

Review of the Implementation of  
Homelessness Legislation  
Welsh Assembly Government





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# Chapter One

## Introduction

**1.1.1** In October 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government (the Assembly) commissioned HACAS Chapman Hendy to review the implementation of homelessness legislation in Wales. The review is an examination of the way in which the current legislative framework, guidance, and responsibilities towards homeless people are being implemented.

**1.1.2** This introductory chapter sets out the background to the review, its scope and the approach adopted.

### 1.2 Background to the review

**1.2.1** The current legislative framework for homelessness is set out in the Housing Act 1996 which has been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. The Housing Act 1996 sets out the duties of local authorities in relation to those presenting to them as homeless or potentially homeless, including the provision of advice and information, temporary and permanent accommodation, and appropriate support. The legislation sets out the ‘tests’ that individuals have to pass to be accepted as statutorily homeless by a local authority and therefore owed the full re-housing duty:

- is the applicant eligible for assistance?
- is the applicant homeless or threatened with homelessness?
- is the applicant in priority need?
- is the applicant unintentionally homeless?
- does the applicant have a local connection? Or, if there is no local

connection, should the authority accept the applicant because of circumstances such as domestic violence?

**1.2.2** Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 states that the following categories of applicant are considered as being in priority need:

- a pregnant women or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person who is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, as a result of emergency such as fire, flood or other disaster.

**1.2.3** The homelessness provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002 came into force in September 2002 and include:

- the requirement for local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness, prepare homelessness strategies based on the reviews, and revise the strategy at least once every five years;
- the requirement for local authorities to provide a greater level of advice

and assistance for applicants for whom there is no duty to secure housing;

- the repeal of the two-year duty to be replaced by an indefinite duty to applicants owed the full housing duty;
- a power to secure accommodation for non-priority applicants;
- a new duty of cooperation between housing and social services;
- changes in the detail of reviews and appeals procedures.

**1.2.4** In addition, secondary legislation was introduced by the Assembly in March 2001, prior to the Homelessness Act 2002. The Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order 2001, (the Order), extended the groups to be considered as in priority need to include:

- care leavers or persons at particular risk of sexual or financial exploitation, 18 years or over but under the age of 21;
- 16- or 17-year olds;
- persons fleeing domestic violence or threatened with domestic violence;
- persons homeless after leaving the armed forces, and
- former prisoners homeless after being released from custody (and who have a local connection with the area of the local housing authority).

**1.2.5** In April 2001 the Assembly issued provisional guidance on the Order. Since then both local authorities and agencies representing homeless people have reported difficulties in the implementation of the law. Shelter Cymru in its two briefings (**Homeless People Denied Rights**

and **Targeting Homelessness**) provided evidence of variability in the implementation of the law across Wales and noted that, in some cases, local authorities were not meeting their obligations to homeless people as the law intended. Further evidence of such difficulties was provided by the Probation Service.

**1.2.6** Assembly Members responding to the issues raised, in particular by Shelter Cymru, expressed concerns during a plenary debate on homelessness and concluded that there should be a review of the implementation of the legislation.

## **1.3 Scope and main aim**

**1.3.1** The review covers all aspects of the statutory duty set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended. The aim of the review is to inform the final version of the Code of Guidance and to improve the implementation of homelessness legislation in Wales. It covers the main dimensions of the statutory homelessness process, that is:

- advice/prevention;
- presentations and referrals by voluntary agencies;
- assessment, including the determination of eligibility for assistance, and support needs;
- the decision-making process in regard to eligibility for assistance, and duties owed by the authority under sections 190 to 200 of the 1996 Act;
- notification and appeals process;
- liaison with other landlords to secure accommodation, and

- choice and nature of accommodation offered, including temporary accommodation and support.

## 1.4 Specific objectives

### 1.4.1 Specifically the review was to:

- establish how local authorities are currently implementing the law and how this compares with their policies and procedures, and with statutory obligations;
- identify the main reasons for the law not being implemented as intended;
- identify any groups experiencing particular difficulty in obtaining their rights to local authority homelessness services;
- advise how the statutory guidance should be amended to clarify and aid the proper implementation of the law;
- make recommendations for any other action which would help ensure that the law is put into effect as intended;
- identify existing good practice by Welsh local authorities, and
- ascertain the views of stakeholder agencies and review any evidence of the views of applicants for assistance under the homelessness legislation.

## 1.5 Method

1.5.1 The review was carried out between November 2002 and May 2003. Preparations for the discussions with agencies took place in November and December with the majority of the fieldwork taking place in January and February. Information and opinions were gathered from all parties on the understanding that any critical remarks would be non-attributable. Analysis was

carried out during the period from February to May. The review involved the following main activities:

### Local authorities

1.5.2 Each local authority was sent a questionnaire to complete and was asked to provide supporting information including policies and procedures, and relevant reports e.g. Best Value reviews. The questionnaire is provided at Appendix 1.

1.5.3 In addition, all local authorities were invited to one of three homelessness enquiry days, held in Carmarthen, Pontypool and Wrexham, to discuss the implementation of the legislation. At the enquiry days we took evidence from the local authorities and they shared practices, experiences, difficulties and examples of good practice. Both policy officers and front-line homelessness officers participated in the discussions.

1.5.4 All local authorities responded to the questionnaire and sent staff to the homelessness enquiry days. The 100% response rate means that the review is able to reflect the issues affecting all areas of Wales.

### National organisations

1.5.5 National representative bodies were invited to comment on the issues, responding via meetings, written or telephone contact. A list of the organisations contacted is attached at Appendix 2. Details of the issues national organisations were asked to comment upon appear in Appendix 3.

### Local organisations

1.5.6 A team of four telephone interviewers contacted over 150 local

voluntary organisations identified by the Assembly. A list of organisations contacted is attached at Appendix 4. Details of the issues that the organisations were asked to comment upon appear in Appendix 5.

### Written evidence

**1.5.7** A literature review of relevant publications was carried out (see Appendix 6). Statistical data on homelessness was drawn from Welsh Housing Statistics and from the local authority returns.

### Steering Group

**1.5.8** The review was overseen by a Steering Group of Welsh Assembly officials and representatives of external bodies. A list of Steering Group members is attached at Appendix 7.

### Acknowledgements

**1.5.9** We would like to thank all participants for their contributions to, and support for, the review. The 100% response by local authorities, and the comprehensive response by a range of

national and voluntary organisations, is a reflection of the high level of importance attached to homelessness issues by respondents. Thanks are also due to Sian-Marie James, Anna Davies and Ann Thomas of the Welsh Assembly Government Housing Directorate for their assistance.

### Researchers

**1.5.10** The review was carried out by Judith Wayne, Tamsin Stirling, Barbara Currie, Laurie Naumann, Sue Piper and Nicholas Willmott of HACAS Chapman Hendy.

**1.5.11** The next chapter of this report sets out the policy context for the review and considers homelessness trends across Wales. The findings of the review are outlined in Chapter 4, while conclusions and significant problems with implementation of the law and Code of Guidance are set out in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 sets out the recommendations which result from the review.

## Chapter Two

### Context

#### 2.1 Policy framework

2.1.1 At an all-Wales level, preventing and tackling homelessness is part of a broader Welsh Assembly Government agenda of tackling inequality and social exclusion. Over the past eighteen months, the Assembly has produced a range of documents which set out the current national policy context for homelessness. They are briefly summarised here.

2.1.2 The report of the Assembly's **Homelessness Commission** was published in August 2001 making 91 recommendations in the following areas:

- definitions of homelessness and rough sleeping;
- local homelessness strategies and a national homelessness strategy;
- monitoring and measuring homelessness, targets and outcomes;
- bond schemes and welfare benefits;
- exclusion policies;
- prevention;
- health, substance misuse and domestic violence;
- carers and children;
- education, training, employment and homelessness support;
- social services and homelessness;
- rural homelessness;
- funding and research.

2.1.3 The report also included draft guidance on local homelessness strategies and on methods of recording rough sleeping. The Assembly made an official response to the report in April 2002.

2.1.4 The National Housing Strategy, **Better Homes for People in Wales**, published in November 2001, sets out the framework for housing policy at national and local levels. On homelessness, housing advice and lettings, its proposals include:

- monitoring the development of the use of personal housing plans (currently being piloted in Bridgend);
- ensuring that levels of homelessness are measured in all local authority areas and addressed through local housing strategies;
- significantly reducing the numbers of long-term homeless households;
- eliminating the need for rough sleeping by April 2003 (the subsequent Homelessness Commission considered that this date was unachievable);
- considering the findings of the housing advice audit and how its recommendations can be used to promote best practice and improve standards;
- ensuring that everyone has access to free high quality housing advice and promoting access to specialist housing advice where this is needed;
- formulating a national lettings policy framework;

- encouraging local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to collaborate over the establishment of common housing registers.

**2.1.5** The Assembly report, **Review into Exclusion from Social Housing**, was issued for consultation in 2001. It found that reasons for restricting access to social housing could be divided into two categories: those based on previous behaviour in a tenancy, and those that relate to structural inefficiencies in the housing system to meet the needs of certain applicants. The review also found that exclusions from social housing were being applied in different ways and to different extents by local authorities and housing associations in a manner which did not necessarily reflect differences in local circumstances or contexts. The review made a series of recommendations emphasising the importance of meeting housing needs.

**2.1.6** The **Code of Guidance on Homelessness and Allocations** was issued for consultation by the Welsh Assembly Government in October 2002 and was published in its final form in April 2003. It sets out guidance for local authorities on homelessness and allocations, and reflects all relevant legislative and policy developments.

**2.1.7** As a response to the recommendations of the Homelessness Commission, and to contribute towards meeting the **Better Homes** and **Better Wales** targets, a national homelessness strategy has been developed by the Assembly. The first draft of the strategy was issued in April 2002 for consultation and a final version issued in April 2003.

**2.1.8** The purpose of the strategy is to:

- provide a framework for the continuing development of national guidance and policy on homelessness;
- help to identify the need for funding and how funding should be prioritised;
- set a clearer context for the development of local homelessness strategies;
- drive improvements in good practice and service standards;
- ensure that homelessness is addressed appropriately in the development of other Assembly policies and strategies.

**2.1.9** The principles of the strategy are wide-ranging and include:

- services focused on meeting all the relevant needs of individuals;
- services accessible to homeless people;
- the prevention of homelessness whenever possible;
- responses to homelessness that reflect the views of homeless people;
- tackling homelessness with longer-term, structural solutions.

**2.1.10** The national homelessness strategy includes an action-plan dealing with:

- prevention;
- access to housing;
- resettlement, support and access to services;
- other essential services such as social services, health, and probation;

- disadvantaged groups ;
- delivering the strategy.

## 2.2 Other guidance and reports

2.2.1 Homelessness is a 'live' policy area and a wide range of guidance and reports on homelessness and related issues have been published in the past year. They are briefly summarised here.

2.2.2 **Homelessness: responding to the new agenda**, published by the Audit Commission in January 2003, draws on Best Value inspections, audit activity and research. It contains a range of recommendations for local authorities on:

- preventing homelessness by improving knowledge of the causes of homelessness and developing early intervention initiatives, the development of effective and holistic advice services, and delivering services that respond to people's needs;
- providing a safety-net by improving homelessness assessment and decision-making, improving standards and reducing the cost of temporary accommodation;
- minimising homelessness by working on longer-term measures and improving inter-agency working to tackle homelessness.

2.2.3 The Audit Commission in Wales also published two linked reports on rent arrears in 2002: **Rent Arrears and Housing Benefit in the Welsh Social Rented Sector** focused on the national picture in Wales, describing the nature and the scale of the problem, the impact of Housing Benefit administration and what social landlords are doing to minimise arrears. **Closing the Gap: working together to reduce rent**

**arrears**, is a practical guide for local authorities and housing associations which identifies ten key areas for action, including more emphasis on prevention, clear corporate aims and objectives, and a firm but fair approach to arrears recovery that includes early action.

2.2.4 The National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux (NACAB) report, **Possession Action – the last resort?** published in February 2003, notes that "one of the most important changes is the shift in emphasis enshrined in the Homelessness Act 2002, which places prevention at the heart of homelessness strategies and therefore has direct implications for how landlords should recover arrears." The report sets out recommendations which focus on the need for a change in approach by some social landlords towards the recovery of rent arrears, including the drawing up at a national level of a joint statement of practice on preventing and recovering rent arrears to which all social landlords should subscribe.

2.2.5 The Shelter report, **Housekeeping: preventing homelessness through tackling rent arrears in social housing** (2003), notes that current approaches to managing rent arrears in social housing cause homelessness and argues for new ways of tackling arrears to avoid the use of court proceedings. The report concludes that the structure and administration of the housing benefit system is the main cause of rent arrears. Recommendations include:

- that the Government should fund independent arrears resolution services;
- that local authorities should identify homelessness due to rent arrears

caused by their own policies and those of housing associations, and identify ways of reducing it;

- that social landlords should seek possession through the courts as a last resort.

**2.2.6 Tackling Homelessness: A good practice guide for local authorities**, (2003) published by the London Borough of Harrow, a Beacon Authority for homelessness, describes a number of practical initiatives that ‘may help local authorities manage increasing demand from homeless people’. The guide focuses on four main areas: the assessment and administration of homelessness; providing a range of solutions for applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness; effective measures to prevent homelessness; and increasing the supply of permanent housing and suitable temporary accommodation.

**2.2.7** Specific measures/initiatives advocated in the guide include:

- looking at baseline figures for an authority and setting a target for homeless acceptances per thousand households;
- examining recruitment, retention and training of homelessness staff;
- reviewing the approach to assessing homelessness presentations triggered by parental, relative and friend exclusions to include home visits, and focusing on mediation and alternative housing options;
- providing a housing options package for people approaching the authority as homeless or threatened with homelessness. (The Harrow Options Model is set out in detail. This

includes LAWN (the scheme to assist people wishing to move out of London), assistance with private renting, and shared ownership options);

- increased focus on the prevention of homelessness to include:
  - o family mediation;
  - o assertive outreach work to prevent eviction from private and public sector tenancies;
  - o establishing early warning protocols to refer applicants for prevention work at an agreed stage in the arrears recovery process;
  - o improved security measures for cases involving domestic violence;
  - o tackling housing benefit problems.

**2.2.8 Homelessness Strategies and Good Practice**, produced by the London Housing Unit in 2003, highlights some of the good practice developed by London boroughs to meet the needs of homeless households. The briefing considers the following themes:

- preventing homelessness;
- access to other housing options;
- increasing the supply of affordable accommodation/making best use of the existing stock;
- increasing the provision of temporary accommodation;
- supporting people in temporary accommodation;
- supporting vulnerable people;

- cross-borough co-operation, liaison and consultation;
- new initiatives.

**2.2.9** In 2003, the ODPM issued guidance to English authorities setting out the targets they are expected to achieve in relation to homelessness. These emphasise the need to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping, and inappropriate use of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast (B&B) hotels. In Scotland, a Homelessness Task Force has developed a ten-year plan for preventing and tackling homelessness which includes legislative and other actions. Of particular note is the intention, over the ten-year period, to incrementally remove definitions of priority need, intentionality and local connection so that, by the end of the period, all homeless people will be entitled to assistance by Scottish local authorities.

## **2.3 The scale of homelessness recorded in Wales**

**2.3.1** Welsh Housing Statistics indicate that during 2000, 12,804 households

presented as homeless to Welsh local authorities. The highest number of presentations was experienced by Swansea (comprising 18.2% of the total), Rhondda Cynon Taff (comprising 9.2% of the total), Cardiff (comprising 8.5% of the total), and Bridgend (comprising 8.2% of the total). The total rose to 13,675 during 2001. Again, the same four authorities experienced the highest number of presentations.

**2.3.2** However, in considering the scale of homelessness for different authorities across Wales, it is perhaps more meaningful to consider the number of presentations per thousand households. This is shown in Table 1 for 2001 using Census data as the population figure. This provides a slightly different picture, with Swansea (22.1) and Bridgend (21.2) having comparatively high numbers of presentations per thousand households, but the Cardiff (10.3) and Rhondda Cynon Taff (13.3) levels being significantly lower. The authority with the highest level of presentations per 1,000 households in 2001 (23.5) was Torfaen.

**Table 1: Homelessness presentations 2001, per 1,000 households, by authority**

Authority	Presentations 2001	Households 2001	Presentations per 1,000 households
Isle of Anglesey	191	28,356	6.7
Gwynedd	279	49,237	5.7
Conwy	304	48,062	6.3
Denbigh	367	39,891	9.2
Flintshire	595	60,539	9.8
Wrexham	613	53,226	11.5
Powys	484	53,865	9.0
Ceredigion	260	30,972	8.4
Pembrokeshire	610	48,176	12.7
Carmarthenshire	859	73,112	11.8
Swansea	2,089	94,400	22.1
Neath Port Talbot	450	57,609	7.8
Bridgend	1,132	53,342	21.2
The Vale of Glamorgan	184	48,753	3.7
Cardiff	1,275	123,580	10.3
Rhondda Cynon Taff	1,259	94,553	13.3
Merthyr Tydfil	114	23,145	4.9
Caerphilly	626	69,341	9.0
Blaenau Gwent	183	29,585	6.2
Torfaen	884	37,576	23.5
Monmouthshire	207	35,193	5.9
Newport	710	56,535	12.6
<b>Wales</b>	<b>13,675</b>	<b>1,209,048</b>	<b>11.3</b>

(Source: Welsh Housing Statistics 2002 and Census 2001)

2.3.3 Table 2 looks at the main reasons for the loss of the last settled home that households had before they presented as homeless for those households accepted as homeless and in priority need by authorities during 2001. Overall, this shows that

relationship breakdown, and family or friends unable to accommodate are the largest categories. Other reasons for loss of rented or tied accommodation are also significant factors.

Table 2: Homelessness acceptances 2001, main reason for loss of last settled home, by authority

Authority	Parents no longer willing to accommodate		Other relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate		Breakdown of relationship with partner		Mortgage arrears		Rent arrears		Other reasons for loss of rented or tied accommodation		In institution/ care		Other		Total
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	
Isle of Anglesey	12	11	9	8	20	18	6	6	-	-	54	49	3	3	6	6	110
Gwynedd	13	11	6	5	40	33	2	2	2	2	57	46	1	1	2	2	123
Conwy	17	11	6	4	34	22	4	3	-	-	75	49	10	7	7	5	153
Denbigh	15	21	9	13	19	26	1	1	-	-	13	18	9	13	6	8	72
Flintshire	31	13	23	10	51	22	13	6	-	-	76	33	21	9	18	8	233
Wrexham	8	8	12	13	22	23	12	13	1	1	17	18	15	16	8	8	95
Powys	35	18	10	5	727	38	4	2	3	2	45	23	17	9	6	3	192
Ceredigion	26	21	10	8	38	31	2	2	7	6	17	14	12	10	12	10	124
Pembrokeshire	36	19	18	9	55	29	5	3	5	3	50	26	6	26	20	10	195
Carmarthenshire	61	18	11	3	93	28	23	7	6	2	107	32	11	3	20	6	332
Swansea	132	19	32	5	242	34	16	2	22	3	147	21	54	8	58	8	703
Neath Port Talbot	9	15	5	8	25	42	-	-	-	-	4	7	15	25	2	3	60

Table 2: Homelessness acceptances 2001, main reason for loss of last settled home, by authority

Authority	Parents no longer willing to accommodate		Other relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate		Breakdown of relationship with partner		Mortgage arrears		Rent arrears		Other reasons for loss of rented or tied accommodation		In institution/ care		Other		Total
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	
Bridgend	154	26	37	6	162	28	48	8	26	4	107	18	44	8	8	1	586
The Vale of Glamorgan	28	22	16	12	31	24	2	2	-	-	33	25	18	14	2	2	130
Cardiff	157	23	65	10	95	14	24	4	15	2	190	28	37	5	96	14	679
Rhondda Cynon Taff	121	26	74	16	94	20	8	2	10	2	105	22	35	8	20	4	467
Merthyr Tydfil	9	9	3	3	19	19	11	11	3	3	24	24	27	27	6	6	101
Caerphilly	56	18	46	15	70	23	16	5	3	1	67	22	24	6	21	7	303
Blaenau Gwent	12	17	9	13	18	25	3	4	2	3	10	14	12	17	6	8	72
Torfaen	70	20	41	12	113	33	11	3	4	1	86	25	14	4	5	1	344
Monmouthshire	21	33	4	6	21	33	-	-	4	6	7	11	2	3	4	6	63
Newport	4	9	9	20	9	20	3	7	1	2	8	18	3	7	7	16	44
<b>Wales</b>	<b>1026</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1343</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1299</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5181</b>

(Source: Welsh Housing Statistics 2002)

## 2.4 Trends: actual and perceived

2.4.1 Table 3 shows the number of homeless presentations and acceptances in each of the 22 local authorities during 2000 and 2001. This shows that:

- 14 authorities experienced an increase in presentations between 2000 and 2001, varying between 4% (Ceredigion and Monmouthshire) and 207% (Carmarthenshire)
- 16 authorities experienced an increase in acceptances, varying between 5% (Ceredigion) and 113% (Carmarthenshire)
- acceptances varied significantly between authorities in both 2000 and 2001, from 4% of presentations in Newport to 86% in Merthyr Tydfil during 2000, and from 6% in Newport to 89% in Merthyr Tydfil during 2001

2.4.2 Tables 1, 2 and 3 indicate significant differences between authorities. These may be explained by a number of factors:

- firstly, the differences may simply reflect differences in how authorities assess homeless applicants, with some authorities taking a stricter approach than others. Reasons for different practices identified during the review included the available supply of accommodation, the political priority given to homelessness, and whether homelessness staff perceive themselves to be "gatekeepers" controlling access to the housing stock.
- secondly, authorities may be interpreting the requirements of the Assembly in relation to statistical

returns differently, i.e. using different definitions. The review found some evidence of this during discussions between authority staff at the enquiry days and from Shelter Cymru. A particular issue is associated with the definition of what constitutes a homeless enquiry;

- thirdly, recording systems may differ. For example, if a local authority is able to house an applicant directly into permanent accommodation at the point of enquiry, this may be recorded as a homeless presentation (or enquiry), but not as a homeless acceptance.

2.4.3 The official statistics provided by local authorities and compiled by the Assembly have some limitations; they only provide information about statutory homelessness. They do not, for example, look at the success or otherwise of action taken to prevent homelessness, or make any attempt to quantify hidden homelessness. In addition, the research carried out by Shelter Cymru to produce their publication, **First Contact**, indicates that a combination of poor reception services and a poor standard of advice provided by some authorities may result in people being denied the opportunity to access the assistance to which they are entitled. If people at first contact with an organisation cannot access the homelessness service, for whatever reason, they will not be recorded as homeless and will not receive the services they need. In most cases Shelter Cymru's mystery calling to authorities resulted in callers being denied the legal duty owed to them and/or being offered limited options regarding assistance available.

Table 3: Homelessness presentations and acceptances by local authority, 2000 and 2001

Authority	Presentations 2000	Acceptances 2000	Acceptances as percentage of presentations 2000	Presentations 2001	Acceptances 2001	Acceptances as percentage of presentations 2001
Isle of Anglesey	181	96	53%	191	110	58%
Gwynedd	280	124	44%	279	123	44%
Conwy	365	177	49%	304	153	50%
Denbigh	336	109	32%	367	72	20%
Flintshire	536	242	45%	595	233	39%
Wrexham	649	58	9%	613	95	16%
Powys	372	128	34%	484	192	40%
Ceredigion	249	118	47%	260	124	48%
Pembrokeshire	579	152	26%	610	195	32%
Carmarthenshire	281	156	56%	859	332	39%
Swansea	2,337	619	26%	2,089	703	34%
Neath Port Talbot	490	29	6%	450	60	13%
Bridgend	1,045	468	45%	1,132	586	52%
The Vale of Glamorgan	177	116	66%	184	130	71%
Cardiff	1,090	356	33%	1,275	679	53%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	1,180	369	31%	1,259	467	37%
Merthyr Tydfil	101	87	86%	114	101	89%
Caerphilly	683	249	37%	626	303	48%
Blaenau Gwent	235	37	16%	183	72	39%
Torfaen	719	368	51%	884	344	39%
Monmouthshire	199	68	34%	207	63	30%
Newport	720	30	4%	710	44	6%
<b>Wales</b>	<b>12,804</b>	<b>4,156</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>13,675</b>	<b>5,181</b>	<b>38%</b>

(Source: Welsh Housing Statistics 2001 and 2002. Note: percentages are rounded to nearest whole figure)

2.4.4 Table 4 shows the number of homeless presentations and acceptances in each of the 22 local authorities during the first six months of the 2002/03 financial year as provided by the authorities in their response to the survey carried out as part of this review. If these half-year figures are doubled to indicate a full twelve months activity, this would equate to 17,366 presentations and 8,124 acceptances across Wales. This would represent an increase of

27% on 2001 for presentations and 39% in acceptances. The increase between 2000 and 2001 was 7% for presentations and 25% for acceptances. Homeless acceptances are therefore rising faster than presentations. One reason for this is the introduction of the Priority Need Order in March 2001. Other reasons may include revised procedures and training following the implementation of the Priority Need order.

Table 4: Homelessness presentations and acceptances: March to September 2002 (authorities' own figures provided for survey questionnaire)

Authority	Presentations March to September 2002	Acceptances March to September 2002	Acceptances as percentage of presentations
Isle of Anglesey	112	70	63%
Gwynedd*	292	220	75%
Conwy	295	164	56%
Denbighshire	190	49	26%
Flintshire	300	117	39%
Wrexham	433	74	17%
Powys	244	129	53%
Ceredigion	136	80	59%
Pembrokeshire	313	147	47%
Carmarthenshire	595	302	51%
Swansea	1095	652	56%
Neath Port Talbot	323	233	72%
Bridgend	579	485	84%
The Vale of Glamorgan	284	123	43%
Cardiff	932	409	44%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	628	250	40%
Merthyr Tydfil	Not provided	Not provided	N/A
Caerphilly	410	219	53%
Blaenau Gwent	Not provided	Not provided	N/A
Torfaen	614	227	37%
Monmouthshire	119	45	38%
Newport	789	67	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8683</b>	<b>4062</b>	<b>47%</b>

(Source local authority questionnaire responses)

\* Gwynedd noted that the figure depends upon definitions

2.4.5 These figures can be compared to those in Table 5 which shows provisional data from returns made by local authorities to the Welsh Assembly Government for the quarters ending June 2002 and September 2002. Although the data in Table 5 is provisional, it is clear that there are

significant differences between the data that local authorities reported to the review team and that reported to the Assembly. One of the areas where definition problems seem to be greatest is what constitutes an enquiry about homelessness.

Table 5: Homelessness enquiries and acceptances: March to September 2002 (provisional returns to Welsh Assembly Government)

Authority	Enquiries March to September 2002	Acceptances March to September 2002
Isle of Anglesey	112	70
Gwynedd	857	130
Conwy	274	117
Denbighshire*	98	29
Flintshire	302	117
Wrexham	419	99
Powys	216	118
Ceredigion	136	80
Pembrokeshire	353	147
Carmarthenshire*	284	86
Swansea	1098	381
Neath Port Talbot	323	71
Bridgend	-	-
The Vale of Glamorgan	490	107
Cardiff	1739	462
Rhondda Cynon Taff	630	252
Merthyr Tydfil	70	50
Caerphilly	410	229
Blaenau Gwent	99	38
Torfaen	614	231
Monmouthshire	119	45
Newport	576	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>9219</b>	<b>3153</b>

(Source: returns to Welsh Assembly Government – provisional/unpublished data)

\* Denbighshire and Carmarthenshire April-June quarter data only

2.4.6 The local authority survey asked a question about trends in the type of household presenting as homeless/being referred to the authority as homeless over

the past two years. Authorities' responses are summarised below. Presentations by young people and from ex-offenders are the most significant areas of growth.

Table 6: Trends in type of presentations

Increase in presentations by category	Number of authorities noting this response
Young people, especially under 18s	16
Ex-offenders	13
Single people	9
New priority groups generally	5
Mental health problems	3
Domestic violence	3
People with support needs	3
Drug and alcohol abuse	2
Care leavers	2
Former asylum seekers	2
Loss of shorthold tenancy	1
Exclusions from social housing tenancies	1
Rough sleeping or vulnerably housed	1
Relationship breakdown	1
Schedule One offenders	1

(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)

2.4.7 National and local organisations noted that the extension of the priority needs groups has placed extra demands on homelessness services provided by local authorities. Trends noted by national and local organisations include an overall increase in the number of homeless enquiries received, put down to the raising of awareness about the new Homelessness Act. More specifically, increases in the number of young people, substance abusers, refugees and ex-prisoners presenting as homeless were noted.

2.4.8 This increase in the number of homeless enquiries received by local authorities needs to be set against a declining social housing stock. Welsh Housing Statistics show that the number of local authority properties has decreased by 21,000 (over 10%) between 1997 and 2002, from 204,000 to 183,000. Over the same period, the number of properties owned by RSLs has increased by just 9,000, from 48,000 to 57,000. Between 2001 and 2002, 3,000 more properties were lost through the Right to Buy than the increase in the number of properties owned by RSLs.

2.4.9 A small number of individual authorities noted a trend of increasing numbers of presentations being made from people in crisis. This development is possibly linked to individuals and agencies becoming more aware of the broader access to services provided by authorities.

2.4.10 Table 7 shows the time taken to make homelessness decisions by local authorities in 2000/01 and 2001/02. In 14 authorities, the proportion of homelessness applications on which the authority made a decision and notified the applicant in writing within 33 working days reduced, in some cases significantly, e.g. by 14% in Conwy and Pembrokeshire.

Table 7: Time taken to make homelessness decisions

Proportion of homelessness applications on which the authority makes a decision and issues written notification to the applicant within 13 working days		
Authority	2000-01	2001-02
Isle of Anglesey	N/A	100
Gwynedd	99	94
Conwy	82	76
Denbigh	91	87
Flintshire	100	89
Wrexham	98	100
Powys	92	89
Ceredigion	100	98
Pembrokeshire	91	85
Carmarthenshire	100	91
Swansea	93	84
Neath Port Talbot	99	98
Bridgend	99	100
The Vale of Glamorgan	94	91
Cardiff	46	59
Rhondda Cynon Taff	97	98
Merthyr Tydfil	100	100
Caerphilly	91	87
Blaenau Gwent	100	96
Torfaen	99	94
Monmouthshire	100	100
Newport	72	90

(Source: Audit Commission performance indicators)

## 2.5 Chapter summary

**2.5.1** This chapter reviews the policy context within which homelessness services operate and outlines homelessness trends. This policy review sits within the context of a number of Assembly reports and guidance documents. In addition, there are many other reports offering good practice and guidance to service providers. These show that the emphasis is on the development of strategies and services which prevent homelessness, tackle its structural causes, and provide responses which reflect the views of homeless people.

**2.5.2** The statistical analysis shows that there are increasing levels of homelessness, especially in the new priority need categories, which place extra pressure on local authorities. The statistical analysis raises questions about recording mechanisms and definitions, given the scale of the difference in the number of cases between authorities.

**2.5.3** In the next chapter we set out the findings of the review in relation to the various elements of homelessness services.



## Chapter Three

### Findings

#### 3.1 Overall findings

**3.1.1** The changes to the legislation on homelessness have been broadly welcomed by all organisations. This review identifies that there are significant areas of good practice and that innovative and effective projects to prevent and tackle homelessness are in place, but that these are not uniformly available to homeless people across Wales.

**3.1.2** It also highlights the complexity of finding solutions to homelessness and the need for coherent approaches which place homelessness policies in a wider strategic context. It is evident that homelessness is a problem which needs a multi-agency response, at both national and local levels.

**3.1.3** Both in this initial summary of findings, and in each of the sections which follow, we include the observations of local authorities and other organisations. The local authority perspective was obtained from the survey responses and enquiry days. It reflects the view of front-line homelessness officers and policy staff.

#### Local authorities

**3.1.4** Homelessness staff are under pressure, with cases increasing in number and complexity, and an increasing amount of time spent securing temporary and permanent accommodation. This is, in part, because of increased numbers of people presenting as homeless, but it is also due to the particular needs and histories of many homeless applicants which mean finding appropriate and

effective permanent housing solutions is time consuming.

**3.1.5** Local authority staff considered that there is a lack of appropriate temporary and permanent accommodation to meet the needs of homeless households, within their own stock and in other sectors. A particular issue for some authorities is the exercise of Right to Buy continuing to take the highest quality local authority stock out of the social rented sector. In addition, many local authorities cited difficulties in getting co-operation from both private sector and RSLs in re-housing people who had been accepted as homeless.

**3.1.6** Local authority staff expressed concern over the way in which the legislation extending the priority need groups was introduced, in particular the lack of time to prepare adequately for the predictable increase in the number of people accepted as homeless. The lack of ring-fenced resources to accompany this major policy initiative was also seen as reducing the potential positive impact of the legislation.

**3.1.7** Many homelessness staff cited a lack of corporate ownership of homelessness as a barrier to effective implementation and working. Their perception was that homelessness is seen as a housing problem which housing should therefore resolve, and that the extension of priority need groups has provided, not only a safety-net for individuals, but also a safety-net for organisations which simply expect homeless teams to pick up the cases.

**3.1.8** The highly political nature of homelessness was emphasised by local authority officers. While some councillors are proactive in their support for the most socially excluded, there are instances where homeless people are not popular with communities, the media or elected members. Officers noted that the level and the nature of intervention by elected members could at times be inappropriate. Specific examples provided were difficulties in getting planning permission for specialist projects for people with support needs when such facilities had been agreed as a strategic priority, and member involvement in the lettings process.

**3.1.9** There is also the potential for conflict between national agendas on homelessness and those on wider issues such as community safety and community regeneration. Without a clear indication of the relative weight of national agendas and suitable performance measures, authority officers considered that it may be inevitable that homelessness does not achieve the level of priority intended.

**3.1.10** However, as noted by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Whole Authority Analysis being completed by local authorities under the Wales Programme for Improvement will look at weak areas of performance and corporate governance issues within authorities and identify areas for improvement.

**3.1.11** The proposals for a revised strategic planning and partnership framework for local governance in Wales, arising from Partnership Council discussions, could, if established, see homelessness more firmly embedded in the health and social well-being agenda. This could have the effect of giving housing and

homelessness a clearer corporate 'place' (beyond the landlord function) and ensuring that senior policy makers understand the implications and links between different policy areas.

**3.1.12** The establishment of a Social Justice portfolio within the Cabinet of the Assembly provides an opportunity for the Assembly to further emphasise to local government the corporate nature of the homelessness agenda and to remedy through guidance, as appropriate, potential or perceived tensions between different policy areas, e.g. that between inclusion and community safety. The further development and refinement of Policy Agreements between the Assembly and local government also offers an opportunity to build homelessness into the corporate agenda of local government.

#### Other organisations

**3.1.13** Generally organisations consulted as part of the review see the new legislation as an advance which has particular resonance for specific groups, such as ex-prisoners. They welcome the increase in advice and assistance to which everyone who is homeless is eligible. However, historically, there were concerns that the way in which the legislation was introduced meant that local authorities were not ready to implement it. The concern now is that authorities are interpreting the legislation very differently. This raises the issue of the need for appropriate support, guidance and training.

**3.1.14** There is a need for clear, firm guidance; a point raised by national organisations in their responses to the consultation draft of the Code of Guidance.

**3.1.15** It is clear from the responses that local organisations experience great differences in various elements of the homelessness service, not just between local authorities, but also between area offices in the same local authority where the service is decentralised, or between individual officers. Overall, a patchy picture emerged from the survey, with some very good practice noted. This contrasts with reports of some poor practice and difficulties for individual clients or groups of homeless/potentially homeless people. No one authority was identified as either 'getting it all right' or 'getting it all wrong'.

**3.1.16** Homelessness staff were generally seen as helpful and sympathetic and many as particularly sensitive to individuals' circumstances. Relationships between voluntary sector organisations and individual members of homelessness teams were frequently cited as being productive and positive.

**3.1.17** Communication between authorities and voluntary and statutory sector organisations is variable. Some organisations are aware of legislative changes and procedural changes put in place by individual authorities, some are not.

**3.1.18** Many organisations noted that local authority homelessness services are improving, with a number of possible triggers for this, including Supporting People developments, the development of local homelessness strategies, and increased joint working to meet the needs of people who fall within the additional priority need groups introduced in March 2001.

**3.1.19** The level of commitment of authorities was seen as making a crucial

difference to what an individual authority actually does to combat homelessness and to whom it is willing to provide temporary and permanent accommodation.

**3.1.20** The question of how to encourage authorities to observe the law consistently, and follow Assembly guidance, thereby improving their services, was raised as a vital issue for the future.

**3.1.21** In the following sections, we examine the implementation of homelessness legislation, looking at the various stages of homelessness.

## **3.2 Information, advice and prevention**

**3.2.1** The public needs to have good quality information and be aware of its right to homelessness services. The evidence from the review is of patchy provision with only some authorities having good quality information available. A number of authorities are in the process of reviewing the nature and quality of the material available to the public, recognising that current provision is inadequate.

**3.2.2** Local authorities are now required to provide a greater level of advice and assistance to persons for whom there is no duty to secure housing (Section 190 and 192 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). Local authorities should therefore be developing enhanced preventative services and providing comprehensive and tailored housing advice, either directly or through other advice agencies.

**3.2.3** Preventing the loss of accommodation and/or providing support which will enable a person to retain that accommodation is an integral part of

preventative services. This review highlights specific problems relating to the loss of accommodation due to rent arrears. The NACAB and Audit Commission reports, previously mentioned, provide many examples of good practice which authorities and RSLs should follow.

### Local authorities

**3.2.4** Local authorities were asked how they made the public aware of their rights to homeless services and the nature of the information provided. Information and advice is provided by a mixture of face-to-face contact e.g. with local authority officers and outreach teams, written fact sheets, via the internet, through forums and other advice agencies. Locations where information is available include community outlets such as libraries, GP surgeries and hospitals. Some authorities provide specific guides to homelessness services available to the public and agencies, while others acknowledged that these were not available, or were in the process of being put together as part of homelessness strategy developments.

**3.2.5** Shelter Cymru operates advice services in 21 out of 22 authorities. While funding from the Legal Services Commission is provided to 19 of these and the Assembly funds 14, one in its entirety, nine authorities make a financial contribution towards the cost of providing these services.

**3.2.6** One measure of the quality of authorities' advice services is whether they have achieved a Community Legal Service

(CLS) Quality Mark. 20 out of the 22 authorities responded to this question. Three (Powys, Swansea and the Isle of Anglesey) have achieved the preliminary or general help level. The Assembly will only fund advice services provided by voluntary bodies if they are CLS quality marked.

**3.2.7** Some authorities stated that every tenant who was evicted was provided with information about where to seek advice.

### Other organisations

**3.2.8** Local organisations reported that there is very variable provision of written information on what someone should do if they are homeless. In some areas, local organisations are not aware of any written material for service users at all.

**3.2.9** The quality of available housing advice provided by local authorities was described by an organisation operating over more than one area as 'fantastically variable'. There was widespread agreement that more explicit guidance is needed for authorities on the provision and delivery of advice as a means of early intervention in preventing homelessness. Although attitudes have improved, staff could be more inclusive towards ethnic minority applicants, this need can be addressed through training.

**3.2.10** Restrictions on eligibility for housing benefit were cited as being particularly problematic for people who are sentenced to custodial sentences, the loss of housing benefit resulting in the loss of a home.

## Good practice pointers

### Advice for young people

Many local authorities and partners referred to the use of Shelter Cymru education materials in schools – ‘Housemate’ and ‘The Key to the Door’.

**Bridgend** County Borough Council has a schools’ advice programme which includes the use of videos, plays and workshops on domestic violence and anti-social behaviour. Bridgend’s publicity materials for the homelessness service also include videos.

**Conwy** Council, working in partnership with Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd and Sylfaen, carry out awareness-raising in schools as part of the social curriculum.

In **Cardiff**, the Housing Options Project, in partnership with Llamau Ltd, provides a first point of contact for 16-21 year olds in housing need in the city. The advice includes housing, homelessness, benefits, careers and a mediation service.

**Swansea** has a one-stop advice shop. Its Housing Options service has recently received the CLS accreditation. Housing Options also has a specialist money advice team who provide advice to clients who are at risk of homelessness due to financial difficulty. Young people are referred to the BAYS project where they are assessed by a social worker and a housing officer.

### Advice for ex-offenders

In **Bridgend**, the probation service funds a voluntary organisation, Caer Las, to provide an advice service specifically for ex-offenders.

### Advice generally

Local organisations spoke positively of **Monmouthshire** Council’s well-written leaflets and guides for clients, and an effective resource directory for local authority and other staff. Likewise they identified a good quality and well-resourced advice service supported by targeted investment in **Rhondda Cynon Taff**.

*(Source: local authority questionnaire and local organisation responses)*

## 3.3 Presentation

### Local authorities

3.3.1 The majority of Welsh local authorities have a separate homelessness assessment team. The alternative approach

is to include homelessness as part of a generic housing officer function. This option can create difficulties, such as getting access to officers in emergency situations when they also have a ‘patch’ to manage.

## Other organisations

**3.3.2** A number of local organisations felt that it was necessary to accompany people, at least to the first interview with the homeless persons officer, so that they could provide advocacy.

**3.3.3** Some problems in accessing homelessness services out-of-hours were cited by organisations working in rural areas, as exemplified below.

### Example of difficulties experienced: case study

#### Young person

A 17 year old presented as homeless. They were given a homeless application form to complete by a receptionist and told to return it when this has been done. The person in question has literacy problems. The person contacted a local voluntary organisation which was informed by the area office that no Housing Officer would be available for two days to conduct an interview. No offer of transport to an alternative office where there would have been a Housing Officer available was made.

*(Source: local organisations telephone interview)*

## 3.4 Referral

### Local authorities

**3.4.1** Local authorities cited particular problems with inappropriate referrals and lack of information provided by Youth Offending Teams (YOT) and Probation teams, social services and, in relation to hospital discharge, the health service.

'The Probation and Prison services have no idea of the homelessness legislation' (RSL)

**3.4.2** A particular issue in relation to young offenders is where the boundaries between the work of YOT teams and social services are and which organisation will pay for what. A lack of understanding about relevant roles and responsibilities is seen, at least in part, as a training and information sharing problem, but it is acknowledged that providing joint training can be difficult when everyone is very pushed for time.

### Other organisations

**3.4.3** It is evident from the responses that other organisations consider that good liaison is an essential feature in providing an effective homelessness service. A number of different liaison/referral arrangements are in place with local authorities, largely dependent on the type of organisation involved. Local authority social service teams rely on internal protocols. Several voluntary agencies have regular formal meetings with local authorities, or meet with them as part of a local homelessness forum, while others rely on informal arrangements.

**3.4.4** The crucial element in liaison is the quality of the working relationship with individual officers and the level of understanding which exists between authorities and agencies.

### Good practice pointers

In **Caerphilly**, the Youth Offending Team accommodation officer attends the homeless forum and has, in the past, given a presentation on electronic tagging of offenders and its implications.

**Rhondda Cynon Taff** has a protocol with Adref for the referral of prison leavers to the service; homelessness officers visit prisoners prior to their release in an attempt to identify suitable accommodation.

(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)

## 3.5 Initial assessment

**3.5.1** At the initial assessment, an authority must decide whether an applicant is homeless, or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance. If

this is the case, the authority has duties under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. The duty varies depending upon the category in which the applicant falls, as set out in Table 8.

Table 8: Local authority homelessness duties

Section of 1996 Act	Category	Requirement
s.193	Unintentionally homeless and in priority need	Duty to secure accommodation
s.192	Unintentionally homeless and not in priority need	Duty to assess needs and provide advice and assistance
s.195(2)	Threatened homeless unintentionally and in priority need	Duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available
s.195(2)	Threatened homeless unintentionally and not in priority need	Duty to assess needs and provide advice and assistance
s.190(2)	Intentionally homeless and in priority need	Duty to secure accommodation for a time to enable the applicant to secure their own accommodation and provide advice and assistance in securing accommodation
s.190(3)	Intentionally homeless and not in priority need	Duty to assess needs and provide advice and assistance
s.195(5)	Threatened homeless intentionally and in priority need	Duty to assess needs and provide advice and assistance
s. 195(5)	Threatened homeless intentionally and not in priority need	Duty to assess needs and provide advice and assistance
s.179	Not eligible for assistance, not homeless or threatened with homelessness	No duty, but housing advice must be made available

(Source: Code of Guidance)

## Local authorities

**3.5.2** General practice in relation to assessment would appear to be that local authorities make a basic assessment of long-term housing and support needs at the initial presentation of a homeless person. If a full assessment is not made at this time, a more detailed assessment follows once all the information and supporting evidence has been collected. Partnership working with other agencies and services was specifically mentioned by a number of authorities (along with the use of Supporting People monies for tenancy support schemes).

**3.5.3** Local authorities were asked what evidence they required from applicants to prove that they are no longer able to continue to occupy accommodation. All local authorities require documentary evidence of legal notices, e.g. Possession Order or Notice to Quit, Proof of Sale, Court Summons, etc.

**3.5.4** Where a legal notice is not available, e.g. friends or family no longer able to accommodate, leaving prison or the armed forces, enquiries are made to confirm and substantiate the information provided and written confirmation is usually expected. One authority stated that liaison with social services will be carried out, if appropriate, and with the consent of the applicant. One authority stated that they have a Mediation Officer to assist with 16-21 year olds, and that homelessness caseworkers will carry out home visits in an attempt to prevent homelessness and discuss other options. While there are differences between local authority approaches, in particular in relation to home visits, the responses indicated that investigations are carried out to assess individual circumstances.

**3.5.5** Local authorities were also asked what evidence they require to confirm vulnerability due to old age, mental illness/handicap and physical disability. The majority of local authorities use some form of documentary evidence, such as a birth certificate or pension book, along with supporting documents or evidence from medical practitioners and/or social workers and/or community mental health team. Joint working, and joint assessments with social services, health and other agencies were mentioned by a number of authorities. Homelessness officers commented on the beneficial arrangements that exist where there are combined housing and social service departments.

**3.5.6** Section 189(1)c of the 1996 Act provides that a person has a priority need for accommodation if vulnerable for an 'other special reason'. Such reasons may include a combination of circumstances which render the person less able to fend for themselves or their family. A number of local authorities responded that the new priority groups cover all likely circumstances. Others indicated that they follow Assembly guidance and a number of authorities stated that they consider each case on its merits. Specific examples where applicants had other reasons for vulnerability were provided by a small number of authorities. These included:

- attempted suicide;
- self-harm;
- being on a recovery programme;
- a person having limited abilities, but with no formal diagnosis or involvement with other agencies;
- refugees with multiple support needs;

- rough sleepers if it can be established that their situation is exacerbating existing health problems;
- on discharge from detox/rehab clinics;
- harassment due to ethnic origin or sexuality;
- learning difficulties.

**3.5.7** Local authorities were asked a specific question concerning the evidence they require to assess a person as vulnerable due to risk of domestic violence. Under the provisions of the Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order 2001, a person fleeing from, or threatened with, domestic violence is now included in the categories of persons in priority need and guidance is set out in the Code of Guidance. Fifteen authorities stated that they do not require any documentary evidence and that the applicant's statement is enough to make a decision. In some cases, applicants are encouraged to provide supporting evidence. The remaining seven authorities stated that enquiries would be made to confirm involvement with the Police, Women's Aid, social services, solicitors, etc.

**3.5.8** The Priority Need (Homelessness) (Wales) Order 2001 extended the previous priority need categories to include care leavers or 18-20 year olds at risk of sexual or financial exploitation. Only five authorities responded that they had accepted a young person aged 18-20 as vulnerable due to sexual or financial exploitation, although one authority commented that if an applicant is a care leaver, this may be the recorded category of vulnerability even where they are vulnerable due to sexual or financial exploitation. Eight authorities specifically mentioned that they sought advice from,

or involved, social services and/or other agencies with specialist training and skills. The type of circumstances in which an assessment would be made included rough sleeping, care leaver, substance misuse, lacking parental or other support networks, low income or involvement in prostitution.

**3.5.9** Local authorities identified that they have close working relationships and/or pathway protocols with social services' Leaving Care teams. Close working arrangements are a particular feature mentioned by authorities where social services and housing are in the same directorate. One authority specifically mentioned that housing services are a core part of the leaving care strategy, along with health, education, training and the Benefits Agency. Another commented that a leaving care procedure is in place, but no cases come seamlessly through the care system into social housing.

**3.5.10** Only one out of the 22 local authorities stated that they do not consider applications for people threatened with homelessness before their release date from prison or those leaving the armed forces. One authority advised that the volume of applicants from prison is too great to consider prison leavers before their date of discharge unless they are subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. Some authorities would only consider applications if discharge was within the next 28 days. The suggestion from many authorities was that early indication of discharge enables the authority to avoid crisis management.

**3.5.11** While the Code of Guidance does not set any time limits for considering an application from a person discharged from prison or service-people leaving the armed forces, many authorities impose an

arbitrary limit. Practice varies considerably from authority to authority. Two authorities expect applicants to apply within two weeks of discharge and others specify within one, two and three months of discharge. Other authorities mention that they consider what is reasonable and assess an applicant's housing history since leaving prison or ceasing to be a member of the forces.

**3.5.12** Authorities commented on the differences in the legislation between England and Wales, particularly in relation to prison leavers. A number of local authority officers expressed a view that the legislation relating to offenders and leavers from the armed forces should mirror the position in England, in that there should be a clause limiting re-housing only to those persons vulnerable due to institutionalisation. There were concerns expressed at the level of repeat homelessness amongst this group, with cases cited of former prisoners re-offending from temporary or permanent accommodation in which they had been placed following a homeless application.

**3.5.13** Authorities were asked about their approaches to people who were threatened with homelessness intentionally and in priority need, and people unintentionally homeless and not in priority need. Most authorities indicated that they provide 28 days accommodation. For people unintentionally homeless and not in priority

need, authorities stated that they provide advice on housing options, including assistance with registering people on the housing register, or provide accommodation if properties are immediately available.

**3.5.14** Authorities indicated that they follow the legislation and Code of Guidance in assessing whether an applicant has a local connection.

### Other organisations

**3.5.15** Several respondents, particularly Women's Aid organisations, mentioned probing and over-intrusive questioning of clients during assessment interviews. This was seen as particularly upsetting to clients already in a state of trauma arising from their problems. Concern was expressed in one area at the high level of justification required before the authority will accept clients as homeless on mental health grounds. Some of the difficulties cited by local organisations are set out in the box below.

**3.5.16** Voluntary organisations are particularly appreciative of those staff who are sensitive to their clients' circumstances. Organisations perceived some front-line staff to be more sensitive than others to the individual circumstances of applicants, especially those presenting as a result of domestic violence.

### Examples of difficulties experienced in relation to specific groups

Insufficient privacy offered for **women** being interviewed in the Homeless Persons Unit/housing department. Obtaining a full service for women declared as intentionally homeless has been a problem. The prospect of children's education being disrupted, because there was no promise of continuity of schooling, was sometimes preventing abused women seeking appropriate assistance at the critical point from the local authority.

The form-filling and questions can be too demanding for **young homeless people**. Examples were cited of homeless persons' staff ringing young people's parents to check their 'stories' (once in the presence of a youth worker).

With regard to **minority ethnic applicants**, staff are 'not always inclusive in their attitudes', but things have improved. A particular problem was cited of women, previously married to UK citizens, who now had no recourse to public funds.

**Offenders** were considered to be vulnerable and often need to be accompanied or supported with their applications. The particular problem is the tendency to be over zealous about local connection, especially when classified Schedule 1.

The health service also commented on the need for people with **mental health problems** to have a health care assistant present during the initial interview.

The **probation service** reported undue delay in local authorities dealing with its **clients'** cases. There was also a suggestion from the probation service that local authorities discharge their statutory obligations to potentially unattractive tenants by offering them sub-standard properties.

*(Source: national and local organisation telephone interviews)*

### Examples of difficulties: intentionality decisions

A 16-year old became homeless after her mother moved to Scotland and was found to be intentionally homeless for not going with her.

A 17-year old woman left home after difficulties with her parents. She was found to be in priority need, but intentionally homeless, as she refused to go for counselling over a drink problem.

A 21 year-old man was discharged from the Army and became homeless. He was found to be intentionally homeless because he was discharged for failing a drugs test.

*(Source: Shelter Cymru casework)*

### Good practice pointers

In **Rhondda Cynon Taff**, a social worker is based at the housing advice centre. Part of this worker's role is to carry out assessment of 16- and 17-year olds and assist the caseworkers in identifying the most the appropriate accommodation for the clients.

**Cardiff** has a Mediation Officer for 16 – 21 year olds based at the Housing Options Project. Homelessness caseworkers carry out home visits to attempt to prevent homelessness and to discuss other options.

The **Isle of Anglesey** file and case management procedures for the service have been awarded the Community Legal Services Partnership Quality Mark. A 10 per cent sample survey of case files is undertaken each month and assessed against a 22 point check list.

*(Source: local authority questionnaire responses and Audit Commission inspection report)*

## 3.6 Decision-making process

### Local authorities

**3.6.1** All local authorities indicated that they comply with the requirement to provide a Section 184 letter notifying applicants of the outcome of the assessment. Shelter Cymru's view is that Section 184 letters are often standardised and do not always provide full and clear reasons for the decision, as required by Assembly guidance.

**3.6.2** 14 local authorities stated that they generally have no or few problems in meeting the target timescale of completing inquiries within 33 days. Of those authorities which stated that they had a problem with this timescale, the main reason given is waiting for information from a third party, e.g. other local authorities, social services, GPs (for which a charge is made), landlords, solicitors, banks/building societies, etc. Two authorities specifically mentioned increased demand for the service since the changes to the priority need groups, which has not been matched by increased resources to deal with the extra demands on the

service. Difficulty in balancing the initial enquiry process with assessment requirements was also identified as a problem, along with an increase in more complex cases.

### Other organisations

**3.6.3** The difficulties experienced by some local authorities were confirmed by the response from other organisations. The length of time taken for some local authorities to make homelessness decisions was noted as a concern. Exceptionally long periods of 6 - 12 months waiting for decisions in relation to their clients were noted by several organisations. In contrast, Shelter Cymru has identified instances in which decisions are taken too quickly and a full investigation of an individual's circumstances is not carried out.

## 3.7 Notification and appeals process

### Local authorities

**3.7.1** Most local authorities stated that the Section 184 notification letter advises applicants of their right to review and the appeal process to be followed. A few local

authorities bring this to the attention of applicants earlier in the process.

**3.7.2** During 2001/02, 128 requests for an appeal were made to 14 different local authorities. Eight authorities had no requests. 36 of these requests were to a single authority. 28 decisions were overturned, of which 12 were in one authority. Information on appeals and outcomes was incomplete for three authorities.

**3.7.3** 21 out of 22 authorities responded to the question on whether any appeals had been made to the County Court. During 2001/02, there were two appeals to the County Court; in both cases the court upheld the Council's original decision. In addition, some cases are conceded by authorities before they reach court.

### Other organisations

**3.7.4** Voluntary organisations, especially national organisations such as Shelter Cymru, have a role in challenging and testing local authority decisions. In a number of instances, these challenges arise before a formal appeal process is put in motion and result in a review of the initial decision.

**3.8** Liaison with other landlords to secure accommodation

### Local authorities

**3.8.1** Some authorities consider that they are the only organisation providing both temporary and permanent accommodation for homeless people. Particular blockages include nominations to housing associations which are selective about accepting homeless households. One example was cited of 22 nominations being made to a housing association over a specific period resulting in only two applicants actually being housed by the association. Mutual

transparency about lettings between local authorities and housing associations is crucial. There is significant room for improvement in current levels of communication on this issue.

**3.8.2** Local authorities were asked to identify the constraints they find when seeking to meet their homelessness duties through co-operation with RSLs and the private sector. While a number of authorities commented upon the good relationship which they have with RSLs, over half stated RSL exclusion policies as being a constraint, in particular in relation to homeless individuals or households with a history of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and/or offending.

***‘We have found that RSLs will not accept some nominations of homeless applicants who, despite being found unintentionally homeless, may have a record of rent arrears or nuisance in previous tenancies’ (Source: local authority questionnaire response)***

**3.8.3** All local authorities identified constraints in working with the private sector. The problems identified include: lack of security, affordability, (especially for under 25s due to single room rent housing benefit regulations), unwillingness of landlords to accept people on benefits and/or particular client groups, unaffordable high deposits, lack of supply, and lack of staff to work with the private sector.

### Other organisations

**3.8.4** There was a view from local organisations that the length of time taken to settle Housing Benefit claims in some areas means that, in these locations, the private rented sector has, in practice, ceased to be an option.

### Good practice pointers

**Neath Port Talbot Council** has taken a recent decision to put all RSL nominations through its Homelessness Section. The question of RSL exclusion policies is being addressed through the Community Housing Agreement and meetings with RSLs.

(Source: local authority questionnaire response)

## 3.9 The choice and nature of accommodation offered, including temporary accommodation

### Local authorities

**3.9.1** Inadequate support and co-operation was cited both within authorities, (and even within housing departments in terms of securing permanent local authority accommodation), and between authorities and external agencies. In particular, there were a number of examples of authorities where a change in the structure of service delivery has led to a separation of the management of homelessness and housing management/lettings. In most cases this has led to increased difficulties for the homelessness team in accessing sufficient/appropriate local authority accommodation.

**3.9.2** Difficulty in accessing appropriate accommodation is being exacerbated by further loss of local authority stock through the Right to Buy which has removed a significant proportion of the highest quality homes in the most popular areas from local

authority ownership. Empty stock is increasingly concentrated in outlying estates or declining communities, and is often not suitable for meeting homelessness requirements

**3.9.3** Some authorities stated that there had been circumstances where they had been unable to discharge their statutory duties as there was no temporary or B&B accommodation available at the point when applicants needed it.

**3.9.4** One authority cited a feeling that its homelessness team has to 'sell' its clients to whoever might provide them with accommodation and that overcoming negative attitudes about homeless households takes a lot of time.

**3.9.5** Local authorities were asked whether the type of temporary accommodation used for homeless households had changed in the last two years. Eight authorities said that there had not been any change. The other 14 authorities responses are summarised in table nine.

Table 9: Changes in the use of temporary accommodation

Change in the use of temporary accommodation	Number of authorities
New use of B&B/increase in use of B&B	6
Greater use of council accommodation	5
Development/more use of alternatives to B&B e.g. leasing, hostels – decrease in use of B&B	4
Use/increased use of accommodation outside the borough	4
Development of new hostels	3

**3.9.6** Seven authorities stated that they vary the type of accommodation offered to applicants under the s188 interim duty and the main duty under s193. The types of accommodation used for interim accommodation are B&B, hostel, women’s refuge or Council stock. Permanent accommodation is Council accommodation or nomination to RSLs.

**3.9.7** When deciding the suitability of temporary accommodation, authorities take a range of factors into account. Collectively authorities indicated that they take note of:

- location;
- adequacy;
- disabled facilities;
- proximity to local schools and support networks;
- transport links;
- employment;

- availability;
- nature of other residents;
- cost;
- health and safety, including over-crowding and HMO legislation;
- family composition;
- reasons for homelessness (i.e. would not house in locality where a person is fleeing violence);
- medical, social or health reasons;
- results of any risk assessment.

**3.9.8** A number of authorities noted that the ability to offer the most suitable accommodation depends upon the availability of accommodation at the time it is required.

**3.9.9** Where feasible, local authorities vary the type of accommodation offered to differing client groups. Examples are set out in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Type of temporary accommodation by client group

Client group	Type of accommodation offered
Young people	Hostel accommodation with support Shared move-on accommodation Private landlord with support services Supported housing with support and mediation YMCA hostel
Ex-prisoners	Direct access B&B Council properties Nominations Night shelter
Domestic violence	Refuges Hostels B&B
Mental Health problems	B&B Varies, following discussion with health services Direct access Hospital

(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)

**3.9.10** Most authorities stated that people from the various client groups, including those with high support needs, may have to share temporary accommodation due to lack of projects designated for specific groups.

**3.9.11** Placing people out of borough is a growing problem. In 2001/02, six authorities placed eleven or more people out of borough with the range being 11 to 74. While one of these authorities has reduced placements in 2002/03 to single figures, another authority has started the practice. The help provided to clients varies from none, to payment of travel expenses and/or provision of a taxi.

**3.9.12** The majority of authorities provide information to applicants in temporary

accommodation on its suitability. Eight authorities noted that such information is inadequate or not available.

**3.9.13** Limited availability of accommodation and location problems were cited as the main factors in being unable to take into account the preferences of applicants for temporary and permanent accommodation. However, disabilities and certain vulnerabilities are taken into account. Choice is also constrained by the time available to secure re-housing and the costs of temporary accommodation in some areas.

#### Other organisations

**3.9.14** A voluntary sector organisation operating in several authority areas

considered that an essential factor governing the varying response of local authorities to homeless people is the supply of accommodation, with a shortage of accommodation likely to generate a harsher interpretation of the law.

**3.9.15** Local organisations considered that the state of repair of temporary accommodation offered often leaves something to be desired. Mainstream housing associations were not considered to be significant providers of temporary accommodation.

**3.9.16** Concern was expressed about the suitability of temporary accommodation offered to people with particular needs such as to those with mental health problems or to very young homeless people.

**3.9.17** The length of time waiting to be offered permanent accommodation was cited as a problem, particularly for large households, (therefore impacting disproportionately on BME households).

**3.9.18** The suitability of permanent accommodation offered was questioned by a number of organisations, again particularly for those with support needs. Those with mental health/learning difficulties, substance abuse/young singles/ex-offenders were thought to be at a particular disadvantage. The risk of forming ghettos of young single homeless

people was identified. Given their low level of income, 16- and 17-year olds were seen as being particularly unsuited to the unfurnished accommodation which is frequently offered to them.

**3.9.19** Geographical allocation areas defined by local authorities can be large. People may be offered accommodation within the allocation area, but still at some distance from their support networks.

**3.9.20** The intensity of support available is not always sufficient to help people maintain a tenancy either in temporary or permanent accommodation. If people lose a temporary tenancy part way through the homelessness assessment process, they can then be deemed to be intentionally homeless.

**3.9.21** Local connection and arrears rulings in relation to the housing register can overrule homeless acceptances, e.g. women who have experienced domestic abuse and do not have a local connection are not actively considered for re-housing by one authority until twelve months after they are accepted as homeless. (NB At the time of the survey, the lettings provisions of the Homelessness Act were not in force).

**3.9.22** Difficulties in securing accommodation for certain groups, e.g. high risk offenders, were cited across many local authority areas.

## Examples of difficulties experienced: case studies

### Offenders

A young person who was classified as a Schedule 1 offender presented as homeless at a voluntary sector organisation advice project. The local authority would not house him due to his Schedule 1 status. An emergency bed was accessed at a voluntary sector temporary accommodation/support project while a child in need assessment was requested. Social services would not get involved as the young person had a Youth Offending Team worker. The young person's grandmother eventually allowed him to stay with her on a temporary basis until a more long-term place became available at the temporary accommodation/support project (approximately five weeks). Due to his learning difficulty, the young person eventually moved on to a shared house via Adult Services shortly after his eighteenth birthday. The length of time he spent at the temporary accommodation/support project was approximately ten months.

A 17-year old man applied as homeless but was refused temporary accommodation or any other assistance because of a previous charge of criminal damage.

A single homeless ex-prisoner with drug problems was not offered assistance because he was considered excluded by the council.

### Individual with mental health problems

A priority need homeless person with identified mental health problems was offered permanent accommodation but made aware that, under homeless procedure, this was a 'one-only' offer. The property was accepted and the tenancy started within one week. Neither the person's social worker nor any other support agency was made aware of the move – as a result the support network set up around this vulnerable person was not able to act as they were unable to contact him.

### Rough sleepers

A couple sleeping rough applied as homeless but were told they had no local connection and therefore could not access temporary accommodation. They were forced to return to the streets. Following an interview with a voluntary agency, it became apparent that they were fleeing domestic violence. This information was supplied to the local authority and they were then provided with temporary accommodation and later assessed as being in priority need.

*(Source: local organisation telephone interviews and Shelter Cymru casework)*

**3.9.23** General shortages of both temporary and permanent accommodation were noted as a reason for authorities sometimes not being able to discharge their statutory duties, e.g. to provide interim

accommodation pending a decision on homelessness, or not being able to follow the provisions of the Code of Guidance on suitability of accommodation.

#### Good practice pointers

**Cardiff's** resettlement strategy gives residents of hostels of supported housing projects accepted onto the scheme priority on the housing waiting list and support for them to maintain their tenancy. The City's homelessness support team provides support to homeless applicants in temporary accommodation. The City's Access Panel aims to help people who are either excluded or self-exclude from statutory and/or voluntary services. A panel of representatives from various agencies, including the Health Authority, Community Alcohol Team and Probation, meets regularly to develop action plans for these individuals.

**Swansea's** Housing Options has its own self-contained temporary accommodation managed by a local authority officer. This is for families only and provides safe, secure accommodation until the authority can discharge its duty. The authority's single homeless strategy has resulted in the development of a wet house for street drinkers.

*(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)*

### 3.10 Funding/resources

**3.10.1** Both local authorities and other organisations perceived poor administration of housing benefit to be a key problem, both in contributing to homelessness and in preventing the use of some options for accommodation, e.g. in the private sector, because of landlords' previous experience of the housing benefit system.

**3.10.2** All types of organisation identified the need for additional resources, especially to provide appropriate temporary and permanent accommodation, with move-on accommodation being a particular priority. The effective use of existing resources, well-trained staff, and better support were also identified as being essential.

#### Good practice pointers

**Bridgend** County Borough Council's Housing Forum has been instrumental in the successful bidding for £1.7 million of funding for a range of homelessness projects including a Bond Board, Breakfast Run, research and specialist housing.

In **Merthyr Tydfil**, a Social Housing Management Grant funded scheme has been established to screen the health of homeless people through the employment of a part-time health visitor.

*(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)*

### 3.11 Targets/statistics and monitoring

#### Local authorities

3.11.1 Most authorities considered that the statistics returned to the Welsh Assembly Government do not accurately reflect reality, as well as being very time-consuming to produce. A general concern, noted earlier in this report, was that of different definitions being used. Specific concerns include:

- the exclusion of cases dealt with by telephone;
- the fact that the statistics do not follow all cases through from

presentation to final outcome and therefore do not cover housing advice and preventative work;

- the fact that they do not give any weight to the complexity of individual cases.

3.11.2 Other than formal publication some time after submission of the statistics, there is no feedback to the authorities from the Assembly and no link to funding or resource distribution. Changes to definitions and data requirements increases the work involved in completing returns and reduce the usefulness of the statistics, e.g. in relation to tracking year-on-year trends.

#### Example of difficulties: statistical returns

The confusion about terminology is exemplified by an authority that noted a nearly eightfold increase in the level of acceptances as a percentage of presentations over a three-year period. These could not all be accounted for by changes in the law or practice within the authority. It was clear that the return was not being completed correctly by the authority. Clearer guidance was issued to the authority after a query was lodged with the Assembly, but the authority acknowledges that there is still confusion about some of the definitions used.

(Source: Shelter Cymru)

3.11.3 A specific issue cited during the study is the statistical exclusion of cases dealt with by telephone. One authority said that it could do a full homelessness assessment by phone for people in rural areas but that these cases are not being reflected in the official statistics.

3.11.4 In addition, not all homelessness cases are followed through in the statistics from presentation to final outcome. This means that the level of prevention achieved by the provision of advice is not measured as part of the official statistics despite prevention being an essential aim

of the national policy framework. Enquiries, presentations and acceptances per 1000 population would provide more useful data than absolute numbers.

3.11.5 Authorities felt that the Assembly target contained in **Better Homes** for the number of households in temporary accommodation is unachievable. One authority alone currently has more households in temporary accommodation than the target for the whole of Wales. It should be noted that, although Assembly commitments to reduce the number of people staying in temporary

accommodation for more than six months and eliminating the use of B&B for homeless families remain, the precise targets to be set are to be reconsidered during 2003/04.<sup>1</sup>

**3.11.6** Local authorities considered that there is the potential for conflict between the prevention of homelessness and

performance indicators for other areas such as arrears and voids. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is currently no national prevention of homelessness performance indicator. An indicator for homelessness prevention might, for example, differentiate between enquiries by potentially homeless people, formal presentations and acceptances.

### Good practice pointers

**Swansea's** single homelessness strategy has resulted in the development of a common monitoring form for single homeless people.

**Cardiff** has developed common assessment and collection of data protocols with a range of partner agencies across the city.

**Rhondda Cynon Taff** uses an Access database to record homelessness. This facilitates easy production of reports and statistics required by the Assembly.

*(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)*

1 "Better Wales" (betterwales.com) sets objectives to, reduce the "number of homeless families living in temporary housing to...below 500" and for "the need for rough sleeping to be eliminated". "Plan for Wales 2001" similarly shows the Assembly Government's commitment to reduce homelessness and sets a target of achieving measurable reductions in the length of time families spend in temporary accommodation.

Statistics on the number of households in temporary accommodation for more than six months, available during 2003, will allow the Assembly Government to set a target and timescale for the reduction of homeless families in temporary accommodation, with reference to the base-line figure.

The Assembly Government does not currently have adequate information on the levels of rough sleeping or the extent of emergency provision. This information will not be available until the Local Homelessness Strategies are in place (Summer 2003 at the earliest), and it will take some time before the planned investment feeds through into available provision.

The Assembly Government is committed to eliminating the need for rough sleeping at the earliest opportunity, but proposes that the target date for achievement of this aim is determined by April 2004 on the basis of proper evidence.

The Assembly Government will work towards:

- eliminating the need for rough sleeping;
- reducing the number of people staying in temporary accommodation for more than six months;
- reducing the incidence of "repeat" homelessness;
- eliminating the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families and minimising it for others;
- ensuring that all local authorities have homelessness strategies in place;
- minimising the length of time local authorities take to assess people presenting as homeless.

(Position statement provided by Assembly Government March 2003)

## Other organisations

3.11.7 Better monitoring and evaluation of services to achieve improvement and to make sure that funding is well spent was noted by other organisations as being an area where all partners need to contribute.

## Chapter summary

3.11.8 This chapter covers the findings of the review, taking account of the views of local authorities, national and local organisations. It includes case studies giving particular examples of implementation of the legislation, and examples of good practice. Particular points are:

- The changes to the legislation on homelessness have been broadly welcomed by all organisations;
- The quality of housing advice and information throughout Wales varies;
- There are a number of advice programmes for schools aimed at preventing homelessness, and tailored advice for young people;
- The majority of local authorities have dedicated assessment teams;
- There are particular problems with inappropriate referrals, e.g. of young offenders, and arbitrary time limits imposed for accepting prison leavers;

- There are examples of good practice and liaison, e.g. protocols for the referral of prison leavers, pre-release visiting, and mediation for 16-21 year-olds;
- Generally assessment staff are sensitive in their approach and authorities have well established procedures;
- There are concerns about the nature and use of temporary accommodation; its location, facilities, and inappropriate mixed use by clients with different support needs;
- The use of out-of-borough temporary placements is increasing;
- RSL exclusion policies and nomination practices result in a limited use of this sector for homeless people;
- A good practice example cited is where all nominations to RSLs are put through the local authority homelessness section;
- All types of organisations identified the need for more resources, especially for temporary and permanent accommodation;
- Local authorities need to understand better how the Assembly makes use of homelessness statistical returns.

3.11.9 In the next chapter we look at specific problems in implementing the law and the Code of Guidance, and the ways in which problems can be overcome.

## Chapter Four

# Problems with Implementing the Law and Code of Practice

4.1 As part of the study, local authorities were asked to identify what problems they experience in implementing homelessness law and the Code of Guidance and to identify what would help to overcome these problems. This section of the report sets out the issues raised by local authorities in their responses.

4.2 The most commonly noted problems were:

- lack of staffing resources to respond effectively to the needs of homeless and potentially homeless people;

***‘It is the volume of presentations and the increase in those we have a duty to provide temporary and permanent accommodation for that has put a strain on already limited resources.’***

***‘The problems experienced are in terms of volume of work and the greater complexity of decision-making.’***

- difficulties with information exchange between organisations associated with data protection legislation and/or lack of effective protocols;

***‘We have difficulties with gaining information to support enquiries in relation to data protection.’***

- difficulties in accommodating specific groups such as 16- and 17-year olds, people with mental health problems, people with addictions and ex-offenders;

***‘We have difficulty in securing permanent accommodation for several groups of homeless people; they are being set up to fail.’***

- lack of an appropriate range of temporary accommodation which results in vulnerable groups being placed together in the same temporary accommodation, increasing vulnerability;

***‘The authority is concerned that certain vulnerable groups are provided with temporary accommodation in the same B&B accommodation.’***

***‘Temporary accommodation placements are regularly full to capacity; we anticipate the need for out-of-borough placements.’***

- lack of permanent accommodation, either generally, or for specific groups such as large families or single people;

***‘Lack of single person accommodation means that single people cannot be kept within their communities.’***

***‘The small social housing grant programme and the continuing purchase of properties through Right to Buy and Right to Acquire is eroding the social housing stock in Wales. We will soon reach the position where it is unable to satisfy the demand from homeless people.’***

- lack of effective joint working;  
**‘We have some difficulties, such as with ex-prisoners, in providing accommodation because of problems with engaging with other agencies within a reasonable timescale.’**

**‘Referrals can be problematic when the referring agency does not have a clear understanding of current legislation and has a higher expectation of the service than can be offered.’**

- difficulties in getting housing associations to co-operate in re-housing an appropriate proportion of homeless households;

**‘The referral process to housing associations can take up to two weeks. Associations can be reluctant to accept homeless applicants, particularly if they display high support needs.’**

- for rural authorities, difficulties in providing an effective homelessness service in dispersed communities, including provision of locations for presentation and assessment, as well

as temporary and permanent accommodation solutions.

**‘The distribution of dedicated homelessness staff across all of the County is problematic, particularly if there are several difficult cases.’**

4.3 Concerns about future policy developments were also expressed by some authorities, for example, in relation to the introduction of choice-based lettings:

**‘Special attention is required to ensure that disadvantaged groups such as homeless people and those with mental health problems are provided with assistance with the completion of registrations forms etc and are afforded the same choice, within reason, as other applicants.’**

4.4 In relation to what authorities themselves could do to overcome the problems identified, the table below shows the responses which were noted by more than one authority. The most commonly noted responses were to increase the provision of temporary accommodation, improve joint working arrangements, and increase the availability of support to homeless households.

Table 11: Authorities' role in overcoming problems

What authorities could do themselves to overcome problems with implementing the law and Code of Guidance	Number of authorities noting this response
Increase provision of temporary accommodation, including that for specific groups	6
Develop and refine protocols and joint working arrangements with other departments/agencies	4
Increase availability of support to homeless households	4
Increase access to existing permanent accommodation for homeless applicants by reviewing lettings policies and practices	3
Increase corporate recognition of homelessness	3
Increase the focus on prevention	3
Increase resources within the homeless section	2
Increase provision of permanent accommodation	2
Develop a central role for homelessness strategies to deal with relevant concerns	2

(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)

4.5 The table below shows the responses noted by more than one authority as to what partners could do to overcome the problems identified. The most commonly noted responses were for housing associations to accept more

homeless households for permanent re-housing, for all partner organisations to assist in the provision of temporary accommodation, and for associations to review their exclusion policies.

Table 12: Partners' role in overcoming problems

What partners could do to overcome problems with implementing the law and Code of Guidance	Number of authorities noting this response
Accept more homeless households for permanent re-housing	8
Assist in provision of temporary accommodation	5
Revise exclusion policies	4
Provide additional accommodation on schemes that will support homelessness strategy	3
Better understand local authority duties and limitations	3
Refer cases at an early stage before crisis happens	2
Give realistic advice to clients about housing options	2
Share information	2

(Source: local authority questionnaire responses)

4.6 The table below shows the responses noted by more than one authority as to what the Assembly could do to overcome the problems identified. Unsurprisingly, the most commonly noted response was the provision of more

resources, including those for permanent, temporary and supported accommodation. Clearer guidance, review of the priority need groups, and a greater focus on the prevention of homelessness were the next most commonly noted responses.

Table 13: The Assembly's role in overcoming problems

What the Assembly could do to overcome problems with implementing the law and Code of Guidance	Number of authorities noting this response
Increase resources (including for permanent, temporary and supported accommodation)	20
Provide clearer guidance	6
Review priority need groups	5
Provide a greater focus on prevention e.g. funding for mediation services	4
Increase awareness of homelessness as a central issue	3
Ensure that all agencies fulfil their obligations	3
Increase regulation of the private rented sector	2

(Source: Local Authority Questionnaire Responses)

4.7 The Assembly plans to spend £4.7 million on homelessness and rough sleeping during 2003/4. Within this planned expenditure the Assembly is

providing funding to the following projects to prevent and tackle homelessness from 2003/4 onwards.

Table 14: Summary of Assembly funded homelessness projects 2003/4 onwards

Authority-based projects					
Type of Project	Authority area	Voluntary organisation	Funding	Funding	Funding
Housing Advice Services	Cardiff	Somali Progressive Association	£25,050	£25,626	£27,508
	Conwy	Shelter Cymru	£43,109	£48,842	£53,544
	Gwynedd	Shelter Cymru	£43,109	£48,842	£53,544
Money Advice Services	Torfaen	Torfaen CAB	£31,400	£30,676	£31,596
Specialist Advice Workers	Caerphilly Cardiff	Gofal	£36,439	£35,359	£36,571
		Big Issue Cymru	£20,902	£31,276	£32,165
Advice and Support	Neath Port Talbot Rhondda Cynon Taff	Gofal	£68,763	£69,763	£79,722
		Shelter Cymru	£24,761	£48,842	£53,543
Outreach Services	Anglesey Bridgend Ceredigion Swansea	The Lighthouse	£45,393	£47,351	£45,787
		Wallich Clifford	£31,622	£31,463	£33,036
		Wallich Clifford	£31,622	£31,463	£33,036
		Caer Las Cymru	£76,055	£119,208	£122,978
Resettlement/ Support	Gwynedd Newport Swansea	North Wales HA	£44,000	£60,000	£60,000
		Big Issue Cymru	£23,544	£28,808	£29,614
		Big Issue Cymru	£22,821	£28,631	£29,433
Emergency Shelters/Direct Access	Denbighshire Gwynedd	Nacro Cymru	-	£4,990	£5,345
		North Wales HA	£87,500	£87,500	£87,500
Furniture Schemes	Wrexham	WATCH	£10,600	£2,100	£2,100
Bond Schemes	Caerphilly	Tai Trothwy	£41,175	£69,875	£71,805
	Conwy				
	Denbighshire	Nacro Cymru	£30,012	£48,419	£50,312
	Flintshire	YMCA's	£45,185	£42,148	£43,100
	Monmouthshire	NASH	£31,519	£36,338	£38,374
	Newport	NASH	£35,225	£56,137	£59,598
Pembrokeshire	Pembs Care Society	£109,503	-	-	
Winter Programme	Cardiff	CASH/Salvation Army	£97,143	£100,767	£104,533
	Wrexham	WATCH	£4,400	£4,565	£4,750

All Wales Projects					
	Organisation	Summary of project	Funding 2003/04	Funding 2004/05	Funding 2005/06
All-Wales projects	Triangle Wales	Research into the needs of homeless lesbian, gay and bisexual people across Wales	£36,940	-	-
	Tai Dysgu a Gwaith Cymru	To support the start-up phase of a new national association in Wales for projects that provide an integrated service of supported housing and training for homeless people	£36,000	£27,040	-
	Homeless Link	To enable Homeless Link to support and represent its members in Wales	£77,301	£81,525	£84,060
<b>Total</b>			<b>£1,211,093</b>	<b>£1,247,554</b>	<b>£1,273,554</b>

(All figures rounded to the nearest £)

## Chapter summary

4.8 In this chapter we summarise the main problems identified by organisations. These are a lack of:

- Staffing resources;
- Protocols between organisations for information exchange;
- An appropriate range of temporary accommodation for specific groups;
- Permanent accommodation;
- Joint working.

4.9 Other problems concern the difficulties in getting RSLs to co-operate in housing homeless people and, for rural authorities, practical issues in providing a service to dispersed communities.

4.10 The chapter includes suggested solutions to these problems and identifies actions for local authorities, partners and the Assembly in overcoming the problems.

4.11 Assembly funding of specific projects is also covered.

4.12 The next chapter sets out our conclusions and recommendations.



## Chapter Five

# Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Overview of conclusions

**5.1.1** In this section we set out the conclusions of the review. Conclusions are drawn for each of the main dimensions of the statutory homelessness process and for specific client groups.

**5.1.2** The review has examined the way in which local authorities throughout Wales are implementing the homelessness legislation, as evidenced through survey results, enquiry day discussions and written reports, policies and procedures. Overall we found examples of good practice, and innovative and effective projects. We also found examples where the legislation and guidance are not being complied with fully. The nature of the research undertaken for the review does not allow us to draw specific conclusions about the extent to which local authorities are complying with their own published policies and procedures. This would require techniques which were not part of our methodology, such as participant observation of homelessness interviews and tracking individual cases.

#### Advice and prevention

**5.1.3** At the time of the review a number of local authorities recognised that the quality and availability of advice they provided was insufficient to inform enquirers of all possible housing options and did not fully meet the legal requirements of Homelessness Act 2002 to provide a greater level of advice and assistance to persons for whom there is no duty to secure housing. Some are in the

process of updating literature and reviewing ways in which the public could be made more aware of advice and preventative services. Voluntary organisations also need to be better informed and provided with copies of relevant literature. Only 3 out of 22 local authorities' advice services have achieved a Community Legal Services Quality Mark; a validated measure of quality. Examples of preventative work include use of Shelter Cymru education materials in schools and of good quality advice services, including those specifically geared to the needs of young people and ex-offenders.

#### Initial presentation, referrals and assessment

**5.1.4** The analysis of the initial assessment process highlights the varied approaches which exist. These differ between local authorities and by client group.

**5.1.5** The research carried out by Shelter Cymru to produce their publication, **First Contact**, indicates that a combination of poor reception services and a poor standard of advice provided by some authorities may result in people being denied the opportunity to access the assistance to which they are entitled. Accessing services out-of-hours in rural areas can also be problematic. However most authorities have dedicated homelessness assessment teams who deal with applicants when they present as homeless or potentially homeless.

**5.1.6** There are a large number of different liaison arrangements in place between authorities and other organisations. The quality of working relationships, the level of understanding between authorities and agencies, and agreed protocols are essential elements of good referral arrangements. There are examples of effective arrangements with Youth Offending Teams and agencies assisting prison leavers, though in many local authority areas inappropriate referrals in relation to offenders point to the need to enhance inter-agency arrangements.

**5.1.7** The review findings show that homeless people have differing experiences of the homelessness presentation and assessment process. This varies by location, the nature of the client group into which they fall, and the eventual decision. Particular difficulties mentioned include lack of sensitivity to the needs of the individual for privacy or support in understanding complex forms, requests for supporting information where this is not required by the legislation, delays in dealing with cases of "potentially unattractive tenants", and the need for support to challenge intentionality findings.

### Decision-making process, notifications and appeals

**5.1.8** In certain instances local authorities are unable to meet the requirement to complete enquiries within 33 days. This is predominantly where they are awaiting information from third parties. All local authorities comply with the requirement to provide a Section 184 notification letter, though there is scope to provide a fuller explanation of reasons in some instances.

**5.1.9** Eight authorities have not carried out formal appeal processes at the time of

the review, though they may have reviewed decisions following challenge prior to a formal appeal. Some authorities did not have the information needed to respond to the question in the review survey on appeals. This points to a need to improve data gathering procedures.

### Provision of suitable accommodation

**5.1.10** The provision of temporary and permanent accommodation is problematic for a number of authorities. Some authorities are sometimes unable to discharge their duty to individuals or households because no suitable accommodation is available. Temporary accommodation is in limited supply in some areas and for specific client groups, e.g. ex-offenders, or people with substance or alcohol addictions. Local authorities have limited success in working with private sector landlords to secure and retain accommodation, particularly for clients who need support.

**5.1.11** Local authorities are using B&B and out-of-borough accommodation to meet the demand for temporary accommodation, despite the fact that the nature of B&B accommodation makes it unsuitable for vulnerable homeless groups, especially young vulnerable people. The use of out-of-borough placements is growing in a number of areas, with the consequent problems of people losing touch with local support networks and support services. The use of out-of-borough B&B accommodation exacerbates the shortage of locally-based temporary accommodation options.

**5.1.12** There is a need for improved communication between local authorities and RSLs to address the concern by authorities that RSLs are using exclusion

policies to limit the number of homeless people housed permanently.

**5.1.13** Another cause for concern is the use by local authorities of their exclusion policies to prevent homeless households being housed permanently within their own stock. While authorities can use (limited) exclusion policies for applicants applying via the housing register, they cannot legally limit their homelessness duty.

### Specific groups

**5.1.14** We assess below the main conclusions for specific groups of homeless applicants

**Persons eligible for advice and assistance:** In some areas there is a need to improve the quality and availability of advice offered by local authorities and through other agencies. Access out-of-hours is a particular problem in rural areas. There is a need for staff to be more inclusive in their attitudes to ethnic minority applicants.

**Households where a member is pregnant or with dependent children:** There is little evidence of problems in the assessments relating to this group. There are concerns regarding the nature and appropriateness of temporary accommodation, particularly where different client groups have to share accommodation, e.g. child protection issues.

**Applicants aged 16-17:** While some authorities have developed specific support and advice services for this group, and many work with voluntary agencies or social services to meet their needs, others need to recognise that vulnerable young people need assistance to complete the formalities of the homelessness process.

Authorities experience significant problems in arranging suitable temporary accommodation and finding appropriate permanent accommodation and support for this group.

**Care-leavers:** Local authorities reported on a range of protocols with social services, voluntary agencies and RSLs to support care leavers with their housing and support needs. While not always seamless, in most areas there is a shared intent that care-leavers should be housed other than through the mainstream homelessness process.

### **Persons vulnerable due to age, physical disability, mental health/learning**

**disability:** There is some evidence of a need to develop enhanced protocols with health authorities so that hospital discharges do not result in homelessness, and so that there is support for people once housed. There is also mention of a need for applicants to be accompanied by health care staff as a support measure during interviews, and concern at the high level of justification needed to accept persons as vulnerable on mental health grounds.

**Persons vulnerable due to domestic violence:** Authorities are generally aware of the paramount need to ensure the safety of the applicant. While the majority of authorities rely on the applicant's statement, a number of authorities seek supporting information from other agencies. This does not accord with the requirements of the legislation or the Code of Guidance. The positive role of Women's Aid is recognised throughout Wales.

**Ex-offenders:** There is clear evidence that a number of authorities are imposing arbitrary time limits in assessing

applications from ex-offenders. The Code of Guidance does not set any time limits. There are also problems with a lack of planned referrals from prisons prior to the release of offenders, ill-timed referrals from Probation and Youth Offending Teams, and in finding suitable temporary and permanent accommodation.

**Ex-armed services personnel:** There are similar arbitrary time restrictions on applications imposed by some local authorities.

**Other reasons for vulnerability:** All authorities stated that each case is assessed by them on its merits, as is required by law. This leaves room for differences between the approaches of authorities which may not be related to the needs and circumstances of individuals.

**Homeless intentionally:** All authorities stated that each case is assessed on its merits. There are similar issues of possible inconsistency of approach as with the other reasons for vulnerability category.

## 5.2 Overview of recommendations

**5.2.1** In this section, we set out our recommendations. These are split into recommendations for the Assembly, for the Assembly and its partners, for local authorities, and for other agencies. It is apparent from the review that improvements to the operation of the legislation and better outcomes for services users need all parties to be focused on working together to alleviate homelessness and ensuring that effective practice is fostered and resourced.

**5.2.2** During the review process, we provided the Assembly with a report on the issues for the Code of Guidance arising

from the review, and observations to feed into the redrafting of the national homelessness strategy. These are provided in Appendices 8 and 9.

**5.2.3** The recommendations below have been developed in the context of a number of current policy developments extending beyond homelessness. Firstly, proposals by WLGA/Solace which suggest that there should be five key plans under the overarching Community Plan, one of which would cover Health and Social Well-Being. Secondly, the revision of the Policy Agreement framework which aims to move towards outcome-focused indicators, and measurements which reflect the impact upon quality of life and the role that partnerships play in delivering real improvements for people.

## 5.3 Recommendations for the Welsh Assembly Government

**5.3.1** The Assembly should:

- Develop links between the National Homelessness Strategy and other Assembly strategies, e.g. Health, Social Care and Well-Being, Community and Children and Young People's Strategies, so that the prevention and management of homelessness has a higher profile and emphasis within the Assembly;
- Revise the Code of Guidance taking into account the findings of this review, as set out in Appendix 8;
- Revise the National Homelessness Strategy taking into account the findings of this review, as set out in Appendix 9;
- Review the ways in which housing, leaving home, and employment education can be built into the

secondary school curriculum and into the work of the youth service;

- Recognise that to provide a person-centred (rather than service-centred) approach for the most damaged and demanding people is likely to be expensive in terms of time and resources;
- Be aware of the longer-term implications of the lack of growth in the budget allocation for social housing during the period 2003-2006, particularly in areas where housing choice is limited. Social housing stock across Wales is declining with the number of homes built by housing associations being less than the number of council and housing association homes sold through Right to Buy and Right to Acquire;
- Allocate additional ring-fenced resources for homelessness, including the prevention of homelessness, so that the quality of services, including support services, and the nature of accommodation best meets the needs of the most socially excluded;
- Provide resources for extra temporary accommodation and encourage schemes such as RSL/private sector leasing schemes which minimise the use of B&B;
- Assess whether it is possible to extend the duration of funding provided to the not-for-profit (voluntary) sector so that the constraints of short-term funding do not impact adversely on services;
- Assess the benefits and difficulties associated with bond schemes and alternatives, such as cash payments to landlords and, subject to the

outcome, provide resources for bond-schemes and/or alternatives in every local authority area;

- Support local authority initiatives to encourage private sector landlords to provide accommodation for homeless households, recognising the limitations of the private sector to fulfil this function;
- Work with transfer associations to ensure that sufficient housing is available post-transfer for homeless households;
- Review the collection of monitoring statistics, explain to local authorities the relevance of the statistics collected, and issue further guidance to aid consistency of returns. The statistics should capture information on prevention of homelessness, perhaps by differentiating between enquiries, formal presentations and acceptances;
- Ensure that there is a consistent national homelessness acceptance/exclusion policy, not only with regard to local authority provision, but also with respect to other social housing providers;
- Take action with regard to recalcitrant authorities, prompted by statistical returns and the results of Audit Commission inspections, using available mechanisms for intervention under agreed protocols. This will include reissuing guidance about the role of members in lettings decision-making;
- Issue regular advice notes on legislative changes, desired outcomes, and best practice methods for achieving results to local authorities,

voluntary organisations, and other housing and support providers;

- Organise a regular forum involving Assembly officers and homelessness practitioners from throughout Wales so that matters of concern can be discussed, problems raised, and effective practice shared;
- Commission training of local authority staff, and others, on specific aspects of homelessness, such as working with women who have experienced domestic abuse, so that a consistent approach is taken by all authorities and relevant organisations in Wales;
- Improve the collection and dissemination of project evaluation and good practice information arising from Section 180 projects, through a database on the Assembly website and possibly a programme of seminars.

## 5.4 Recommendations for the Assembly and its partners

### 5.4.1 The Assembly should:

- Work with the WLGA to develop an appropriate target for the prevention of homelessness to include in the next round of Policy Agreements. Such a target could focus on the reduction of homelessness against the main reasons for homelessness in any one area. The definition of prevention could be that used by the ODPM: *'activities that enable a household to remain in their current home, where appropriate, or that provide options to enable a planned and timely move and help to sustain independent living'*;
- Review national performance indicators for homelessness to consider including, for example, a

measure of the level of prevention achieved. This could be the proportion of households presenting as homeless where the authority has intervened to prevent homelessness occurring. The Assembly should ensure that this falls within the scope of the Welsh Assembly Government's review of the performance measurement framework for Welsh local government;

- Work with Syniad and the WLGA to ensure that preventing and tackling homelessness features in the Excellence Wales Scheme's proposed mechanisms for identification and dissemination of proven good practice and innovative and emerging practice, and that homelessness is a recognised theme in its own right ;
- Work with the WLGA to develop a briefing incorporating the most important messages from the Code of Guidance and National Homelessness Strategy for members;
- With the involvement of the WLGA and the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations, develop protocols for mandatory single nominations of homeless people to RSLs, and incorporate reference to this and the need for RSLs to work to prevent and tackle homelessness in the Regulatory Code for Housing Associations;
- With the involvement of Probation, develop model protocols for inter-authority arrangements for Schedule 1 offenders;
- Facilitate directly, or through another agency, such as Shelter Cymru, the development of a Welsh website containing a database of good practice guidance and documentation.

This could predominantly take the form of links to existing sources of good practice;

- Continue to work with organisations assisting homeless people in monitoring and reporting on the delivery of local authority services.

## 5.5 Recommendations for local authorities

### Overall:

#### 5.5.1 Local authorities should:

- Implement the recommendations in Shelter Cymru’s publication **First Contact**, and follow the WLGA Routemap for Improvement contained in the report.

### Advice/prevention

#### 5.5.2 Local authorities should:

- As part of the development, implementation and review of their homelessness strategies:
  - o carry out audits of the provision of housing advice in their areas;
  - o set out action to fill gaps identified;
  - o ensure that the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the authority’s own race equality scheme are met;
  - o consider whether core housing management tasks, e.g. collecting rent, tenancy management, repairs, etc, contribute towards or work against the prevention of homelessness;
  - o develop an action plan for revising housing management policies and

procedures in order to aid the prevention of homelessness;

- o identify where linking floating support to repeat homeless might prevent further homelessness, and use the opportunity of Supporting People to put such support in place;

- o ensure that Supporting People Operational Planning mechanisms are used to address the support needs of homeless people;

- o develop approaches to working with the private sector, including the use of exceptional housing benefit payments, to maintain tenancies;

- o monitor the effects of exclusion policies and introductory tenancies on local homelessness.

- Ensure that housing advice provided meets the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002, i.e. is targeted to the specific needs of the individual following an assessment of those needs ;
- Support the provision of independent housing advice to assist with prevention, and provide assistance to organisations testing and challenging decisions made by the local authority on individual homelessness cases;
- Work towards the Community Legal Service Quality Mark for their housing advice service;
- Publicise housing advice services to all agencies, along with referral mechanisms to maximise prevention of homelessness;

- Develop a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of housing advice in preventing homelessness with recording systems that will enable cases where homelessness has been prevented to be identified;
- Publicise housing advice services;
- Take practical steps to ensure leaving home and housing options are covered as part of PSE in schools and/or discussed at youth clubs and facilities e.g. incorporating 'HouseMate' and other educational materials produced by Shelter Cymru as part of the PSE curriculum;
- Fully explore the role of mediation in preventing homelessness and support the development of local mediation services.

#### Presentation/assessment/decision making/referrals

##### 5.5.3 Local authorities should:

- Identify a training budget for homelessness staff and ensure they have adequate access to training, including on relevant case law;
- Consider inter-authority arrangements for the provision of out-of-hours services;
- Ensure that reception facilities for applicants are user-friendly, in appropriate locations for easy accessibility, and that all applicants are dealt with in a sensitive manner in and with appropriate privacy;
- Provide an easy-access guide to the legislation for partner agencies and the public;
- Follow the Code of Guidance when accepting applicants from ex-offenders and refrain from setting

arbitrary timescales for the acceptance of applicants;

- Ensure that elected members perform an appropriate role, e.g. adhering to agreed strategic principles and not being involved in individual cases;
- Ensure that all Section 184 letters include full and clear reasons for the decision that has been reached and are written in plain language.

#### Securing temporary/permanent accommodation/appropriate support and role of RSLs

##### 5.5.4 Local authorities should:

- Develop lettings plans to predict the amount of temporary and permanent accommodation needed and use this information to agree lettings targets with the housing department and RSLs;
- Through the homelessness strategy, identify shortfalls in temporary and permanent accommodation and ensure that an awareness of these deficiencies is fed through to the Local Housing Strategy and appropriate bidding mechanisms;
- Consider giving more choice to homeless households within the lettings policy;
- Work with local RSLs to develop adequate nomination arrangements and access to temporary and permanent accommodation for homeless people;
- Use bond schemes, or alternatives, to improve access to the private rented sector;
- Maximise the use of exceptional housing payments to enable access

to, and maintenance of, private rented sector tenancies;

- Inspect temporary accommodation and set minimum standards for its quality;
- Maintain contact with households placed out-of-borough and advise the external authority of the placement;
- Identify through their homelessness strategies whether, and how frequently, they are unable to discharge their statutory homelessness duties due to lack of suitable temporary and/or permanent accommodation;
- Be aware of the specific needs of minority ethnic groups, e.g. for the accommodation of larger families;
- Develop enhanced joint working with statutory and voluntary agencies, drawing upon best practice guidance.

### Funding/resources

#### 5.5.5 Local authorities should:

- Review resources and adjust to changing demand for services in order to prevent and tackle homelessness;
- Assess the staffing required to develop preventative services, including mediation, working with the private sector and voluntary agencies.

### Targets/statistics and monitoring

#### 5.5.6 Local authorities should:

- Be consistent in the recording of statistical information, both within the authority and with other authorities, by ensuring that definitions set out by the Assembly are adopted and adhered to.

## Corporate ownership and user involvement

### 5.5.7 Local authorities should:

- Work to raise the profile of homelessness across the authority, including with elected members;
- Ensure homelessness strategies feed into higher level plans and strategies, including the Local Housing Strategy and the Community Plan, so that there is corporate ownership of homelessness;
- Identify and make compatible agendas viewed as potentially conflicting, e.g. the re-housing of ex-offenders may be perceived as conflicting with the community safety policy;
- Develop and publicise, in conjunction with service users, clear service standards for homelessness.

## 5.6 Recommendations for other agencies

### 5.6.1 RSLs should:

- Co-operate with partner authorities in the development and delivery of their homelessness strategies;
- Consider secondments of staff between themselves and local authorities to aid mutual understanding and to enhance the role of RSLs as housing providers to homeless people;
- Set up a joint panel of local authority and RSL staff to review exclusion policies affecting homeless applicants;
- Agree lettings targets for re-housing homeless households with partner authorities;

- Develop and agree adequate nomination arrangements and access to temporary and permanent accommodation for homeless people.

#### 5.6.2 Prison/probation services should:

- Co-operate with partner authorities in the development and delivery of their homelessness strategies;
- Make housing advice available to all prisoners well in advance of their release;
- Train prison/probation staff in dealing with housing benefit and liaison with landlords. (This could be provided by partnership working as is the case in Wrexham);
- Develop protocols with homelessness departments and appropriate voluntary agencies to enable an effective and timely response to the housing needs of individuals being discharged from prison.

#### 5.6.3 Voluntary organisations should:

- Co-operate with partner authorities in the development and delivery of their homelessness strategies;
- Extend joint training initiatives with local authorities to update staff on legislation and guidance;
- Identify roles and responsibilities with respect to local authorities, drafting protocols to support actions and working relationships.

#### 5.6.4 Local health groups and relevant health organisations should:

- Co-operate with partner authorities in the development and delivery of their homelessness strategies;

- Develop protocols with local authorities, e.g. for hospital discharge, timescales for provision of medical information, etc.;
- Ensure adequate access to health services for those who are homeless and/or rough sleeping;

### 5.7 Topics for research

- Whether housing ex-offenders as a priority need category reduces the rate of re-offending;
- How and to what extent preventative work on homelessness saves public resources in the long run;
- Case studies to analyse the reasons for the wide variation in the rates of presentations and acceptances should further statistical analysis bear this out as an issue;
- Analysis of specific difficulties encountered when dealing with rural homelessness, particularly with regard to provision of accessible services.

### Chapter summary

**5.8** In this chapter we set out the recommendations for the Assembly, the Assembly and its partners, local authorities and other agencies. Topics for future research are also covered.

**5.9** We do not repeat the specific recommendations in this summary. Many relate to working relationships and practices within and between agencies. Some require additional resources and/or better use of existing resources. All the recommendations are intended to assist organisations prevent homelessness, or, where it cannot be prevented, to provide the most appropriate accommodation and support.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 2: Review of Homelessness questionnaire for local authorities and information requested

#### Information requested

Please send paper copies of:

- 1 Homelessness policies and procedures covering all stages from presentation to allocation of permanent accommodation
- 2 Homeless application form and any proformas used for assessment of applicants
- 3 Relevant policies and procedures in relation to ensuring safety of temporary accommodation e.g. environmental health inspections etc
- 4 Information/leaflets for homeless applicants or those who are potentially homeless – again covering information provided to individuals at all stages from pre-presentation to allocation of permanent accommodation, including decision letters
- 5 Service standards for the homelessness service (if available)
- 6 Reports of any service reviews (Best Value or other)
- 7 Reports to members about homelessness since April 2001
- 8 Results of any consultation with users/mystery shopping etc.
- 9 Homelessness Resource Directory (if available)
- 10 The CIPFA homelessness return from your authority for 2001/02

#### Questionnaire

- 1 Please provide details of the number of homelessness presentations and acceptances in the first six months of the financial year 2002/03

No. presentations \_\_\_\_\_

No. acceptances \_\_\_\_\_

- 2 Have there been changes in the type of household presenting as homeless/being referred to you as homeless by voluntary agencies over the past two years? If so, what have been the key changes?
- 3 Public Awareness: how do you ensure that people who may become homeless are aware of their rights and the homelessness services you provide?
- 4 Applications and Inquiries
  - 4a What standard information do you provide to applicants when they apply to you for homelessness assistance?
  - 4b What information do you provide to applicants when notifying them of your decision after completion of inquiries?
  - 4c Do you have any general problems with completion of inquiries within 33 working days? If yes, please elaborate.
  - 4d At what stage do you assess an applicants' long term housing and support needs?
  - 4e Do you consider applications from people threatened with homelessness before the date they leave prison or the armed services?
- 5 Homelessness
  - 5a What evidence do you require from an applicant to confirm that they have no right to continue to occupy their current accommodation ?
  - 5b Is your approach different if they are living with family or friends? If yes, please specify.
- 6 Priority Need
  - 6a What evidence do you require to confirm that an applicant is vulnerable due to: old age, mental illness/handicap, physical disability?
  - 6b Are there any other special reasons why you would normally assess the applicant to be vulnerable?
  - 6c What evidence do you normally require to assess a person to be vulnerable due to a risk of domestic violence?
  - 6d In what circumstances would you normally assess a person aged 18-20 to be vulnerable due to risk of sexual or financial exploitation? Have any people yet been so assessed by your authority?

- 6e What arrangements do you have in place with social services to ensure that Care Leavers do not become/remain homeless?
- 6f Do you have any time limit during which a person leaving prison or the armed services must apply to be considered to be in priority need?
- 6g Are there any circumstances in which you would regard someone as intentionally homeless on leaving prison or the armed services?

## 7 Temporary accommodation

- 7a Have there been changes in the type of accommodation that you are using for homeless households over the past two years? If so, what have been the key changes?
- 7b Does the type of accommodation vary between that which you offer to applicants under the s.188 interim duty and under the s.193 main duty?
- 7c What factors do you take into account in deciding the suitability of temporary accommodation?
- 7d What forms of temporary accommodation would normally be offered to: people aged 16-20, ex-prisoners, people fleeing domestic violence, people with mental health problems?
- 7e Would the temporary accommodation involve people in these groups sharing with people from the other groups in this list, or others with high support needs?
- 7f How many households did your authority place in out-of-borough temporary accommodation during 2001/02 and what were the main reasons for this?
- 7g What help did you give them to get to their accommodation
- 7h When applicants are placed in temporary accommodation, what information are they given on their rights with regard to its suitability?

## 8 Main duties

- 8a In what ways do you provide assistance to applicants who are threatened with homelessness intentionally and in priority need, and those who are unintentionally homeless not in priority need?
- 8b How is the provision of support needs addressed in the process of the allocation of temporary accommodation, or the resolution of the s.193 main duty?

- 8c Are there any constraints on meeting your homelessness duties through co-operation with RSLs ?
- 8d Are there any constraints on meeting your homelessness duties through use of private sector accommodation?
- 8e How are the preferences of homeless applicants taken into account in the offers they receive of temporary and permanent accommodation?
- 9 Local Connection: what criteria do you use to decide whether an applicant has a local connection?
- 10 Review and Appeals
  - 10a How and at what stage do you advise applicants of their rights to review and to appeal to the County Court?
  - 10b How many requests for review were received during 2001/02?
  - 10c How many decisions were overturned as a result of a review?
  - 10d How many appeals were there during 2001/02?
  - 10e How many decisions were overturned as a result of an appeal?
- 11 What problems does your authority have in implementing the law and the Code of Guidance?

As well as policy, procedural and staffing issues particular to the homelessness team, you may wish to refer to departmental or corporate issues or factors external to your organisation.

It would be helpful if your responses could make reference to the following areas of implementation, as applicable:

Presentation

Referral

Assessment

Decision-making

Notification

Liaison with landlords to secure accommodation, and

The choice and nature of accommodation offered to homeless people, including temporary accommodation

12 What would help your authority to overcome the problems listed above?  
In particular:

12a What more could your authority do?

12b What more could partner agencies do to assist you in discharging your homelessness duties?

12c What more could the Welsh Assembly Government do to assist you in discharging your homelessness duties?

Please say which three things you think would help the most.

i. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13 Please provide examples of good practice in homelessness exemplified by your authority. If this practice has been externally evaluated/assessed in any way, please state. (We want to share good practice.)

14 Does your authority have Investors in People for the department which includes homelessness?

Yes

No

15 Is there a dedicated training budget for staff working on homelessness?

Yes

No

16 Does your authority have any quality awards for homelessness e.g. Charter Mark, Community Legal Service Quality Mark? If yes, please describe and give date of the award

17 Any further comments



### Appendix 3: National organisations consulted

Association of Directors of Social Services (Wales)  
Audit Commission  
AWEMA  
Barnardos Cymru  
Big Issue Cymru  
Chartered Institute of Housing (Cymru)  
Children First Team (Welsh Assembly Government)  
Commission for Racial Equality  
Children First Team (Welsh Assembly Government)  
Commission for Racial Equality  
Defence Housing Executive  
Legal Services Commission  
NACAB Cymru/Wales  
Nacro Cymru  
National Probation Service  
NSPCC  
NSPCC  
Shelter Cymru  
The Prison Service  
Welsh Federation of Housing Associations  
Welsh Local Government Association  
Welsh Women's Aid  
Veterans Task Force  
Voices from Care  
Young Offenders Team Forum



## Appendix 4: Issues for discussion with national organisations

### Homelessness legislation:

How well is the legislation designed?

Views on the clarity of the legislation and guidance;

Significance of the March 2001 changes to homelessness legislation for their organisation;

The response of the organisation, or those represented by it, to the legislative changes, if any;

How well is the legislation is being implemented? (Response to include problems and issues with implementation, and the reasons for these.)

### Thoughts on how guidance could be improved:

Impact on client group;

Impact of homelessness legislation among client group;

Awareness of the rights of the relevant client group in the organisation, in the field and among the client group;

How well does the implementation of the legislation lead to successful housing outcomes? (people placed in the right housing etc.).

### General:

Particular areas of interest or concern;

Any observations on authorities whose homelessness activities exemplify good practice;

Examples of areas where there are tensions/difficulties;

Views on how practice could be improved in future;

Copies of any relevant reports/research, case studies and/or monitoring information.



**Appendix 5: Local organisations consulted**

LA	Organisations
Anglesey	Di-gartref Ynys Mon, South Anglesey CAB, Ynys Mon Womens Aid, GISDA
Blaenau Gwent	NCH,NASH, Probation, Social Services
Bridgend	Caer Las, Gofal, Wallich Clifford, Llamau, Barnardos, Bridgend Womens Aid, Social Services
Caerphilly	Caerphilly Youth Project (now Kids in Caerphilly Crazy), Gofal, Caerphilly Drug Aid, United Welsh HA, Caerphilly Social Services, Rhymney Valley Womens Aid, North Gwent Womens Aid, Probation
Cardiff	Cardiff Action for Single Homeless, Big Issue, Wallich Clifford, Dyfrig House, Llamau, Cardiff Prison, Somali Progressive Association, BAWSO, Tai Trothwy, Cardiff Womens Aid, Probation Service, Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust, Cardiff Social Services
Carmarthenshire	Llanelli Womens Aid, Lliw Valley Womens Aid, Carmarthenshire Womens Aid, Amman Valley Womens Aid, Camarthen Womens Aid, Tai Trothwy, CT Hafan, Local Health Trust, Social Services
Ceredigion	Cardigan Womens Aid, Abersytwyth Womens Aid, HYPE, Ceredigion Social Services, Aberystwyth CAB, Dyfed Powys Probation, West Wales Substance Misuse Service
Conwy	Conwy CAB, Probation, North Wales HA, Conwy Social Services, Conwy Youth Homeless Project (C.T. Clwyd), Shelter Conwy, Probation
Denbigh	Denbigh MIND, CAIS, NACRO, North East Wales NHS Trust, Cornerstone, Glyndwr Womens Aid, Rhyl and District Womens Aid, Probation
Flint	Delyn Womens Aid, Deeside Womens Aid, Clwyd Alyn HA, Flint Social Services, Probation
Gwynedd	GISDA, NACRO, CAIS, Sylvaen, Bangor CAB, Bangor and District Womens Aid, Gwynedd Womens Aid, Social Services
Merthyr Tydfil	Tarian Womens Aid, Merthyr MIND, Probation, Social Services
Monmouthshire	Stopover, Abergavenny CAB, Abergavenny MIND, YOT, Monmouthshire Womens Aid, Probation, NASH
Neath Port Talbot	DEWIS, YMCA, Caer Las, Neath Womens Aid, Port Talbot Womens Aid, Social Services
Newport	NASH, Caring Hands, Barnardos (Risca), Big Issue, Probation, Social Services

LA	Organisations
Pembrokeshire	PATH, Pembs MIND, Hafal(NSF), Haverfordwest Womens Aid, Social Services
Powys	Tai Trothwy, Radnorshire Womens Aid, Brecknock Womens Aid, Powys Drug and Alcohol, Probation, Powys Health Trust, Social Services
Rhondda Cynon Taff	Adref, Rhondda Womens Aid, Cwm Cynon Womens Aid, Pontypridd Womens Aid, NCH, YMCA Pontypridd, Cynon Taf HA, Social Services
Swansea	Swansea Drugs Project, Barnardos, Swansea Young Single Homeless Project (SYSHP), Swansea Prison, NACRO, Swansea Womens Aid, Social Services, Probation
Torfaen	NASH, Health Trust, Torfaen Womens Aid, Social Services, Torfaen Voluntary Alliance, Probation, Drug and Alcohol team
Vale of Glamorgan	Llamau, Tai Trothwy, Probation, Penarth Youth Service, Local Health Trust, Vale of Glamorgan Womens Aid
Wrexham	CAIS, WATCH, WAVO, Probation, YOT, Wrexham Womens Aid

## Appendix 6: Issues for discussion with local organisations

To enable us to understand more about your organisation please advise us of:

- the geographical coverage of the organisation;
- what client group(s) you work with;
- what services you provide;
- how many staff you have;
- where your funding comes from;
- any other key issues in relation to the organisation itself/context needed.

Specific questions:

- Is homelessness a problem for a significant number of your clients?
- Are your clients readily able to access good quality housing advice?
- Do you have an understanding of the local authority's duties to homeless people in your client group (including statutory guidance), and of the services they provide?
- How well do you feel the local authority meets those duties?
- Have you or your client group experienced any difficulties when they have approached the authority for help due to homelessness?
- Can you share any anonymised case experience to illustrate the above?
- Does the authority normally arrange housing for your homeless clients as soon as they approach the authority, and if so what type of housing are they typically offered?
- Does the local authority normally arrange access to long-term housing for your clients who have been homeless, and how well might it meet their needs?
- Do you have any referral or liaison arrangements with the authority to help your homeless clients?
- How are the support needs of your clients addressed after your homeless clients have approached the authority?
- Are you aware of any recent trends affecting the delivery of services to your clients who are homeless?

- Do you have any general comments on how effective the local authority homelessness service is in your area, and how it could be improved?
- Do you have any comments on how the Assembly or other organisations could help the authority to meet its duties to homeless people, or on any changes needed to the law and statutory guidance?

Please distinguish in your comments between what the Assembly, local authorities and partner agencies could do to improve local authority practice/response.

General:

Any other comments including particular areas of interest or concern;

Any observations on authorities whose homelessness activities exemplify good practice;

Any examples of areas where there are tensions/difficulties;

Views on how practice could be improved in future;

Copies of any relevant reports/research, case studies and/or monitoring information.

## Appendix 7: The project steering group

Anne Delaney	Audit Commission in Wales
Joy Kent	Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru
John Puzey	Shelter Cymru
Phil Roberts	Welsh Local Government Association
Mike Harmer	Welsh Assembly Government
Geoff Marlow	Welsh Assembly Government
Tamlyn Rabey	Welsh Assembly Government



## Appendix 8: Issues for the Code of Guidance arising from the review

(These comments were provided in note format to the Assembly during the review process, to make a contribution to the final version of the Code of Guidance.)

### Background

The issues were identified from:

- the responses to the local authority survey (21 out of 22 received at the time of the response);
- discussions held at the inquiry days held in January and February 2003 (all local authorities attended);
- the telephone survey of local organisations;
- discussions and meetings with, and responses from, national organisations.

### Overall issues

The Code should:

- emphasise that homelessness is a corporate and a housing-wide issue, not just the homelessness team's responsibility;
- offer clear guidance on how homelessness fits in with wider corporate agendas e.g. Crime and Disorder, Children Act, etc.;
- be more prescriptive, both to reduce variation between local authorities (which is significant), but also to stimulate better partnership between homelessness teams and other departments/teams/other agencies. There is currently too much emphasis on voluntary co-operation;
- be clearer about what local authorities must do;
- be written in even clearer language and ensure that any jargon is fully explained;
- stress the need to look at the causes of offending, substance misuse etc., and encourage authorities to recognise the part that accommodation and support play in preventing re-offending;
- provide clarity on appropriate roles for elected members, e.g. adhering to agreed strategic principles and not being involved in individual cases.

## Advice and prevention

The Code should:

- provide extra guidance on the provision and delivery of advice as a means of early intervention in preventing homelessness;
- emphasise the need for a culture of prevention. This needs to be promoted through other mechanisms as well, such as being reflected in other Assembly strategic documents.

## Publicity for the service

The Code should:

- emphasise the need for local authorities to provide leaflets for the public setting out how to access the service, how it works and what they can expect to happen.

## Presentation/assessment/decision making/referrals

The Code should:

- provide guidance on the use of interpreting services by front-line staff, how these should be paid for and by whom;
- issue guidance about the need for interviewing space to be private;
- provide clear guidance about whether people living in hostels are homeless or not;
- provide clearer guidance about the definition of local connection for prisoners, the timescale within which applications can be made for assistance, and further advice on the assessment of ex-offenders;
- advise whether homeless assessments by other organisations, e.g. Women's Aid, could be accepted by the homelessness team (subject to the Council making the statutory decision) rather than the individual/household having to repeat the details of their circumstances to the Council's homelessness team;
- provide a clearer definition of vulnerability, particularly in relation to mental health where there is a need to consider the impact, not just the diagnosis;
- be clearer about the level of proof required, e.g. concerning domestic abuse or mental health problems;

- state that abused women should not have to have been through a women's refuge, or stay in one for a specified period of time, before being assessed by the council;
- emphasise and publicise to voluntary organisations that there is a target timescale for making decisions on homelessness;
- consider introducing standard homelessness notification letters which would ensure that the legislation is applied consistently across the Country. These could also include a user-friendly guide to the legislation, explaining all the duties and obligations a local authority has to applicants depending on what decision is reached.

### Securing temporary/permanent accommodation/appropriate support and role of RSLs

The Code should:

- recognise what is happening "on the ground", i.e. that local authorities can't force private sector landlords to take homeless people and that landlords want money, not bonds;
- consider extending the scope of what is a suitable offer of permanent accommodation given the limited availability of accommodation;
- provide practical ways of achieving the more aspirational statements, e.g. housing of 16/17-year olds, advice on legal issues, what to do if someone will not accept support;
- consider mandatory quotas for the provision of both temporary and permanent accommodation by RSLs;
- provide guidance on what information it is appropriate to provide to RSLs with nominations so that they are able to house sensitively/appropriately;
- provide guidance to local authorities on how to negotiate with RSL exclusion policies on debt and anti-social behaviour. These policies mean that RSLs do not house many homeless nominations, whereas local authorities have no choice but to do so;
- provide guidance on what type of tenancy agreement is appropriate to discharge homeless duties;
- provide more general guidance on housing those accepted as homeless who have previous arrears or have lost a tenancy through anti-social behaviour;

- provide guidance on the practicalities of accommodating Schedule 1 offenders, risk assessment, and the role of partner organisations in carrying this out;
- provide guidance that it may be appropriate for local authorities to use their own stock to house homeless young people;
- provide guidance to cover the role of support in temporary accommodation to help prevent loss of temporary accommodation;
- provide advice on dealing with applicants who repeatedly lose temporary accommodation through their behaviour.

### Joint working

The Code should:

- provide even clearer guidance about the need for joint working between housing and social services staff giving practical examples and, possibly, model protocols;
- provide guidance on the need for local authorities to keep partner organisations informed about their services/procedures/changes etc.;
- reinforce to Children Services Departments their role under Section 17 of the Children Act which is not replaced by homelessness legislation;
- clarify and enforce guidance about involving the voluntary sector in planning;
- provide guidance on working with partner organisations.

### Disseminating and ensuring implementation of the Code

The Assembly should:

- maintain a database of managers of homelessness services and send information about changes in the law directly to them, as well as to the chief housing officer, to ensure timely dissemination;
- disseminate the Code of Guidance widely to a range of local authority departments and other agencies, providing a summary analysis of the relevance of the Code to the differing bodies;
- issue good practice notes on important matters;
- promote and resource training on the Code.

## Appendix 9: Issues for the National Homelessness Strategy arising from the review

(These comments were provided in note format to the Assembly during the review process, to make a contribution to the final version of the National Homelessness Strategy.)

### Background

The issues were identified from:

- the responses to the local authority survey (21 out of 22 received at the time of the response);
- discussions held at the inquiry days held in January and February 2003 (all local authorities attended);
- the telephone survey of local organisations (progress report provided);
- discussions and meetings with, and responses from, national organisations (progress report provided).

### Overall issues

As part of its National Homelessness Strategy, the Assembly should:

- seek to raise awareness of homelessness, what authorities should be doing to assess people presenting as homeless, and what is actually available to help them discharge their duties. Practical ways of raising awareness include internet information about national and local services, and joint training between organisations;
- disseminate good practice, perhaps via the internet ;
- identify methods of raising awareness of homelessness among Assembly officials and Members;
- organise joint events with and between local authorities, and attend local forums;
- organise a good practice network;
- provide clear direction to elected members and corporate chief officers on the Assembly's expectations for the development of homelessness services as a political priority and a corporate responsibility;
- increase resources for homelessness and provide ring-fenced funding for local authority homelessness services;
- provide funding opportunities for new services as needs are identified. These should not be tied to an unrealistic bid timetable, and should not require match funding for which provision cannot realistically be made;
- consider the provision of longer-term funding for voluntary organisations to enable them to plan more effectively;
- set out practical measures to ensure that all agencies fulfil their obligations - to rely on voluntary co-operation all the time is over optimistic;
- ensure that policy changes are adequately resourced and resources for new initiatives are ring-fenced;

- provide guidance on how exclusions should relate to homeless applicants;
- ensure that housing and employment education is built into secondary school core curriculum subjects and that suitable materials are produced for teachers;
- take a lead in changing public perceptions about supported housing schemes so that these schemes are seen to be acceptable within the community.

### Prevention

As part of its National Homelessness Strategy, the Assembly should:

- provide more funding/support for mediation and specialist advice services to prevent homelessness;
- signal a shift to prevention at a national level;
- provide grants to enable the provision of good quality services, e.g. achieving the CLS Quality Mark.

### Access to housing

As part of its National Homelessness Strategy, the Assembly should:

- increase the development of social housing;
- introduce incentives for private sector landlords;
- provide more resources to increase the amount and standard of temporary accommodation for specific client groups, e.g. ex-prisoners;
- provide encouragement to/pressure on authorities to ensure adequate funding for housing within the authorities' own resources;
- evaluate and explore new ways of providing and funding accommodation for groups of persons recently added to the priority need groupings;
- facilitate joint working arrangements between local authorities in the provision of temporary accommodation;
- further tighten the legislation in relation to private landlords regarding rent setting, and health and safety standards;
- use money from Right To Buy for new-build projects.

### Resettlement, support and access to services

As part of its National Homelessness Strategy, the Assembly should:

- increase funding/Social Housing Grant for supported housing options, including direct access/emergency provision, floating support and tenancy support.

### Delivering the strategy

The Assembly needs to take action on recalcitrant authorities and inappropriate involvement by elected members. Regular monitoring and audit of local authorities and RSLs is required.