactive measures, the proposed changes can be implemented more effectively and with minimal negative impact.

Question 17 - Do our proposals go far enough to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness receive joint support from social services and local housing authorities? What more could be done to strengthen practice and deliver the broader corporate parenting responsibilities?

Table 3.3: Sentiment analysis of answers to question 17

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	15
No	5
Inconclusive	42
Total	**62**

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.224   The analysis found a majority of inconclusive responses in answer to question 17. Whilst only two respondents provided an explicit 'no' within their answers, most comments failed to indicate a clear position, producing a high volume of caveated and nuanced commentary.

Comments on what more could be done to strengthen practice

3.225   The analysis indicated a high degree of support for strengthening practice., Respondents' suggestions primarily focused on strengthening responsibilities, accountability, and overcoming the long-term issues that have led to young people aged 16 and 17 being failed. In summary, respondents called for the following.

3.226   **Joint responsibility between social services and housing departments**: Collaboration between social services and housing departments was highlighted as crucial to ensure that all 16 and 17 year olds, as well as care leavers, are placed in secure and stable accommodation while receiving the necessary protection and support.

3.227   **Cooperation between agencies**: Respondents expressed concerns about barriers to effective joint working between social services and local housing authorities. They suggested further work to better understand these barriers and find ways to overcome them. Respondents stressed the importance of mandatory cooperation between relevant public bodies, including schools, colleges, universities, and other educational settings, to effectively support care-experienced young people. Clear communication, improved understanding of roles and responsibilities, and better coordination were seen as key factors.

3.228   **Clarity of roles and responsibilities**: There was a call for explicit clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of both social services and housing authorities in supporting this vulnerable demographic. A well-defined framework was seen as essential to ensure accountability and promote seamless collaboration.

3.229   **Trauma-informed care and mental health focus**: Incorporating trauma-informed care principles into joint support services and strengthening the focus on mental health and well-being were considered important considerations. Access to education and employment opportunities, addressing hidden forms of homelessness, and collaborating with specialist third-sector organisations were also suggested.

3.230   **Support to parents/guardians**: Respondents highlighted the need for readily available support to be offered to parents/guardians, especially those with caring responsibilities and/or those who are disabled . This support would help in addressing the needs of children/young parents and contribute to preventing homelessness.

3.231   **Training and guidance**: Suggestions were made for identifying skills gaps and training needs among staff involved in supporting young people at risk of homelessness. Clear guidelines, codes, and training were seen as essential to ensure consistent and effective support.

3.232   **Transition from foster care**: Concerns were raised about the lack of mention in the White Paper regarding the transition for young people from foster care to relevant schemes. Respondents recommended addressing this gap and ensuring a smooth transition process.

3.233 **Accommodation provision and funding**: Recommendations were made for reviewing and improving the provision of appropriate accommodation for care-experienced young people. It was suggested that the Welsh Government should work with local authorities, the private rented sector, and care-experienced young people to address issues such as the lack of guarantors and financial barriers.

Comments on what more could be done to deliver corporate parenting responsibilities

3.234 Respondents suggest several further actions that could be taken to deliver corporate parenting responsibilities for 16 and 17 year olds at risk of homelessness. These actions include:

- using land owned by anchor organisations to build suitable housing and supported accommodation for this population
- developing mentoring programs that require senior leaders of organisations to offer support and guidance to young people, with a particular focus on education and employment
- creating work experience and volunteering opportunities that prioritise children and young people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or care leavers to enhance their skills
- strengthening corporate parenting by ensuring the availability of appropriate supported accommodation, as legislation and case law already support this concept
- establishing a strong corporate parenting framework that sets out the support that young people living alone should receive, although this situation should be exceptional and rare
- ensuring that care leavers' financial capabilities are developed through the pathway planning process and providing support for their financial independence
- making the voluntary Corporate Parenting Charter statutory (for named public bodies) to deliver broader corporate parenting responsibilities and encourage other bodies to develop specific practices and collaborate to end youth homelessness

- providing clarity and leadership to ensure that legislation is implemented as intended, addressing the confusion regarding responsibilities

- recommending the development of a dedicated young person's housing pathway, including priority access to family mediation services to retain accommodation where it is safe to do so

Question 18 - Do you agree or disagree that the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 should be amended to allow 16 and 17 year olds to be able to hold occupation contracts?

Table 3.4: Sentiment analysis of answers to question 18

Answer	No. of respondents
Agree	33
Disagree	10
Inconclusive	21
Total	**54**

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.235   The majority of respondents agreed with this proposal, however, the number of inconclusive responses identified through the analysis demonstrates the level of nuance and caution that is recognised when exploring the consequences of amending the Act. Local authority respondents were split between those who agreed and those who disagreed with the proposal. The majority of RSL responses to this question were inconclusive, with the remainder being split between those who agreed and those who disagreed with the proposal. Similarly, most third sector responses were inconclusive, although a small minority agreed with the proposal.

Comments in agreement

3.236   Comments that supported the amendment recognised the difficulties that young people encounter when attempting to navigate the private rental market. Respondents noted that young people dealing with ACEs are likely to need additional support in order to 'start over' in new areas and emphasised that individuals should not be penalised due to their age.

3.237 Evidence from organisations offering experience of working with young people was also referenced to support the amendment, with respondents highlighting that private renting is often an inaccessible option without a guarantor. This is a barrier faced by all young people without an immediate relative who can evidence a high/stable financial status.

Comments that agree in principle but with caveats

3.238 Respondents who agreed in principle suggested a number of possible actions which could be taken to support the amendment of the Act. For example, respondents emphasised the importance of ensuring that young tenants possess the necessary capabilities and maturity to handle financial responsibilities, manage a home, and take care of themselves. They suggested that an assessment should be conducted to determine whether these individuals are ready for independent living and whether they require additional support or supported accommodation.

3.239 Furthermore, respondents highlighted the need for clarity and formalisation of the rights and obligations of both landlords, property agents, and tenants in relation to this age group. They believed that such formalisation would provide a clear framework for all parties involved and ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities.

Comments in disagreement

3.240 A summary of the primary reasons that respondents provided for either disagreeing with, or expressing concern in relation to the amendment is provided below. Broadly, these respondents are concerned by the potential risks that may be posed to a group that is already recognised to be vulnerable – without a wider supporting strategy:

3.241 **Capability and safeguarding**: respondents questioned whether 16 and 17 year olds have the capability to independently manage and sustain a tenancy. They raised concerns about the potential risks of living alone and unsupported in general housing stock, highlighting the need for increased supply of supported accommodation models.

3.242 **Maturity and financial independence**: some respondents suggested that some 16 and 17 year olds are not financially independent enough to hold a tenancy. Respondents argued that starter units or supported housing would be a more appropriate solution.

3.243 **Need for ongoing support**: respondents emphasised the importance of providing ongoing support and mentoring to young people to enable them to maintain a successful tenancy. They highlighted the lack of statutory social responsibility or duties for landlords in this regard, which could put young tenants at risk.

3.244 **Feasibility and landlord willingness**: concerns were raised about the feasibility of 16 and 17 year olds being able to afford rent in the current housing climate, given their reduced welfare benefit entitlements and lower minimum wage. There were doubts about whether landlords would be willing to let to this age group due to contract law allowing individuals under 18 to void a contract without reason.

3.245 **Safeguarding and implementation**: several respondents expressed concerns about safeguarding and implementation issues. They worried about the potential exploitation of young renters by landlords and the need for strict guidance, consistent assessment of capacity and maturity, tailored support, and training in independent living skills.

3.246 **Risk of tenancy failure**: respondents highlighted the risk of tenancy failure among 16 and 17 year olds and the potential consequences it could have on their future housing opportunities. They believed that this proposal could set young people up to fail and suggested considering alternative options.

3.247 **Legal implications**: there were concerns about how the proposed amendment aligns with contract law, which states that individuals under 18 cannot be responsible for a legal contract. The current practice of offering a Contract In Trust until the individual turns 18 was seen as a way to mitigate the risk of tenancy failure.

3.248 **Increased pressure and demand**: some respondents worried that allowing 16 and 17 year olds to hold occupation contracts may increase pressures and demand for housing support services, making it difficult to meet the needs of this age group.

3.249 **Additional support and risks**: respondents stressed the need for intensive support for young people if they are to successfully hold a tenancy. They highlighted the potential financial difficulties, risks of homelessness, and negative impacts on mental health if a tenancy fails.

3.250 Overall, respondents emphasised the need for careful consideration, further research, and comprehensive support structures before implementing a change to the Act.

Question 19 - The accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment sets out our early consideration of the costs and benefits of these proposals. Are there any costs and benefits we have not accounted for?

3.251 The analysis produced a number of recurring themes in relation to the RIA across the consultation, however some responses were particularly relevant to the associated consequences for the age group in question. These are presented below.

Costs not accounted for

3.252 A minority of respondents believed there were costs that were not accounted for in this chapter of the consultation. Though the respondent pool for this summary was too small to meaningfully aggregate feedback, there were a number of costs raised that the Welsh Government may want to consider:

- it was suggested that an increase to the Housing Support Grant in order to support children and young people in appropriate accommodation would be necessary to support this proposal
- the administrative costs, training expenses, and capacity-building for professionals working with homeless youth must also be considered when implementing new policy, especially policy based on collaboration
- three respondents suggested that the RIA under-estimates the cost of proposals to local authorities, specifically

- further to this, one respondent suggested that the lack of detail on financial impact to local authorities made them hesitant to trust the information provided

- reported costs to local authorities were seen to stem from additional pressures encountered as a by-product of the implementation of these proposals, such as secure establishment costs and storage costs for personal belongings of young people

- it was a concern that removing priority need may result in lack of prioritisation, increasing costs for temporary and supported accommodation.

Benefits not accounted for

3.253 Similar to the comments made on costs, there were not any clear themes identified in the responses; however, the potential benefits listed included:

- a justification of short-term costs were thought to be mitigated by the long-term benefits

- the potential for a future reduction in demand for social services and healthcare

- creation of productive citizens

- the economic benefits that might be brought by curbing costs associated with homelessness

- the social benefits that would come with improved educational and vocational outcomes, and enhanced mental health and well-being.

Question 20 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the short-term proposals to increase the suitability of accommodation? Are there additional immediate actions you believe should be taken for this purpose?

3.254   This question referred to 13 individual proposals within Chapter 4, with respondents addressing each of the proposals to different extents. Each proposal is considered in turn; however, it is worth noting that both the quantitative and qualitative analysis is significantly affected by the nature of the question and format of the survey.

3.255   In addition, a number of responses to this question raised points that were difficult to assign to a particular proposal, and therefore a thematic analysis of these general points was undertaken. These include:

- challenges in meeting suitability standards
- the need for clarity and guidance
- the impact on vulnerable groups
- the enforcement and monitoring of standards
- the need for financial investments and addressing housing supply
- the rapid rehousing approach.

3.256   Many respondents acknowledged the importance of increasing the suitability of accommodation but expressed concerns about the practicality and feasibility of achieving these standards in the short term. Limited housing stock, high demand, and budget constraints were cited as significant challenges that could hinder the successful implementation of the proposed measures.

3.257   Stakeholders emphasised the need for clear guidance and specific details on how legislative reforms would be implemented to strengthen existing laws. They called for comprehensive planning and review processes to address ambiguities and ensure the effective interpretation and implementation of the proposed measures.

3.258   Several respondents highlighted the importance of considering the needs and circumstances of vulnerable groups, such as single women with young babies, asylum seekers, and individuals with protected characteristics. They stressed the need for clear guidance when determining the suitability of accommodation for

these groups and advocated for safe shared accommodation options and supported integration into wider society.

3.259   The effectiveness of any new suitability standards was seen as contingent upon the establishment of an effective framework for enforcement and monitoring. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of local authorities taking responsibility for monitoring standards in temporary accommodation, to ensure the safety and well-being of residents.

3.260   Respondents recognised the need for increased investment from the Welsh Government to drive improvements in the quality and supply of accommodation. They highlighted the current lack of affordable housing and the challenges in building suitable accommodation that meets the diverse needs of the homeless population. Calls were made for additional resources, strategic development opportunities, and access to land held by services such as health to increase housing supply.

3.261   While the rapid rehousing approach was generally supported, concerns were raised about the availability of suitable accommodation, particularly for young people. Respondents noted a lack of appropriate housing options in the current housing stock and called for more affordable housing choices, including specialist health provision for individuals with high support needs.

Proposal 1: Ensuring accommodation with Category 1 Hazards is always unsuitable

Table 4.1: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 1

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	42
No	1
Don't know	7
Inconclusive	13
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.262   Approximately half of local authority respondents agreed with this first proposal; the remaining local authority responses were unclear or disagreed. Most RSLs that referenced this proposal in their response agreed with it. With one exception (where the response was not clear), all third sector responses that referred to this proposal were supportive of it.

Comments in agreement

3.263   This proposal was met with clear support and respondents agreed that the proposal "is essential to safeguard the wellbeing of individuals". Respondents highlighted the importance of this proposal by pointing to cases where individuals have died due to poor quality housing, and stressed that this action is an urgent priority.

Comments in disagreement

3.264   Although in the minority, respondents who either disagreed or had concerns with the proposal, questioned how this proposal was to be managed. They were concerned that this proposal would result in unreasonable expectations and additions to housing teams' workload, with one respondent (incorrectly) commenting that it is currently courts that determine whether a property is or is not fit for human habitation, not environmental health teams. Secondly, one respondent suggested that the proposal was unnecessary as the conditions for determining suitability are covered adequately in the Housing Wales Act 2004, Housing Wales Act 2014 and Renting Home Wales Act 2016.

Additional comments

3.265   One local authority recommended that the Operational Guidance to determine whether a property has category 1 or 2 hazards is updated, while another respondent proposed the need for a more stringent definition of suitable accommodation.

Proposal 2: Prohibiting shared sleeping space

Table 4.2: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 2

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	2

Don't know	9
Inconclusive	15
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.266 This proposal was approved by the majority of respondents; however, some responses which were positive or inconclusive also raised concerns; to avoid duplication of issues, these concerns are outlined in the 'comments in disagreement' section. Local authority responses were split between those who agreed with it, those who were unsure and those that were inconclusive. Two local authority responses disagreed with this proposal. Most third sector and RSL responses that referenced this proposal agreed with it.

Comments in agreement

3.267 Respondents who agreed with the proposal shared their experiences, or experiences of people they have supported, of inappropriate shared sleeping spaces. Reasons for supporting the proposals included the need for individuals to feel safe, a child's right to privacy under UNCRC Article 16, and the need to minimise trauma of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Comments in disagreement

3.268 The comments in opposition to the proposal followed three themes, the need for flexibility to suit the individual, the demand on accommodation and the need to accommodate people in an emergency.

3.269 Local authority respondents suggested that a blanket ban on shared sleeping spaces would reduce the choice available to applicants, and may not suit all applicants. Examples were given of rough sleepers and refugees who preferred shared spaces due to the informality of the service and suggested it was a way to provide shelter without having to enter formal housing, which comes with additional responsibilities that the applicant may not feel they can manage. In addition, another referenced that shared spaces may be suitable for families, (which would be permitted under the proposal) or the only suitable option due to the lack of accommodation and the demand on services. This comment suggests there is a need to clarify that the proposals would *not* prohibit shared sleeping space for

families. With regards to the final theme, local authority respondents highlighted the need for shared sleeping spaces in cases of an emergency, such as during the flooding caused by Storm Dennis, or due to cold weather. They suggested that a blanket ban on shared sleeping space would rule this out.

Proposal 3: Applying the same standards across privately owned and local housing authority/registered social landlord owned or managed non-self-contained accommodation.

Table 4.3: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 3

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	1
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	19
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.270 The majority of RSL and third sector responses that referenced this proposal agreed with it. Local authority responses were broadly split between those who agreed with the proposal and those who were unsure. A small minority of local authority respondents were unsure, whilst one local authority respondent explicitly disagreed with the proposal.

Comments in agreement

3.271 Respondents were generally in favour of this proposal highlighting the clarity it would provide to applicants and the need for good quality accommodation across tenures.

Comments in disagreement

3.272 Respondents expressed concern about the supply of accommodation, and the need for flexibility to allow local authorities to meet their statutory duties. A local authority suggested that the policy would create further shortages in temporary accommodation and would require additional funding for administration and enforcement of the standards in the private sector. One respondent highlighted that

local authorities and housing associations currently benefit from an exception, which if removed would place stress on already overburdened systems.

Proposal 4: Building choice into the system

Table 4.4: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 4

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	3
Don't know	7
Inconclusive	16
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.273   Most RSL and third sector respondents that referred to this proposal in their response agreed with it. A small majority of local authority respondents also agreed with it. The three responses that disagreed with this proposal were all from local authorities.

Comments in agreement

3.274   Supporters of the proposal argued that an unsuitable match can adversely affect not only the individual seeking accommodation but also others in their household, neighbours, the wider community, and housing support staff. They believe that when services take into account an individual's specific needs and preferences, the placement and contract is more likely to succeed. In addition, they suggested that expecting them to uproot their lives and move far away from their preferred area is unfair and unrealistic. It was felt that allowing individuals to choose their preferred area helps them maintain their social connections and reduces the likelihood of resorting to sofa surfing or rough sleeping.

3.275   The need to take personal circumstances into account through meaningful conversations was also highlighted, in order to understand the specific requirements and preferences of applicants. They argued that the current approach of system matching without considering individual circumstances may lead to mismatches between applicants and properties. It was noted that taking the time to understand what matters to applicants can help ensure better allocation decisions.

3.276   However, respondents cautioned against making strict statements or requirements around this, as it may create unrealistic expectations that are difficult to meet. They emphasised the importance of being able to discharge the duty by providing suitable accommodation, even if it does not align with the stated wants of the household. For example, affordability and availability in a chosen or preferred area may limit the options available to a household, and subsequently property in that area may not be available as a suitable placement.

Comments in disagreement

3.277   Those who either disagreed with the proposal or had concerns felt that the proposal had contradictions with the removal of priority need, may potentially give clients unrealistic expectations and would be difficult to manage given the current homelessness and housing crisis.

Proposal 5: Ensuring placement in overcrowded accommodation is never suitable at the point of discharge of the main housing duty

Table 4.5: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 5

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	3
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	17
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.278   The majority of RSL and third sector respondents that referred to this proposal in their response agreed with it. Local authority responses were mostly split between those in agreement with the proposals and those that were unclear. The three responses in disagreement with the proposal were all from local authorities.

Comments in agreement

3.279   Respondents who agreed with the proposal did so due to the expressed preference of households who have experienced homelessness and concerns about living conditions and safety. Respondents suggested many households presenting as

homeless express a preference to temporarily reside with friends or relatives rather than being placed in overcrowded accommodation or emergency accommodation such as bed and breakfasts or other temporary accommodation settings. In addition, supporters of the proposal highlighted concerns about the living conditions in overcrowded accommodation, particularly for families and young people. Placing families in overcrowded situations is seen as unacceptable, and young people have expressed hesitancy to live in shared accommodation due to concerns around privacy and theft. There was a recognition that overcrowded living arrangements may not provide the necessary level of comfort, safety, and independence for individuals and families. However, they also highlighted concerns over the lack of clarity in defining "shared accommodation", and how overcrowding is calculated.

Comments in disagreement

3.280   Respondents who disagreed with the proposal or were concerned about its implementation did so due to the lack of suitable accommodation for larger families, the proposal limiting households' choice and flexibility, and the need for additional funding and practical solutions to meet this proposal.

Proposal 6: Prohibiting the use of unsupported temporary accommodation for young people

Table 4.6: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 6

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	4
Don't know	10
Inconclusive	12
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.281   Most RSL and third sector respondents that referred to this proposal agreed with it. Local authority respondents were fairly evenly split between those who were unsure, those who agreed and those who disagreed with the proposal.

Comments in Agreement

3.282   Respondents who supported the proposal referenced the need to focus on trauma and well-being, the safety and security of young people, and the need for age-appropriate support due to the experiences that young people have had.

3.283   Many respondents highlighted the negative impact of unsupported temporary accommodation on the mental health and well-being of young people. They emphasised that homelessness itself is a traumatic experience and stressed the importance of providing appropriate support to address physical and mental health needs, substance misuse issues, and criminal justice needs.

3.284   Respondents also raised concerns about the safety and security of young people in temporary accommodation. Respondents mentioned the lack of locks on rooms, which leaves them feeling scared for their physical safety and worried about the security of their belongings. They argued that ensuring physical safety should be a priority and proposed accommodation without secure locks as unsuitable for placement.

3.285   Supporters of the proposal emphasised the need for age-appropriate support for young people in temporary accommodation. They stressed that the support should be trauma-informed and tailored to the specific needs and experiences of young people.

3.286   However, several respondents expressed concerns about the availability and quality of support services for young people experiencing homelessness. They argue that there is a lack of good quality, trauma-informed support that is accessible 24/7. They also highlight the increasing support needs of young people and the pressure it puts on existing supported accommodation capacity.

Comments in disagreement

3.287   Respondents who opposed the proposal did so due to resource constraints, restrictions on choice, the need for flexibility due to exceptional cases and the rationale that the proposal is based on assumptions around vulnerability.

3.288   The recurring theme across this chapter was the concern regarding resource limitations and the lack of available alternatives to unsupported temporary accommodation.

3.289   The second theme that emerged revolved around the suitability of different types of accommodation for young people. Some respondents argued that shared accommodation can be beneficial for reducing social isolation, sharing expenses, and providing mutual support. They also highlighted that self-contained accommodation may not be affordable for young people due to limitations in the benefit system.

3.290   Concerns were raised about the potential negative consequences of forcing young people accustomed to self-contained accommodation into shared environments. Additionally, there was a call for individualised assessments of need rather than a one-size-fits-all approach based solely on age. This related to the need for flexibility in the proposed legislation, particularly regarding 16-17 year olds. Respondents argued that there should be room for exceptional cases where alternative accommodation may be necessary in emergencies, even if only for a brief period.

3.291   Finally, respondents suggested that the proposal makes assumptions about the vulnerability and support needs of young people. Respondents argued that not all young people require supported accommodation and that support can be provided in various settings, including mainstream properties with floating support. There was also a criticism in relation to the assumption that only those who have experienced adverse childhood events (ACEs) or traumatic events will become homeless.

3.292   In addition to the above, respondents requested clarity around what counted as supported accommodation, and suggested that there could be potential to differentiate between 16-17 year olds and 18-25 year olds.

Proposal 7: Location

Table 4.7: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 7

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	1
Don't know	12
Inconclusive	12
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.293   Again, most RSL and third sector respondents who referenced this proposal were supportive of it. Local authority responses were split primarily between those who agreed with the proposal and those who were unsure. One local authority respondent disagreed with the proposal.

Comments in agreement

3.294   Respondents who supported the proposal suggested that the move to a new location can cause "serious problems" for people experiencing homelessness. The consideration of location and support was deemed important for sustaining future tenancies and it was felt that proximity to wider family and friend support networks should also be included.

3.295   One respondent suggested that this approach should have an impact on the provision of new housing across Wales, reinforcing the need to build housing with access to schools, public transport links and services. Respondents did suggest that the proposal would not be feasible within the short term due to current circumstances and asked for clarity on the timeframe proposed.

Concerns

3.296   While this proposal received widespread support, respondents did express concerns due to the housing crisis, different circumstances and challenges faced by rural populations, and a perceived lack of clarity around the definition of a "reasonable travelling distance".

Proposal 8: Taking into account wider support needs

Table 4.8: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 8

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	2
Don't know	7
Inconclusive	17
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.297   Amongst local authorities that referred to this proposal in their response to question 20, 4 agreed with it, 3 were unsure and 2 disagreed with the proposal, whilst the remainder were inconclusive. With the exception of 2 third sector responses that were unclear, all third sector respondents that referenced this proposal agreed with it. Similarly, although 2 RSLs explicitly disagreed with this proposal, the rest of the RSL responses that referenced the proposal agreed with it.

3.298   This proposal received widespread support across all sectors, in particular in relation to domestic abuse survivors, children and young people, people with special educational needs and the Neurodivergent, as well as those with language needs. It was appreciated that the White Paper acknowledged support networks broader than the family. However, one local authority stated that this is already a consideration when determining suitability and suggested that no change is required.

Proposal 9: Culturally appropriate accommodation

Table 4.9: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 9

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	1
Don't know	7
Inconclusive	18
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.299   Almost all respondents who specifically referenced this proposal supported it. The single response that explicitly disagreed with the proposal came from a local authority. The minority of respondents who were unsure about this specific proposal were all either local authority or RSL respondents. Whilst it was recognised that the proposal specifically focused on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, respondents suggested that it is important that those communities are given the choice to ensure it is not just assumed they would prefer to be housed on a site. They also suggested that this proposal needed to be a part of a long term plan to ensure that sufficient culturally appropriate sites were available.

3.300 In addition, respondents suggested extending the proposal of ensuring culturally appropriate accommodation beyond these communities, for example suggesting that it may be appropriate for women whose religion prohibits shared accommodation with men.

Proposal 10: Broader supporting policy and guidance

Table 4.8: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 10

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	1
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	20
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.301 Only one respondent (a local authority) who addressed this proposal specifically, suggested that any broader supporting policy and guidance must be flexible to allow for cases where "house" rules are necessary due to the level of risk posed by some individuals and the need to keep staff safe, and maintain the support of the local community.

Proposal 11: Homelessness at home

Table 4.11: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 11

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	37
No	1
Don't know	7
Inconclusive	18
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.302 The majority of respondents who cited this specific proposal in response to question 20 were in favour of the proposal. One local authority respondent was opposed to the proposal.

Comments in agreement

3.303 Those in favour of the proposal praised the person-centred approach that would maximise people's choice, its potential to provide local authorities with additional opportunities to support people, and felt that it would provide reassurance to family members that their relative has the same level of priority as any other household in temporary accommodation. In addition, respondents suggested the need for further guidance to ensure that the scheme is consistent across Wales, and that it is not abused to secure social housing.

Comments in disagreement

3.304 Only one response specifically disagreed with the approach proposed, suggesting that it may have the unintended consequence of parents asking their child to leave home at the age of 18 as they would feel "confident that the local authority will allow them to stay in the parental home until a suitable property is found". Other respondents who offered a mixed response suggested the need for more guidance and exploration of the unintended consequences that might arise due to the Homeless at Home Scheme.

Proposal 12: Data Collection

Table 4.12: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 12

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	35
No	0
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	22
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.305 Only 2 comments specifically referenced the proposal on data collection, with the first welcoming the proposals due to the associated opportunity to revise data

returns and collect data on who is accessing accommodation. They felt that it would enable evaluation of the transition to a rapid rehousing approach. However, a local authority respondent expressed concerns related to the additional burden that may be created and suggested there was a need for further detail on the proposed timescale of implementation and guidance before commenting further.

Proposal 13: Proposals for longer term improvement to temporary accommodation

Table 4.13: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 13

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	35
No	0
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	22
Total	63

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.306   Only one respondent specifically referenced this proposal stating that while they approved of the proposal as an important step toward raising the minimum standards of temporary accommodation, they thought that the timescales needed to be realistic and achievable given the current housing crisis.

Question 21 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals around the allocation of social housing and management of housing waiting lists? What do you believe will be the consequences of these proposals?

3.307   This question referred to **9 individual proposals** within Chapter 4, to which respondents addressed each of the proposals to different extents.

3.308   Each proposal will be considered in turn, however, it is worth noting that both the quantitative and qualitative analysis were significantly affected by the nature of the question and format of the survey.

General comments

3.309   There were a number of comments made by respondents which could not be attributed to any single proposal, these included:

- the importance of not solely focusing on housing homeless individuals but also addressing the acute housing needs of other vulnerable populations to prevent homelessness
- respondents also highlighted the need for stronger guidance to ensure that people experiencing homelessness have access to social housing, including addressing restrictive policies such as blanket no-pet clauses
- the role of local authorities in implementing local lettings policies and the need for collaboration between housing authorities and the private rental sector to meet housing needs.
- the complexity of social housing allocations with support for the recommendation for further research in this area to understand how allocations can work more effectively
- the suggestion of exploring existing good practices and considering the long-term role of social housing in ending homelessness
- concerns about the length and outdated nature of housing waiting lists with an emphasis on the need to address the shortage of suitable social housing units and the potential impact of prioritising reducing waiting lists over individual needs
- respondents repeatedly raised concerns about unintended consequences of the proposed reforms, such as homelessness becoming a pathway to social housing

Proposal 1: We propose new legislative provision which will make clear an RSL cannot unreasonably refuse a referral from a local housing authority, within a specified timeframe, except in specified circumstances.

Table 4.14: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 1

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	34
No	9
Don't know	3
Inconclusive	12
Total	58

3.310   Almost all local authority and third sector responses agreed with this proposal, whilst the majority of RSLs that referenced this specific proposal in their response to question 21 did not agree with it.

Comments in agreement

3.311   Support for this proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- strengthening collaboration: supporters believed the proposal would enhance collaboration between local authorities and RSLs, improving rehousing efforts

- priority for homeless clients: the proposal prioritises clients at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, ensuring better access to social housing

- accountability and transparency: clear regulations and guidance are needed to hold RSLs accountable for allocation decisions

- addressing concerns regarding cherry-picking: the proposals could help to address concerns about some RSLs selectively choosing tenants based on stability or support needs

- resource management: additional resources may be required to manage the increased workload resulting from the new provisions

Comments in disagreement

3.312   Themes that emerged from respondents who disagreed with the proposal, or those who seemed to agree with caveats included:

- undermining partnership agreements: opponents argued that the proposal would undermine existing partnership agreements and working relationships between local authorities and RSLs, which are crucial for building balanced and sustainable communities

- respondents particularly expressed doubts about whether using punitive legislation to mandate allocations fosters the right relationship between local authorities and RSLs

- a need for suitable support and accommodation: critics emphasised that a sustainable allocation requires both suitable accommodation and the

necessary support for as long as it is needed. They believed that the capacity and resources required to deliver this legislation need to be in place

* concerns about "unreasonable refusal" and "specified circumstances": there was a call for clarity on what constitutes an "unreasonable refusal" and "specified circumstances."

* specifically, some opponents questioned whether a lack of suitable supply would be considered a reason for refusal - they also advocated for RSLs to be involved in developing guidance and a reasonable refusal list with the sector

* impact on community cohesion: opponents argued that enabling local authorities to mandate allocations could disrupt community cohesion and create barriers between organisations, stressing the importance of RSLs being able to match dwellings to the specific needs of applicants while considering the implications for communities

* focus on alternative mechanisms: some opponents suggested that attention should be focused on strengthening partnerships and developing common allocation policies rather than introducing legislative requirements

* proposals therefore included exploring non-legislative options, such as regulation, data collection, and maximising common housing registers and common allocation policies

Proposal 2 Unacceptable Behaviour Test

Table 4.16: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 2

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	24
No	5
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	23
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.313   Most local authority and third sector respondents who referenced this proposal agreed with it. Two local authority respondents and one RSL respondent disagreed

with the proposal. None of the RSL respondents explicitly agreed with this proposal.

3.314 *Comments in agreement*

3.315 Several themes emerged for support for the proposal related to the "Unacceptable Behaviour Test":

- respondents expressed concern that the current test lacks clarity and monitoring, resulting in inconsistent application of the test across different local authorities, leading to uneven and unjust outcomes – it was felt that standardising the test's application would ensure fair treatment for all applicants
- it was also suggested that the proposed "tightening up" of the test would allow local authorities to exclude relevant persons from the housing waiting list
- it was suggested that the proposal could help to address victim-blaming, for example: preventing survivors of domestic and financial abuse from being penalised because they have a history of high rent arrears through no fault of their own (it was suggested that guidance for applying the test should be developed in collaboration with the specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence sector)
- it was also suggested that the proposed review of the unacceptable behaviour test could enable a more trauma-informed approach in cases of persistent ASB and high rent arrears.

Concerns

3.316 While the proposals were widely supported several concerns emerged including:

- perception of criminal connotation: some individuals expressed concern that the wording of the test, specifically the reference to being "guilty of unacceptable behaviour," implies a quasi-criminal conduct
- a worry that the proposed test may unfairly disadvantage neurodivergent and disabled young people

- more clarity, safeguarding measures, and understanding of the impact of neurodivergence on individuals' lives should be included in the test

- some respondents proposed that the test should only consider current behaviour rather than previous behaviour, with a power (rather than a duty) to consider past behaviour patterns(this was seen as a way to embed the principle of rights and responsibilities)

- whether rent arrears should be included in the definition of unacceptable behaviour(stemming from a lack of clarity in the legislation and the potential removal of rent arrears as a consideration)

- suggestions that amendments are needed to ensure clear guidance and consistency for local authorities when considering the Unacceptable Behaviour Test - the potential distress caused to contract holders and the disruption of community cohesion were highlighted as potential consequences

Proposal 3: Power to remove people not in housing need from the waiting list

Table 4.17: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 3

Answer	No. of respondents
Agree	28
Disagree	11
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	13
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.317   The majority of local authority respondents who referred to this specific proposal agreed with it (one disagreed and two were unsure). RSL responses were either inconclusive, disagreed with the proposal or were unsure. Third sector respondents were fairly evenly split between those who agreed, those who disagreed and those who were unsure.

Comments in agreement

3.318   Two respondents, both local authorities, supported this proposal based on the administrative burden of managing waiting lists and the high number of people

currently on their waiting lists with no housing need. They also suggested that having a list based only on need would provide a clearer picture of housing need for developers and RSLs. Although they supported the proposal, they also raised concerns that it may result in more work for local authorities in managing waiting lists to assess need, and that applicants may challenge the local authority, resulting in more resource use. One supporter of the proposal stressed the need for a more detailed definition of housing need, while another proposed that when an individual is removed from a list that they are contacted by the local authority and directed towards suitable options within the private rented sector.

Comments in disagreement

3.319   The points raised in opposition to the proposal were as follows:

- concerns about unintended consequences and regression of positive work done to improve the perception of social housing
- scepticism regarding the reduction in the size of the waiting list and potential for individuals without housing need to seek alternative categorisations or homelessness duties to access the register
- potential increase in workload for officers due to client/member contact complaints and queries if the power to remove those without housing need is enforced
- belief in the importance of an open waiting list to provide a fuller picture of need and demand, and to offer housing advice to all applicants, even if they are not currently in housing need

3.320   Those who had mixed views about the proposal felt that it would not change their existing practice, (for example one respondent noted that they already had a "non-preference band" for households on the waiting list) which already helps to ensure they are prioritising those in housing need. This respondent also disputed the suggestion that the proposal would produce more accurate data as they already capture the data for other purposes (e.g.: Local Housing Market Assessments). In addition, there was a concern that alongside the removal of intentionality, this proposal may have the unintended consequence of driving people towards homelessness.

Proposal 4: Providing 'additional preference' to people experiencing homelessness

Table 4.18: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 4

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	28
No	9
Don't know	4
Inconclusive	17
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.321 Local authority respondents were broadly split between those who agreed and those who disagreed with this proposal. None of the RSL respondents agreed with the proposal (two explicitly disagreed, one was unsure and the remainder provide an inconclusive response). Most third sector respondents who commented specifically on this proposal agreed with it.

Comments in Agreement

3.322 Respondents who agreed with this proposal stressed the need to ensure a robust and clear timeline , alongside guidance and support for local authorities.

Comments in Disagreement

3.323 Respondents who disagreed with the proposal suggested that it will reduce the flexibility needed to create sustainable communities with a limit on internal transfers for those currently living in social housing that does not meet their needs. They suggested that it may create a bottleneck in the system. Respondents also suggested that Welsh Government must consider potentially unintended consequences due to the limited accommodation available, and that this proposal may incentivise homelessness.

3.324 There were concerns raised about ensuring the sustainability of tenancies rather than just allocating based on need, as well as exploring the existing options available.

Proposal 5: Providing 'additional preference' to care experienced people who are homeless and those fleeing abuse

Table 4.19: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 5

Answer	No. of respondents
Agree	26
Disagree	5
Don't know	5
Inconclusive	22
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.325 Most local authority respondents who commented on this specific proposal either agreed with it or provided an inconclusive response. One local authority respondent explicitly disagreed with this proposal and 3 were unsure. Few RSL respondents commented specifically on this proposal; of those who did, 2 disagreed with it and one was unsure. Most third sector respondents who commented on this proposal agreed with it.

3.326 The respondents in support of the proposal raised several points in relation to:

- **care leavers**: respondents emphasised the need to prioritise this vulnerable group within existing allocation systems, to increase their access to affordable accommodation and prevent homelessness

- **fleeing abuse**: respondents emphasised the need for greater consistency in allocation decisions by local authorities and RSLs to ensure that survivors of abuse receive appropriate support and secure housing

- **definition and clarification**: some respondents expressed the need for further clarification on the definition of those fleeing violence and the associated risk level/assessment

- respondents also called for a **broader definition of care-experienced people** beyond just care leavers to ensure that the proposal encompasses a wider group of individuals at risk of homelessness

- **consistency and impact**: respondents believed that implementing the proposed changes would lead to greater consistency in allocation decisions by both local authorities and RSLs and that these changes would significantly increase the number of homeless people rehoused by RSLs

Comments in disagreement

3.327   The points raised to oppose the proposal of providing 'additional preference' to care experienced people who are homeless and those fleeing abuse can be summarised as follows:

- concerns about managing too many preference groups: having too many preference groups could make it difficult to distinguish between them and manage referrals effectively

- all care-experienced young people should have additional preferences: respondents argued that all care-experienced young people, not just those threatened with homelessness, should be given additional preferences and that there should be no upper age limit for this preference

- poverty as the main driver of homelessness: respondents highlighted that poverty is the primary factor leading to homelessness and therefore all young people should be given reasonable preference in social housing allocation, as they are more likely to work in low-paid roles and have reduced access to welfare payments compared to older individuals

- definition and age considerations for care leavers: there was a reported need for clarification regarding the definition of care leavers and the age range for considering additional preference

- the question of whether local authorities have the discretion to prioritise care leavers on a case-by-case basis was also raised, some were concerned about the potential burden of asking every applicant about their care experience and the lack of a trauma-informed approach

Proposal 6: A statutory requirement for a Common Housing Register/Common Allocations Policies

Table 4.20: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 6

Answer	No. of respondents
Agree	34
Disagree	4
Don't know	2

Inconclusive	18
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.328 The majority of local authority respondents who commented on this proposal either agreed with it, or provided an inconclusive response. The majority of RSL and third sector respondents agreed with the proposal. One RSL respondent and one local authority respondent explicitly disagreed with it.

Comments in agreement

3.329 Several themes can be identified for those who supported the proposal related to the common housing register and common allocations policy:

- transparency and fairness: respondents believed that implementing a common housing register and common allocations policy would make the housing allocation process more transparent and fair
- resource management: some supporters recognised that implementing a common housing register would free up resources currently used to manage waiting lists, improving efficiency and allowing homelessness services to focus on individuals who are genuinely eligible for social housing
- data management: the use of a common housing register was seen as an opportunity to improve data knowledge by eliminating duplication of applications and providing a consistent, centralised space for housing needs data and available stock

Comments in disagreement and challenges

3.330 Respondents raised concerns around the challenges of standardising an approach across multiple local authorities, the additional resources required to run a common housing register such as IT infrastructure, and questioned the overall impact that a common housing register would have.

Proposal 7: Challenging an allocations decision

Table 4.21: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 7

Answer	No. of respondents

Agree	24
Disagree	6
Don't know	2
Inconclusive	26
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.331 Comments in relation to this proposal were limited, however, 3 respondents suggested that a mechanism for challenging decisions is essential and that Welsh Government should commit to a mechanism that is clear, simple and transparent. On the other hand, another respondent opposed the proposal suggesting that it is "unworkable" due to data protection.

3.332 Amongst specific stakeholder groups, two RSLs explicitly disagreed with the proposal and the rest were inconclusive in relation to this proposal. Amongst local authority respondents, 5 agreed with the proposal, 2 disagreed with it and the rest were inconclusive. Of the third sector respondents, 4 agreed with this specific proposal, one was unsure and the remainder were inconclusive.

Proposal 8: Introduction of a 'deliberate manipulation test'

Table 4.22: Sentiment analysis of answers to proposal 8

Answer	No. of respondents
Yes	25
No	9
Don't know	6
Inconclusive	18
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.333 Most local authority respondents who commented on this particular proposal were supportive of it; 2 local authorities disagreed with it and 2 were unsure. Of the 8 RSLs that commented specifically on this proposal, one agreed with it, one disagreed, one was unsure and the rest gave an inconclusive response in relation to this proposal. Third sector respondents were generally split between those who agreed and those who disagreed with the proposal.

Comments in Agreement

3.334 Those respondents who supported the introduction of the deliberate manipulation test felt that it would counteract the incentive for individuals to become homeless to gain higher priority for social housing, and that it is necessary with the removal of the intentionality test. However, supporters of the test suggested it would need to be applied at an earlier stage of the process, or at the outset of the homelessness application process to prevent unintended consequence. In addition, respondents identified the need for clear guidance and a review of the resource implications of the test.

Comments in Disagreement

3.335 Opponents of the deliberate manipulation test suggested that the test would not offer a robust deterrent and that its application is against the interests of the local authority as they would still owe a homelessness duty to the individual, meaning they will need to provide expensive temporary accommodation for long periods of time. Again, the point at which the test would be applied was raised as being too late in the process. Other reasons for opposing the introduction of the test included the idea that it will "reintroduce the intentionality test by another name" creating a culture of blame, shame and stigmatisation. Finally, a concern was raised on the impact of the test on survivors of abuse and how the application of the test can distinguish between "genuinely falsified information" and "genuine mistakes".

Additional Comments

3.336 In addition to the above, respondents expressed concern about subjective decision-making, requested more clarity and detail, and suggested exploring unintended consequences through scenario mapping.

Question 22 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for additional housing options for discharge of the main homelessness duty? What do you foresee as the possible consequences (intended or unintended) of this proposal?

Answer	No. of respondents
Agree	38

Disagree	1
Don't know	9
Inconclusive	10
Total	58

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

3.337   The majority of local authority and third sector respondents agreed with this proposal, whilst the remaining 3 local authority respondents and single third sector respondents were unsure. RSL respondents were split between those who agreed with the proposal, those who were unsure and those who submitted an inconclusive response. The single response that explicitly disagreed with the proposal was from an individual.

Comments in agreement

3.338   Respondents who agreed with the proposal felt that the increased range would allow for greater flexibility and choice, enabling a more person-centred approach with more potential for positive outcomes for households. Respondents emphasised the importance of implementing safeguards and support services, as well as building trust and transparency. Finally, respondents stressed the importance of clear and concise guidance to ensure consistency across local authorities.

Concerns and challenges

3.339   While the proposal was overwhelmingly supported, a number of respondents highlighted particular challenges and concerns. These included the frequently mentioned issue of housing availability, particularly social housing, the increase in workload and lack of resources, and the strain placed on support providers. In addition, respondents suggested that they were unable to comment on the proposals effectively due to a lack of detail in the White Paper. A concern (which was also raised by those who supported the proposal) was the need to ensure that the additional housing options do not place vulnerable groups, such as domestic abuse survivors and individuals with substance misuse problems, at increased risk. There was particular concern about the potential for discharging duty to be used as a way to decrease workload, which respondents believed should never be the case.

23. The accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment sets out our early consideration of the costs and benefits of these proposals in relation to access to housing. Are there any costs and benefits we have not accounted for?

3.340 Respondents identified a number of costs and benefits that they believe have not been accounted for, including:

Costs

- underestimated cost implications: respondents were concerned that costs associated with suitability and allocations not be under-estimated and suggested significant additional cost implications for both revenue and capital

- lack of affordable housing solutions: respondents perceived a lack of acknowledgment in the RIA regarding the shortfall of affordable housing solutions needed to fully realise the aims of the proposals

- legal and administrative costs: implementing the proposed reforms is likely to incur legal and administrative costs, including legal consultations, policy development, IT system updates, training, ongoing monitoring, and evaluation activities

- staffing resources: adequate staffing resources are crucial for the full implementation of the proposals, including resource administration within local authorities and funding support through Housing Support Grants

- Common Housing Register: moving to a CHR would have considerable cost implications, including resource implications, large IT structure considerations, and reviewing each application in line with a new allocations policy

- reviewing suitability and additional administrative costs: the right to review decisions regarding suitability may result in additional costs, such as transferring households between temporary accommodation, and increased administration time and workload for assessment teams

- risks and concerns: risks associated with the reclassification of RSLs as public bodies remain a significant concern, and there is a need for

engagement with relevant stakeholders and funders to address potential implications

Benefits

- long-term benefits and savings: although the proposals incur short-term costs, they are justified by the long-term benefits of transformative legislative reforms and the Welsh Government's wider strategy to end homelessness. The investment in these reforms is expected to lead to ground-breaking systemic change and savings across the Welsh public sector as homelessness becomes rare, brief, and unrepeated

- economic advantages and social benefits: preventing homelessness through the proposed measures can generate substantial economic advantages, such as better health outcomes, reduced demand for emergency services, enhanced employability, and social and community benefits. Stable housing can also contribute to improved mental and physical health and a more stable living environment

Question 24 –To what extent do you think the proposals outlined above will support the implementation and enforcement of the proposed reforms?

3.341 This question referred to seven individual proposed changes within Chapter 5 with respondents addressing each of the proposals to varying extents. Given the open-ended nature of the question, the configuration of responses varied and included:

- comments in favour of the proposed changes within Chapter 5 in general
- support for one or more of the specific proposed changes within Chapter 5
- comments broadly in support of the proposed changes, but with caveats
- comments against the proposed changes within Chapter 5 in general
- opposition to one or more of the specific proposed changes within Chapter 5
- responses that referred to other chapters of the White Paper (positive and negative)
- recommendations for ways to support or improve the proposed changes in Chapter 5 and the wider proposals in the White Paper
- requests for more detail or clarification

General comments in agreement

3.342 Thirteen responses were comments in favour of the proposed changes in general. Reasons for thinking the proposals would support implementation and enforcement of the proposed reforms included the Welsh Government's acknowledgment of the scale of the issues and the need for realistic timeframes and support for the recognition given to the expert panel in the process.

Support for one or more of the specific proposals in Chapter 5

Proposal 1: We propose to use and extend the existing structures provided through local government scrutiny and social housing regulation in order to monitor homelessness provision and the implementation of the proposed legislative reform.

3.343 Nine respondents supported this proposal for the following main reasons:

- it would strengthen oversight and regulation, particularly relating to long-term supported accommodation for individuals with complex needs, which should be subject to higher levels of regulatory oversight

- giving greater powers to the Welsh Ministers to challenge and direct improvement is crucial for effective implementation and for addressing disparities in service provision across Wales caused by different interpretations of policies by local authorities

- preference for utilising existing structures and arrangements (such as Scrutiny Committees and the Housing Partnership Board), to monitor implementation of the proposed legislative reforms, rather than the introduction of a new regulator

- it would ensure consistent implementation and enforcement: one response highlighted the misapplication of current laws, whilst another emphasised the need for oversight that is independent of local government to enforce individual rights and standards for services

3.344 One respondent stressed the importance of the Welsh Government having a comprehensive understanding of the situation in each local authority, including challenges, available resources, and demographics. The respondent expressed "broad support" for the proposal, but suggested that regulation should be "based on principles, rather than prescriptive guidance."

Proposal 2: We will consider whether it is appropriate to make changes to the Regulatory Standards that apply to Registered Social Landlords to encourage an even greater commitment to ending homelessness and to monitor performance and delivery.

3.345 Five respondents expressed support specifically for the proposal to make changes to the Regulatory Standards that apply to RSLs. Reasons for this included concerns that the current regulatory standards are too vague in regard to cooperation around homelessness prevention and affordable housing, and need for clearer guidelines and expectations for RSLs to work collaboratively with local authorities and avoid being selective in providing housing support.

3.346   One respondent called for regulatory requirements around rehousing to be applied equally to both RSLs and stock retaining councils. Another acknowledged the risk to RSLs of housing people who require additional support, if resource constraints means the local authority is unable to provide wrap-around support.

Proposal 3: We propose to consider the functions of existing inspectorates in Wales, such as Care Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales to identify the role these organisations can play in ensuring delivery of the aims outlined in this White Paper to achieve broader responsibility for homelessness prevention across the Welsh public service.

3.347   Seven responses included support for this specific proposal, primarily on the grounds that it would ensure other public bodies – specifically health boards and social services – have clear and consistent levels of responsibility for homelessness prevention. One respondent advocated for collaborative local area responsibilities rather than sole reliance on housing/homelessness teams.

Proposal 4: We will review and consider whether additional powers for Welsh Ministers are necessary in order to ensure the proposed legislation meets its aims, including possible direction making powers to compel a local authority to meet the requirements within the proposed new legislation.

3.348   Three respondents referred specifically to this proposal as something that they supported. One respondent noted the need for clear guidelines on when Welsh Ministers would intervene; another expressed hope that these additional powers would not be used often.

Proposal 5: We will also consider how we can ensure the views of people with lived experience of homelessness can continue to inform our understanding of how homelessness systems work and ensure this feedback influences ongoing development of services and prompts action from Welsh Ministers where appropriate.

3.349   Seven responses to this question referred specifically to this proposal as something they supported. Respondents emphasised the importance of taking into consideration the views of people with lived experience of homelessness when

developing new services and evaluating the effectiveness of existing services. One respondent noted the alignment of this proposal with the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the need to involve children and young people with lived experience of homelessness in decision-making processes.

Proposal 6: In line with recommendations by the Homelessness Advisory Group and the recent Ending Homelessness National Advisory Board Annual Report, the Welsh Government will work to improve continuous data collation across the housing and homelessness sector.

3.350 Twelve respondents expressed support for this specific proposal, more than was the case for any of the other 6 proposals. Respondents emphasised the need for good data to hold individuals, local authorities, and RSLs to account and to monitor compliance with statutory requirements. It was also suggested that improved data collection and monitoring could increase understanding of the causal factors behind homelessness, help identify groups that are more susceptible to homelessness and support preventative approaches and break the cycle of homelessness.

3.351 Finally, it was suggested that without consistent data collection it would be impossible to monitor the efficacy of the proposals in the White Paper and compare progress across different local authorities.

Proposal 7: We also propose the creation of a power by which the Welsh Government could 'call-in' data collected by a local housing authority when undertaking its homelessness functions.

3.352 Three responses included explicit support for this proposal to allow Welsh Government to 'call in' data from local authorities. A fourth respondent stated that they "welcome the scrutiny of data by the Welsh Government to oversee implementation of the plans" , implicitly in favour of the final proposal in Chapter 5. Respondents caveated this support by emphasising the need to give local authorities sufficient time to collate the required data and for clarity of the rationale for 'calling in' data in this way.

Comments that agree in principle but with caveats

3.353 Seven responses to this question provided agreement with the proposals in principle but with the following caveats:

- the need for sufficient governance and funding
- the need for acknowledgement of the scale of the housing crisis and existing demands on local authority housing teams in the face of limited capacity and resource
- the need to avoid making local authorities solely accountable for homelessness prevention
- the need for more clarity on the detail of the proposed additional scrutiny of local authority homelessness provision

General comments in disagreement

3.354 The main area of concern or criticism around the Chapter 5 proposals related to funding and resources. Many respondents expressed concerns about the existing stretched service provision and budgetary shortfalls, highlighting that some of the proposals may be challenging to implement without additional financial resources to meet costs for staffing and IT.

3.355 The lack of affordable housing was seen as a major obstacle to implementing the proposals. Respondents stressed the need for a dramatic and sustained increase in the supply of affordable housing, as well as suitable accommodation for individuals with complex needs.

3.356 The review or replacement of IT systems and software, as well as ongoing costs of IT, were mentioned as potential procurement issues for local government finances. One respondent noted that these costs would need to be met by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which is already strained on account of the need to cap rent increases to assist families financially.

3.357 The other two main areas of concern with the proposals in this chapter were around the practicalities of implementation (in particular the risk of putting additional pressure on local authorities that already face multiple priorities and the need to involve local authorities and RSLs in developing a phased implementation plan) and

a lack of detail in the proposals (notably around timescales and expectations on local authorities in terms of data collection).

3.358 Other criticism or identified shortcomings (each mentioned in one response) included:

- reliance on the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales for scrutiny, which is not particularly accessible to people wanting to make a complaint about homelessness services
- concern that the data to support some of the proposals is not fully understood, or even available
- preference for proposals to be presented as "public service legislation around housing" rather than "housing legislation" in recognition of the role of other public services
- concern that introducing minimum standards for temporary accommodation (Chapter 4) could limit availability of accommodation
- concern that the language used in the Chapter to describe the relationship between local authorities and RSLs is unnecessarily adversarial and could inadvertently undermine existing partnership working "by creating barriers and eroding goodwill and trust" that many local authorities and RSLs have developed.

Opposition to one or more of the specific proposals in Chapter 5

3.359 Concerns were raised about three specific proposals, as follows:

- proposal 29: concern that this could create a power imbalance between local authorities and RSLs and undermine existing partnership working
- proposal 410: concern that any intervention by the Welsh Government using these additional powers is done in full understanding of the local authority context

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[9] We will consider whether it is appropriate to make changes to the Regulatory Standards that apply to Registered Social Landlords to encourage an even greater commitment to ending homelessness and to monitor performance and delivery.
[10] We will review and consider whether additional powers for Welsh Ministers are necessary in order to ensure the proposed legislation meets its aims, including possible direction making powers to compel a local authority to meet the requirements within the proposed new legislation.

- proposal 611: Concern that this could become bureaucratic and could lead to local authorities being compared against each other, despite operating in very different contexts: "What is important to us is that we are improving within our own authority."

Requests for more detail or clarification

3.360 Three responses included a request for clarification around the proposals, including:

- clarity on timescales and funding for implementation
- details of the outcome of the review (Proposal 4 in Chapter 5) and what the proposed additional powers to the Welsh Government would mean for a local authority that was failing to meet requirement
- additional detail or guidance on what would constitute an 'unreasonable refusal'[12] and 'specified circumstances' (both Chapter 4)
- clarification of whether RSLs therefore be able to 'demand' support from a local authority under the duty to cooperate (Chapter 3)

Responses that referred to other chapters of the White Paper

3.361 Some responses included a reference to other chapters of the White Paper. References to proposals in other chapters where the respondent was supportive of the proposal included:

- proposed inclusion or an additional right to request a review (Chapter 1) and ensuring there is clearer information for applicants on their rights to request a review
- the requirement for local authorities to maintain contact with applicants six months after accepting an offer (Chapter 4) was thought to support ongoing suitability of accommodation and early identification of potential issues

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[11] In line with recommendations by the Homelessness Advisory Group and the recent Ending Homelessness National Advisory Board Annual Report, the Welsh Government will work to improve continuous data collation across the housing and homelessness sector.
[12] I.e.: applicants who have deliberately and unreasonably refused to co-operate with the local housing authority

- provision of mediation services and legal assistance (Chapter 4), which could address underlying issues contributing to homelessness and foster a more comprehensive approach to homelessness prevention

- inclusion of a deliberate manipulation test (Chapter 4), which serves as "a deterrent against potential abuse" and reinforces the commitment to assist those genuinely in need

3.362   The proposal in Chapter 4 to provide local authorities the power to remove people with no housing need from the waiting list in their areas, was however, criticised in a response to this question, for two reasons:

- it could stigmatise social housing (i.e.: if it is only allocated to homeless applicants)

- it would penalise other vulnerable groups, including older people, young people, families experiencing overcrowding, disabled people and people moving on from refuge

Recommendations for ways to support or improve the proposed changes

3.363   Respondents used this question to make recommendations for ways to improve the proposed changes in Chapter 5 and/or the wider proposals in the White Paper. The most common theme in the recommendations (cited in eight responses to this question) was around regulation and scrutiny, including:

- the need for a strong and independent regulator with the power to hold local authorities and RSLs accountable for their decisions and (separately) for the Welsh Government to collaborate with the Ombudsman to discuss proposed changes

- the suggestion to introduce additional scrutiny and oversight of third sector providers

- the need for clear and achievable targets, as well as robust mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing the proposed reforms

- the proposal to use informal visits by the Welsh Government as a reporting framework to encourage shared ownership of legislative reform

- the idea of involving Public Service Boards in scrutinising the implementation of legislation to avoid local authorities being held solely accountable for homelessness prevention

3.364   Three responses included a recommendation for a single data system for all local authorities to use to ensure consistent and comparable data across Wales.

3.365   The need to define timescales was recommended in three responses, and specifically, the recommendation to 'stagger' or 'phase' implementation of the proposals. Two respondents suggested detailed guidance documents (including clearer definitions) would be advantageous.

Question 25 – What other levers/functions/mechanisms could be used to hold local housing authorities and other public bodies accountable for their role in achieving homelessness prevention?

3.366   This question yielded a variety of responses; however, they broadly fell into one or more of the following themes:

- regulation, accountability, auditing and monitoring
- data collection
- partnership working
- co-production and the involvement of people with lived experience
- training mechanisms

Regulation, accountability and auditing

3.367   Of the 44 respondents who answered this question, 18 suggested mechanisms around regulation, accountability and auditing as a means to hold local housing authorities and other public bodies accountable for their role in achieving homelessness prevention.

3.368   Some responses included a call for a specific ombudsman or regulator for homelessness, with strengthened powers and resources to carry out greater scrutiny of homelessness services, to ensure oversight and prevent poor practice or performance. One respondent suggested adopting the Scottish model of regulation of homelessness services (via the Scottish Housing Regulator) given that local authorities lack the capacity and resources to regulate effectively through member

scrutiny functions. Another respondent suggested this regulator could cover all landlords in Wales (i.e.: private landlords as well as RSLs).

3.369   Two respondents called for increased accountability of RSLs specifically, by building homelessness into the RSL self-assessment or including homelessness within the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations in Wales.

3.370   Others called for regular reviews or audits of homelessness services, to be conducted by the Welsh Government, Audit Wales or by peer review to allow for greater transparency when holding service providers to account. It was suggested that authorities must respond to audit findings, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. One respondent pointed to the opportunity to learn from other mechanisms (for example Safeguarding) which has a "Whole Wales learning approach and allows opportunities for local authorities to scrutinise and learn from each other." Another called for increased public scrutiny on services via annually published reports from each local authority, demonstrating how they are implementing these proposals and delivering outcomes.

3.371   Other responses highlighted various approaches to increase accountability and retribution for failing to meet a duty, providing potential strategies to hold local housing authorities and other public bodies accountable for their role in homelessness prevention. This includes a need for some form of consequential action for bodies that do not adhere to the duty to refer and duty to cooperate. One respondent suggested that the full cost burden for addressing non-compliance should fall on the local authority or other public body.

3.372   Three responses suggested increased accountability on health and social care, placing a legal duty on these organisations to work with local authority housing departments and act appropriately when needs cannot be met by housing or support services funded by the Housing Support Grant, particularly for people with complex health and care needs.

3.373   The need to set clear and measurable performance targets and benchmarks for local housing authorities was identified by 3 respondents as a way of fostering a results-oriented approach and holding local housing authorities and public bodies accountable for their role in homelessness prevention.

3.374 Another (separate) 3 respondents suggested that the Ending Homelessness Outcomes Framework (EHOF) could be used as a tool to ensure accountability across public services. Two of these respondents proposed linking the EHOF to existing frameworks such as the Public Health Outcomes Framework would enhance accountability.

3.375 Finally, it was suggested that the Welsh Ministers should act as the ultimate backstop, with the power to call in decisions and demand improvements to ensure all partners are working to the letter and spirit of legislation and national strategy.

Partnership working

3.376 Ten responses referred to the role that partnership working can play in supporting accountability. It was suggested that local authorities, RSLs, health boards, and other public sector organisations work together and are held accountable at both 'a mass level and an individual level' and that accountability should extend beyond each partner to the entire partnership. One respondent proposed a statutory requirement for other public bodies to collaborate with homelessness services. Another recommended a duty for GP surgeries, education and youth services to refer to a housing services if they are aware that someone's health or wellbeing is being impacted by their housing circumstances – including a risk of homelessness.

3.377 Encouraging public and third sector organisations to commit to shared priorities, such as housing, education, and employment, was considered crucial. One respondent suggested creating shared responsibilities for key performance indicators (KPIs) associated with these priorities would improve collective action to tackle homelessness alongside other wider determinants of health.

3.378 Finally, respondents highlighted a need for upskilling across all services involved in homelessness prevention, allowing for the adoption of a consistent approach, such as the PIE (Psychologically Informed Environment) approach, when people move from one service to another. Evaluation and evidence capture through a joined-up approach was also highlighted as important.

Data collection

3.379 Eight responses included a reference to the role that robust data collection can play in holding public bodies to account. One respondent cited the need for a centralised database where homelessness cases are recorded, enabling easy access to data on an 'as-needed basis'. It was suggested this would need to align with the EHOF.

3.380 Another respondent highlighted the need to include numbers of homeless presentations on hospital admission and/or hospital discharge. Another cited the need for more robust and accurate statistics on veteran homelessness.

3.381 In general it was suggested that by leveraging data effectively, it becomes possible to evaluate performance, identify areas for improvement, and allocate resources more efficiently.

Training mechanisms

3.382 Three responses included a reference to the role that training can play in supporting accountability, this included:

- training for housing officers in providing consistent support to survivors of domestic abuse
- training for health and social care professionals on what constitutes risk of homelessness and appropriate referral pathways to housing support
- training for housing professionals on the legal rights of individuals within the homeless system and how to support them

Co-production and the involvement of people with lived experience

3.383 Three responses suggested co-production and the involvement of people with lived experiences can help to hold local housing authorities and other public bodies accountable and aid understanding as to how effectively a service is operating and how a service could be improved.

3.384 There was also a call for accountability from identified bodies responsible for homelessness, urging them to prioritise the implementation of policies and practices accurately. Collaboration between clients and services was seen as essential for achieving progress and combining efforts and ideas.

3.385 One respondent suggested establishing anonymous feedback mechanisms to allow for input from individuals using housing options services and routine review of this feedback to ensure continuous improvement.

3.386 Another proposed that any substantial changes to homelessness services should involve consultation with people with lived experience of homelessness, in particular the need for strong youth voice involvement in oversight and co-production of youth-focused services.

No additional mechanisms needed

3.387 Finally, 2 respondents suggested that there are already sufficient accountability measures in place.

Question 26 – The accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment sets out our early consideration of the costs and benefits of these proposals. Are there any costs and benefits we have not accounted for?

3.388 Only 25 respondents answered this question (including 3 who felt that all the costs and benefits had already been considered and 2 who felt that there was insufficient detail on the proposals to answer the question).

Benefits

3.389 Additional benefits identified by respondents included:

- health and social benefits: attention to the wider determinants of health and adopting a prevention focus can lead to improvements in mental and physical health for affected individuals. Reducing homelessness can also have broader social and health benefits
- economic benefits: the proposed reform could result in economic benefits such as gains in productivity, job creation, and stimulation of local economies due to housing stability
- environmental benefits: reducing homelessness can lead to environmental benefits by decreasing the need for emergency refuges, transportation, and associated energy consumption
- equity and social inclusion, particularly for vulnerable or marginalised groups
- innovation and learning opportunities

- general improvements in quality of life

Costs

3.390   Seven respondents identified additional costs that should be considered in the accompanying RIA. These included:

- cost implications for the Welsh Government, given that the potential financial burden of the proposals may be larger than anticipated and local authorities should not have to bear the cost out of already stretched budgets
- cost of providing support for individuals with complex needs
- costs associated with data collection staff involved in implementing the proposals
- additional costs of upgrading IT systems
- knock-on effects on other services: any additional funding that local authorities need to find from their existing budgets will have wider community impacts (which may lead to the need to raise Council Tax, reduce non-statutory and preventative services, and impact waiting times for non-critical services)
- staffing costs: backfilling in organisations where a staff member has been seconded or employed into a new role may incur costs
- training and co-location costs: costs associated with training and possible co-location of resources should also be considered
- implementation costs, such as infrastructure development, and procedural changes integral to the successful execution of the proposed reforms
- long-term financial implications, including potential future costs and the sustainability of the reforms over time alongside secondary and indirect costs, capturing expenses incurred by other stakeholders or sectors, as well as exploring opportunity costs

Question 27 - What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the proposed reforms in this White Paper on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

3.391 Based on the consultation responses, several themes emerged regarding the likely effects of the proposed reforms in the White Paper on the Welsh language. These themes primarily focused on the opportunities to use the Welsh language and ensuring that it is not treated less favourably than English.

3.392 **Safeguarding the Welsh Language**: many respondents expressed concerns about the potential adverse effects of abolishing the Local Connection test on the Welsh language. They emphasised that consideration of local connection within allocation policies is crucial for safeguarding the future of the language in areas where it is declining. Although the White Paper makes no reference to local connection within allocations policies, some respondents suggested the removal of Local Connection could potentially be detrimental to Welsh-speaking communities and may result in a dilution of the Welsh character in certain areas.

3.393 **Service Delivery**: respondents highlighted the importance of providing support and services in the Welsh language to prevent homelessness among Welsh speakers. They emphasised that ensuring access to services in the language of choice reduces the risk of incorrectly assessing situations and allows for appropriate support. It was also noted that greater numbers accessing services may result in an increase in requirements to provide information in Welsh.

3.394 **Recruitment and consultation**: several respondents stressed the need for recruiting Welsh language speakers and involving them in multi-agency reviews and consultations. They also called for the release of consultation documents and guidance on upcoming legislation in both Welsh and English to ensure accessibility for young people at risk of homelessness.

3.395   **Equality and accessibility**: respondents highlighted the importance of treating the Welsh language equally to minority ethnic languages for all communications – and particularly in the context of PHPs. They emphasised the need for interpreters and translation services as equal options to recruit based on merit and experience. Additionally, there were calls for improving the accessibility of information and communication, particularly by using less formal and bureaucratic language, to ensure that young people accessing the homelessness system can receive information and communicate in their preferred language.

3.396   Overall, the proposed reforms were seen as having the potential to positively impact the use of the Welsh language, particularly through improvements in service delivery and communication. However, concerns were raised about the potential negative effects on Welsh-speaking communities and the need for robust policies and recruitment practices to protect the language's integrity.

Question 27a - Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?

3.397   The following 2 opportunities were identified:

- the provision of affordable housing to support local people and reduce the need for families to move away
- the availability of services in Welsh would reduce stress and anxiety of those needing support.

Question 27b - Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

3.398   One respondent identified increasing populations around Welsh language schools could increase their catchment and encourage non-Welsh speaking individuals to learn Welsh and obtain their education through the medium of Welsh.

Question 28. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them

Respondents to this question highlighted a number of issues, including:

- need for sufficient resources: respondents (particularly local authorities) emphasised the importance of having adequate resources to address homelessness effectively and prevent further crisis
- data collection and reporting: improved data collection, accountability, and reporting were highlighted as essential for identifying and monitoring outcomes related to homelessness prevention and support
- joined-up approach: there was a call for a holistic and coordinated approach across all housing tenures, including the private rented sector, to end homelessness and meet housing needs
- definition of homelessness: the definition of homelessness was a concern, with a request for a broad definition that covers various types of housing needs
- timelines for implementation: respondents sought clarity on the timelines for implementing the proposed changes and providing guidance and support to local authorities and partner agencies
- supply of homes: the availability of affordable housing and the need to increase the supply of social housing were highlighted as crucial factors in preventing homelessness
- health inclusion and support: the integration of health services, including mental health and substance misuse support, was seen as vital in addressing homelessness and promoting rehabilitation
- standards and regulations: calls were made for more definitive standards, such as time limits for sleeping rough and ensuring accommodation is arranged upon leaving hospital or prison
- private rented sector: the role of the private rented sector in providing housing solutions for single people and families was emphasised, along with the need to incentivise landlords and expand leasing schemes
- housing market reforms: proposals were made to reform the housing market, including maintaining local housing allowances at an affordable level and considering measures to limit property ownership by private landlords

- duties and responsibilities: concerns were raised about additional duties and responsibilities placed on local authorities, potential conflicts, and the need for a joint approach to prevent homelessness

- prevention and support: the importance of prevention and support services, including tenancy sustainment and community response teams, was highlighted to avoid evictions and maintain stable housing situations

- data sharing and monitoring: the need for safe and efficient information sharing between health and housing departments, as well as ongoing data collection and monitoring, was emphasised

- the unreasonable failure to co-operate clause: concerns were raised about the interpretation and application of the unreasonable failure to co-operate clause, suggesting a need for clearer definitions and monitoring of its usage

4. Stakeholder engagement events

4.1 Welsh Government officials undertook wide ranging stakeholder engagement activity during the consultation period. This included five online themed stakeholder engagement events covering the following:

- – 1. Core reforms to part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 (exploring prevention period, PHPs, the tests, and exemptions)
- – 2. Access to housing (exploring suitability, availability, and safety of local housing supply)
- – 3. Homelessness and the Criminal Justice System (exploring targeted proposals to prevent homelessness for those disproportionately affected and the implications of the tests for people in custody)
- – 4. Homelessness and health (exploring hospital discharge and complex needs)
- – 5. The role of social services and housing in homelessness prevention.

4.2 In addition; three bespoke events were run for RSLs, sessions were held with every local authority in Wales, a survey of social housing tenants was undertaken in partnership with TPAS, focus groups were run by the Welsh Refugee Council and engagement with children and young people was facilitated by End Youth Homelessness Cymru.

4.3 Summaries of some of this engagement have been published alongside this consultation response and can be viewed separately here.

4.4 Unlike the consultation document, these stakeholder discussions were not designed to follow a standardised questioning format, meaning that we cannot compare findings on a group-by-group basis. The findings were therefore aggregated on a thematic basis, with different areas of interest offering varying levels of feedback.

4.5 This short summary therefore prioritises findings which provide specific insight to inform how the proposals are perceived by core stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder feedback on the tests (priority need, intentionality, local connection)

Priority need

4.6   As observed in the written consultation; while there was a majority agreement with the proposal to abolish priority need, concerns have been raised about the potential challenges that may arise in the future when resources are stretched. Some local authority stakeholders felt that removal of priority need will prove challenging in the future when resources are further stretched, however those who had only joined local authority housing services during the pandemic reported having no prior experience of administering such tests.

4.7   Some stakeholders believed that removing priority need could lead to confusion and undermine the messaging around priority groups, as it may not be clear who should be given additional priority without the test. There was also a concern that individuals with fewer complex needs may be seen as more 'attractive' clients, potentially leaving the most vulnerable individuals without adequate support.

4.8   On the other hand, some stakeholders argued that removing priority need is necessary in order to create a caring society. They emphasised the importance of being ambitious in this regard, but also highlighted the need for clear guidance that accompanies the legislation. In terms of specific groups affected by the priority need test, there were concerns raised about care leavers and people in custody. Care experienced stakeholders highlighted that some local authorities already have a recognised lack of accommodation, and that care leavers are not 'near the top of the list'. Some stakeholders cautioned that removing priority need may hinder existing processes in certain local authorities that are working well for care leavers, such as providing them with gold band priority.

4.9   However, there were also stakeholders who argued that removing priority need has already been beneficial in certain local authorities, where alternative approaches have been implemented to ensure accommodation for those leaving custody.

Intentionality

4.10   Some stakeholders expressed support for the proposal to abolish the test, citing reasons such as promoting a trauma-informed and person-centred approach to homelessness. They argued that removing the test would alleviate the workload for staff and create an environment where individuals feel less judged and more comfortable seeking assistance.

4.11   There were, however, stakeholder views from the engagement events which strongly opposed the removal of the intentionality test. When exploring the relative challenges and benefits associated with the proposal, most responses can be categorised as challenges. Local authority stakeholders emphasised that they would be disproportionately affected by its removal, compared to wider prevention and support services. Stakeholders believed that eliminating the test would result in a lack of consequence and personal responsibility for individual citizens and therefore remove a valuable tool currently used to support prevention work. These stakeholders argued that the test serves as a deterrent and helps prevent situations from escalating to a point where intervention becomes necessary.

4.12   Additionally, stakeholders highlighted the existing financial pressure and scrutiny faced by local authorities, suggesting that the removal of the test could lead to increased costs for them. Particularly, stakeholders were concerned about the possible 'knock-on' effects in relation to housing supply and available options. With a less accessible PRS, local authorities emphasised the existing challenge of working with private landlords to encourage provision of accommodation when they have had negative experiences. It was therefore suggested that the removal of the test would result in people being placed in temporary accommodation for increased periods of time.

4.13   There were also suggestions to retain the intentionality test but expand it, similarly to the Local Connection criteria. This approach aims to strike a balance between holding individuals accountable for their actions while considering the complexities of joint tenancies and potential coercion.

4.14   As observed in the written consultation, while some stakeholders supported its removal to promote a more inclusive and supportive approach, others emphasised the importance of maintaining consequences and prevention measures within the wider system. The findings highlighted the need for careful consideration and further exploration of the implications associated with the proposed changes to the intentionality test.

Local connection

4.15   Stakeholders expressed mixed views on the local connection test. Some agreed with the proposal to retain it with exceptions, while others raised concerns about its fairness and suggested applying the test on a case-by-case basis. The trauma-informed application of the test was also questioned.

4.16   Some stakeholders agreed with an exemption for care experienced young people but emphasised the need to strengthen collective efforts. Others questioned whether the local connection should be completely abolished, considering the current rules as unfair.

4.17   Stakeholders also discussed more challenges than benefits in relation to the proposal. Some felt that the list was too wide and could be misused, while others believed that it disadvantaged those with less complex cases. The importance of a centrally managed reciprocal framework for effective movement around Wales was emphasised.

4.18   Stakeholders pointed out potential negative impacts on services such as health and criminal justice in local authority areas with higher placement needs. They also highlighted the resource burden on local authorities due to correspondence and queries from elected representatives regarding out-of-county placements. The impact on the Welsh language and the need for strong, consistent guidance were mentioned.

4.19   Concerns were also raised in relation to prison leavers and public protection. Stakeholders emphasised the need for local connection for prisoners to create an equitable housing market system. Risk assessments, public protection, and clear guidelines to deter system manipulation were considered important. The upfront sharing of knowledge about individuals' health needs and substance use was seen as crucial for successful reintegration and community cohesion.

4.20   Finally, stakeholders suggested alternative approaches such as implementing support to build healthier relationships as an alternative to relocation. They also emphasised the involvement of probation services in determining when people need a fresh start to effectively manage risks.

Views on PHPs

4.21   Overall, there was a recognition that PHPs are a positive step towards capturing location and support needs for applicants. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of building choice into the system, enabling individuals to live where they want in close proximity to employment and services. However, some stakeholders expressed scepticism about the feasibility of achieving this goal in the current funding climate.

4.22   There were differing views on whether PHPs are the appropriate vehicle for recording and documenting this information. While some stakeholders believed that PHPs are the right place to record formal and informal conversations, others disagreed, stating that PHPs are not well understood by individuals working in other areas and do not receive buy-in from other services.

4.23   The issue of suitability and choice in housing allocation was also a point of contention among stakeholders. Some expressed concerns about the definition of suitability and the limited availability of housing stock in certain areas. They emphasised the need for reasonable discussions with applicants, taking into account their changing circumstances while attempting to find permanent accommodation. On the other hand, it was reported that some local authorities are encouraging applicants to consider a wider range of areas due to the current housing crisis, and that reviewing on a regular basis could lead to an additional resource burden.

4.24   Overall, while stakeholders generally recognised the potential benefits of PHPs in capturing location and support needs, there were differing opinions on their effectiveness, understanding, and practicality.

4.25   The issue of suitability and choice in housing allocation also generated varying perspectives.

Implications of the proposed duties on the health sector

4.26   Health sector stakeholders shared a general agreement in principle regarding the role of health services and the proposed duties to identify, refer, and co-operate. Stakeholders believed that these duties are long-awaited and necessary for

adopting a whole systems approach to addressing homelessness. However, there were concerns about the practical implementation of these duties.

4.27   Stakeholders expressed the need for clearer guidelines and processes to ensure effective collaboration between local authorities and mental health services. They highlighted the importance of discharge liaison officers who possess specific and highly skilled services to facilitate smooth transitions for individuals experiencing homelessness. Additionally, stakeholders emphasised the requirement for services beyond general tenancy support, as highly specialised work is needed to address the complex needs of this population.

4.28   While stakeholders agreed on the overall importance of the proposed duties, they raised several challenges and considerations. These included the lack of appropriate accommodation in end-of-life care settings, the assumption that individuals with mental health issues do not have physical health issues, and the unmet needs of those experiencing homelessness with cognitive impairments or learning disabilities.

4.29   Funding constraints and the reallocation of resources from health to housing were identified as barriers to implementing the duties effectively. Stakeholders called for increased support and funding to ensure successful prevention and intervention efforts. They also acknowledged the need for training and buy-in from the entire health sector, as anyone accessing health services could be susceptible to needing homelessness and housing support.

Stakeholder views on proposals to prevent homelessness for prison leavers

4.30   Overall, criminal justice sector stakeholders recognised that the proposals have the potential to have a positive effect for prison leavers, but several concerns and suggestions were raised.

4.31   The lack of well-planned releases from prison was identified as a significant issue. It was noted that probation referrals can be left until the last minute, and local authorities are not always notified in advance. This lack of coordination and timely information hinders the ability of local authorities to carry out appropriate checks

and secure suitable accommodation. Stakeholders highlighted the need for accurate and timely release figures and expressed concerns about the insufficient information given to housing services about individuals.

4.32   The complex needs of prison leavers, such as substance misuse and mental health issues, were recognised as a challenge. Stakeholders stressed the importance of trauma-informed practice, particularly for women prisoners, and the need for a better understanding of mental health issues among service providers. The lack of move-on or single-person accommodation, affordability issues, and the general provision of temporary accommodation for all homeless individuals without considering individual support needs were also raised as concerns.

4.33   Stakeholders raised further challenges related to the availability of suitable accommodation. Stakeholders mentioned difficulties in finding private rented sector options due to some landlords' reluctance to accept high-risk cases and the negative impact of online searches revealing offending history. Exclusion zones for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) cases were identified as a barrier to accessing certain accommodations. Additionally, the costs of security and the insufficiency of support for maintaining accommodation in bed and breakfasts were highlighted.

4.34   Collaboration and partnership working emerged as a key theme. Positive examples were cited, such as collaborative approaches between local authorities and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), as well as partnerships with third-sector organisations. However, stakeholders acknowledged that different approaches exist across authorities, producing a need for clearer guidance and responsibilities to ensure consistent and fair support for prison leavers, particularly in navigating between devolved and reserved services.

Stakeholder views on the role of social services and housing to end youth homelessness

4.35   Social services stakeholders shared several suggestions within engagement events to strengthen the proposals to support young people, these included:

- clarify and align statutory duties with the SSWB and HWA Acts

- improve pathways and options, both directly for young people, and in awareness terms for supporting staff members
- engage the third sector through integration in the legislation
- strengthen corporate parenting
- foster collaboration between housing and social services (through the development of joint assessments and sustainable approaches)
- addressing financial pressures

4.36 Social services stakeholders also provided feedback on the specific demographic profiles of young people who are at-risk of leaving care and presenting directly to homelessness services, these included:

- young men with mental health issues from early childhood who have been involved in violent crime, this group is said to have been systemically failed
- young people who are neurodiverse who struggle to live independently
- young people who have been sexually exploited
- care experienced young mothers (particularly where unsuitable accommodation can lead to tenancy failure, also presenting risk of the child being put into care)
- unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- individuals who have acute mental health issues but do not meet the level of need for long-term hospital stays
- LGBTQ+ youth

Stakeholder views on enabling 16 and 17 year olds to be occupation contract-holders

4.37 Social services stakeholders relayed mixed views in relation to this proposal. Advantages identified included the increase in accommodation options this would enable, the fact that this could be particularly beneficial for young parents, and the subsequent independence this would offer.

4.38 Disadvantages cited in response to the proposal were focused around the practical realities of young people managing contractual responsibilities, as well as concerns

that the move could set unmanageable expectations for young people, simultaneously placing support staff in difficult positions.

4.39   Care experienced stakeholders were also hesitant about the proposal, with stakeholders raising the potential increased risk of exploitation between landlords and young tenants.

4.40   Moreover, these stakeholders were unconvinced that landlords would be willing to take on tenants at this age. This group emphasised that the focus of legislation and policy should be on supporting young people to access more suitable supported accommodation, rather than opening up access to the PRS.

5. Non-Standard Response summary

5.1 'Non-standard' responses were submitted by 19 respondents. This term is used to refer to respondents who chose not to use the 'standard' consultation document template to produce a response, meaning that the content of their response cannot be comfortably aligned with the consultation questions. Instead, these respondents chose to address specific questions on their own, specific standalone chapters as a whole, the White Paper as a whole, or the topic of homelessness prevention more generally.

5.2 In most cases, the non-standard responses matched the sentiments and themes of the standard responses. However, there were several that stood out as distinct or representative across the responses.

Deliverability of Housing Services

5.3 Housing services in Wales face multifaceted challenges, predominantly revolving around the deliverability of the White Paper proposals. A critical concern lay in the insufficient housing supply, exacerbating pressures on support services as demand outstrips availability. Respondents suggested that recent data reveals a concerning trend of increased caseloads.

5.4 Local authority respondents suggested that compounding these challenges are budgetary constraints, notably evidenced by the over-budget allocation in some authorities[13].Questions loom over the sustainability of current service levels, prompting urgent discussions on how to secure adequate funding streams and implement the proposals.

Support for Proposals

5.5 Support for the proposals was relatively widespread, however, respondents specifically suggested that the measures would facilitate easier movement for existing tenants, crucial for fostering housing stability and flexibility.

5.6 Equally welcomed were proposals geared towards improving clarity and guidance within housing policies. The prospect of consistent procedures, particularly

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[13] Evidence was provided and can be found in the supporting appendix document

concerning local connection and unacceptable behaviour criteria, was met with enthusiasm.

5.7   Some disagreement was observed from organisations in response to the deliberate manipulation test, and a need was identified for further review here.

5.8   A small number of local authorities also responded in the non-standard format, raising implications about the practical implementations of proposals 'on the ground' and evidencing the degree to which proposals are perceived to align with, or challenges, current ways of working.

Additional Proposals

5.9   A number of the non-standard responses suggested additional proposals or improvements for the existing White Paper proposals. These included:

- property buy-back schemes to replenish housing stock
- forging strategic partnerships with lettings agents to streamline landlord-tenant-local authority relations
- recognising the interconnected nature of social issues
- implement actions to put an end to 'no DSS' policies amongst the minority of landlords and agents who continue to operate them (as part of targeted proposals to prevent homelessness for those who are disproportionately affected)
- effective engagement with various Westminster public bodies, including the Police, Probation, and Department of Work and Pensions

Specialist accommodation and LGBTQ+ support

5.10   To address the unique needs of marginalised communities, the provision of specialist accommodation emerges as a pivotal priority. LGBTQ+ individuals, in particular, expressed a pressing need for dedicated housing and support services, citing a lack of inclusive provisions and the adverse effects of minority stress on homelessness rates.

5.11   Central to these discussions is the imperative to introduce safeguards to prevent further harm, particularly concerning mediation processes for LGBTQ+ youth.

Frontline staff training on issues such as domestic abuse within LGBTQ+ communities was identified as a crucial step towards fostering inclusivity and efficacy within support frameworks.

Addressing mental health and homelessness

5.12   The intersectionality of mental health and homelessness was identified as particularly important. Respondents advocated for the inclusion of mental health considerations within housing policies, recognising mental illness as a significant contributor to homelessness.

5.13   There was a push for early intervention strategies, such as pre-treatment assessments, to identify housing vulnerabilities and provide timely support. Community-based mental health crisis services were also championed, offering tailored interventions that address both mental health needs and housing instability in tandem.

Evidence-Based Approach

5.14   There was a clear call for an evidence based approach, including drawing from global and local insights. Stakeholders advocated for a nuanced understanding of homelessness complexities, learning from successful initiatives elsewhere, notably in Scotland. Central to this approach is the imperative for robust impact assessments, comprehensive implementation planning, and ongoing evaluation and monitoring.

Overview of evidence submitted

5.15   To promote consistency, the specific pieces of evidence shared in non-standard responses has also been included in the separate appendix document, shared with the Welsh Government. In summary, non-standard responses shared a wealth of targeted evidence across the following areas:

- action undertaken by HMPSS to support homelessness prevention across for those in the criminal justice system
- challenges accessing housing for those fleeing domestic abuse
- evidence on applicants' experiences of PHPs

- evidence on the policy implementation barriers to reforming the Local Connection test in Wales
- evidence on the challenges encountered by staff working in homelessness prevention (under-payment, recruitment and retention)
- evidence in opposition to the deliberate manipulation test
- evidence on the ways in which the proposed changes to the three core tests are likely to impact decision-making at the local authority level
- ongoing need to challenge undue discrimination against people who are in receipt of welfare benefits

6. Young Person Response

Young Person / Easy Read

6.1 There were a total of 6 responses to the youth consultation questions, and respondents were generally happy with the proposals listed across all sections. When asked if there was anything the Welsh Government had missed in their proposals, only one respondent chose to answer in each section.

Section 1: Helping people in the right ways

Question – What do you think of the proposals in this section?

Table 6.1: Sentiment analysis of answers to Section 1.

Answer	No. of respondents
Happy	5
Ok	1
Unhappy	0
Don't know	0

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

6.2 Only those who answered that they were 'Happy' with the proposals opted to expand on why they chose their answer in this section. Three respondents noted that:

- the proposals help those most in need
- there is a responsibility to find shelter for youth experiencing homelessness
- those facing homelessness will have a level of assurance that will have somewhere safe for at least six months

Question – Is there anything we've missed?

6.3 One respondent expressed that they would like to see those who are experiencing homelessness have access to therapy, or counselling.

Section 2: Making sure services work together better

Question – What do you think of the proposals in this section?

Table 6.2: Sentiment analysis of answers to Section 2.

Answer	No. of respondents
Happy	5
Ok	1
Unhappy	0
Don't know	0

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

6.4   For those who answered that they were 'Happy' with the proposals and opted to expand on why, they said:

- they were happy to see a resolution being found for those experiencing homelessness

- they were glad that those experiencing homelessness can get the support they need

6.5   One respondent answered that proposals were 'Ok', with reasons for this being:

- there should be a number that everyone learns in school for those experiencing homelessness, as it sometime can't be seen, or it happens quickly

Question – Is there anything we've missed?

6.6   One respondent said that they would like to see an option for texting.

Section 3: Put support where it's needed most

Question – What do you think of the proposals in this section?

Table 6.3: Sentiment analysis of answers to Section 3

Answer	No. of respondents
Happy	5
Ok	1
Unhappy	0
Don't know	0

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

6.7 Only those who answered that they were 'Happy' with the proposals opted to expand their answers, mentioning:

- more individuals need to help those facing homelessness

- that those coming out of prison should have support to alleviate struggles

Question – Is there anything we've missed?

6.8 One respondent answered that everyone should get the opportunity to express how they feel and explain their circumstances.

Section 4: Matching people to the right homes

Question – What do you think of the proposals in this section?

Table 6.4: Sentiment analysis of answers to Section 4

Answer	No. of respondents
Happy	4
Ok	2
Unhappy	0
Don't know	0

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

6.9 For those that were happy with the proposals in this section, they said that it was fair to solve a problem by moving someone or fixing an error.

6.10 One respondent who answered that they were ok with the proposals said it was because everyone has unique experiences, meaning everyone should also get a chance to prove themselves.

Question – Is there anything we've missed?

6.11 No respondents chose to answer this question.

Section 5: Putting changes in place and checking work

Question – What do you think of the proposals in this section?

Table 6.1: Sentiment analysis of answers to Section 5

Answer	No. of respondents
Happy	5
Ok	1
Unhappy	0
Don't know	0

Source: Miller Research analysis of consultation responses

6.12   Those who responded that they were happy with the proposals in section 5 said so because

- people are being helped

- it would be good to see changes

Question – Is there anything we've missed?

6.13   One respondent answered that there should be more places for those experiencing homelessness to stay and have some sort of privacy.

7.   Next steps

7.1   The responses to this consultation exercise and resultant analysis will inform further development of our policy and legislation, as we take forward the commitment in the 2021 – 2026 Programme for Government and the Co-operation Agreement to "reform housing law and implement the Homelessness Action Group's recommendation to fundamentally reform homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing".

7.2   The consultation responses will inform ongoing policy development to support future legislative reform. Welsh Government will continue to work closely with all stakeholders, including the Expert Review Panel to develop our approach to end homelessness in Wales.