

Housing Information Group: minutes of meeting

Wednesday 18 May 2022 – 10:30-13:00

Attendees			
Alun	Evans	ACA	Citizens Advice
Hannah	Browne Gott	HBG	Welsh Government (WG)
Caitlin	Theodorou	CT	Ceredigion County Council
Cerys	Purches-Phillips	CPP	Ceredigion County Council
David	Rowlands	DR	Tai Pawb
Jill	Fairweather	JF	Welsh Government
Darren	Hatton	DH	Welsh Government
Janine	Edwards	JE	Conwy County Borough Council
Jenny	Murphy	JM	Newport City Homes
Jim	McKirdle	JM	Welsh Local Government Association
Cathy	Johnson	CJ	Welsh Government
Kirsty	Wells	KW	Housemark
Karen	Deehan	KD	Welsh Government
Presenters			
Rhidian	Jones	RJ	Welsh Government (Chair)
Catrin	Awoyemi	CA	Welsh Government
Becca	Sarasin	BS	Welsh Government
Rhiannon	Jones	RJ1	Welsh Government
Bob	Smith	BS	Cardiff University
Peter	Mackie	PM	Cardiff University
Gowan	Watkins	GW	Welsh Government
Cathy	Johnson	CJ	Welsh Government
Scott	Clifford	SC	Welsh Government
Minute takers			
Fiza	Mahmood	FM	Welsh Government
Mitch	Case	MC	Welsh Government
Apologies			
Chantel	Jordan	CJ	Carmarthenshire County Council
Sue	Leake	SL	Welsh Government
Catherine	May	CM	Chartered Institute of Housing
Becca	Sarasin	BS	Welsh Government
Sarah	Scotcher	SS	Community Housing Cymru Group
Karl	Thomas	KT	Welsh Government

1	Welcome and Introduction	Rhidian Jones, Welsh Government
<p>Introductions and house rules.</p> <p>We will be in touch about alternative calendar invites to get your permission for this. This meeting is being held in English and the minutes will be available in English only.</p>		
2	Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Unit Draft Strategic Evidence Plan Update	Catrin Awoyemi and Becca Sarasin, Welsh Government
<p>Catrin Awoyemi shared a bilingual PowerPoint slide.</p> <p>There are three units within the Equality, Race and Disability evidence Units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Evidence Unit • Race Disparity Evidence Unit • Disability Disparity Evidence Unit <p>We are also exploring the intersectionality of these three units. Advertising for recruitment posts externally, looking for people with lived experience.</p> <p>The unit's mission is to improve what is available in terms of data on protected characteristics. Working across all key policy areas and looking at working with the communities of the data produced.</p> <p>The unit faces some challenges including trust, changing existing sources, data sharing and minority populations being less visible. The unit will consider solutions including boosting sample sizes in surveys.</p> <p>Work that has already started includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment • scope and pilot of equality data collection from Public Sector Bodies • looking at anti-racist Wales's action plan and how to measure success • involvement in the Cabinet Office UK wide disability survey, • commissioning research on how to collect information on the social model of disability and • survey discussions with National Survey for Wales's team. <p>Questions:</p> <p>JE – asked about the well-being assessment and the population needs assessment and was wondering whether Catrin is plugged into what is going on with those networks.</p> <p>CA – the unit is involved in the well-being of Wales's report, which KAS colleagues develop; that report is a good summary of the equality evidence that is available at this point.</p>		
3	Update on planned data collections for 22/23	Scott Clifford (Head of Housing Statistics), Welsh Government

SC was Head of Housing Statistics until recently; now working with the Disability Unit.

Paper will be circulated post meeting going over what he mentions today.

Background:

Pandemic caused issues with data collection timetable and schedule. The vast majority of collections and releases were paused during 2020-2021 as resources were diverted to focus on the pandemic response.

During 2021/22 (the period in which SC was in post as Head of Housing Statistics) the vast majority of data collections were resumed; these related to 2020-21 year. This was interesting data as this was the period affected by the initial onset of the pandemic, so we were able to notice things like new house building being affected by the pandemic.

The 2021-22 cycle – most releases brought back online but there were some changes to timing and frequency of releases, this was partly due to the introduction of the monthly homeless management information collection release which was part of the pandemic response which continued through 2021-22 year.

They noticed that data providers and colleagues within LAs and WG were feeling the effects of pandemic through sickness absence etc. which caused problems with release timing.

The 2022-23 timetable is similar to 2021-22, however things will be a bit more as they were pre-pandemic.

Three things to flag for 2022-23

1. Intending to continue monthly management information data collection in relation to homelessness as policy colleagues have found this information useful in terms of day-to-day operational work. Additional resources have been allocated to this, so it does not impact other releases.
2. Statutory homelessness collection, pre-pandemic, was on a quarterly and annual basis. Since the onset of the pandemic, it has just been collected and published on an annual basis (i.e., quarterly collections have been paused). In 2022-23, it will continue to be published solely on an annual basis.
3. New house building data will be collected annually for 2021-22 period in 2022-23. We will also recommence quarterly data collections for LA only data in 2022-23. First collection is 22 July 2022, which covers the April to June 2022 period.

The paper circulated after this meeting will have a more detailed scale of when requests for data and data deadlines will be issued.

Work is ongoing between the housing statistics team, data collection and policy colleagues to complete plans for next year's data collection. They are asking what is needed around homelessness data and what is needed for user and policy demand; this especially in terms of time frame of the data and how frequent the collections are.

Any issues/comments/concerns about these plans, SC encourages people to mention it now, or to contact the housingstats@gov.wales mailbox after the document has been sent round.

RJ – in his role, spent a long time trying to corral all the different needs and requirements across the Housing and Regeneration directorate. Long list of what policy teams would like data collections to include. We have tried to prioritise those but during the pandemic there were different pressures and different priorities, so trying to equalise those. RJ encourages people to

	raise concerns/comments. It was quite mind-blowing seeing the list of requirements because of how huge it was; trying to get all the big-ticket items was challenging but they have done the best they can.	
4	Update on LHMA work	Rhiannon Jones, Welsh Government
	<p>Shared a PowerPoint.</p> <p>Local authorities' requirements of the new LHMA process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rewrite/refresh their LHMA by April 2024 • thereafter, rewrite every five years with a refresh over second and third years of that five-year period • internal sign-off of their LHMA and submission to Welsh Government for a review and sign off, must use the WG LHMA tool and the WG template reports. <p>WG requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and sign off the LHMA's • provide 1-1 support for local authorities • monitor the WG LHMA mailbox. <p>The LHMA bilingual tool includes four sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview • Data inputs - responsibility of the local authority. Allocate the local authority to HMA's using wards, MSOAs, LSOAs. Tool allows up to 20 HMAs. Default data provided for property prices, rents, and key assumptions such as affordability assumptions and property to income ratios. • Calculations - estimate the housing need by tenure for the estimated additional households over the next 15 years based on the newly arising need and existing unmet need. Allocation to different tenures uses a formulaic approach. Over the first five years the tool can allow for a forecast growth in rents, house prices and income. • Outputs - additional market housing need estimates and additional affordable housing need estimates. Specific housing needs requirements are covered outside of the tool. <p>Next steps – Welsh Government to continue working with local authorities, review and sign-off the LHMA's, considering further developments such as the number of dwellings.</p>	
5	UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CACHE)	Bob Smith, Cardiff University
	<p>The paper on this has been circulated before the meeting</p> <p>BS will highlight some things since the last update.</p> <p>BS is based in Cardiff University but also in the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence unit in the knowledge exchange program in relation to Wales.</p> <p>Cache is a consortium of 14 organisations, mainly universities but also one or two other stakeholder organisations, setup in August 2017. It is funded by two research councils and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and its remit is to develop research and evidence to inform housing policy and</p>	

practice across the UK; led from Glasgow University but Cardiff University is one of the universities in the consortium.

BS has tried to highlight some of the research on the report, will not go into the project in detail but, in the paper, there is a summary of key reports and a link to these reports.

BS notes people might find particular interest in a couple of reports, one being on health and wellbeing in the private rented sector, this was published last summer. Another report was published on lease holders' experiences of living through the building safety crisis, this has had some media coverage and was done by colleagues at Sheffield university. Also, a recently published review of the evidence basis for rent control which has been shared with colleagues in housing and regeneration and knowledge and analytical services, as this is an area that these groups are looking at in terms of further policy development.

Recently – colleagues in Scotland have a demonstration project looking at a retrofit of traditional Glasgow tenement housing which is the first report from that project looking at the cost benefit analysis of retrofitting these buildings. All of the aforementioned projects are on the website in more detail.

In terms of ongoing research, BS has highlighted the projects which are continuing and will report by the end of this year, to highlight four or five ongoing projects:

1. Work is being done in collaboration with Crisis on social housing allocation looking at England, Wales and Scotland.
2. Looking at the potential of modular construction to help the supply of new affordable housing, this is more of an international literature review and this report will be out in the next few weeks as the research is now complete and is being peer reviewed.
3. Research on ethnic inequalities in housing, work covering England, Wales and Scotland.
4. Ongoing work on housing responses during the covid pandemic, these reports are due out later this year.
5. Piece of work just starting on anticipatory governance in social housing organisations, looking at what social housing organisations might be doing in terms of anticipating change and using forecasting to anticipate the future of housing.

Final part of the report makes references to the future of CACHE who submitted an application to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for further funding for 2022-26. A decision on this is expected soon; the directors have been interviewed by the ESRC. If successful, CACHE will have four years further funding although at a reduced level. The hope is that CACHE will have funding from late 2022-late 2026.

The work will focus on – housing and the economy, housing inequalities, housing, and the environment etc. There will be three crosscutting themes to CACHE's work, work on housing systems, work on developing international research and linkages, and continuing work on housing data.

BS asks for questions, no questions presented.		
6	ADR Housing Research	Peter Mackie, Cardiff University
<p>ADR Housing Research has come to end of its initial funding period however it has now got continuation funding. ADR is a collaboration between Welsh Government and academics and has a shared division of labour.</p> <p>Key publications – produced a study on the prevalence of covid infections in groups that experience homelessness. The study found that people who experience homelessness had a lower prevalence of covid, this may be in part due to the WG policy response. Read more on this in the paper. Another publication involves survey data using young people in schools that are at risk of youth homelessness.</p> <p>There is an output on people with multiple support needs, the paper uses survey data to identify how to better understand their needs and how to support these individuals.</p> <p>Studies/publications in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid rehousing. More detailed study coming soon using Scottish data. • Another piece of work on covid, looking at vaccination uptake amongst people experiencing homelessness compared to the housed population. <p>For the next funding period 22-26, they are finalising and agreeing on projects.</p>		
7	WHQS2 consultation	Gowan Watkins and Cathy Johnson, Welsh Government
<p>The Minister for Climate Change gave an oral statement on the proposed WHQS2023 on 10 May, the consultation launched on 11 May 2022 and closes on 3 August (12 Weeks). The consultation focuses on the content of the standard, not the funding model. Once standard agreed, funding model will be addressed.</p> <p>The original WHQS was introduced in 2002, to boost the quality of social housing in Wales. By the end of 2020, 99 percent of social housing in Wales met the original WHQS. Generally, been updated after 20 years and reflects improvements in building and safety standards. This update has brought a big opportunity as it has improved outcomes for tenants in Wales. It applies to all social housing in Wales (230,000+) and Welsh Government has spent nearly two billion GBP on it.</p> <p>WHQS2023 keeps quality and anti-poverty requirements at its heart, introducing the requirement to provide flooring throughout the home at each new tenancy, raising the bar in terms of making homes affordable to heat and minimising exposure to noise.</p>		

It also seeks to minimise the environmental impact of homes through decarbonisation, water efficiency and encouraging landlords to consider biodiversity opportunities.

For the development approach, the team worked closely with a range of stakeholders, considering their concerns during the drafting of the proposed new standard. This research has included: small group feedback sessions with all social landlords, tenant surveys, independent evaluations, commissioning technical consultants, task and finish group, practitioners' group, data group.

Timeline:

May – Aug 2022 – Consultation open

June 2022 – Engagement sessions

Autumn 2022 – Analysis of consultation responses

Jan 2023 – Launch of WHQS2023

1 April 2023 – WHQS2023 starts to apply

2026(?) – Compliance with new elements of standard (Excluding decarb)

2033 – Full compliance with Standard.

The proposed WHQS 2023 has eight parts:

1. In a good state of repair
2. Safe and Secure
3. Affordable warmth and environmental impact
4. Kitchens and utility areas
5. Bathrooms
6. Comfort and well-being
7. Outside Space (gardens)
8. Attractive and safe environments

Of all the above, there are defined sub requirements.

In terms of reporting, there is a traffic light system for the current standard, which checks whether properties pass individual elements or fails them; so, the categories are compliant or non-compliant and there is an acceptable fails category. There are some reason codes attached to it, but they are not particularly well recorded so it can get confusing. The original WHQS was aspirational and not expected to be measured; a lot of work has been done to ensure that it can be measured in this iteration. Wider scale now, from pass to fail with conditional passes with specific reason codes, for each individual element they will ask for a pass, conditional pass (where physical constraints are present e.g., steep garden, cost prohibited, not possible), temporary fail (tenant refuses, in the next round of planned works, tenant delays the work, way the tenant lives e.g., drying clothes inside and creating damp) and finally the fail category.

Conclusions and next steps:

- Listened to a wide range of views to shape and co-create the approach
- Much of WHQS2023 most will recognise, kept what works
- Continue to raise the bar, with focus on tenants at the heart of the standard, cementing its role as an anti-poverty strategy – water, fuel, flooring
- Bold but doable.

Questions:

SS- will data on the new variables be made available in time? (Comfort and wellbeing, outside space and attractive and safe environment).

GW – This will be done.

DH: On Conditional Pass and Cost Prohibitive - are there clear guidelines on what the thresholds are for the cost prohibitive? For instance, it might make sense on a spreadsheet to not take action to improve an individual's houses energy efficiency, but you are potentially also locking that tenant into fuel poverty?

GW + CJ – This will be done, if we see a landlord throwing everything into cost prohibiting, we will enquire what is going on. There is also an obligation on landlords to publish a compliance policy and tell us how they make these decisions. Direction within the guidance as to how these decisions should be made. Guidance will need to be updated and expanded as landlords get into the new Standard and new situations arise.

DH: it is unintended consequences; DH is involved in the Ukraine response and is looking at voids and empty properties. There are a lot of them; some of this because they do not pass the existing WDQR, and it was easier to leave it as a void property than deal with it. We need to consider the unintended consequences of the standard when we're in a housing crisis and we have lots of properties void or empty. We also need to consider the climate impact of building new properties vs upgrading old ones.

CJ: They are asked about that, specifically; how they've evaluated carbon and carbon impact of demolition vs redevelopment. We are asking about it and trying to give that message. It is difficult to mandate something, or measure something, but it is on the radar as something they must at least consider or calculate. In terms of other unintended consequences, the feedback from the landlords has been clear about the risks there, where we have ended up in terms of decarb being planning, assessment and not just a knee-jerk reaction. It is difficult but there will be conversations. The idea is we plan it, understand it, see it and work on it together, rather than landlords going off on their own.

GW: The requirement to be carbon neutral across their stock, not specifically on individual properties – this recognises that some properties cannot reach certain elements of the Standard, and instead of off-loading them onto other sectors, they can be balanced by over performing properties or other initiatives within the landlord's organisation.

LR: In RCT we have particularly difficult area of the valleys to build new social homes. To add to this, we have RSLs that sell stock in these areas because a property does not hit the WHQS standard and to make it so would be unviable. My question is, with new standards being added to the WHQS, is there work being done with Grants Teams to enable the retaining of stock in these difficult scenarios?

RJ: Reiterates and expands on LR's Q, in setting a new WHQS, some of the consequences of this will be that some of these properties might need financial support to continue to exist in the social sector; is this funding something which is already being spoken about?

	<p>CJ: We do not have the answers to the funding question yet as we are still in the planning stage. This will be a conversation had at a later stage.</p> <p>GW: At this point we are focusing on what the Standard should be. Once we know thoughts on this, we can look at what is needed to fund it and, if necessary, make changes to the Standard as proposed to fit the funding we will have.</p>	
8	Census housing outputs - Paper from Tony Wilkins, Office for National Statistics	Gowan Watkins (Head of Housing Conditions Evidence Programme), Welsh Government
	<p>Shared ONS' PowerPoint.</p> <p>There was a 97 percent response rate for the 2021 Census. There is an analysis plan, which is subject to change, which states in late June/early July the first census release is published. In Autumn 2022, eight topics are summarised and due to be published. One of these topics include housing. More reports are coming after winter 2023 such as the number of second homes and vacant dwellings.</p> <p>More information can be found here: Census - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</p>	
9	Any Other Business	
	<p>As mentioned at the start of the meeting, the secretariat will be in touch with you about the way we send meeting invitations – please respond.</p> <p>The next meeting of HIG will be on the morning of Wednesday 26 September 2022. Please let us know if you have any ideas for this meeting. Thank you attending, hope to see you in September.</p> <p>Close</p>	

Housing Information Group 18 May 2022 Summary of Action Points		
1	Send out an email regarding the new way of accepting/declining meeting invites.	Secretariat