

Welsh Assembly Government

A Study of Housing Professional
Education and Training in Wales





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1. Introduction

Background to the study

“Better Homes for People in Wales: A National Housing Strategy for Wales” contains the Welsh Assembly Government’s vision for housing in Wales:

“We want everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable, housing; to be able to choose where they live and decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families.”

High quality housing professional education and training is vital for all those involved in the management and development of social housing. “Better Homes” makes clear that the Assembly Government will continue to encourage social housing landlords, in close partnerships with higher education institutions and the Chartered Institute of Housing, to enable housing professionals to access the education and training they require. Clearly, professional education and training needs vary across Wales and are best assessed and met by housing organisations at local level. However, the Assembly Government plays a role in ensuring that housing organisations have easy access to housing training and development facilities of a high standard. Funding from the Social Housing Management Grant Programme is used to help carry out this role.

Currently the Assembly Government is grant funding Cardiff University to provide student bursaries for its Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)/MSc Housing course. The bursary covers 50% of full-time student costs with the remainder met by the

sponsor, normally the employer. The Assembly is committed to providing about £94,000 of funding for the 2002-03 and 2003-04 intakes of students. Following the completion of an initial assessment of the student bursary scheme in 2001, the Assembly Government concluded that a more wide-ranging assessment of housing professional education and training should be undertaken.

For this reason the Assembly Government commissioned ECOTEC Research and Consulting in Summer 2003 to undertake a review of housing professional education and training in Wales.

Aim and purpose of the review

The aim of the project was to evaluate housing professional education and training provided across Wales by specifically:

- Identifying local authorities and registered social landlords’ (RSLs) need for housing professional education and training;
- Assessing the provision of housing education and training in Wales;
- Identifying the extent to which the provision of services and Assembly funding is meeting the needs of social landlords;
- Assessing the opportunities and options to enable black and minority ethnic (BME) students and housing professionals to undertake housing education and training; and

- Recommending options for future Assembly Government funding.

As a part of this process the Assembly Government was concerned to specifically examine whether:

- The bursary scheme offers value for money and is adequately meeting the needs of social landlords outside South Wales; and
- Funding might also be used to support housing students and professionals undertaking courses at Undergraduate, Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher Education Diploma and other levels.

Methodology

The methodology specified by the Welsh Assembly Government is summarised below. This section sets out the reasoning behind the approach taken and some initial detail on the work performed. The remaining chapters in this report provide additional material regarding approach, results and conclusions drawn.

The methodology employed in the study was directed by a desire to understand what various courses are available to individuals wishing to pursue studies in housing in Wales and the extent to which the form and content of the study options are meeting the needs of the Welsh housing profession. The views of the institutions providing the various study options as experts in housing professional education in a Welsh context were considered to be highly relevant. The study also sought views from other interested parties, including: the All Wales Chief Housing Officers Panel (AWCHOP), the Chartered Institute for Housing (CIH

Cymru and the CIH in England), Shelter Cymru, Housing Potential and Peter Williams (the original architect of the Welsh Postgraduate Housing Courses at Cardiff and now Deputy Director of the Council of Mortgage Lenders). The study was also concerned to ensure that the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic groups were taken into account. Lastly, in view of the current Assembly Government support for postgraduate study at Cardiff University, the study took an in-depth look at the Bursary Scheme.

The study provides background material on Housing Professional Education in Wales and establishes the views of those involved, whether as providers or consumers. However, the study did not set out to assess the detailed demand for housing professional education and training, whether at postgraduate or other levels. This would need to be the subject of further detailed studies in the context of the developing strategy for Housing Professional Education and Training.

The various stages of the research and the rationale for each stage are:

Stage 1: In order to gain as comprehensive view as possible from social landlords, a postal questionnaire was sent out to all Local Authority Housing Departments and the major Housing Associations in Wales asking for background information on each of them. The questionnaire also asked questions on:

- Social landlord requirements for the professional education and training of their staff;
- The extent to which current courses in Wales address their needs; and

- Views on the importance of Welsh based research and postgraduate education.

Additional questions were asked about Cardiff University's Postgraduate courses and Black and Minority Ethnic issues.

Additional views of social landlords were obtained at stage 2 of the study through the All Wales Chief Housing Officers Panel.

Stage 2: The second stage involved the compilation of a comprehensive description of all housing professional education and training courses in Wales, as well as taking a wider look at postgraduate courses in the UK. This was to set Welsh provision in a wider context and provide a means of contrasting the availability of different study options in Wales and the UK.

Representatives of the following educational establishments were interviewed:

- University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC)
- North East Wales Institute Wrexham (NEWI)
- Cardiff University
- Coleg Gwent

The interviews followed a structured approach and had the objective of ascertaining the key issues facing housing education in Wales, including: structural changes, how the sector should be responding to a changing environment, recruitment to courses and the balance of housing educational provision in Wales.

Representatives of other relevant institutions were also consulted. These were:

- the All Wales Chief Housing Officers Panel (AWCHOP),
- the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH Cymru) and the CIH in England,
- Shelter Cymru,
- Housing Potential, and
- Peter Williams of the Council of Mortgage lenders (the original architect of the Welsh Postgraduate Housing Courses at Cardiff).

Again a structured approach was taken to eliciting their views on relevant developments in the housing profession, skills that are commonly lacking amongst housing professionals and how to better equip housing professionals with the skills they need.

Stage 3: The third stage of the report involved an in-depth assessment of the Cardiff University student bursary scheme. This part of the study draws on the evidence gathered in undertaking stages 1 and 2 as well as two focus groups of students. One group comprised current students attending the MSc Course at Cardiff, the other former students from this course. Stage 3 also involved detailed interviews and correspondence with Bob Smith, Senior Lecturer in Housing and Director of the then Centre for Housing Management and Development at Cardiff University. In view of its financial involvement, the Assembly Government specifically required this part of the study. It follows therefore that the research focuses more heavily on this course than on others in Wales. It should also be noted that other Welsh institutions have not been subject to the same level of scrutiny as Cardiff in compiling this report.

Stage 4: The fourth stage involved a specific assessment of opportunities and options for taking positive action to enable BME students and housing professionals to undertake housing professional education and training. This part of the study involved the convening of a focus group by Professor Richard Tomlins of De Montfort University. It also drew on the responses to specific questions in stage 1 as well as a desk review of policies, initiatives and research in the UK and Wales.

Stage 5: The last stage involved using the information gathered in stages 1 to 4 to draw out overall themes and identify policy options. Specifically the policy report:

- Highlights regional and national unmet housing professional education and training needs;
- Identifies landlord preferences for housing professional education and training; and
- Presents options for the future distribution of Assembly Government

funding for housing professional education and training.

Structure of this report

This remainder of this report presents the findings of the research as follows:

Section 2 presents the results of a postal survey conducted for the study.

Section 3 reviews the current provision in Wales and, where relevant, in the rest of the UK.

Section 4 reports on the findings of a series of stakeholder interviews.

Section 5 provides an in-depth review of the MSc/PGDip course in Housing at Cardiff.

Section 6 looks at the specific issue of housing education and training and BME groups.

Section 7 examines policy options.

2 Results of the Postal Survey

Postal survey

In order to gain as comprehensive a view as possible from social landlords, a postal questionnaire was sent out to all Local Authority Housing Departments and major Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Wales asking for background information on each of them. The questionnaire also asked questions designed to inform the study in respect of the following:

1. Social landlord requirements for the professional education and training of their staff;
2. The extent to which current courses in Wales address their requirements; and
3. Views on the importance of Wales based research and postgraduate education

Questions were also asked on Cardiff University's Postgraduate courses and regarding Black and Minority Ethnic issues.

Additional views of social landlords were obtained at stage 2 of the study through the All Wales Chief Housing Officers Panel.

The questionnaire was sent to the following 121 individuals in 22 local authorities and 36 RSLs:

- 21 Directors of Housing, Local Authorities
- 22 Training Managers, Local Authorities

- 32 Directors of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
- 46 Training Managers of RSLs

Methodology

The ECOTEC project team, including David Hucker, the former Housing Association Chief Executive, and Professor Richard Tomlins, an expert on the housing of Black and Minority Ethnic people, drafted a questionnaire. Amendments were made in consultation with the Assembly Government and the final version translated into Welsh. The questionnaire comprised 26 questions.

Response

Some 36 responses were received, with 24 from RSLs and twelve from local authorities. This represents a response rate of 29.8%. However, given that the questionnaire was in most cases sent to two individuals in the targeted organisations, and recipients were asked to only return one form per organisation, the real response rate is higher, at 62.1%. This figure is based on a total of 58 recipient organisations. By organisation, this breaks down into a response rate of 66.7% for RSLs and 54.5% for local authorities. The lack of response from some landlords that have previously enrolled significant numbers of students on Cardiff University's Housing MSc/PGDip course was disappointing (e.g. Torfaen CBC, Cardiff CC, Newport CC).

The table below lists the respondents to the survey.

Table 1 Respondents

Organisation	Role
<i>Local Authorities</i>	
Caerphilly County Borough Council	Principal Housing Officer
Denbighshire County Council	Head of Housing Services
Flintshire County Council	Director of Community and Housing
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	Co-ordinator – Housing Services
Powys County Council	Policy and Performance Officer
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Regional Housing Manager
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Housing Services Manager
City and County of Swansea	Principal Admin/Finance Officer
Conwy County Borough Council	Head of Housing
Pembrokeshire County Council	Customer Services Manager
Vale of Glamorgan Council	Operational Manager
Wrexham County Borough Council	Principal Assistant
<i>RSLs</i>	
Aelwyd HA	Director
Bro Myrddin HA	Housing Services Manager
Cadwyn HA	Personnel and Training Administrator
Cardiff Community HA	Personnel and Training Officer
Charter HA	Director of Housing Services
C.T. Cantref	Housing Director
C.T. Eryri	Human Resources Director
Eastern Valley Housing	Chief Executive
Glamorgan and Gwent HA	Chief Executive
Merthyr Tydfil HA	Chief Executive
Mid Wales HA	Chief Executive
Pennant Ltd	Human Resources Manager
Pontypridd and District HA	Chief Executive
Rhondda HA	Director of Housing Services
Swansea HA	Corporate Services Manager
Taff HA	Head of Tenant Services/Personnel Mgr
United Welsh HA	Head of Personnel and Administration
North Wales HA	Personnel Officer
Gwalia Housing Group	Staff Development Co-ordinator
Pembrokeshire HA	Director of Housing
Cynon Taf HA	Deputy Chief Executive
C.T.Hafan	Chief Executive
C.T.Clwyd	Head of Operations
Gwerin HA	Director of Operations

The table above shows that just under half of respondents were directors or chief executives, about a quarter were responsible for personnel/human resources, and the remaining quarter middle management. As such, the survey responses represent a very useful cross-section of the population targeted.

The geographic distribution of the responses was satisfactory with good coverage from all areas of the country.

Conclusions

The main points to emerge were:

Background

- Housing professionals working in respondent organisations have a wide range of qualifications, not just full CIH professional level.
- Two thirds of respondent organisations employ fewer than 100 people.
- Nearly half have no BME staff.

Training requirements

- Respondents do not expect significant future growth in the demand for housing professionals.
- 80% of the sample recruit three or fewer housing professionals per year.
- Respondents have little experience of BME tenant issues.

Views on the provision of training

- Provision of housing professional education and training in Wales is considered adequate.
- However, there is a perceived need to supplement housing professional training in financial management, business planning and IT over and above what is provided via formal housing professional qualifications.

- Respondents based in the North were concerned that professionals in the South have more ready access to housing education provision than those in the North.

Views on the need for Welsh based research and postgraduate education

- The need for research capability in Wales is endorsed, although there is some criticism of its current relevance, visibility and lack of impact.
- There is strong support for housing studies at postgraduate level in Wales.

Other and more detailed results are summarised below:

Provision of education and training

- 39% of respondents agreed that provision in Wales is adequate, against 17% who did not. The remaining 44% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- Cardiff University (34%) and UWIC(25%) have the largest share of staff sent by respondents to obtain qualifications. NEWI in Wrexham has 15%. Only one was training outside Wales and 15% of staff training by respondent organisations is via distance learning.
- From comments, most respondents are happy with their local provision, although there are some concerns about a Cardiff concentration.
- Organisations in North and Mid-Wales, and in rural areas, tend to have greater difficulty accessing training and education and therefore rely more on alternatives, such as distance learning and training in England.
- No significant criticism of the quality of courses is apparent.

- Ten of the 36 respondents had recruited from the Cardiff MSc/PGDip course, of these, there was a general agreement that the quality of housing management in their organisation had increased as a result.

Supplementary training needs

- Three areas were assessed as requiring supplementary training: business planning, financial management and IT.
- 94% of respondents are providing comprehensive Continuing Professional Development (CPD), through mentoring, in-house courses, day release, Investors in People and the use of agreed training development plans.

Sector growth

- A significant number of respondents felt that a housing professional qualification is not significantly relevant to recruitment.
- Recruitment levels obviously vary with the size of organisation, but in general most organisations (80% of the sample) recruit three or fewer housing professionals per year.
- More respondents think that the numbers of housing graduates available for recruitment are insufficient than respondents who do not think so (47% versus 19%).
- The number of students sponsored by respondents at the time of the survey was 120. These are mostly (81%) sponsored to undertake a postgraduate, undergraduate and HNC/HND course.
- Most respondents (64%) think that the numbers of students they sponsor will

not change, with slightly more thinking this will increase rather than decrease (19% versus 17%). Reasons given for this included costs and tight finances, lack of need, and lack of time to release staff.

- Housing organisations in North and Mid-Wales and in rural areas have greater difficulty recruiting housing professionals than those in the South.

The Welsh context

- There is strong support for maintaining a dedicated Welsh capability in both research (80%) and postgraduate education (86%).
- There is very little movement of housing professionals out of Wales. Information provided by organisations about where individuals leaving go to shows that 69% of movers are staying in the same role in Wales and 8% going to housing jobs elsewhere in the UK.
- A significant number of respondents argued strongly for the need for a specifically Welsh content in courses, based on the differences from England in terms of the policy context and the issues faced.

Black and Minority Ethnic issues

- Numbers of BME staff in respondent organisations are generally low. This is to be expected given a Welsh BME population of 2.1%
- Very few respondents felt they had enough experience of BME employees and BME tenants to comment.

3 Review of Courses in Wales and UK Postgraduate Courses

Introduction

The second stage of the study involved the compilation of a comprehensive description of all housing professional education and training courses in Wales as well as taking a wider look at postgraduate courses in the UK. This was to set Welsh provision in a wider context and provide a means of contrasting the availability of different study options in Wales and the UK. This section starts with a consideration of whether housing is generally regarded by practitioners and others as a *Profession* – a key issue in terms of policy considerations – and goes on to set out the various educational opportunities available to housing professionals in Wales. It then goes on to look at postgraduate courses in the rest of the UK, the purpose of which was to assist in the review of the Cardiff Bursary Scheme.

This desk-based research was supplemented by interviews with the educational institutions that run the courses in Wales as well as other organisations with an interest in Welsh housing professional education and training. The rationale for undertaking these interviews, the questions asked and the findings are set out in Section 4.

Professional framework

An ever-present issue for this study was the debate about the professional status of housing as a career and its poor image, leading to a lack of interest in it by young people. When comparisons are made with professions such as social work, environmental health and teaching for example, many come to the conclusion,

not unreasonably, that housing is “not in the same league”. This failure to professionalise (that is mandatory professional membership for all housing officers) and to undertake compulsory CPD is lamented by some while others consider it to be neither practical nor desirable. There are, of course, many shades of opinion in between.

The role of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) was reviewed to establish the professional framework in the housing field. The CIH is described on the organisation’s own website as:

“...the professional body for people working in housing. Our purpose is to maximise the contribution that housing professionals make to the well being of communities”.

There is a wide range of housing qualifications that can lead to membership of the CIH as a Practitioner or Corporate Member. The three main strands are:

- Achieving the CIH Professional Qualification (PQ) – comprising an appropriate academic qualification and the “APEX” practical element.
- CIH Certificates in Housing.
- National Vocational Qualifications in Housing.

Senior housing professionals can achieve full CIH corporate membership via the Direct Final fast-track route. The Associate Grade of membership is available to facilitate entry, via a professional interview,

to the CIH for people who are professionally qualified in another field.

CIH also provides accreditation to housing courses in the UK. It is a positive feature in Wales that all undergraduate courses and the postgraduate course at Cardiff University are CIH-accredited. In the rest of the UK, by contrast, not all postgraduate courses are accredited by CIH, (for example the Housing Sector MBA at Birmingham University). This course is supported by the Housing Corporation and was developed as a result of a study which reviewed existing management development activities in the sector and market tested the design of the proposed new programme. The study found that there was growing recognition of the need for generic management skills in a sector where technical and professional skills have tended to be given greater importance in promotion routes to senior management. It identified the value placed by the sector on developing externally accredited training and the development of transferable management skills. No mention is made of CIH in the course literature.

The CIH provides a range of services to the housing sector in general and to its membership in particular. The organisation's *raison d'être* is clearly to promote and facilitate the professionalisation of the housing sector. It works towards this goal by various means. The most important ones, for the purposes of this study, are:

- Offering a route for those working in the housing sector to achieve CIH membership.
- Providing a series of CIH Housing Certificates.

- Accrediting undergraduate and postgraduate courses.
- Providing a distance learning service.
- Policy and strategy, for example lobbying Government.
- Providing information (magazine, conferences etc.) and training.

However, there are several features of housing professional education and training that need to be set against these, undeniably useful, services:

- Organisations recruiting housing professionals very seldom specify CIH membership as a prerequisite.
- Membership penetration is low when compared with other professions.
- While all housing courses in Wales are CIH accredited, a significant number in the rest of the UK are not.
- There would therefore appear to be no intrinsic link between the quality and value of housing courses and CIH accreditation.
- Many housing professionals do not aspire to CIH membership.
- Indeed, for a significant number of housing professionals (eg. those involved with buildings aspects), there is a more attractive route to professional qualification in the RICS procedures.

Courses in Wales

Housing Courses in Wales are offered at Undergraduate level by UWIC and NEWI, and at Postgraduate level by Cardiff

University. Distance learning is available from Coleg Gwent. Other distance learning courses are available from English based providers such as CIH Distance Learning Centre and Unison Open College London. The tables below provide more detail of available courses.

Undergraduate courses

There are two institution-based providers of undergraduate courses and two distance learning providers. All courses are validated by the CIH. Degree courses offered are:

North East Wales Institute of Higher Education Wrexham (NEWI)

BTEC Higher National Certificate in Housing Studies (p/t)	PQ Stage 1
BSc/BSc (Hons) in Housing (p/t)	Top-up from Diploma
BSc (Hons) in Housing (f/t)	PQ Stage 1 and 2

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC)

BTEC Higher National Certificate in Housing Studies (p/t)	PQ Stage 1
UWIC Diploma in Higher Education in Housing Studies/ Housing Studies: Professional Diploma (p/t)	PQ Stage 2
BSc/BSc (Hons) Housing Studies (p/t)	PQ Stage 1 and 2
BSc (Hons) Housing Studies (f/t)	PQ Stage 1 and 2

As can be seen from the above tables, the two institutions offer the same suite of courses. The exception is the Diploma in Higher Education which NEWI has discontinued. UWIC is developing a new degree course in Housing and Support, to be available from September 2004. The new course will offer a high degree of flexibility so that practitioners can enter and exit the programme to achieve the level of award that best meets their needs. The following awards will be offered through full and part time options:

- HNC Housing and Support
- Certificate of Higher Education
- Diploma of Higher Education
- BSc and BSc (Hons.) Housing and Support

There will be a fast track route for managers and senior practitioners which

will allow completion of the Diploma in two years, via part time study.

A comparison of the courses on offer shows many similarities and few differences. For example, the BSc Housing courses at NEWI and UWIC both comprise three levels and there appear to be only minor differences in the subjects studied. For example, Level 1 at NEWI comprises a general introduction, followed by a wide range of subjects at Level 2, ending with a focus on three specific fields in Level 3 – public policy and strategy, renewal and regeneration and project management – and a final year dissertation. At UWIC the first two levels both address a wide range of topics, with two projects during Level 2. Level 3 is reserved for a final year dissertation. Fees are very similar at about £2,400 for a three-year full time course. The courses are however, located in different departments: the NEWI course in the Built Environment Department and the UWIC one in the Health and Social

Sciences School of Interprofessional Studies. By and large this does not appear to have any impact in terms of the content of the courses offered. The possible exception is the inclusion of a construction module in the NEWI course and the emphasis on regeneration and renewal and project management in the final year.

Similarly, HNC courses do not differ significantly in content.

Postgraduate courses

Only one postgraduate housing course is available at an institution in Wales, as follows:

Cardiff University of Wales

Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Housing (p/t)	PQ Stage 2. 2 year course (with work placement)
Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Housing (f/t)	PQ Stage 2. 2 year course (with work placement)
Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Housing (f/t)	PQ Stage 2. 1 year course

A comparison of the content of the BSc Housing Studies courses offered at NEWI

and UWIC with the content of the MSc course is provided in the table below.

Cardiff Msc	NEWI BSc	UWIC BSc
<p>Core modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing and policy strategy - Management of Housing Organisations - Housing Practice - Research and Survey Methods <p>Specialist options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public sector Housing Management - Diversity and Equality - Research and Policy - Planning and Development of Housing - Housing and Urban Regeneration 	<p>Level 1 – General introduction with Economics, Politics, Housing, Construction, Law and Information Technology.</p> <p>Level 2 – Poverty and Social Exclusion, Equal Opportunities, Community/Tenant Participation, Housing Development, Housing Management, Housing Law and Housing Research. There will also be opportunities to study Geographical Information Systems and Computer Aided Design.</p> <p>Level 3 –Three key areas: Public Policy and Strategic Working, Renewal and Regeneration and Project Management. In addition you will be able to pursue individual interests through a range of module options and by completing a dissertation.</p>	<p>Level 1 - Social housing policy, Housing services & the law, Economics of the housing market, Resourcing Britain's housing, Development and planning, Housing organisations, Research skills, Professional skills, Challenges for housing practice.</p> <p>Level 2 - Housing management, Housing finance, Housing development & design, Housing law, Research skills, Inter-professional studies, Regeneration.</p> <p>Level 3 - Policy development, Housing strategies for the future, Homelessness, Housing & community care, Tenant participation & building communities, Project management, Equality studies, Final year dissertation.</p>

Distance learning

The following undergraduate distance learning courses are also available in Wales:

Chartered Institute of Housing Distance Learning Centre	
BTEC Higher National Certificate in Housing Studies (p/t)	PQ Stage 1
CIH Professional Diploma in Housing Studies (p/t)	PQ Stage 2
UNISON Open College, London	
Professional Diploma in Housing (p/t)	PQ Stage 2

Note that the regional distance learning centre for Wales (Coleg Gwent) does not offer the CIH courses above, but rather focuses on the CIH National Certificate in Housing qualification (see Section 3.3.4). Students who are based in Wales and wish to study for any of the above courses must do so via attachment to a centre outside Wales.

CIH Distance Learning

Course materials and assignments are sent to students' home address. Students are linked to a Regional Centre (e.g. Coleg Gwent) which appoints a tutor to provide support over the telephone and by e-mail. There are two intakes a year, in March and September. Induction days are held during April and October. New students are invited to attend a one day induction day, run by the regional centre. Attendance at the induction day is a compulsory part of the course.

The National and Higher Certificate course and the Graduate Conversion Course can be completed in 12 months. The HNC and Professional Diploma courses are two year courses. CIH estimates that students need to spend approximately 10 hours per week for around 30 weeks. Those students not working in housing need to arrange a placement with a housing organisation.

Data provided by the CIH shows that some 50 CIH members registered with the Welsh

Branch are currently studying via CIH distance learning courses, with 24 attached to the Wales regional centre at Coleg Gwent and the remainder at:

- Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies (6)
- Cornwall College (2)
- Salford College (2)
- College of North East London (11)
- De Montfort University (5)

The most popular CIH distance learning courses run via Coleg Gwent are the National Certificates in Supported Housing (46% of students) and Housing Management and Maintenance (33%). The Welsh centre does not offer the full range of distance learning courses, but only the Level 3 Certificate in Housing (formerly the National Certificates in Housing - see Section 3.4.1). Hence the numbers attached to centres outside Wales. Those studying outside Wales are taking the HNC, Graduate conversion and Professional Diploma Courses.

UNISON Open College

UNISON Open College is an accredited distance learning college, which means all course materials, tuition and student advice services are independently assessed by the Open and Distance Learning Quality

Council to ensure they meet the highest standards of educational provision. The College is also a member of NIACE (the National Organisation for Adult Learning) and EADL (the European Association for Distance Learning). UNISON provides its own courses, but also offers courses from outside providers, at a discount for UNISON members.

UNISON Open College courses are delivered by a number of open, distance and flexible learning systems. These are designed to be as 'open' as possible in terms of:

- Accessibility;
- Where it is possible, entry qualifications have been eliminated;
- Open method of learning (for example, students do not need to have their work assessed or take an examination if they do not wish to);
- Accreditation;
- There are no fixed intake deadlines.

Vocational and technical training

The **CIH Level 2 Certificate** (formerly known as the Foundation Certificate in Housing) is an introductory qualification for those new to housing, achievable through a short period of study. As a Level 2 award, this certificate is equivalent to GCSE or Scottish Standard Grades. It is suitable for anyone wishing to gain an insight into housing activities, for example tenants and other volunteers, trainees on Government-funded programmes or new employees. The CIH may be able to accredit an organisation's induction programme so that the qualification can be achieved in the workplace.

The **CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing** (formerly known as the National Certificate in Housing) is a qualification for anyone active in housing, whether as a paid worker, tenant or volunteer. Achievement of the CIH Level 3 Certificate entitles the holder to Practitioner Membership of the CIH and to use the designatory letters Cert. CIH.

The CIH Level 3 Certificate can be achieved in a year, usually at a local college or through distance learning. However, the CIH may be able to accredit an organisation's in-house training programme so that the qualification can be achieved in the workplace. As a Level 3 award, this certificate is equivalent to A Level or Scottish Higher/Higher Still standard. To gain the award, all students study six Core Units and six Pathway Units from one of the following programmes.

- Core Units
- Supported Housing
- Tenant Participation
- Housing Management and Maintenance
- Housing Aid and Advice
- Benefits
- Travellers Site Management
- Sustainable Communities
- Caretaking and Concierge Services
- Call and Control Centre Operators

The **CIH Level 4 Diploma in Housing** has within it three Level 4 Certificates with specialist pathways in Supported and

Sheltered Housing, Student Accommodation Management, and Housing. Students may progress to the second year of study to achieve the Level 4 Diploma, equivalent to the HNC in Housing.

The CIH also has a Level 4 Certificate in Governance designed specially for those who are Board Members.

The following CIH Certificate courses are available at Welsh institutions (both in the Cardiff area, with none in North and Mid Wales):

Barry College

Level 2 Certificate

Level 3 National Certificate in Housing (Supported Housing)

Level 4 Certificate in Managed, Supported and Sheltered Housing

Pontypridd Technical College

Level 2 Certificate

Level 3 National Certificate in Housing (Management and Maintenance)

The **NVQ/SVQ** qualification for the Housing Sector offers a wide range of optional units. The pre-existing NVQ/SVQ in Special Needs Housing has been incorporated into it. These are nationally recognised qualifications based on standards of competence in the workplace. In Housing, they are offered at Levels 2, 3 and 4. Level 4 in Housing is recognised by the CIH as meeting the requirements of the first stage of its Professional Qualification.

For Housing, the awarding body is City and Guilds. At present only two centres are

accredited by City and Guilds to provide the NVQ housing certificates in Wales, as follows:

- Bridgend CBC (no activity so far, although only set up relatively recently and expected to start soon)
- Gwent Care Consortium (private sector training provider)

It would appear that activity in Wales in terms of these qualifications is at a very low level.

Courses outside Wales

Introduction

As described in the previous section, the MSc/PGDip Course at Cardiff University is the only postgraduate housing degree course offered by a Welsh institution. Section 3.3 has examined the undergraduate courses at UWIC and NEWI, also in Wales. This section examines the postgraduate degree at Cardiff in the context of the other postgraduate housing degree courses offered in other parts of the UK so as to:

- Compare course characteristics (content, entrance criteria, practical/theoretical balance for example);
- Examine the relative role of the CIH in accrediting courses;
- Compare quality, where possible;
- Examine relationships with research activities and undergraduate courses;
- Compare fees and funding arrangements.

Postgraduate housing courses available

The table below lists all postgraduate housing courses available in the UK. There

are some 32 courses (16 are accredited by CIH), offered by 20 institutions.

Table 3 Summary of postgraduate housing courses in the UK

Institution	Course	CIH Accredited
De Montfort University	MSc Housing	✓
University of Glasgow	MPhil Housing Studies	✓
University of Westminster	MA Housing Law and Policy	
	MA Housing Practice	✓
University of Central England	MA Housing	✓
	MA Housing Studies	
Anglia Polytechnic University	MSc Housing	✓
University of Birmingham	MSc Housing Research and Policy	
	Public Service MBA for the Housing Sector	
Cardiff University	MSc Housing	✓
University of Greenwich	MSc Housing	
Heriot-Watt University	MSc European Planning and Housing	✓
	MSc Housing	
	MSc International Housing Development	
Liverpool John Moores	PG Diploma/MSc Housing Studies	
Leeds Metropolitan University	MA Professional Housing Studies	✓
University of Lincoln	MA Housing Innovation	
London School of Economics	MSc Housing	✓
	MSc Housing (International)	
Middlesex University	MSc Housing	✓
	MSc Organising High Quality Staff Housing	
Northumbria University	MA Housing Policy and Management	✓
	MA Urban Regeneration and Housing	
University of Salford	MSc Housing (Practice)	✓
Sheffield Hallam University	MA Housing Policy and Practice	✓
	MA Housing Policy and Practice (by thesis)	
South Bank University	MA Housing Studies	✓
University of Stirling	MSc Housing Studies	✓
University College London	MSc Housing	
	MSc International Housing Studies	
University of Ulster	MSc Housing	✓
University of the West of England	MA Housing and Community Renewal	
	MA Housing Studies	✓

Comparison of postgraduate courses

The table below summarises the main features of five postgraduate courses that might be considered to be fulfilling the

same role as the Cardiff MSc course. Several of the non-Wales courses have been selected for their proximity to North and Mid-Wales.

Table 4 Summary comparison of selected postgraduate housing courses

	Cardiff University	Salford University	John Moores Liverpool	Birmingham University
Degree	PG Diploma/ MSc Housing	PG Diploma/ MSc Housing (Practice)	PG Diploma/ MSc Housing Studies	MSc Housing Research and Policy
Placement	12 months with the two year FT option	One-year paid placement with employer in Year 2 of full time course	None	None
Entry requirements	A degree or two years housing experience (for those over 25)	CIH Foundation Course or equivalent, or first degree in related discipline, or Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)/ Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)	Degree or equivalent	Good Honours degree or equivalent. Can transfer from Diploma course to MSc.
Fees	£2,870 FT £1,435 PT (2002/03)	£2,870 FT £1,200 PT	Approx £2,800	Full time £2,870.
Funding arrangements	Assembly Government bursary meets 50% of cost, remainder usually met by sponsoring housing organisation (for full-time study only)	Three employer sponsored places available and this route is being developed.	Self Funded	Self funded
Department	Centre for City and Regional Planning	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Environment	School of the Built Environment	Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
CIH validated	Yes	Yes	No	No

Table 4 Summary comparison of selected postgraduate housing courses (continued)

	Glasgow University	Sheffield Hallam University	Birmingham UCE	University West Of England (Bristol)
Degree	PG Certificate/ Diploma/MPhil Housing Studies	PG Diploma/ MA Housing Policy and Practice	MA /PG Dipl Housing	MA /PG Housing and community renewal
Placement	None	None	No	No
Entry requirements	University degree or HNC, or five years experience. Diploma students HNC or CIH Foundation course, or NVQ/SVQ Level 4	Related first degree or relevant professional qualification. Commitment to a career in housing is important	Related first degree. Housing experience preferred.	Related first degree. Housing experience preferred.
Fees	Full time £2,810 £1,535 PT	Full time £2,360 £1,180 PT	£2,940 FT £1,200 PT	£3,960 FT £1,320 PT
Funding arrangements	Self funded	Self funded	Self funded	Self funded
Department	Department of Urban Studies	School of Environment and Development	Faculty of Built Environment	Faculty of Built Environment
CIH validated	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

It can be seen from the above comparison that courses appear to fall into two categories – those with placements and those without. Fees are generally comparable, as are entry criteria. The issue of placements may relate to the perception on the part of some of the institutions of an MSc/MA course as an “academic” qualification, without the necessity of including an extended practical element within the course. The reason for including a work placement, as in the Cardiff two year full time course, is that it provides the opportunity to apply what has been learned and offers a balance between the

theoretical and the practical. Of the three options offered by Cardiff, the one-year full time course (without placement) is the most directly comparable to courses elsewhere.

It is also clear that funding arrangements outside Wales are considerably more uncertain following the withdrawal of ESRC studentships for postgraduate housing courses (even though bursaries are available to support full time study at Heriot Watt and Stirling in Scotland). Interestingly, Salford University may be pointing to the way ahead in its emphasis

on securing more employer funded places. It should also be noted that in the field of Planning, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has recently decided to re-introduce bursaries in the light of difficulties experienced in attracting professionals.

The Quality of courses

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) assesses the quality of teaching and learning in UK Higher Education institutions. Established in 1997, the QAA is an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of Higher Education and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies.

For the Welsh institutions, Cardiff University, UWIC and NEWI, institutional reviews have been carried out for Cardiff and UWIC in October 2002. None appears to have been carried out for NEWI and there has been no Subject Review for Housing. The Institutional Reviews do not include any specific information on specific courses.

Subject reviews for housing courses at the following institutions are available: De Montfort University, Southampton Institute, Salford University, Liverpool John Moores University, University of Northumbria, University of Ulster and Anglia Polytechnic University. These reviews encompass housing where it falls under the remit of Town and Country Planning Departments.

Quality Assessments were carried out by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) in 1993/94 and 1996/97, with responsibility passing to QAA in 1997/98. The information contained in these HEFCW reports is limited and its age clearly makes it of little interest to this study. There is therefore little or no information available with respect to quality assessments of teaching of housing courses in Wales.

The Quality of Research

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) provides an assessment of the quality of research undertaken by higher and further education institutions within the UK. The RAE produces ratings for each institution, which are then used to influence the allocation of over £1 billion of research funding each year, with those institutions producing research of higher levels receiving larger grants.

The RAE is completed periodically, with the last assessment having been undertaken in 2001. All research assessed for the RAE is allocated into one of 68 'units of assessment' which reflect broad subject areas and were identified in consultation with the higher education sector. Each public-funded higher and further education institution is invited to submit research for the assessment, with each able to submit to as many units of assessment as they wish. The table below sets out the ratings for those institutions offering postgraduate courses on housing which submitted research for the RAE assessment.

Table 5 Summary RAE results

Institution	2001 Rating	Proportion of Research Active Staff Selected	Category A and A* Research Active Staff (FTE)
Anglia Polytechnic University*	2	B	9.1
University of Central England, Birmingham*	3b	E	6.3
Leeds Metropolitan University*	3a	B	13.0
Liverpool John Moores University	3a	A**	3.0
Oxford Brookes University*	4	C	26.0
Sheffield Hallam University*	4	D	14.3
South Bank University*	4	D	6.0
University of West of England, Bristol*	3a	B	23.5
University of Westminster*	3a	D	17.5
University of Glasgow*	5	A	21.5
Heriot Watt University*	3a	B	4.0
Cardiff University*	5*	A	33.2

Notes * Institutions providing CIH accredited Masters course(s). ** An A grade indicates 95-100% of staff. submitted

Source: RAE Results, 2001, Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK.

The rating for Cardiff University, above, is for the Department of City and Regional Planning, of which Housing is part. Note CPLAN at Cardiff University's award has

recently been upgraded to 6*. This reflects the award of the highest research ranking in consecutive Research Assessment Exercises.

4 Stakeholder Views and Perspectives

Rationale and methodology

Section 3 set out details of all housing professional education and training courses in Wales as well as taking a wider look at postgraduate courses in the UK. This was to set Welsh provision in a wider context and provide a means of contrasting the availability of different study options in Wales and the UK.

In order to supplement this and obtain the views of Welsh housing educational establishments, representatives of the following institutions were interviewed:

- University of Wales Institute Cardiff: Jan Huyton and Sue Finch
- North East Wales Institute, Wrexham: Jane Wafer
- Cardiff University: Dr Bob Smith
- Coleg Gwent: Roger Powell

The interviews followed a structured approach, the objective being to ascertain the key issues facing housing education in Wales including: structural changes, how the sector should be responding to a changing environment, recruitment to courses and the balance of housing educational provision in Wales.

Other relevant institutions were also consulted in order to take in the perspectives of those who have a direct interest in Welsh housing education. These were:

- AWCHOP: Raymond Smith, Secretary
- Shelter Cymru: Michelle Wales

- Housing Potential: Christina Heard
- CIH Cymru: Joy Kent and Keith Edwards
- CIH: David Butler (CEO) and Martin Winn (Director of Education and Training)
- Peter Williams of the Council of Mortgage lenders (the original architect of the Welsh Post Graduate Housing Courses at Cardiff).

Again a structured approach was taken to eliciting their views on relevant developments in the housing profession, skills that are commonly lacking amongst housing professionals and how to better equip housing professionals with the skills they need.

Summary of results

The views provided by the education providers are summarised below, followed by the view of the other bodies consulted:

Providers of housing professional education and training

The various institutions have different roles and, perhaps not surprisingly, have, in respect of certain matters, differences of view. The analysis below sets out firstly issues on which the education providers are agreed. This is followed by a consideration of issues in respect of which there are divergent opinions.

The representatives of these organisations made the following key comments in respect of which there was broad agreement:

Whilst learning about ‘bricks and mortar’ is an important part of any academic syllabus, the professional educators consider housing education to be essentially about the needs of people and communities.

Individuals move into careers in housing from a number of different backgrounds and consequently have different training needs. These vary according to the professional expertise and experience that they have already acquired; their educational attainments and capability; the form of studying that is most appropriate to them (full time, part time, distance learning etc); and their career ambitions. Consequently education providers consider it to be incumbent on them to be flexible in providing courses in order to make them as accessible as possible. They also maintain an on-going review of developments in the field of housing to ensure that existing courses continue to be relevant and, where appropriate, to introduce new courses - in this regard UWIC quoted the introduction of their new supported housing qualification.

The Housing sector requires a wide range of skills - essential transferable skills (for example, working with vulnerable people, communication and operational skills) and also strategic skills such as policy and management skills. Both undergraduate and postgraduate course providers see themselves as meeting this range of needs. They highlight a requirement to address a greater breadth of course content given a ‘blurring at the edges’ between housing and other related issues, such as regeneration, development and poverty.

And they point out the importance of making provision for ‘non-traditional students’, such as those with Black,

Minority Ethnic backgrounds and Housing Association board members, as well as mainstream housing officers. Distance learning options are available in Wales, although many distance learning students take advantage of courses run from England. Shelter Cymru runs a range of mostly one-day courses covering issues including homelessness, welfare benefits, human rights, family law and security of tenure.

The trend towards Local Authorities becoming enablers, together with ‘*Customer first*’ thinking and the introduction of performance based cultures, mean that there is an increasingly private sector approach towards customer needs and requirements. There is also an ever-increasing emphasis on the *quality* of education provided.

There was a general recognition of the importance of a quality research capability in Wales, and Cardiff University’s excellent research ranking was noted. It was also considered important that there should be postgraduate education and training *in* Wales.

There was general agreement that *Housing* has a poor external image, leading to a less than appealing perception of housing as a potential career. In order to address this they argue for higher impact marketing of housing as a career with the objective of engaging the interest of other highly motivated and capable individuals with a view to them becoming housing officers.

Concern was expressed that resource limitations may threaten the viability of some courses. One provider commented that they were experiencing demand that could not be met in that students cannot

always secure the financial support they need from housing sector employers.

There is a view that whilst it is important for postgraduate level education to be on offer in Wales, the current courses address only part of the need. Cardiff University offers conversion courses for non-housing professionals. It does not therefore offer further study options for either housing graduates or for housing professionals who have a number of years practical experience. The similarity of learning outcomes between *housing* under-graduate and *housing* postgraduate study means that there is a lack of opportunity in Wales to move onto postgraduate study if a candidate has first studied housing at under-graduate level. One consequence of this is that there is competition between the two course levels for candidates. The argument here is that because there is a bursary arrangement, and a very flexible admissions policy on the part of the postgraduate courses, candidates are understandably attracted to study at the higher level given that it is a shorter course and results in a more prestigious degree. In certain cases it may be more appropriate, in the interests of personal development, to direct candidates to study at undergraduate level. A second consequence is that potential course content relevant to those with aspirations to senior positions in the profession is not currently available. This would include leadership, business strategy, and project and financial management. Currently Welsh housing graduates and senior housing professionals wishing to pursue a postgraduate qualification choose therefore to study for an MBA.

Cardiff University's housing team is aware of these views and was concerned to answer these points. They emphasise that the Cardiff courses are fundamentally

different from the undergraduate courses and should not be compared with any other Welsh based programmes. The Cardiff course provides a higher level qualification than under-graduate courses, and is completed over a shorter period of time. It has a specific role - to provide postgraduate training for new entrants into Housing and it is consequently inappropriate to criticise the course for not covering all potential student needs. The course does not set out to provide progression for housing undergraduates and the proponents of this view argue that other non-housing courses cater for this need – such as the Cardiff MBA. They offer an enlightened and flexible admissions policy in that they do not require a first degree, albeit they are careful only to admit those who are capable of successful completion. In this way a wide cross-section of students have benefited. This in turn is good for the profession. The opportunity to study at a postgraduate level in Wales has proven to be a very effective way of attracting non-housing specialists; and the Chartered Institute of Housing in England is looking at the possibility of establishing a similar scheme to that operated in Wales. They see the Welsh bursary scheme as a good model to follow.

It is pointed out that there is only one Postgraduate Housing course provider in Wales – Cardiff University. The courses run by Cardiff were established with the assistance of the Welsh Office (now Welsh Assembly Government) bursary scheme; and on-going support is fundamental to their viability. There is a danger that if the bursary were to be deflected from its current focus, Wales could lose this important and successful facility. Also in danger would be the part-time course, which depends on the full time course for

critical mass, and the contribution that the housing team make to the 6* research rating of the City and Regional Planning Department. Cardiff point out that bursaries are available to candidates wherever they live in Wales although they do accept that it is easier for South Wales based students to take up the opportunity.

The University is conscious that in a rapidly changing environment courses require constant review, and it is appropriate to make modifications from time to time. It is also conscious that postgraduate courses form a part of the overall provision of housing professional education and training in Wales. In the light of this Cardiff University's housing team have an on-going dialogue with the industry, other educational institutions and key housing professional organisations. The recent introduction of the two-year part time option, and longer work placements are sited in this context. It is anticipated that these changes will increase the popularity of the part-time option with existing housing staff.

Other organisations

The other organisations interviewed included the AWCHOP, Shelter Cymru, Housing Potential, CIH Wales and the CIH in England. They each have a different role in connection with housing and consequently have different emphases in responding to the study questions. The following is an attempt to draw out themes:

Since the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales, housing in Wales is becoming increasingly differentiated from housing in England. Wales is seen as having a 'uniqueness' and there is a perceived opportunity for the Assembly to give Welsh Housing a 'distinctive shape' of

its own. This contributes to the large proportion of Welsh trained housing professionals who remain in the housing profession in Wales.

Housing in Wales has an image problem. It is not recognised as a mainstream professional career choice and it has been effectively demoted as a service by being combined with social care and other services within local authorities.

Whilst the pace of change in Wales is slower than elsewhere in the UK, the Housing profession is changing in various different ways, and, as a consequence the world of housing professional education and training is changing. For instance the replacement of Housing Potential with the Sector Skills Council - linking skills development in with other professional activities - reflects a new, broader emphasis on facilities management. The role of AWCHOP is also changing; and the profession is responding to major new policy agenda items including an increasingly private sector approach, stock transfer, gender and BME issues, as well as the widening of the housing professional's role in regeneration. With these changes comes the need for the constant revision of courses, and, a rethink of the connections and linkages between the providers of professional education and training in Wales.

Given the size of Wales compared with England, it is relatively easy for the key influencers in the industry to meet together on a regular basis. AWCHOP is growing in importance as a forum having extended its membership to include RSL Chief Executives, education providers, CIH etc. Increasingly this forum is engaging in policy issues, and there is an opportunity for this mechanism to be used more extensively in

influencing the development of housing professional education in Wales. The Panel has expressed a strong interest in developing strategy for this area, and has nominated individuals to form a working group on the subject.

It is noted that large numbers of housing professionals do not aspire to CIH qualification. There is no requirement currently in Wales, to be a qualified housing professional in order to practice, and it is 'still pretty easy to obtain a post with no housing qualifications'. In fact Housing Potential commented that qualification with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors is the preferred route for 'the building side', also that senior managers are more likely to aspire to an MBA qualification. The CIH is concerned therefore to widen access to housing courses, and would be in favour of taking steps towards the professionalisation of the industry if this approach were to be more widely endorsed within the profession.

Against this background, it is generally recognised that professional education and training is a key issue for the housing profession and that there are skills gaps. Housing Potential sees these in the area of people skills, engaging communities and sustainable development; and considers that there should be more emphasis on technical and vocational training and employer training. Shelter Cymru notes that the high levels of pressure under which housing professionals operate mean that 'people skills may not always be given priority'. AWCHOP identifies skills gaps in the areas of financial management, marketing and promotion, governance and tenant participation. CIH express a general concern over whether current housing courses as a whole, are providing the full range of skills needed to meet the current

agenda of regeneration, stock transfers, diversification etc.

Peter Williams of the Council of Mortgage Lenders comments that programmes are 'broad rather than deep' and that there should be 'a rationalisation of the offerings in Wales and building of working/practical linkages between them'. AWCHOP adds to this - 'courses seem to be standing still and providers need to respond to changes in the sector with greater flexibility'. AWCHOP also noted that there should be a greater emphasis on CPD as opposed to housing NVQs, the take up of which is low.

With regard to postgraduate education there was both explicit and implicit support for on-going postgraduate level courses in Wales. However, the need to address geographical issues (equality of access in North, West and Mid Wales) was highlighted and it was noted that undergraduate courses are 'disadvantaged' in relative terms. Set against this it should be noted that the CIH in England are looking at the Welsh Bursary scheme as a model that they wish to promote in England. The CIH recognises the need to have a strong full-time postgraduate course to support part time opportunities.

Conclusions

By combining the information collated concerning courses with the results of interviews with providers and other housing bodies, the following key points emerged.

It is clear that in common with professions generally, the housing profession in Wales is experiencing a period of rapid change. As a consequence there is a need to continually review the products on offer from the various educational institutions. The institutions themselves are very aware

of this need. In addition a strong view emerged from the consultations that provision should be considered holistically, embracing the many different levels and forms of study as well as the depth and breadth of the subject matter and approach, target student groups etc.

It seems, therefore, that there would be support for the development of an overall strategy for housing professional education and training in Wales. AWCHOP have nominated a sub-committee to consider their approach. This is a potentially helpful development whereby the education providers, CIH (Wales), the Assembly and the housing profession as a whole can identify, strategically, the future education needs of the sector. Amongst other things the whole question of professionalisation could be considered, as well as ways in which the structure of professional development can impact on the image of housing, and consequently its ability to attract additional able and committed individuals into the sector.

There is an extensive offering of courses ranging from one day seminars arranged by CIH, Shelter Cymru and others, through NVQs, to undergraduate and postgraduate study. In addition housing professionals can benefit from generic courses – such as finance, management and leadership – that are run by non-housing specialists and are suitable for individuals from a wide cross section of professions.

From various sources it appears that there are skills gaps in the provision of professional education and training for housing professionals in Wales. Of the greatest concern appear to be leadership, financial planning, business planning and people skills. The various sources do not all identify the same areas of need, having

different emphases. It is helpful to quote the individual bodies:

*'The big issue is on the skills gap – in particular in the areas of **financial management, marketing and promotion, governance and tenant participation**' – AWCHOP*

*'Housing workers are under pressure to deal with high demand and **people skills** may not always be given priority' – Shelter Cymru*

*'CIH Wales has a concern over whether current training is providing students with the right skills to meet the current agenda of **regeneration, stock transfers, diversification etc.**' CIH*

*'In terms of skills gaps, **ways to engage communities and people skills** in general were highlighted. Other gaps are **community issues and sustainable development**' Housing Potential*

The demand for distance learning in Wales is strong. However the Welsh regional centre provides only a limited number of courses and many are attached to centres outside the country, this means that students miss out on the Welsh context that would be available from a Welsh based provider.

There is a need to address the poor image of housing as a career. Housing Potential has made some progress in this area, in schools, but most recognise that is still a significant problem.

Postgraduate education forms a key element of this study. However it is clear from the views of respondents and consultees that it is just one part, albeit an important one, of the overall provision of housing professional education and training in Wales.

There is general agreement that the postgraduate housing course in Wales is valuable and the importance of Cardiff's research ranking is recognised. Housing is part of the 6* research rated City and Regional Planning Department of Cardiff University. Unlike most English housing courses, Cardiff offers an extended practical component in addition to strong academic elements. Most landlords responding to the postal survey recognised the added value attributable to their staff having completed one of the Cardiff courses.

Despite this, there is some debate over the use of the bursary scheme in support of the postgraduate programme. This relates to three principal issues. Firstly that its link with Cardiff means that in practice the catchment area tends to be principally South East Wales. This leaves potential

beneficiaries based elsewhere in Wales and their sponsor organisations with a feeling of 'unfairness'. Whilst the bursary is in theory available to them, in practice there are practical limitations in their doing so. Consequently there is a perception that the South East is better served than the rest of Wales. Secondly the bursary only supports postgraduate study, whereas in certain cases it may be appropriate to support undergraduate or other forms of study. Thirdly there are potential postgraduate level programmes, providing progression from undergraduate courses, and also courses (relating to identified skill gaps), that are not currently available at Cardiff University.

This issue, and the arguments on both sides, will be considered again later in this report.

5 Postgraduate Housing Education at Cardiff University

Introduction

A more detailed review was carried out of the specific issue of the Bursary Scheme, via which the Welsh Assembly Government makes funding available for students taking the full-time MSc Housing Course at Cardiff University. This part of the study draws on:

- Desk study.
- Two focus groups; one comprising current students attending the MSc. Course at Cardiff, the other a group of ex-students from the course.
- Interviews and correspondence with Dr Robert Smith, Senior Lecturer in Housing and Director of the former Centre for Housing Management and Development at Cardiff University.

Background

The Cardiff postgraduate course is essentially a conversion course. It is designed to provide opportunities for individuals with limited or no housing experience to follow a career in the field. One of the Assembly's purposes in commissioning a review of the course is to consider the extent to which this objective is being effectively achieved.

A number of lines of evidence have been collected and compiled to allow some conclusions to be drawn on these questions, including background information on the course, focus groups with students and consultations with education providers and other interested parties. Before looking at these questions in detail, some background information is provided below.

Cardiff University, housing and the Bursary Scheme

Cardiff University (or as University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology) has provided education in the field of housing since 1987-88. The MSc course in Housing is, starting from the academic year 2003-04, provided as a number of options:

- Two years full time, with work placement
- One year full time, without placement
- Two year part-time, day release

A one year full time/one year part-time (day release) option has been discontinued.

The MSc. course is accredited by CIH and validated every five years. The course was last subject to an external assessment of teaching quality (by HEFCW) in 1996-97, when it was awarded an "excellent" rating. The course is reviewed at the end of each academic session and updated accordingly. Methods for monitoring and evaluating the course include student evaluations at the end of each semester, a staff-student panel, reports from external examiners, meetings with employers and an annual review of the scheme of study.

Housing education is provided by the School of City and Regional Planning (CPLAN). Teaching of housing is undertaken primarily by a team of seven staff:

- Professor Alan Hooper (Convenor)
- Professor David Clapham (Course Director)

- Dr Pauline Card
- Ms Bridget Franklin
- Dr Craig Gurney
- Dr Bob Smith
- Dr Richard Walker (currently on leave of absence)

Housing staff also provide teaching for other postgraduate and undergraduate

courses taught within CPLAN, and contribute to modules offered by other Schools within the University. According to Dr Robert Smith, all staff are expected to be active in academic research, contributing to the achievement of CPLAN's recent, revised, 6* research rating.

The table below shows the numbers taking the PGDip/MSc Housing course, from its inception to the current academic year.

Table 6 Numbers of students taking the PGDip/MSc course

Year	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time/ Part-time	Totals
1987-88	13	6	-	19
1988-89	11	13	-	24
1889-90	10	14	-	24
1990-91	12	14	-	26
1991-92	9	18	-	27
1992-93	10	16	-	26
1993-94	9	18	-	27
1994-95	9	19	-	28
1995-96	7	13	-	20
1996-97	11*	19	-	30
1997-98	10	8	5	23
1998-99	12	12	5	29
1999-2000	7	7	8	22
2000-2001	8	22	5	35
2001-2002	6	11	2	19
2002-2003	11	0	-	11
2003-2004	7	25	-	32
Totals	162	235	25	422

*Includes one self-financing student without Welsh Office Bursary

Virtually all students taking the full-time course have been funded by the Welsh Office/Assembly Government Bursary at a rate of 50%, with match funding from employers. The only rare exception is where a student provides the match funding. Nearly all students taking the part-time option have been funded wholly by their employer. Self-financing part time students have been known only occasionally.

The Full-time/part-time course was established in 1997-98 to access ESRC bursaries, but this route was terminated when ESRC funding was withdrawn across the UK.

The University did not recruit to the part-time course in 2002-03 because the course was being re-structured at that time. The new course was introduced from 2003-04 and it is now possible, for the first time, to complete the MSc course full-time in one year, without a work placement. The University has pointed out that neither it nor, in its opinion, housing employers, believe that students completing this option will be as “employable” as those taking the two-year option.

The part-time course is not eligible for funding via the Assembly Government Bursary and housing organisations are clearly willing to fully fund students taking this option. This fits well with the needs of employers and employees where the student is already working for a housing organisation.

As intimated in its marketing literature, the course running for the year 2003-04 has the objective to:

“...engage students with the complexities of housing problems, and to provide them with the skills required to become reflective and responsive practitioners”.

The course has six core modules, including, at the present time:

Two Housing Policy and Strategy modules; plus

1. Strategies and Choices
2. The Management of Housing Organisations
3. Housing Practice
4. Research and Survey Methods

In addition, students choose from a number of specialist areas for further study, examples of which are:

1. Public Sector Housing Management
2. Diversity and Equality
3. Research and Policy
4. Planning and Development of Housing
5. Housing and Urban Regeneration

The course is made up of a series of lectures, seminars, workshops and project work. Assessment is by group and individual work, essays, reports, projects, presentations and examinations. Where work placements are included, students are allocated a personal supervisor from the University, in addition to their employer-based supervisor.

Prospective students must have either a degree, or for those aged 25 or over, at least two years housing experience in a “position of responsibility”. The Department operates an equal opportunities policy, which includes encouraging mature, non-graduate students with relevant housing experience and people from BME backgrounds to apply.

Housing research at Cardiff

Housing-related research is carried out within the Housing Research group (one of five such groups within CPLAN), the scope including housing provision, management and development and aspects of urban design. Its membership comprises the seven academic staff detailed in Section 5.3, plus research students and associates.

This group’s housing research work has, until recently, been based around the Centre for Housing Management and Development. However the work of the Housing group has now been integrated into CPLAN, which has been re-classified as the “School of City and Regional Planning”. There is therefore no longer an independent Centre for Housing Management and Development.

All staff are expected to be active in research. As appropriate staff collaborate with colleagues in other research groups, other Schools (Cardiff Business School for example), outside organisations and independent consultancy practices. Also through cross-departmental research centres such as the University’s Regeneration Institute and its Local and Regional Government Unit.

The types of research activity undertaken have been characterised by the Housing

Research group (formerly the Housing and Built Environment Group) as:

1. Funded and un-funded research (staff following their own research interests)
2. Responsive (e.g. via invitations to tender) or proactive (via proposals submitted for consideration to bodies such as ESRC or the Joseph Rowntree Foundation).
3. Short, medium or long term research, with responsive examples tending to be short-medium term and proactive research longer term.
4. Research done by individuals or by teams

BME issues

The Assembly Government has developed a range of policy initiatives designed to combat discrimination and disadvantage suffered by BME groups. A key element is housing and BME people (see Section 4.5). In terms of the Cardiff Bursary scheme, there are two issues: the numbers of students from BME backgrounds taking the course and the course content with respect to BME issues.

Information kept by Cardiff University indicates that some 24 students from BME backgrounds have taken the MSc. Housing programme over the 17 years of its existence. It is increasingly considered good practice by public sector organisations to collect data that includes a breakdown by ethnicity. Dr Robert Smith, Director of the (former) Centre for Housing Management and Development, has indicated that numbers have increased in recent years, although they are generally low, in line with both the size of the BME population

and the number of BME housing professionals in Wales. In fact, the University itself has limited influence over this for those on the part-time course, as candidates are usually put forward by their employers. For a number of years one particular housing association targeted a Bursary place at those from BME communities, but this was discontinued.

In terms of course content, CPLAN has indicated that “...issues of difference, diversity and equality of opportunity are addressed across a number of individual modules”, although it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of this approach. Ideally, such content would include the use of case study material and good practice examples. There is a specialist “difference and equality” module, in which sessions are devoted to issues of gender, ethnicity, disability and housing for older people. However, this is an optional rather than a core module. A point raised in Chapter 6 is that access by members of BME communities to housing education and training would be enhanced if a flexible approach were adopted, involving week-long blocks that can be built up into a qualification to meet individual’s needs. It is not clear if, given its research-led philosophy, Cardiff University would be interested in offering such options.

Focus Groups

Current students

A group of 12 students taking the MSc course in 2003/2004 was convened at Cardiff University on the 30th July, 2003. The main points that emerged during the discussion were as follows:

Students' motivation for choosing the course was primarily financial and geographical. Comparisons of quality with other courses did not feature. Most, if not

all, were driven less by an interest in housing than by the availability of the funding. The MSc was viewed as a fast-track option to CIH accreditation and subsequent accelerated career progression.

Views on course content were generally positive, in particular with regard to the broad scope. Coverage of certain specialist areas was considered to be weak - IT, finance, HR, and customer relations; and students would appreciate more case studies and local examples of practice. The research activities of the department were considered an asset to the taught course.

The placement was considered a strong element, but many would welcome alternatives to the two stage approach (academic followed by placement). Also concern was expressed by some about the quality of the placements, which could be variable.

The re-designed course will have fewer exams and a longer placement. Some were concerned that this might make the course "easier" and de-value it.

Former students

Invitees to this focus group were selected by ECOTEC from a list of names provided by the University. Eight ex-students attended the discussion, which was held at Celtic Manor Hotel, Newport on the 8th September 2003. The main points made during the discussion were as follows:

The general view was that it was a good course overall. It encouraged students to think strategically and helped to propel them where they wanted to go in their careers. Where they had occasion to make complaints about the course content the University had taken these up and changes had been made, and it was emphasised

that the 'constructive criticism' made during the session should be considered in the light of this overall positive view.

The group considered that the postgraduate level was the way into housing if you 'wanted to get on'. Employers are keen for employees to have the qualification although the route is seen to be more helpful with Housing Associations than Local Authorities. Funding was a consideration but not the main reason for attending the course. However, none of those attending made a conscious decision to enter the profession.

Some felt that course content could be kept more up-to-date and more 'cutting edge' and relevant in terms of the issues of the day – for example new legislation and best value issues as well as the practical problems that housing officers face. The housing management module, professional and practice skills could be improved, and IT skills could be addressed more effectively. The one module on BME issues could usefully have been expanded upon.

The course needs to be more interactive; also there was little contact with and feedback from tutors. Marking was felt to be inconsistent, and there was considerable variation in the competence levels of the teaching staff.

The course should be added to by CPD short/extra courses once in the profession.

Many felt that the MSc is not really relevant to the job they are doing now, as it had an academic rather than a practical focus, albeit the benefits could appear later on in their careers. The part-time course was considered by many to be superior to

the full-time course, as there is a better mix of practical and theoretical study. They considered it would be useful, in this regard, to have more housing practitioners teach, in addition to academic tutors.

Because there is no requirement for graduate entry onto the course, the students observed a difference in the capability levels of students admitted.

The housing professional's role covers a wide range of areas such as community development, tenant issues, strategy and operations. There was a high level of job satisfaction amongst the former students present, a feeling of making a difference to people's lives, setting targets and reaching them etc. This is despite the fact that housing officers often find themselves facing challenges created due to the shortage of social workers - this can be a problem area as appropriately trained personnel are not available to help.

The former students felt that there is a negative external perception of housing as a career – it is not really established as a profession and outside the industry little is known about what it exactly entails. The role of Housing Officers are little understood with the general public not understanding what they are there for or what they do.

Placements were not researched or managed and varied greatly in what they offered. It would be desirable if they were to be overseen by a supervisor to ensure an adequate practical experience is acquired. It would also have been useful to have training in customer care as the profession has a customer focus.

Conclusions

The most striking finding of the first focus group (current students) was that, in a situation where many were not sure what postgraduate course to pursue, the availability of the Bursary was the main influence on their deciding to come to Cardiff. This appears to be a good indication that the scheme is successful in achieving its key objective – to divert students from other disciplines towards housing. It might perhaps be questioned whether students who are motivated so directly by finance rather than interest in the field of housing will have a genuine commitment in their work, in particular to the needs of the clients they will be serving. However, there was a noticeable difference between the first and the second groups in this regard – the former students emphasising the job satisfaction obtained in that their employment put them in a position to ‘make a difference’.

Many of the comments made by the ex-students group are difficult to validate, given that the course has changed over the years. Clearly, it is not possible to assert categorically that the views expressed by individuals are necessarily indicative of widely held opinions. However, attention should be drawn to the following points on which there appeared to be broad agreement:

- Overall, it was a good course, which encourages students to think strategically;
- The MSc had an academic rather than a practical focus;
- Employers are keen for employees to have the qualification, but the course

does not offer the practical skills that are required;

- While there is no difference in the choice of modules available to FT versus PT students, the part-time course was considered better as there is a better mix of practical and theoretical study.;
- There is a need for more teaching by practitioners rather than academics and there was a great variance in the level of competence among the teaching staff;
- The course should be added to by CPD short/extra courses once ex-students have entered the profession;
- The course should be shorter, an issue that has already been addressed by the re-launch of the course from 2003/04.

It would seem therefore that the course is fundamentally achieving its objective of encouraging students into the field of housing. Also former and current students endorse it as a good course providing them with material useful to them in their careers in housing. There are some areas of criticism, which were identified through the student focus groups which can perhaps be summarised as an over emphasis on academic rather than practical skills, and that there are certain subject areas that could benefit from a more detailed review.

On this basis, it would appear that the Cardiff course, whilst capable of improvement in certain directions, is a good course and should be continued. Whether the provision of the Assembly Bursary is the best way to ensure its continuation is a further question which will be considered in a later section.

6 Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

Introduction

The study reviewed the specific issue of people from Black, Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and housing education and training. It also touched on the wider context of BME groups and housing.

Policy context

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places an enforceable duty on the Welsh Assembly Government to promote racial equality and prevent racial discrimination. The Act applies to public authorities, but while Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are not classified as such, the Assembly Government aims to ensure the aims of the new legislation are passed on to RSLs through the Black, Minority Ethnic Housing Action Plan for Wales and subsequent changes to the Regulatory Framework for RSLs. A series of Statutory Codes of Practice, produced by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), provide guidance to the Assembly Government, local authorities and public bodies.

The Black, Minority Ethnic Housing Action Plan is therefore the key policy driver. Its development was the culmination of a process that started with the publication in 2000, by the Assembly, of the *"From the Margins to the Centre"* Report which assessed the need for a BME Housing Strategy for Wales. The publication of this report was followed up by a conference on BME housing issues in March 2003. In April 2001, the Assembly consulted on its proposed BME Housing Strategy, and the BME Housing Action Plan for Wales of September 2002 was subsequently developed to implement it.

A key theme of the BME Housing Action Plan is the requirement placed on all local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Wales to have individual BME housing strategies in place by April 2004 (or to be part of a regional or multi-agency BME housing strategy). An example of the latter approach is the 2003 Draft BME Housing Strategy prepared by the North Wales RSL Equality Partnership on behalf of five RSLs and the North Wales Race Equality Network. Equally, the six LAs in North Wales are co-operating to prepare a BME housing strategy.

Other key themes of the Action Plan are:

- Provision of BME housing and services
- BME tenant involvement
- Tackling racial harassment
- Race equality training
- BME people and private sector housing
- Good practice and research
- Monitoring and review

Most local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Wales are currently preparing BME housing strategies. In addition much work has been, or is being done by the Assembly Government to gather evidence on the housing and socio-economic circumstances of BME people in Wales.

The *"From the Margins to the Centre"* report makes little or no reference to the key role

that increasing the numbers of BME housing professionals (through education and training) might have across a range of issues. However, the draft BME housing strategy prepared by North Wales RSLs does include achieving equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection and recognises the low numbers of BME people working for housing associations. Section 9 of the BME Action Plan (Empowering BME social housing organisations and Assembly Government members and employees), has target outcomes to have numbers of BME staff in the social housing sector (including RSL board membership) that reflect the ethnic composition of the communities they serve. This includes actions 9.11, 9.12 and 9.13:

- To review the skills of current BME staff and work with them to identify career progression opportunities.
- To positively promote training and development opportunities to BME staff including secondment and mentoring opportunities.
- To review training and development policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they do not discriminate against BME people and provide opportunities for BME staff to progress to senior levels.

None of the small number of schemes designed to address the need to encourage more BME people to go into housing professional education, as opposed to into a housing career per se, are Wales-specific. The most successful schemes employ a bursary system to assist BME students to take housing courses and this would certainly seem to be the most direct and cost effective way to address this issue in Wales. Action 9.21 of the BME Housing

Action Plan does provide a basis for considering “positive action” where monitoring reveals that some BME groups are under-represented in the workforce. However, from the Assembly Government’s point of view, there would clearly be little point if Welsh housing organisations did not value BME employees and these therefore took their qualifications elsewhere. Any such move should therefore be part of a wider series of activities within the overall framework of the BME Housing Action Plan.

Focus group

The results of the focus group highlighted the importance of customer focus as far as interactions between BME clients/tenants and housing officers are concerned. The general perception was that housing officers are poorly equipped to deal with different cultures. The results therefore serve to reinforce the findings of the postal survey, in terms of not only lack of awareness of race issues but also gaps in “people skills”. The findings with regard to BME groups would tend to suggest a wider challenge in terms of improving the ways in which housing officers (and others) deal with vulnerable people.

Existing schemes

Pathways to Housing was a one-year programme designed to increase opportunities and awareness of housing careers for excluded groups. *Pathways Plus* is a new, three-year pilot programme to re-introduce positive action training to Wales. Its aims are to increase opportunities for BME people within the housing sector by providing a diverse 3-year placement programme. In principle, the Pathway schemes send a positive message that the organisation/sector is concerned about under-representation and is prepared to introduce a visible initiative to tackle that.

It potentially introduces a cadre of BME staff to the profession that can inspire others to follow them. It is important to remember that the scheme can only be provided where the training provider or employer can demonstrate that a group is under-represented in a particular area of work. We understand that a number of high profile BME staff in the sector have come through this route.

While, in principle, there is wide support for these schemes, they tend to be criticised by those who are not comfortable with the concept of positive action (providing opportunities) and who see it as positive discrimination (guaranteeing outcomes). As soon as any scheme starts guaranteeing either interviews or jobs for its participants then it is implementing positive discrimination and acting unlawfully.

Positive Pathways should not be the only route for BME employees. The buzzword (for a while) around equalities and diversity has been “mainstreaming” and any Pathways programme would have to be conducted alongside initiatives to improve access through mainstream channels. In particular, the *Pathways* initiatives is expected to be linking into mainstream initiatives (e.g. day release college courses) rather than replacing them. Particular attention is drawn to the idea of a series of short “block week” courses leading to different levels of professional qualification that could quite easily be linked to *Pathways*.

In implementation, the equivalent programmes in England is sometimes criticised because of:

- The “poor quality/motivation of trainees” - in England, there are a range

of regional positive action providers and at times their recruitment of trainees has not been the best.

- The poor level of support from the training provider. To address this problem there should be regular reviews to ensure that mentoring is of a high standard and meets the needs of the trainee (e.g. is a female or BME mentor needed?)

Education and training

In terms of education and training there would therefore appear to be a continuing need for:

- Increased race awareness training for housing officers (this is already being addressed under the Assembly’s BME Housing Action Plan and local BME housing strategies being developed).
- Improved access to short courses for housing officers on specific customer-orientated issues.
- Financial support to allow BME housing workers access to short training courses and thus develop their careers.
- An increased effort to recruit more people from BME groups into the housing profession (possibly by means of a dedicated Wales-based bursary-type initiative).

In terms of the education and training supply in the housing sector, flexibility would appear to be a key consideration. Adoption of a more responsive model would see providers better able to meet the needs of trainees from increasingly diverse backgrounds by offering a range of short block week courses, which trainees can build into “their own qualification”. Re-

structuring of provision around such block-based courses, which could be used as building blocks to a qualification, would offer an alternative route into the profession.

Conclusions

The results of the policy review show that the Welsh Assembly Government is strongly committed to addressing issues concerning BME groups and housing. The policies in place and actions being undertaken will deliver improvements. A particularly strong element is the approach which sees the BME Housing Action Plan as a working document, which will be continually reviewed, monitored and developed. There is also a clear recognition that the Plan's objectives can only be achieved by working in partnership. The most significant contributors will be social landlords as they translate strategy into action, through their BME housing strategies. Therefore, while several action points that relate directly to education and training for BME housing professionals are included in the Action Plan, it is not yet clear what impact can be achieved in practice and by employing what methods. The review and monitoring of outcomes will therefore be crucial.

The main focus of the above tends to be on addressing discrimination and improving

services for BME tenants and potential tenants. Of more direct interest to this study are schemes that aim to increase the numbers of people from BME backgrounds who work in the housing sector, thereby improving understanding of the needs of housing customers from BME groups. Education and training therefore clearly forms an integral part of addressing the wider challenges. This encompasses both training of non-BME and BME housing people to provide a better customer focus and the recruitment of more BME people to the housing profession.

The Assembly Government and the National BME Housing Review Group might consider ways in which the issue of housing professional education and training for BME people, as a means to increase representation where appropriate, could be accorded higher priority as activities move beyond the initial stages of strategy development at local and regional level.

The *Pathways and Pathways Plus* initiatives have achieved encouraging results, but there is a need to provide a range of routes for BME housing professionals and strengthen links to existing mainstream provision. The Bursary Scheme offers one route to encourage the greater uptake of housing professional education and training by BME people.

7 Conclusions and Policy Options

This chapter briefly summarises the key research findings set out in detail in this report together with recommendations for the Assembly Government and the Housing Profession in Wales.

The study objective was to review housing professional education and training in Wales, looking specifically at the Assembly Bursary Scheme; and has involved desk research, a postal survey, interviews with key experts – education providers and customers (employers and students) – together with a review of relevant BME issues.

The key findings were as follows:

Welsh educational and training institutions provide a wide range of Housing courses that are highly valued by the profession, and these institutions consequently play a vital role in supporting Welsh social housing providers. Because of their focus on the Welsh market, they are able to include peculiarly Welsh elements. Research participants confirmed the importance of maintaining this Welsh based education and training, given the devolved administration in Wales, including, specifically, post-graduate education and research.

The Assembly Bursary Scheme, has been very effective in encouraging new entrants into the profession, and former Cardiff students are now in positions of influence throughout the Welsh housing world. The Cardiff post-graduate course is highly valued by the profession, and Cardiff's 6* research rating means that its research output is of a very high standard.

In the rapidly changing environment of the housing profession, not surprisingly, the various housing professional groups interviewed expressed certain concerns with regard to housing professional education and training in Wales. They also had constructive suggestions to make. There is a general concern that the profession has a lack-lustre image, and that this has the effect of deterring new entrants. Training needs were identified in particular aspects of housing work – such as people skills, IT, and business planning. Access difficulties due to physical distance from education providers were highlighted by some respondents outside of South East Wales; and some questioned whether the Assembly bursary scheme should be extended beyond the Cardiff post-graduate course. The research also highlighted a very low level of awareness of BME issues.

Suggestions for the enhancement of housing professional education and training in Wales include the establishment of a forum in which the profession can take a more strategic approach to Welsh housing professional education and training; the potential for further 'professionalisation' of the housing profession; the introduction of additional courses or course modules targeting particular development needs; extending the Assembly bursary scheme to include other courses; and, looking at ways in which BME representation can be increased in the profession.

Taking into account the research undertaken, together with the conclusions detailed in the report and summarised above, the Assembly Government is recommended to:

Establish an all-Wales forum to facilitate a greater degree of joint working between providers of housing education and to promote a deeper understanding between providers and housing employers.

AWCHOP would seem to be a good place to start such a forum, given its experience and representative nature.

Commission further research on the value and potential ways forward to deliver a higher degree of professionalisation of housing practitioners in Wales, focusing in particular on those dealing with vulnerable tenants. Some form of accreditation scheme might be tested, drawing on the work underway in the development of the social care workforce (Circular on the Social Care Workforce Development Programme for Personal Social Services 2003-2004.

Welsh Assembly Government, Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, 9th May 2003). Links might also be made to the newly established Sector Skills Council for housing, which has an interest in the wider adoption of national training frameworks.

Consider, with the profession, ways in which the skill gaps and other issues identified during the course of this research can be addressed. And, if necessary, consider broadening the use of the bursary fund.

Consider, with the National BME Housing Review Group, ways in which the issue of housing professional education and training for BME people could be accorded higher priority. This will assist in increasing BME representation in the housing sector and in turn improve services provided to BME communities.

Consider, with the profession, whether the Bursary could be offered to housing organisations in the form of a grant, which

would be the subject of an application, on behalf of a candidate, to attend eligible education and training in Wales, to encompass postgraduate (or “post-professional”) and undergraduate courses.

If it is decided to implement this decision, it is important that a sufficient period of time should be allowed for all providers to anticipate the changes; and that the Assembly and profession are satisfied that the change will involve a clear gain. A list of eligible education options could be drawn up by the Assembly Government, in conjunction with the housing community, via some type of forum that could be co-ordinated by AWCHOP or CIH Cymru. The eligibility framework established would be designed to seek to address some of the gaps identified by this study – for example leadership, working with people, IT and business management.

A revised Bursary system would allow greater choice of types of training and education to be developed - in terms of subject (e.g. leadership, business skills, “people skills”, IT, supported housing) and format (modular courses, distance learning part-time/full-time), focusing more closely on real sector needs. Such options would have to conform to minimum duration criteria to maintain the focus of the Bursary funding on housing-related education and avoid divergence into the market for short training-courses. A system, in which applications for such grants are assessed and awarded competitively, should include candidate interviews and some limited input by the Assembly. This should have the effect of encouraging all providers to review the range of options provided. Hopefully many would choose to work closely with other providers to provide a uniquely Welsh, and all-Wales, solution.