



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



An evaluation of the effectiveness of Community Housing Agreements

communities
social inclusion
housing





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Chapter 1 Introduction

1 Background to the research

Community Housing Agreements (CHAs) are voluntary agreements established between local authorities and registered social landlords. The model for CHAs was developed by the Welsh National Social Landlords' Forum in October 1998, which recommended local authorities and housing associations across Wales adopt the agreements. The Welsh National Social Landlords' Forum was short-lived being comprised of representatives from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations (WFHA). The representatives worked together to produce two outputs, the model form of CHA (a copy of which is attached at appendix 3) and a set of shared principles and performance measures for social landlords.

The Welsh Assembly Government made a series of commitments in respect of CHAs in its national housing strategy *Better Homes for People in Wales: a National Housing Strategy for Wales*¹.

These were to:

- undertake a review of the effectiveness of CHAs;
- work with the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Federation of Housing Associations to enable all local authorities to put in place CHAs with local housing associations by spring 2003; and
- issue good practice guidance on their operation and benefits.

Housing+Cymru, a consortium of Wales based independent housing consultants, were commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake research into the effectiveness of CHAs in the summer of 2005.

CHAs sought to provide a vehicle for more effective partnership working between local authorities and housing associations on shared priorities and objectives.

The agreement was also intended to fill the gap created by the merger of Tai Cymru with the Welsh Office. This merger saw the demise of Strategic Housing Agreements, which were tri-partite agreements between Tai Cymru, the local authority, and housing associations with development status.

The model CHA developed by the Welsh National Social Landlords' Forum aimed to ensure housing association activities complemented those of the local authority. A key aim of the agreement is to provide housing associations with the opportunity to:

“reflect and complement the corporate activities of the Council integrating the provision of housing services with national, local and community needs.”²

CHAs were potentially wider in scope than the precursor Strategic Housing Agreements, covering not just housing issues, but also the contribution of housing to wider objectives such as community regeneration.

¹ The National Assembly for Wales (2001a:26).

² Community Housing Agreements: a proposal by the Welsh National Social Landlords Forum (October 1998).

“Registered Social Landlords are seen as contributing to meeting the wider needs not only in terms of joint working arrangements and development, but also in terms of ‘housing plus’ and community initiatives.”³

The model for the agreements envisaged by the Welsh National Social Landlords’ Forum consisted of two elements:

- a formal agreement stating the primary aims and objectives of the parties to the agreement, including monitoring, liaison and review mechanisms; and
- a schedule or performance plan, which included actions and targets that could be reviewed on an annual basis.

The model CHA incorporated a mix of both strategic and operational issues.

2 Objectives and methods of the research

Since the development of the model CHA in 1998, the policy environment within which both local authorities and housing associations operate has changed considerably. The review of CHAs provides an important and timely opportunity to reconsider their role in the light of these changes. The specification for the research project set out the objectives as being:

- i) to evaluate the effectiveness to date of CHAs in fulfilling their stated expectations;
- ii) to advise whether CHAs could be used in more effective ways to realise local authority strategic objectives and, if so, how; and
- iii) to develop policy suggestions for the Welsh Assembly Government to facilitate the wider use and greater effectiveness of CHAs.

The research commenced in June 2005, with the fieldwork for the research being undertaken between October 2005 and July 2006. The project was guided by a Project Steering Group, comprised of officials from the Department for Social Justice and Regeneration of the Welsh Assembly Government and representatives from the Welsh Local Government Association, the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations and Shelter Cymru.

The research consisted of four key stages which are set out below.

a Policy and literature review

This involved a review of literature relating to partnership working in general and partnership working in housing. It was also informed by a review of the current policy agenda in relation to local government and housing associations. In addition, the policy review was informed by telephone interviews held with staff members from key stakeholder agencies (see below).

The literature review drew upon a large and diverse literature on partnership working. Although the bibliography is not exhaustive, it includes a range of sources that vary in terms of their purpose, scope and geographical coverage.

b Telephone interviews with local authorities, housing associations and key stakeholders

Interviews were conducted with senior housing managers in Welsh local authorities and senior managers in developing housing associations⁴. The interviews were conducted in November and December 2005. The purpose of the telephone interviews was to establish:

- how widely CHAs were being used;
- the reasons for adopting CHAs;
- the format of CHAs;

³ Welsh National Social Landlords Forum (October 1998:3).

⁴ See appendices 4 and 5 for copies of the questionnaires.

- the effectiveness of CHAs; and
- the effectiveness of other partnership working arrangements.

Where CHAs were in place, local authorities were invited to send the consultants a copy of the agreement to enable them to be analysed. Six of the eight local authorities with CHAs in place provided copies and these were reviewed. The analysis examined the structure and content of CHAs and the arrangements for monitoring their implementation.

Where CHAs were not in place the research sought to establish:

- why they had not been established; and
- the effectiveness of partnership working between the local authority and housing associations in its area.

It was originally intended that interviews would take place with senior managers in all 22 local authorities and all 27 developing housing associations. Interviews were successfully completed in 21 local authorities (95%) and in 22 housing associations (81%)⁵.

A series of key stakeholder organisations were identified at the outset of the project and telephone interviews were conducted with a relevant staff member during January and February 2006⁶. The purpose of these interviews was to establish:

- the background to the development of CHAs;
- the use of CHAs in Wales;
- other housing partnership arrangements;

- how partnership working in housing had changed over recent years; and
- examples of positive practice in relation to partnership working in housing.

c Case studies

The case studies were undertaken to gain a more detailed understanding of:

- the background to the development of the CHA, where one was in place, and its effectiveness;
- why a CHA had not been developed where one was not in place; and
- the effectiveness of partnership working between housing associations and local authorities generally and the contribution made by housing associations to tackling homelessness problems.

Six local authorities were identified and interviews sought with the following staff, or their equivalent:

- Head of Housing;
- Head of Corporate Planning;
- Head of Planning; and
- Homelessness Service Manager.

Group interviews were undertaken with housing associations operating in the locality. Each housing association was invited to send one representative to the interview. The local authorities selected were a mix of urban and rural and included those which had entered into CHAs with housing associations and those which had not. Interviews were conducted in February and March 2006⁷. Summaries of the case study reports are incorporated in the text of Chapter 4.

⁵ A list of local authorities and housing associations which participated in the telephone interviews is attached at appendix 6.

⁶ List attached at appendix 7.

⁷ Copies of the questionnaires used with local authority and housing association staff where there was a CHA in place are attached at appendix 8. Copies of the questionnaires used with local authority and housing association staff where there was not a CHA in place are attached at appendix 9.

d Consultation on proposals for the way forward

Following the completion of the fieldwork, the consultants circulated a discussion paper to all Welsh local authorities, all housing associations and key stakeholder agencies in late May 2006. The paper briefly set out the research findings, the changing policy context and proposals for the way forward in relation to the use of CHAs⁸.

Practitioners and staff from key stakeholder agencies were invited to attend two workshops held in south and north Wales, in late June and early July 2006, to discuss the policy suggestions contained in the discussion paper. In addition, organisations unable to send representatives to the workshops were invited to send their written comments on the policy suggestions to the consultants. 25 participants attended the two workshops and written comments were received from 3 organisations⁹.

The comments received from practitioners and stakeholders on the discussion paper have been used to shape the policy suggestions contained in Chapter 5.

3 Structure of the report

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 reviews the policy context for partnership working between local authorities and housing associations.
- Chapter 3 provides a focused review of the literature on partnership working as it relates to CHAs.
- Chapter 4 sets out the findings of the research on the effectiveness of CHAs.
- Chapter 5 sets out policy suggestions for the future of Community Housing Agreements.

⁸ A copy is attached at appendix 10.

⁹ A report setting out the comments provided at the workshop and those received in writing is attached at appendix 11.

Chapter 2 Policy Review

1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the policy environment in Wales prior to, and following, the development of the model Community Housing Agreement in 1998. Although the project focuses on CHAs, it was agreed with the Steering Group that the policy review would have a broader remit and provide an overview of partnership arrangements more generally and the wider policy environment. The chapter concludes by focusing on the policy environment in England and Scotland before reaching conclusions about partnership working in the housing sector in Wales.

2 Partnership working in Wales

Partnership working has been a constant thread running through public policy development in Wales and elsewhere in the UK for more than 20 years. In the late 1970s, emerging policy on inner cities, with its emphasis on closer central and local government cooperation, was seen as a watershed in British urban policy¹⁰. In the early 1980s, the Conservative government began a programme of reform that had a major impact on how public services were delivered, including the extent and nature of partnership working. Local government was encouraged to establish public/private partnerships to tackle local problems and to explore options for outsourcing service provision¹¹. The introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering placed a duty on local authorities to test the cost-effectiveness of their services and to outsource work if other providers were more competitive. In terms of social

housing provision, policy and changes to financial arrangements meant housing associations replaced local authorities as direct providers, with local authorities being encouraged to play a more strategic role. As we shall see below, the emphasis on partnership working has continued unabated since the 1980s, albeit with some shifts in emphasis.

3 Partnership working in the housing sector

During the 1980s, government policy meant housing associations replaced local authorities as the main providers of additional social housing in Wales, although, until relatively recently, a small number of local authorities maintained small building programmes. However, partnership working between local authorities and housing associations (and their regulator Tai Cymru/Housing for Wales) was limited, usually related to the development of new social housing schemes and nominations to housing association lettings.

In 1991, Tai Cymru introduced Strategic Housing Agreements, which sought to connect the development of new social housing with the policy objectives of individual local authorities. The purpose of the Strategic Housing Agreement is:

- a) *to further the working relationship with local authorities;*
- b) *to recognise the importance of the strategic responsibilities of local authorities; and*
- c) *to provide a more formal basis for partnership.*¹²

¹⁰ Hastings, A. (1996).

¹¹ Hastings, A. and A. McArthur (1995).

¹² Tai Cymru / Housing for Wales (1992).

Prior to local government re-organisation in Wales in 1996, Tai Cymru had entered into Strategic Housing Agreements with 9 of the 37 district councils¹³. When reviewing its relationship with local government from its establishment in 1989 to local government reorganisation, Tai Cymru suggested the relatively small number of Strategic Housing Agreements was:

“perhaps the most disappointing feature of the last seven years.”¹⁴

Following local government re-organisation and the establishment of single tier unitary authorities, Tai Cymru sought to enter into Strategic Housing Agreements with all 22 unitary authorities. Whilst it did not achieve this, more than 50% of authorities had signed agreements by the time of the merger of Tai Cymru with the Housing Division of the Welsh Office in January 1999.¹⁵

At the time of the merger, there was a developing appreciation amongst housing practitioners in the local authority and housing association sectors of:

- the contribution that housing associations could make to the delivery of the wider aims and objectives of the new unitary authorities; and
- the need for housing associations to promote their activities to functions beyond housing within the new authorities.

This culminated in the development of the model CHA by the Welsh National Social Landlords' Forum. The model CHA attempted to ensure that a wider range of activities were incorporated into the

agreement, recognising the contribution that housing can make:

“not only meeting housing needs, but also to assisting the regeneration of healthy communities.”¹⁶

The schedule to the agreement identified an extensive list of areas of activity which it was considered should be incorporated within a CHA. This included strategic housing, operational housing management and social inclusion activities.

4 Changing policy context in Wales

Since 1998, the partnership working policy environment for local government and housing associations in Wales has changed significantly. Since its inception, the Welsh Assembly Government has been strongly committed to partnership working. The Government of Wales Act 1998 places a unique obligation on the Assembly to consult with both business and voluntary organisations. In 1998, the Assembly established formal partnership councils with local government (the Partnership Council), the business community (the Business Partnership Council) and the voluntary sector (the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council).

Recent policy developments in Wales have reinforced the importance, indeed, the necessity, of local government working closely with local and national partners to achieve important strategic objectives.

Making the Connections

The Assembly Government's broad agenda for public services - set out in *Making the Connections*, published in Autumn 2004¹⁷, underlines the vital importance

¹³ Tai Cymru / Housing for Wales (1994) The latest Tai Cymru document showing the number of Strategic Housing Agreements entered into is the Investment Policies & Plans 1994/95.

¹⁴ Bader, J. (1996:9-10).

¹⁵ Tai Cymru/Housing for Wales (1998).

¹⁶ Welsh National Social Landlords Forum (1998:2).

¹⁷ Welsh Assembly Government (2004).

of working together across organisational and geographical boundaries. The key *Making the Connections* objectives of delivering consistently high and improving standards of public services, actively establishing, reflecting and meeting the needs and priorities of communities and citizens, and focussing on outcomes and not processes, can only be achieved if organisations work together.

Making the Connections also picks up on the recommendations of the Gershon review of public sector efficiency¹⁸. Both emphasise the importance of partnerships and collaborations as a way of realising efficiency gains. Local authorities are encouraged to consider more collective and professional procurement, streamlining support functions and maximising value from capital investment. Welsh local authorities will, in future, be expected to set out the efficiency gains they have achieved in the past year, with overall targets, and targets for gains specifically from better procurement in their Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI). The Welsh Assembly Government, through Value Wales, has recently published a consultation paper on realising efficiency gains through collaborative procurement which reinforces the importance of working with partner organisations¹⁹.

It is also important to recognise that the geographical context for partnership working is shifting. *Making the Connections* emphasises the importance of services being sensitive to local circumstances and of local people being involved in decision-making. This helps to ensure that locally tailored and, therefore, more effective solutions are developed to local problems. There is also potential for this

approach to rekindle public engagement. The *Communities First* programme is an example of an initiative that is very much based on local solutions for local problems, on the basis it is local people and organisations that have the essential local knowledge. In 2006, there were Communities First partnerships in the following areas:

- the 100 most deprived electoral divisions in Wales (as determined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000);
- 32 pockets of deprivation (a sub-electoral division level); and
- 11 communities of interest (sectoral communities within a defined geographical area).

In addition, there are also pressures to form larger regional partnerships, sometimes to realise efficiencies, to jointly bid for funds, or to tackle issues that transcend local authority boundaries. Welsh authorities have created four regional local government bodies to facilitate collaborative working on issues and on services such as transport, economic development and waste disposal²⁰. In the housing field, regionalism is also on the agenda. The *Making the Connections* action plan specifically mentions regional partnerships, such as the Heads of the Valleys Partnership, which will seek to use housing investment, particularly in respect of the planned large scale renewal of social housing, as one of the main engines of regeneration in the region.

Plan Rationalisation

Local authorities are required by the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare a community strategy to promote

¹⁸ Sir Peter Gershon (2004).

¹⁹ Value Wales (2006).

²⁰ <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/content.php?nID=336;IID=1>

and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area, and contribute to sustainable development and equal opportunities. The Act also requires local authorities, in preparing community strategies, to consult and seek the participation of such organisations and people as they consider appropriate. Guidance on preparing community strategies²¹ makes it clear the involvement of partners must be comprehensive and meaningful, extending from the shaping of local priorities, to the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Although the guidance supporting the development of community strategies is currently being reviewed, the emphasis on working jointly with partners will certainly continue, especially given the thrust of other recent policy developments.

Although local authorities will continue to prepare community strategies, other statutory planning requirements are likely to be significantly reduced between 2006 and 2009²². Local authorities will be expected to have just three high level strategies, sitting below the community strategy. These strategies, covering health, social care and well-being, children and young people and the local development plan, will set out long term, shared visions for meeting local needs and contributing to national priorities. In addition, local authorities will contribute to the Wales Spatial Plan which has a broader geographical remit and sets out a vision and priority actions for six sub-divisions of Wales.

The requirement for short to medium term, service specific strategies, (such as the Housing Strategy), has been removed from 2008, although local authorities can still

decide to develop and use them. However, any such strategies developed do not have to conform to any guidance, nor do they have to be submitted to the Assembly.

The shift to a small number of high level strategies strengthens the need for partnership working, since many of the issues being addressed - for example, more sustainable land use, better outcomes for children and young people and better health for the population at large, cannot be tackled by any single organisation or sector in isolation.

The Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI)

WPI was introduced in 2002, and builds on the Best Value framework introduced by the Local Government Act 1999. The 1999 Act places a duty on local authorities to seek continuous improvement in the way they exercise their functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and the quality of services. WPI has taken the principles of Best Value and placed them within a context of self-assessment and risk-based improvement action. Revised WPI guidance places increased emphasis on the importance of involving partners in the process of improvement planning, delivery and reporting. More specifically, the guidance suggests partners/service users should be involved in the annual assessments of services and functions and in any more fundamental reviews that authorities decide to conduct from time to time. There is no recommended model for carrying out assessments, but the guidance notes assessments should cover service aims, needs, delivery, efficiency, capacity, accountability and engagement.

²¹ National Assembly for Wales (2001b).

²² Welsh Assembly Government (2005a).

“Authorities should aim in all cases to base their assessments on as wide a range of views and evidence as possible, and to conduct them inclusively. This should generally involve reflecting the views of service users, partner organisations, community groups and peers as appropriate.”²³

In terms of periodic reviews, the guidance specifically mentions that local authorities should consider conducting reviews jointly with other local authorities and partners, particularly where there might be scope for collaboration in delivering services.

The guidance also states the results of annual performance and risk assessments and any periodic reviews should be fully integrated into local authorities' planning and budgetary processes and need to be actively communicated to service users and partners.

Although WPI guidance places considerable emphasis on involving partners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services, there is no prescribed model. It is up to local authorities how they interpret and apply the requirement. It is, therefore, likely the approaches taken will vary between authorities and possibly even between services within an authority. Although it is early days for the revised WPI guidance, it will be important to see how the engagement of partners in relation to housing-related services develops, especially given the proposed removal of the requirement for a housing strategy.

The Beecham Review of Local Service Delivery

In July 2005, Sir Jeremy Beecham was appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of local service delivery in Wales. The review had two main aims, which were to:

- identify improvements in the arrangements for local service delivery, which are as radical and innovative as necessary; and
- examine how existing arrangements for accountability can be used, developed and adapted to support this innovation.

The review examines service delivery in key areas, with particular regard to the cross-cutting issues that are central to improving outcomes. The review focuses on local authorities, health bodies and other local service delivery organisations in the public, voluntary and independent sectors and examined how best to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery in the interests of service users and taxpayers.

The review reported to the Welsh Assembly Government in July 2006²⁴. The review recommends Wales should aspire to become an exemplar of small country governance and this should be driven by four critical success factors:

- citizen engagement;
- delivery;
- partnership; and
- challenge.

The review recognises the importance of partnership working and the need for the whole architecture of public services in Wales, along with the culture, skills and behaviours of those who work in them, to be made more conducive to shared delivery.

Whilst the review does not recommend structural re-organisation, it suggests action is needed to address capacity constraints and that this could be most effectively achieved by collaborative working across organisations.

²³ Welsh Assembly Government (2005d:13).

²⁴ Beecham, J. (2006).

A key conclusion and recommendation from the review is the development of Partnership Action Contracts (PACts), in which the key local delivery organisations negotiate with the Assembly Government and non-devolved UK Government Departments to agree a set of joint priority actions for the area. These agreements should be a negotiated balance of national and local priorities and the process of negotiation itself is recognised as crucial to ensuring improvement in the delivery of services to citizens. The review recommends PACts should be piloted in a small number of local authority areas with a good record of effective multi-agency working.

5 The changing housing policy context

The importance of partnership working also runs through housing policy in Wales post 1998. The national housing strategy and more specific guidance on, for example, supporting people and homelessness, all emphasise the importance of local authority housing services working with key partners. For example, draft guidance on developing local housing strategies states the strategy should be developed:

“involving key local partners in formulating, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Local Housing Strategy.”²⁵

The Welsh Assembly Government also issued guidance specifically on how local authorities should involve the private sector in developing and delivering their housing strategies²⁶. More recently, the five year *Making the Connections* action plan²⁷ states the Welsh Assembly Government will pursue stronger housing collaborations.

A number of changes in policy have reinforced the need for more effective partnership working between local authorities and housing associations.

The growing importance of the strategic housing function

In recent years, there has been increased appreciation of the importance of a balanced housing market as a fundamental building block in the development of socially just and sustainable communities. The shortage of affordable owner occupied housing, as a result of significant house price rises throughout Wales, is now regarded as a key issue by local people, the media and politicians alike. On two occasions, the Welsh Assembly Government has introduced secondary legislation on homelessness and has undertaken a root and branch review of the National Homelessness Strategy with a clear focus on the prevention of homelessness and eradicating the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

The contribution of housing expenditure to local economies and its potential to play a role in regeneration strategies is now starting to be appreciated. This is in contrast to the situation in the late 1990s, when the contribution of housing to achieving national and local policy aims and objectives was, at best, seen as marginal.

At the same time, an enhanced appreciation of the critical importance of the strategic housing role of local authorities has begun to emerge. In the late 1990s, the strategic housing role of local authorities tended to be limited to “enabling” the delivery of new affordable housing, some elements of private sector renewal and the production

²⁵ Welsh Assembly Government (2006a).

²⁶ Welsh Assembly Government (2003).

²⁷ Welsh Assembly Government (2005b).

of the Local Housing Strategy. There is now a developing understanding of the importance of the strategic housing role of local authorities and what the function itself entails. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGGA), in its Manifesto for Welsh Local Government²⁸, recognised the importance of the strategic housing function and made the development of this function one of their priorities for the following three years. The Welsh Assembly Government has recently supported, through the Social Housing Management Grant fund, an initiative by the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru to develop the skill base of strategic housing staff within Welsh local authorities.

The growing importance of both the strategic housing function and need for local authorities to work in close partnership with housing associations was recognised by the WFHA and the WLGGA in March 2006 when they launched their Protocol of Partnership Working. The protocol identifies the areas where housing associations and local authorities should work together in partnership. Both organisations will be encouraging individual local authorities and housing associations working in their areas to sign up to the protocol²⁹.

The impact of stock transfer on the strategic housing function

The expectation in *Better Homes for People in Wales* that all social landlords should achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2012 has prompted many local authorities to consider the options available to them. Some have concluded they are unable to meet and sustain the standard beyond 2012 within the current ownership model.

One local authority, Bridgend, has transferred its housing stock to a newly established housing association. At the time of writing, five local authorities are committed to balloting their tenants on transfer (Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Swansea, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Newport) and a number of others are currently going through the options appraisal process. The strategic housing role and effective mechanisms for planning and implementing partnership working will be crucially important for those authorities whose stock is transferred. Any future arrangements for partnership working between local authorities and housing associations will need to cater for a situation in which the local authority has no housing stock and where one of its key housing relationships is with the housing association that has taken on that stock.

The impact on housing of plan rationalisation

The changes introduced by plan rationalisation contain potential risks. The move to a small number of high-level, shared strategies means that service specific partnership arrangements, for example, in housing-related fields, could struggle to find their place on this broader strategic canvas. There is a risk the implementation of the plan rationalisation proposals could undermine the strategic housing function at a local level. This requires the Welsh Assembly Government to carefully consider the guidance it offers to local authorities on the effective delivery of the strategic housing function.

The impact of Making the Connections in the housing sector

Making the Connections specifically mentions regional partnerships. In the housing field, regionalism is very much on the agenda,

²⁸ Welsh Local Government Association (2005).

²⁹ Welsh Housing Quarterly (2006).

evidenced by a number of collaborative local authority consortia such as South East Wales Regional Housing Forum (SEWRHF), the North Wales Regional Housing Partnership and the Rural Housing Authority Network (RHAN). This regional collaborative working, predominantly involving local authorities, is starting to bear fruit with Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Councils proposing to produce a regional housing strategy in April 2007.

However, the impact of the *Making the Connections* agenda has been more marked on the housing association sector. In July 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government published *Developing Partnerships*, following consultation on the future for Social Housing Grant development and procurement. The paper made the link with the *Making the Connections* agenda and the Assembly's ambition of realising efficiency savings. In the autumn of 2004 and early 2005, housing associations formed into consortia. The consortia are, in part, based upon models of regional collaboration and have taken responsibility for the management of the Social Housing Grant programme to develop new social housing from individual local authorities.

The level of partnership working within consortia varies. Whilst in some consortia, partnership working is limited to the development of new social housing, in others it has been extended to consider far closer collaboration across a range of areas, including consideration of joint procurement of housing maintenance, housing management and support services.

Best Value for Housing Associations and the Regulatory Code

There are strong expectations that housing associations will work in partnership with local authorities. The Best Value regime was extended to the housing association sector in 2001 and is currently under review. A revised regulatory code for housing associations was adopted in March 2006. Inspection by the Wales Audit Office against the new regulatory code will include looking at the robustness of local partnership arrangements. The new regulatory code includes a key expectation for associations to:

“work in partnership with local authorities to identify and provide for the housing related needs of their area.”³⁰

6 The picture elsewhere in the UK

From our brief review of partnership working arrangements in England and Scotland, it is clear that partnership working is as strong a driving force in England and Scotland as it is in Wales, although many of the policy instruments vary.

In England, a key development has been the introduction of Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Introduced in 21 pilot areas in October 2004, these are mechanisms for delivering better local service outcomes through better coordination between central government and local authorities and their partners. The agreements are negotiated between local partners and Government Offices (on behalf of central government) and specify a range of agreed outcomes shared by all delivery partners with associated indicators, targets and funding streams. The LAAs are structured around three themes - children and young people, safer and stronger communities

³⁰ Welsh Assembly Government (2006b:4).

and health and older people. An early evaluation of the pilot scheme³¹, published in June 2005, is largely positive about the initiative, and the pilot project was extended to cover 40 local authority areas in 2005/06.

LAA's follow on the heels of a number of other more specific area-based or themed partnership initiatives. Most significantly since 2000, as part of a national strategy on neighbourhood renewal, the Government has encouraged local authorities to establish Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) based, wherever possible, on existing partnerships such as community planning partnerships or Health Action Zone partnerships. Local Strategic Partnerships are intended to bring together local authorities and other service providers, business, voluntary sector and communities, to develop more coordinated approaches to the problems of deprived neighbourhoods. The formation and work of LSPs across England was supported by a Strategic Partnering Taskforce research and development programme, set up by the ODPM which operated between September 2001 to March 2004.

The Gershon Agenda³² establishes challenging targets for English local authorities to realise annual savings of 2.5%. Savings are to be achieved through the standardisation of best practice, partnering, shared/collaborative procurement and the use of market power, and local authorities are required to produce "annual efficiency statements", as are housing associations.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) methodology has been

revised to take into account the need for enhanced efficiency savings and to reflect the increased emphasis on partnership working. One of the key themes, capacity, includes an examination of how effectively local authorities are working with others to enhance their delivery potential. There will also be a focus on the use of resources at corporate and service level. For example, one of the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for housing inspections includes a range of questions on managing value for money through partnerships, procurement and taking a long-term view.

The Lyons Inquiry³³ into the future of local government in England makes a number of far reaching recommendations, including extending the power of local government in relation to the delivery of economic, social and environmental well-being. Another recommendation relates specifically to strengthening the ability of local government to influence partners by introducing a statutory duty on local agencies to co-operate with local government.

The notion of "double devolution" as set out by David Milliband³⁴ (the former Minister for Communities and Local Government), sees the further devolution of power to local government being dependent upon local government playing a more strategic role within their communities and sharing power with individuals and communities, in particular third sector (voluntary) organisations. Double devolution will require:

- additional openness from local authorities to the views and perspectives of third sector organisations when developing strategies;

³¹ ODPM (2005).

³² Gershon, P. (2004).

³³ Lyons, M. (2006).

³⁴ David Milliband (2006) Speech by David Milliband entitled "Empowerment not abandonment" to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations annual conference. 21st February 2006.

- the provision of longer-term contracts to private and voluntary sector providers, where government has provided funding on a three-year basis to the local authority;
- when developing and letting contracts, setting out the outcomes to be delivered, rather than the detailed outputs; and
- where agencies work across professional silos, simplified reporting arrangements.

The idea of double devolution is considered to be a guiding theme for the third term of the Labour Government, tackling a power gap by giving local people more control over their lives.

Policy developments in Scotland have also reinforced the importance of partnership working. The same requirements for local authorities to cooperate with partners in developing and implementing a local community plan are in place. Local Outcome Agreements have been introduced across six policy areas - educational attainment, education and children's services, adult literacy, rough sleeping, community care for the elderly and the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund. The agreements, similar to Local Area Agreements in England, are outcome-focused and are intended to link national priorities with local service outcomes, whilst allowing local authorities and their community planning partners the flexibility to develop local solutions to local problems. A number of Scottish local authorities are also considering sharing senior managers and delivering services across two or more neighbouring authorities in an effort to improve governance arrangements and reduce overheads³⁵.

7 Conclusions

The policy agenda in Wales is increasingly placing emphasis on local authorities working closely with partners, including housing associations, to agree priorities, deliver services that are accessible and sensitive to what people want and need, achieve key outcomes, and to realise efficiency savings.

Potentially, there are a large number of ways local authorities and housing associations can work together, both strategically and operationally.

The national policy framework in Wales gives considerable flexibility to local authorities to meet the broad requirements around partnership working as they see fit. There is no national template for engagement, provided the approach adopted takes into account the views of the local community and partners.

Strategic partnerships are increasingly focussing on the "big picture" themes and issues, such as children and young people, health and social well-being. This increases the importance of key housing agencies, including local authority housing services and housing associations, playing an active part in these partnerships. The forthcoming removal of the requirement on local authorities to develop a Housing Strategy reinforces the importance of housing having a "place at the strategy table".

The Wales Programme for Improvement can potentially provide a bridge between high level, cross-cutting strategies and local service delivery. Revised WPI guidance emphasises the importance of engaging with the community and partners in planning, delivering and monitoring services (within the context of community strategy priorities), although it is up to local

³⁵ Article on www.improvementservice.org.uk website found at the following link http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=180&Itemid=233

authorities and their partners to agree how this should be done.

Although the strategic housing function involves the local authority creating, developing and maintaining positive working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders and partners, the quality of the relationship between a local authority and its partner housing associations determines the effectiveness of the delivery of the strategic housing function.

There is an argument to be made that we are at a critical stage in the development of local authority and housing association relations. The partnership environment is fast moving, and key cross-cutting issues such as homelessness, tackling anti-social behaviour and housing's contribution to the local economy, make it even more important that local authorities and housing associations work together effectively. The prospect of stock transfer in an increasing number of local authorities requires them

to have strengthened their strategic housing function and clearly identify how they will work in partnership with the transfer association and the other housing associations in their local area. This issue underpinned the recent call from the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru for the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the WLGA, to produce guidance on the delivery of the strategic housing function in Wales³⁶.

Partnership working is more important than it has ever been, but within the context of greater freedom and flexibility at the local level. The need for different relationships and the increased emphasis on networking and brokerage will require new skills and competencies, as well as new partnership models. Therefore, the need for a form of agreement between the local authority and key partners involved in the delivery of the strategic housing function is possibly greater today than it was in 1998.

³⁶ Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru (2005).

Chapter 3 Partnership working: a literature review

1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature relating to partnership working. There is a large and diverse literature on partnership working and it was agreed with the Steering Group that the review would be limited in its scope, focused on areas of particular relevance to CHAs. In addition, the review concentrated predominantly on sources aimed at practitioner audiences.

In spite of the diversity of the literature, it was possible to identify four common themes which are explored below.

2 The policy context

A number of sources, mainly academic, focus on the history of the development of public service partnerships, either across the public sector as a whole³⁷ or in relation to specific types of partnerships³⁸. Many of the sources aimed at practitioner audiences, which focus more on the immediate policy context, identify a range of reasons for partnership working, including:

- to tackle multi-dimensional problems, such as a poor local environment, and/or social deprivation;
- to better integrate services;
- to better understand a problem or the needs/preferences of people;
- to access funding;
- to get the most out of existing resources/realise efficiencies;
- to spread risks;
- to develop more innovative ways of working; and
- there is a statutory requirement.

³⁷ Hastings, A. & A. McArthur (1995).

³⁸ Hastings, A. (1996).

³⁹ Audit Commission (1998).

⁴⁰ CIPFA (1994).

⁴¹ Arnstein, S. (1969).

⁴² Wilcox, D. (2004).

The list is not exhaustive and different partnerships clearly give weight to different objectives.

3 Defining partnerships

Just as there are a myriad of partnerships, there are many different ways of defining and categorising partnerships. Many definitions focus on the legal basis or organisational structure for partnerships. For example, the Audit Commission (1998) identifies four main types of organisational structure for partnerships:

- i) separate organisation;
- ii) “virtual” organisation;
- iii) co-locating staff from partner organisations; and
- iv) steering group without dedicated staff resources.³⁹

Some definitions focus on the purpose of partnerships, the most common distinction being between business and social partnerships. For example, although the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants' (CIPFA) categorisation of partnerships has a number of dimensions, the two principal types of partnership identified are business, where the objectives are commercial, and social, where the objectives are social and economic⁴⁰.

Other definitions focus on the degree of partnership, although this is expressed in different ways. Some sources refer to Arnstein's⁴¹ ladder of participation where the most non-participative form of partnership is described as “manipulative”

and the most participative as “citizen control”⁴². In her work, Arnstein defined partnership as the lower degree of citizen control, where power is redistributed through negotiation and where planning and decision making responsibilities are shared.

The Employers’ Organisation identifies five different types of partnership from superficial co-existence to full co-ownership⁴³. CIPFA, on the other hand, refers to the “degree or depth of partnership” from the communications-only model, where parties recognise that they have a role to play in relation to each other, but only communicate with each other, to a full merger where the parties form a collective resource pool. CIPFA recommends partnerships should be mapped according to two axes - one covering the social/business dimension and the other the relative depth/shalowness of the partnership.

4 Requirements for effective partnership working

Many sources focus on the requirements for effective partnership working. At a general level, similar requirements emerge:

- commitment;
- shared goals;
- cultural fit;
- SMART objectives/targets;
- sufficient resources/capacity;
- clear roles/responsibilities; and
- an appropriate structure.

Some sources focus on the “softer” requirements of effective partnership working such as the behaviour, attitudes and style of key players. Others concentrate on the “harder” practicalities

such as meeting necessary legal and regulatory requirements, keeping proper records, setting up an agreement or contract and having a properly constituted partnership board.

Many sources aim to be of practical assistance by including good practice checklists and examples of good practice. For example, the CIPFA report includes as an appendix a checklist covering:

- the pre-partnership phase;
- the trial period;
- commitment to the partnership;
- making the partnership work; and
- looking to the future.

The Audit Commission has also developed a diagnostic checklist based on the life-cycle of a partnership, from deciding to go into partnership, to reviewing success⁴⁴.

A partnership assessment tool developed by the Nuffield Institute for assessing Strategic Partnerships in England is based on six key partnership principles:

- recognising and accepting the need for partnership;
- developing clarity and realism of purpose;
- ensuring commitment and ownership;
- developing and maintaining trust;
- creating clear and robust partnership arrangements; and
- monitoring, measuring and learning.⁴⁵

A 2004 report on working together by the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru recommends that housing organisations should develop Housing Partnership Codes that set out the parameters for working with partners⁴⁶. These parameters, which reflect recognised good practice, should

⁴³ Employers’ Organisation for Local Government (nd).

⁴⁴ Audit Commission (1998).

⁴⁵ Nuffield Institute for Health (2003).

⁴⁶ Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru (2004).

cover issues such as the delegation of powers, information sharing and capacity building.

Some good practice guidance on partnership working is more service specific, for example, the ODPM (in partnership with the Housing Corporation, National Housing Federation and Local Government Association) has issued guidance on nomination agreements and exclusions, as an aid to joint working on homelessness⁴⁷.

5 The extent and effectiveness of partnership working

A number of sources have looked at the extent and effectiveness of partnership working. The Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru report on joint working on housing-related issues in Wales found that although organisations said that working with partners was commonplace, most joint working was informal and links with health and economic development agencies were particularly weak.

A review of Local Housing Strategies in Wales found a range of weaknesses in relation to their development, including inadequate engagement with key partners⁴⁸. Indeed, one of the original driving forces behind the introduction of CHAs was a desire to see greater cooperation between local authorities and housing associations on housing issues, in particular on homelessness.

In England, there have also been concerns about the effectiveness of cooperation in tackling homelessness. An evaluation of all local authorities' homelessness strategies by Housing Quality Network Services (HQNS) found evidence that housing associations

had not always been involved closely in developing the homelessness strategies⁴⁹.

A report on partnership working in the public sector in Wales, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and produced by Cardiff University, also found a large number of partnerships.⁵⁰ They estimate that, on average, local authorities might be involved in as many as 92 local partnerships. They also found considerable frustration and disappointment with partnership arrangements. The principal problems were:

- conflicting expectations;
- uneven distribution of labour between partners;
- lack of clear powers and responsibilities; and
- partnerships are short-lived and poorly resourced.

A Wales Audit Office report on regeneration in Wales⁵¹ has also found weaknesses in how agencies are working together on regeneration issues. Findings included:

- limited coordination;
- partnership arrangements at local authority level have not been rationalised;
- the number of different strategies are a burden, and a barrier to setting effective priorities;
- short-term funding works against long term planning;
- partnership working with the private sector is weak; and
- where there isn't a clear strategy, local authorities shape their priorities to fit the funding available.

⁴⁷ ODPM (2004f).

⁴⁸ Report to the Welsh Assembly Government Social Justice and Regeneration Committee 16th January 2005.

⁴⁹ ODPM (2004e).

⁵⁰ Bristow, G. et al (2003).

⁵¹ Wales Audit Office (2005).

The Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru⁵² found three main barriers to effective partnership working on housing within Wales:

- resources;
- time and timescales; and
- differing agendas.

Two additional weaknesses identified by many studies outside Wales are lack of commitment and poor monitoring of performance/outcomes.

6 Conclusion

There is a considerable amount of published material on partnership working and the

general requirements for effective practice are well established. Several comprehensive checklists and toolkits to help organisations assess the strengths and weaknesses of their own arrangements are available.

There is relatively little information on the different approaches being adopted in Wales, especially in relation to housing-related partnerships. Given the multiplicity of partnerships that exist across public services, it is important to have a method for defining/categorising approaches, and also a framework for evaluating their effectiveness.

⁵² Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru (2004).

Chapter 4 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Community Housing Agreements

1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the various stages of the research and concludes by providing an evaluation of CHAs which considers how well they achieved their original purpose.

2 Research findings

The findings are contained within three sub-sections. These are:

- areas where CHAs are used;
- areas where CHAs are not used; and
- issues relating to partnership working.

2.1 Areas where CHAs are used

This sub-section, which focuses on areas where a CHA is in place, sets out the findings of the research in relation to:

- the use of CHAs;
- the reasons for introducing a CHA;
- the types of CHA;
- the effectiveness of CHAs;

- the strengths of CHAs;
- the weaknesses of CHAs; and
- the impact of CHAs on homelessness.

2.1.1 The Use of CHAs

At the time the research was conducted, eight local authorities (36%) had a CHA in place. These were Cardiff, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan.

More than half of the CHAs were introduced in the late 1990s and in the early years of the new century (see Table 1 below), within a few years of the Welsh National Social Landlords' Forum recommending their adoption and issuing broad guidance on the format agreements should take. The Vale of Glamorgan Council and Newydd Housing Association signed the first CHA in early 1999.⁵³

Table 1. Period when CHA introduced

Period CHA introduced	Number of CHAs
Before 2000	3
2000-2002	2
2003 -2004	2
2005	1
Total	8

⁵³ Cartref (1999).

2.1.2 Reasons for introducing a CHA

Two primary reasons were given for having a CHA:

- their use had been recommended by the Welsh Assembly Government; and
- they can provide a useful framework or structure for working with housing associations.

A small number of local authorities emphasised reasons specific to the individual authority for having a CHA in place. Such reasons included:

- to make it easier to work together on issues like homelessness; and
- to maximise the input of housing associations into strategic development and service planning.

In one local authority, the recently developed CHA is intended to strengthen the strategic approach to meeting the area's housing needs at a time of considerable housing demand and need pressures.

In one local authority, it was stated that the CHA had been introduced to,

“replace the Strategic Housing Agreement... and in recognition of the fact that the housing association had a greater role to play than previously in contributing to the delivery of the Council's housing aims and objectives and it was viewed as an opportunity for the association to be drawn closer to the council.”

2.1.3 Types of CHA

Of the eight local authorities where a CHA was in place, six provided the report authors with copies of the agreement to review. The results of the analysis are provided in paragraphs 2.1.3(a) to 2.1.3(i).

The guidance issued in 1998 by the Welsh National Social Landlords' Forum was very

general. The template agreement itself, which amounts to less than two pages, is limited to who the parties should be, their respective roles, how the agreement should be monitored, reviewed and terminated, and monitoring, liaison and consultation arrangements, resources and contacts. The substance of the agreement is left entirely to the discretion of local authorities and their partners and is to be included in an attached schedule. It was envisaged that the schedule would cover both strategic and operational partnership issues and be action-based. The agreement would be for three years, but the schedule would be reviewed and up-dated on an annual basis. The schedule is to be viewed:

“as a performance plan in terms of the best value regime”.⁵⁴

2.1.3(a) Format of CHAs

Most of the CHAs closely follow the model CHA template, covering the parties to the agreement and the terms, supported by an action-based schedule. There are, however, a couple of exceptions. Two local authorities' CHAs include additional information on:

- context;
- the council's objectives and priorities;
- the council's commitments to housing associations; and
- the council's expectations of housing associations.

2.1.3(b) Parties to CHAs

In six local authorities, the CHAs are joint agreements with all the main housing associations operating within the local authority area.

In one local authority, the CHA is with one local housing association, which the Council regard as their major housing association partner. All other housing

⁵⁴ Welsh National Social Landlords Forum (1998:4).

associations operating in the locality were not party to a CHA.

In another local authority area, the Council has separate agreements with the two major locally based housing associations.

Local Authority 1

In this area, positive working relationships exist between the local authority and all housing associations and the authority has a CHA with one locally based association. Each has a good understanding of respective roles and responsibilities and the understanding and appreciation of the role of housing associations has been seen to increase recently.

The CHA was seen by participants as effective in formalising joint working arrangements between the authority and the housing association. The agreement identifies:

- key areas where partnership working is required;
- officers from both agencies with responsibility for these activities;
- the regularity they meet; and
- a framework for monitoring the quality of partnership working between the housing function of the council and the housing association.

Both the authority and the housing association reported the weakness of the CHA why its limitation to housing services and not being regarded as a corporate agreement.

All housing associations which operate in the locality enjoy positive working relations with the authority, particularly the housing function, and the CHA itself was not regarded as a major contributory factor to changes in the quality of partnership working in the locality. Other factors, such as the rise of affordable housing on the corporate agenda, the role of the local authority in determining the use of Social Housing Grant and increasing homelessness pressures experienced by the local authority, were seen as major contributory factors in improving the quality of partnership working. The CHA has contributed little to the delivery of services to homeless people in the locality.

2.1.3(c) Roles of the parties to CHAs

Most of the CHAs adopt the roles set out in the model, for example:

- the local authority is required to produce an annual Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP)⁵⁵ which considers housing issues across all sectors and tenures;
- the HSOP is to include reference to the council's strategic planning documents as set out in an Appendix to the agreement along with other relevant corporate strategies and policies;
- the local authority will establish the housing and community needs within its area in partnership with the housing association(s) and other agencies;
- the local authority will promote the involvement of the housing association(s) in the development of all relevant community development initiatives both with the local authority and in partnership with external agencies; and
- the housing association will assist the Council in meeting its statutory

⁵⁵ The HSOP, introduced by the Welsh Office, was a forerunner of the Local Housing Strategy.

obligations in accordance with the agreement on the terms set out in the schedule with reference to joint working, development and community initiatives.

One local authority expands on these roles within the agreement itself, for example, it refers to the authority's wider corporate strategic planning arrangements.

In two local authorities, the CHAs also include details of the existing commitments of partners to the agreement. One local authority's commitments cover nominations, advice, joint working, staff development and training, housing management, development and benefits. The second local authority's CHA commitments cover twenty-seven different topics/issues. As a consequence, both local authorities' CHAs are some twenty pages long (excluding the attached schedules/action plans). This is compared to some three pages for the other CHAs. In the CHAs of both these local authorities, the schedules are also more selective, focusing on new actions required, for example, including eleven actions/tasks compared with sixty-eight in another CHA.

2.1.3(d) Duration, termination and renewal of CHAs

The duration of the agreements varied from one to five years. In one local authority area, the duration of the CHA was for one year, in three areas, it was for three years and in a further two, it was for five years. All were subject to annual review and three months notice of termination.

All refer to the need to observe an agreed arbitration service, but only two refer to specific arbitration arrangements (the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru service).

2.1.3(e) Monitoring CHAs

All CHAs include arrangements for monitoring the agreement. Two of the CHAs include a commitment for partners to meet on a quarterly basis, two on a bi-annual basis and one to meet quarterly for zoned housing associations and bi-annually for non-zoned housing associations.

In the remaining local authority area which had the most recently agreed CHA, there is a commitment to establishing a Monitoring and Review Group, but the agreement does not specify how often the group will meet. This local authority's CHA also sets the monitoring arrangements within the context of a broader communications framework.

2.1.3(f) Liaison and consultation

All six CHAs closely replicate the liaison and consultation arrangements set out in the model CHA.

2.1.3(g) Resources committed to CHAs

All six closely replicate the section on resources committed to the agreement in the model CHA.

2.1.3(h) Additional terms included in CHAs

One local authority's CHA includes sections on basic principles and equal opportunities.

2.1.3(i) The schedules attached to CHAs

There are differences between the schedules reflecting the differences between agreements. As mentioned above, two CHAs include existing commitments in the main body of the agreement and so the schedules take more the form of targeted action plans. This is particularly the case with one of these local authorities where the partners worked together for two years to develop the agreement, including many of the commitments within it. The schedule is then used to capture the actions required to move the agreement on.

Local Authority 2

In this area, a CHA has recently been signed by the local authority and all housing associations operating in the area, following an extensive period of development. A matrix has also been devised to measure associations' performance against the CHA, with the intention that performance will be linked to selection of the local authority's preferred partners for development.

The CHA is still predominantly housing-focused, as opposed to corporately owned, (and relationships between associations and authority departments other than housing are very variable), and there is still a need for the addition of a detailed SMART action plan for the delivery of CHA objectives, and for robust regular monitoring of agreed actions. However, all parties agree the development of the CHA has already had a major impact in terms of improved performance and, crucially, in building a more trusting and equal relationship, and that it has been a genuine attempt at partnership working.

All parties felt CHAs were an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between associations and authorities.

In two other local authorities, the schedules to the CHAs are much more comprehensive, cover a wide range of operational and strategic areas and clearly indicate the issue, target action, responsible officer(s) and timescales. Some of the actions are allocated to local authority staff from other functions.

In the remaining two local authorities, the CHAs schedules are much vaguer, and do not clearly specify the tasks, responsibilities or timescales. For example:

Local authority A

- The council will consult and liaise with local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) over potential partnerships in relation to regeneration strategies in both the public and private sectors.

- The council and local RSLs agree to use this CHA as a vehicle to explore opportunities for joint working in the following areas:
 - access to social housing
 - tenant participation
 - sustainable communities
 - relationship with other unitary authority departments.

Local authority B

- The parties will establish a mechanism whereby the council and partner RSLs consider the processing of Housing Benefit on a regular basis.
- The council would like to explore further with partner RSLs how they can assist the council in meeting its duty to accommodate statutory and non-statutory homeless households.

Local Authority 3

In this area, an early CHA was signed, largely at the instigation of the local housing associations. Associations felt the CHA had served a useful purpose at the time in focusing attention on the fact that they wanted to be involved, and on how they could be involved. However, the CHA contained no specific targets, and was never reviewed or monitored.

All parties agreed the CHA had, initially, influenced activities and stimulated many examples of joint working with the authority housing function, but was seen as a housing document, and had had little impact corporately. The CHA has now fallen into disuse, and has been superseded by other authority strategic fora, with operational engagement on an issue-by-issue basis.

The quality of partnership working between the authority and associations is now generally good, with associations involved in a wide range of strategic fora and operational arrangements. However, associations felt there was, as yet, little corporate understanding in the authority of what associations could contribute.

There were mixed views on whether CHAs were an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working. On balance, opinion seemed in favour of some sort of agreement linked to the authority's high level strategies, involving a wider range of housing-related bodies than housing associations, and authority departments beyond housing, with clear targets for delivery of agreed objectives.

The original purpose of the CHA was for the schedule to the agreement to be a live document containing targets for the local authority and housing association, which would be monitored regularly and its content reviewed and amended on a frequent basis. In one local authority, it was reported the content had not changed significantly over recent years and that monitoring arrangements were limited by a lack of performance measures. In another local authority, where the impetus for the development of the CHA had come from the housing associations rather than the local authority, the CHA contained a limited action plan, had never been monitored, reviewed or amended since its development.

The variation in terms of the content of the schedule, the quality of the schedule and the number of parties to the schedule would suggest the original intention was not clearly understood.

The case studies demonstrate in areas where there was a greater investment of resources in the development of the CHA, and in particular the schedule to the agreement, the more effective the CHA was considered to be in the longer term. In areas where the CHA was in effect an "off the shelf" version of the model agreement, they were considered to have the least long-term impact.

2.1.4 The effectiveness of CHAs

In areas where a CHA was in place, local authorities and housing associations were asked about whether CHAs had helped improve partnership working and their continuing usefulness. Six of the eight local authorities with CHAs in place said the agreements had improved partnership working, one said the agreements had made no difference and one local authority said it was too early to judge.

Those local authorities which stated partnership working had improved as a result of the introduction of the CHA gave the following reasons:

- the CHA provides a framework/structure, brings more discipline to relationships;
- the CHA improves relationships, builds trust and understanding of each others organisations;
- the CHA was a spring-board for the development of other partnership arrangements/agreements, for example, common registers;
- the CHA brings together existing agreements and helps to ensure there are no significant gaps;
- the CHA encouraged a focus on the whole range of partnership issues (not just nominations and development); and
- the CHA provided an opportunity to address issues in a less defensive way.

In one local authority, it was suggested that, although the CHA had initially been a catalyst to improving partnership working, improvements in joint working subsequently tended to happen through operational issues not within the scope of the CHA. Overall, it was felt that the CHA had not had a significant impact.

Three of the eight local authorities with a CHA in place tended to view the agreement as a framework for drawing together and formalising existing agreements and partnership arrangements, rather than a vehicle for driving change. This is despite the initial improvement in relations and partnership working which resulted from the development of the CHAs.

The one local authority which stated the CHA hadn't improved joint working suggested that relations had been good

beforehand and the agreement had just formalised arrangements.

Housing associations were divided over whether the CHA had improved partnership working. Positive comments included:

"Our association was perceived as one of the outsiders - not one of the locals. The CHA has almost forced our involvement with X."

"The CHA has changed attitudes to joint working. The association committed time and resources to participating with the local authority. The CHA won't make any difference without this commitment."

"CHA gives clarity, sets out clear arrangements for working together."

Alternative views included:

"It has had no effect whatsoever. Produced a lot of nice publicity when signed. Nothing has happened since."

"CHA was a reflection of a relationship that was already there, not an attempt to improve things. CHA was just a stamp on a relationship which was already good. CHA doesn't impinge at all."

Housing associations in one local authority area were very positive about the process of producing the CHA. For example:

"There are examples of trust and positive relationships (e.g. disabled access register) which could be the forerunner of a common waiting list. Developments before the protocol have paved the way."

"...codifies a lot of existing relationships. Producing the CHA was a very useful process - it tackled some thorny issues."

Local authorities with CHAs in place for more than a year were divided about how useful they still were. Roughly half said the agreements had become less useful and had effectively been replaced by other developments. It was reported that CHAs

had been effective catalysts for driving improvements in partnership working in the late 1990s/early 2000s when relations between local authorities and housing associations were more difficult, but that the partnership agenda has moved on.

For example:

"initially [the CHA was] very useful in terms of reference for joint working and joint policy development, but over the last 18 months-2 years its effectiveness has diminished because of the amount of change that has taken place."

"the local authority is still working with housing associations and moving forward despite there being no CHA meetings over the last 12 months."

"the CHA has been superseded by a range of other partnerships we've been encouraged to set up with RSLs."

However, a number of local authorities remained positive about the on-going value of the agreements. For example:

"The CHA is a really useful tool. Everyone knows what they are working for and it helps them deliver."

"The CHAs are helpful. They bring us and RSLs closer, bring discipline and a framework and focus on things we might otherwise overlook."

In just two of the seven local authorities with agreements in place for more than a year, the CHA was viewed as having brought changes to the authorities or housing associations' priorities or ways of working. However, one local authority saw the process of developing the CHA as one of introducing change and improvement to partnership working arrangements and providing:

"an opportunity to have a real in-depth discussion of issues that have been festering for years and get everyone around the table to discuss common ways forward."

Local Authority 4

In this area, a CHA has been in place with the main housing associations operating in the area since 2003. The CHA was introduced to provide a formal structure and working agreement between the local authority and the housing associations and is perceived by the authority as a good working tool to deliver the local housing strategy. In general, partnership working with housing associations was seen by the authority as very effective.

Views on the effectiveness of partnership working varied between the individual housing associations, but it was generally seen as reasonably effective, particularly in relation to the strategic housing function. The CHA was seen by housing association partners as an important driver of partnership working in its early days and as one mechanism by which the authority established its strategic role. Significant progress was felt to have been made on strategic issues identified in the CHA, but less so on operational issues. Resources to effectively implement the content of the CHA were felt to be lacking on both sides.

The CHA aimed to be a corporate document, bringing non-housing sections of the council to the table, with the Strategic Housing Forum as the main mechanism by which this is to be achieved. Views as to the success of this varied, with the associations seeing the agreement as being predominantly housing-focused. The impact of the CHA on operational issues around homelessness was felt to be fairly limited.

All parties felt some sort of agreement was appropriate for the future to ensure that strategic priorities were delivered, but the CHA model was somewhat outdated.

The concept of local area agreements was felt by the authority to be useful in considering what a future agreement might look like.

Housing associations were divided on how useful they found CHAs. Four housing associations said the CHA to which it was a party had been effective:

“It was a catalyst - not a bible but a framework. It comes down to how proactively you develop it.”

“It opened doors for us.”

Five housing associations said that the CHA to which they were a party was not effective:

“As a document, it’s completely irrelevant.”

“On its own, it is not effective, although it started regular meetings which have built up relationships.”

“We have good relations anyway and so isn’t necessary.”

The case studies demonstrate where CHAs followed the original intention of the model agreement and the schedule to the CHA was used as a performance plan which was regularly monitored and updated, they were regarded as more effective by both local authorities and housing associations, than those where the schedule was of poor quality.

2.1.5 Strengths of CHA

In areas where a CHA was in place, local authority and housing association staff were asked to identify the strengths of the CHA. These varied from one locality to another, depending on the quality of the CHA itself. The strengths of CHAs were generally regarded as:

- the initial stimulus it gave to partnership working initiatives;
- the value it provided as a mechanism for identifying problems and developing solutions to them;
- its usefulness as a framework to manage relations between the council and the housing association;

- the opportunity it provided to review performance against the delivery of shared objectives;
- the role the agreement itself played in the development of the authority’s strategic housing role; and
- the opportunity it provided housing associations to get more involved in the development and delivery of the Local Housing Strategy.

In one local authority, which had only recently completed the development of a CHA, the strengths were regarded as:

- the role it played in promoting a focus on the whole range of partnership issues;
- the role the development process had played in enabling issues to be addressed in a less defensive way and a culture of genuine partnership to be developed; and
- it concentrated all parties’ attention on considering their processes for delivering on the key issues within the agreement.

In another local authority area, the CHA was seen to have value within the local authority in demonstrating the importance of the strategic housing role.

2.1.6 Weaknesses of CHAs

In areas where a CHA was in place, local authority and housing association staff were asked to identify the weaknesses of the CHA. A number were mentioned:

- lack of buy-in/commitment to CHAs from other Local Authority departments such as planning and economic development;
- overlap with other partnership arrangements;
- lack of capacity to monitor/keep up the momentum;

- agreement is too broad, lacks focus;
- not dynamic, not a strategic tool for improvement and so gets dated;
- good relationships do not depend on an agreement - will only be useful if relations are poor;
- is too focussed on housing relationships - relations with housing associations need to be wider;
- is a top-down approach, too easily becomes yet another thing to do;
- length of time taken to develop the agreement itself meant it had in part been overtaken by events;
- contained no specific targets, so there was no clarity about what the parties were seeking to achieve;
- signed off at senior officer level and operational staff further down the hierarchy of organisations were not aware of its content; and
- quite aspirational in some areas.

In a number of local authority areas, it was agreed the CHA had improved partnership working between the housing association and the local authority housing function, but not with the local authority in general.

2.1.7 Impact of CHAs on Homelessness

In the case study localities where there was a CHA in place, local authority and housing association staff were asked to identify what impact the introduction of a CHA had on the ways in which housing associations assist the local authority to meet its homelessness obligations and its wider impact on homeless people.

Generally, the impact of the CHA on the delivery of services to homeless people and on the level of assistance offered to local

authorities by housing associations was regarded as minimal.

In all of the case study authorities, regardless of whether there was a CHA in place, it was reported over the last five years the local authority and housing associations had increased co-operation in relation to the provision of accommodation to people who are homeless. In all areas, housing associations were seen as having a greater understanding of the local authority's statutory duties and the need to share the statutory burden with the local authority. In localities where a CHA was in place, the CHA was not felt to be instrumental in this.

However, in one local authority which had recently developed a CHA, the agreement incorporated arrangements for the local authority to monitor the performance of individual housing associations in relation to key aspects of their work, including lettings to homeless households. It was reported that:

“the CHA, and especially the use of the performance matrix, is starting to have a big impact ... on housing management issues giving them a much higher profile, and that the results are beginning to be seen in terms of improved performance, particularly in the areas of nominations, exclusions and assistance with homelessness.”

2.2 Areas where CHAs are not used

This sub-section, which focuses on areas where a CHA was not in place, sets out the findings of the research in relation to the:

- reasons for not using CHAs; and
- planned introduction of CHAs.

Table 2 provides information about the use of CHAs and the intentions of local

authorities to introduce CHAs. Thirteen local authorities did not have a CHA in place.⁵⁶

Table 2. The use of CHAs

Position in Relation to CHA	No. of Local Authorities
CHA in place	8
CHA planned	6
No CHA planned	7
Total	21

2.2.1 Reasons for not introducing a CHA

Seven local authorities that did not have a CHA in place stated they had no plans to introduce one and did not feel there was a need to. The reasons stated for this varied. Some local authorities stated CHAs had dropped off the national agenda, others stated that partnership working arrangements with housing associations

were effective and therefore, there was no need to formalise them with a CHA. For example:

“we started working on one 4 years ago. Before it was formally adopted, it dropped off everyone’s list of priorities, and it was never finalised.”

“a community housing agreement would only codify what we do anyway.”

Local Authority 5

There is no CHA in place, but the local authority and housing associations enjoy particularly positive working relationships. This could be related to a range of issues identified during the interviews:

- culture - both the local authority and housing associations are not large organisations and have always needed to rely upon partnership working to achieve organisational objectives;
- personal relationships - there is limited staff turnover and staff movement between the local authority and the housing association is common. This has enabled key staff to develop long established relationships based upon mutual trust and respect; and
- clarity - both organisations have a good understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the other agency, helped by involving key councillors on the Board of the association.

The relations between planning and housing associations had improved recently and this can be attributed to the increasing prominence of affordable housing and homelessness on the corporate political agenda.

Whilst all participants recognise a CHA would add formality to the relationship between the local authority and housing associations, it was felt that it would not, in itself, improve partnership working between the council and housing associations. Some participants consider the development of the CHA would act as a distraction, diverting scarce resources from delivering partnership working to developing the agreement.

⁵⁶ The researchers were unable to undertake an interview in Gwynedd, the 22nd local authority.

One authority said they did not feel the time was right to introduce a CHA because they were pursuing stock transfer and, if this were to go ahead, they would need to radically review all their agreements.

The key requirements for effective partnership working were seen as having shared objectives and a relationship built on openness and trust. Many local authorities felt that having a formal agreement did not add anything and, in some ways, directed resources away from the delivery of partnership working initiatives. CHAs were seen by some as introducing “unnecessary bureaucracy” and taking staff resources away from other priorities when the strategic capacity of many local authorities was limited.

There was also some scepticism about the benefits a CHA would bring. Both local authorities and housing associations saw a danger that the agreement could quickly become out of date and remain on the shelf. However, one local authority chief housing officer who was fairly sceptical about CHAs said that they were planning to introduce a common housing register and that this could possibly form the basis of a CHA.

2.2.2 Planned introduction of a CHA

A number of authorities stated they were considering introducing a CHA in future (see Table 2 above). Two local authorities reported they were working on draft agreements at the time of the research and a further four stated they were actively considering introducing an agreement.

However, there was a sense that introducing a CHA has been on the “things to do” list for some time for a number of local authorities and that the commitment has frequently been overtaken by other

priorities. A number of local authorities said that although they had periodically looked at developing a CHA, no-one was pushing them to do so and so it kept “slipping off the agenda”. Also, CHAs were seen by many local authorities as largely a vehicle for “tidying up” existing partnership arrangements, which may explain the lack of priority attached to their development. Where the development of a CHA was being actively driven forward at the time of the research, it was because a formal commitment had been made to do so. In one case, the commitment was included in the housing strategy; in another, it had flowed from a Best Value review.

In one local authority that enjoyed positive partnership working with housing associations, a draft of an agreement has been in the process of development for a number of years, but had not been finalised or signed. Both local authority and housing association staff stated that if partnership working was not as effective as it is in the locality, then the priority attached to finalising and signing the agreement would have been greater. Concerns were also expressed about how developing and implementing a CHA would divert resources away from partnership working activities.

In another local authority that planned to introduce a CHA, external pressures such as increased land values, the lack of affordable homes and the need to support vulnerable applicants/tenants had increased the importance of working closely with partner housing associations. However, concerns about the resources required to develop, introduce and monitor a CHA had meant these plans had not been taken further.

Local Authority 6

This authority does not have a CHA in place. Working relationships between the local authority and housing associations were described as positive in relation to community planning and housing. However, partnership working with other non-housing functions of the local authority was less well developed, although acceptance from various parts of the authority that housing associations should be around the table is gradually growing.

The authority has a housing association liaison group which meets on a quarterly basis and has an informal agenda based around issues of mutual importance, currently homelessness and choice-based lettings. These meetings do not constitute a formal mechanism to review joint working.

The authority and its partner housing associations are committed to developing a CHA in the future. The main barrier to developing a CHA has been the amount of time the authority considers it would take to develop an effective CHA and the lack of resources within the strategic housing function to take it forward.

Both the authority and housing associations would like a future CHA to support joint working across the authority and see this as a priority area. The authority sees both plan rationalisation and the context of possible stock transfers in a number of local authorities as an opportunity to embed any future agreement more effectively within the corporate body of the local authority. The term community housing agreement was questioned by both the authority and housing associations as to whether it created a barrier to achieving corporate 'buy-in'.

The authority considered a CHA would give partnership working some substance and would help define the range of current and potential joint working arrangements. The fact the authority has a number of housing association consortia working in its area is acknowledged as a factor that will need to be taken into consideration in developing any future agreement.

There is a clear recognition from all parties that partnership working is about relationships and people, irrespective of whether a formal agreement is in place or not.

2.3 Issues relating to partnership working

This sub-section, which focuses on all areas irrespective of whether or not a CHA was in place at the time of the research, sets out the findings of the research in relation to:

- the impact of CHAs on the extent and effectiveness of partnership working; and
- CHAs and the future.

2.3.1 The impact of CHAs on the extent and effectiveness of partnership working

Local authorities and housing association staff members who participated in

the telephone interviews were asked similar questions about the extent and effectiveness of partnership working at a local level, regardless of whether a CHA was in place or not.

The interviews showed that, in recent years, there would appear to have been an increase in the amount of partnership activity at both strategic and operational levels.

Both practitioners and stakeholders attributed the increase in partnership working at a local level to a range of reasons, such as:

- the increased role of the local authority in determining the use of and managing the Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme;
- the increasing political priority attached to the delivery of affordable housing;
- increasing homelessness pressures as a result of changes to the priority need categories;
- an increased willingness from housing associations to accommodate homeless people;
- greater respective understanding and a greater appreciation of the roles of housing associations at a local level;
- greater direction given by the Welsh Assembly Government;
- a well-funded strategic housing function;
- local authorities' greater willingness to engage with housing associations;
- housing associations' greater willingness to discuss and concede issues; and
- more equality in the partnership between the local authority housing function and housing associations.

Partnership working was not regarded as being entirely problem free, with local authority and housing association staff identifying sets of factors that created tensions and made partnership working problematic.

Issues identified by housing association staff were:

- local authorities have the power and so partnerships favour them - they call the tune;
- involvement can be tokenistic, housing associations are brought in at the last minute to validate what the local authority has done;

- there is a lack of strategic leadership from the local authority;
- local authorities focus on the numbers re-housed when there are wider issues such as sustainability; and
- poor connections with wider local authority agenda leading to corporate inconsistencies.

Issues identified by local authority staff were:

- tensions over access to housing association properties, although the development of common registers and choice-based lettings systems seems to be easing some of these problems;
- majority of local authorities said they found it easier to work with locally based HAs. They have better relations, know local needs and are more prepared to be flexible;
- a couple of local authorities said they found the larger housing associations easier to work with as they have more capacity and are less parochial; and
- housing associations can be reluctant to collaborate together in wider partnerships.

Local authority staff, housing association staff and staff from key stakeholder agencies identified a range of strategic and operational partnerships that had developed between local authorities and housing associations over recent years, although the type and strength of partnerships vary across Wales.

In terms of operational arrangements:

- all local authorities have nomination agreements with their housing association partners, except where common housing registers/choice-based lettings systems have superseded the need for nomination arrangements;

- there are common housing registers in 6 local authority areas and they are being considered in 3 other areas;
- a number of local authorities with common housing registers are considering introducing common allocations policies;
- there is a move in several areas towards common choice-based lettings systems;
- a range of other operational agreements were in place, including:
 - exclusion/suspension agreements;
 - lettings plans;
 - joint tenant compacts;
 - Housing Benefit agreements;
 - Service Level Agreements with advice/support/accommodation providers; and
 - Care and Repair agency agreements.

In terms of strategic partnerships, the following were mentioned most frequently:

- Housing Forum (or Partnership/ liaison group);
- Homelessness Forum;
- Black & Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy Group;

- Supporting People Strategy/liaison group; and
- Rural Housing Enablers.

Other strategic groups mentioned included Social Housing Grant (SHG) liaison groups, affordable housing groups, economic development groups and groups targeted at specific needs groups, for example, mental health. In recent years, growth areas for local authority and housing association partnerships at both a strategic and operational level appear to be community safety and area regeneration.

It does seem that local authorities with CHAs (in place for more than 12 months), are slightly more likely to have operational agreements, such as common housing registers, in place (see Tables 3 & 4 below). However, we need to treat these results with caution. The results were gathered in a telephone interview survey, which is not the ideal medium to collect such detailed information and there was some confusion over the definitions of some agreements, for example, lettings plans. Also, we cannot assume it was the CHA that gave rise to these other agreements.

Table 3. Other operational agreements

Operational Agreements	Local authorities where CHA is in place		Local authorities where no CHA is in place	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Common Housing Register	3	5	3	10
Common allocations policy	1	7	1	12
Nominations agreement (including coverage by common housing register)	8	0	13	0
Suspension agreement	4	4	4	9
Tenancy enforcement agreement	2	6	0	13
Joint tenant participation compact	3	5	1	12

Table 4. Operational arrangements where a CHA is either in place or not

Operational Agreements	% of local authorities where agreement is in place and there is a CHA is in place	% of local authorities where agreement is in place and there is no CHA in place
Common Housing Register	38%	27%
Common allocations policy	13%	9%
Nominations agreement (including coverage by common housing register)	100%	100%
Suspension agreement	50%	33%
Tenancy enforcement agreement	25%	0
Joint tenant participation compact	38%	9%

All local authority and housing association staff who participated in the telephone interviews were asked to score the effectiveness of partnership working on a scale of one to ten. The mean scores show little variation by whether or not there is a CHA in place. Local authorities rated the effectiveness of both their strategic and operational partnerships at 7, regardless of whether or not they had a CHA in place. Housing associations that were party to a CHA rated both strategic and operational partnership working with local authorities at 7, compared to a mean average score of 6 for housing associations that were not party to a CHA. It should be noted that the range of scores for housing associations where there was not a CHA in place was very wide (from 1 to 9).

Eight housing associations, which were party to a CHA with one local authority, worked with at least one other local authority where there was not a CHA in place. Of the five housing associations able to give a view on whether a CHA made a positive difference to their relationship, two thought it did and three said they had more positive relationships with local authorities with whom they did not have a CHA.

A mixed picture emerges from this stage of the research. Whilst the extent of partnership working between local authorities and housing associations has increased in recent years, CHAs would appear not to have been a major contributory factor. In areas where a CHA was in place, there would appear to be a slightly greater likelihood of other forms of partnership working agreements being in place. However, the effectiveness of partnership working would not appear to be significantly affected by the presence of a CHA.

2.3.2 CHAs and the future

The majority of practitioners interviewed during the case studies expressed the view that some form of agreement between local authorities and housing associations is required to ensure that:

- a clear focus can be maintained on how housing and housing associations can contribute to the delivery of the Community Plan objectives;
- the contribution of partnerships towards the delivery of shared objectives can be monitored; and
- the relationship between the local authority and the housing association is recognised and formalised.

In a small number of cases, practitioners identified the need for agreements to be wider than the housing association sector, drawing in other key stakeholders to the strategic housing function. Practitioners also sounded cautionary notes about any future agreements. Concerns included:

- recognising that agreements themselves cannot create positive working relationships which rely on mutual respect and a positive view of each party by the other; and
- warning against over-complication, in the light of limited strategic capacity within both local authorities and housing associations.

2.4 Review of the effectiveness of CHAs

The chapter concludes by attempting to establish how effective CHAs have been in practice and whether they constitute a form of agreement that can usefully continue to be applied in Wales. Establishing the effectiveness of CHAs requires consideration of:

- some of the original intentions of the model CHA;
- how the agreements have been implemented; and
- other factors that could have influenced their use and effectiveness.

Discussion will focus on each of the following areas:

- the implementation of CHAs;
- the extent that the agreements achieved corporate ownership;
- the extent to which CHAs incorporated schedules which could be considered performance plans; and
- the impact of CHAs on partnership working.

2.4.1 The implementation of CHAs

The fact that CHAs are not widely used would suggest practitioners in local authority and housing association sectors do not consider them to be particularly relevant to their circumstances. However, the limited use of CHAs may equally be related to the absence of any form of promotion of the agreements and the resources committed to the strategic housing function at a local level.

The model CHA was developed by a forum made up of representatives from the WLGA and WFHA. The agreement was voluntary, not widely promoted by either organisation and not extensively promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government, despite this being a target in *Better Homes for People in Wales*. It is perhaps, therefore, not too surprising their use was limited.

In local authorities where resources committed to the strategic housing function are insufficient to adequately perform the function, it should be no surprise the development of a CHA would not be considered either a priority or an achievable task.

2.4.2 Achieving wider corporate ownership

The achievement of wider corporate ownership was one of the key aspirations of the model CHA.

“Rather than an agreement being entered into between a Housing Department and the Association(s), it is felt important to refer to the Council in its entirety. This is aimed at achieving a corporate ownership to the agreement and ensuring that Registered Social Landlords are drawn into the wider aims and objectives of the authority(ies).”⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Welsh National Social Landlords Forum (1998:2).

The purpose of developing an agreement which was wider than the housing functions of the local authority, was to:

“ensure that they did justice to the potential range of services that can characterise the authority/association partnership.”⁵⁸

One of the problems identified by both local authorities and housing associations, where CHAs were in place, was the difficulty of engaging non-housing local authority functions in either the development of the CHA itself, or in the implementation of actions identified in the CHA. This difficulty was the most commonly raised weakness of the CHA.

The failure to gain wider acceptance within the local authority does not mean the agreements themselves were flawed. CHAs were developed by housing staff in local authorities, in partnership with colleagues in housing associations, and the agreements themselves were seen as “housing” rather than “corporate” documents. It may well be the architects of the original CHAs over-estimated the ability of the housing function to influence the wider corporate agenda of local authorities.

Had CHAs been promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government and supported by guidance, it is possible that greater corporate engagement may have occurred in their development and the agreements themselves would have achieved a greater sense of corporate ownership.

2.4.3 The schedules as performance plans

The model CHA suggests CHAs should contain two parts, the second of which should comprise:

“A schedule which can be developed to be a performance plan between an authority

and a single association. This will outline the respective targets for the coming year and will be the basis for review at the end of the year.”⁵⁹

From an examination of CHAs, it is apparent a number failed to incorporate detailed action/performance plans. In some cases, the CHA purely contained the agreement and no detailed schedule setting out actions and targets which parties to the agreement would review and monitor. This would appear to indicate, either a lack of understanding of the purpose of CHAs, or the need for an agreement to be developed and signed off for the sake of appearances.

In respect of those CHAs that contained detailed schedules, it was a common failing for the action/performance plan not to be reviewed as regularly as set out in the agreement. This failure to monitor the schedule to the CHA was, in more than one case, attributed to a lack of resources and the fact the CHA had been superseded by other partnership working arrangements.

The fact that CHAs were regarded as becoming outdated demonstrates a lack of appreciation of the original intention behind their development. The purpose of CHAs, as set out in the model CHA, was for them to be living documents, regularly reviewed and updated and which set challenging targets for both the local authority and housing association to strive to achieve. CHAs should not have been superseded by other partnership working arrangements - rather they should have been incorporated within their scope.

The failure to follow the guidance in practice would suggest that it was not clear. In addition, the fact the task of

⁵⁸ Cartref (1998:1).

⁵⁹ Welsh National Social Landlords Forum. October (1998:4).

developing, monitoring, reviewing and updating CHAs was, in most cases, not successfully completed would indicate the resources required to do this did not exist in the local authority. This is supported by the conclusions of a recent report to the All Wales Chief Housing Officer's Panel on the capacity of the strategic housing function across local authorities.⁶⁰

2.4.4 The impact of CHAs on partnership working

Local authority and housing association officers were asked about the extent and effectiveness of partnership working in localities where CHAs were in place and also where they were not. CHAs would appear to have had little impact on the extent or the effectiveness of partnership working. Closer examination, however, would suggest this is not necessarily the case.

Although it is the culture of organisations, particularly the local authority, that affects the effectiveness of partnership working, in a number of cases it was reported that the development of the CHA had been the catalyst for improving partnership working when initially developed, or that it had played a part in creating collaboration where it had not previously existed.

In addition, the approach to developing the CHA would appear to have a significant impact on its usefulness. In one local authority area, it was reported by both local authority and housing association officers, that the process of developing the CHA was a means of developing a culture of collaborative working. In this local authority, where the recently developed CHA incorporates arrangements to monitor the housing management performance of housing associations and link this to the allocation of Social Housing

Grant, it was reported the impact of the CHA had been considerable in relation to nominations, exclusions and assistance with homelessness.

It is likely the effectiveness of CHAs is reduced by local authorities committing insufficient resources to monitoring, review and updating, enabling it to be superseded by other partnership working arrangements. However, as the most recent example of a CHA demonstrates, where the agreements are developed in a true spirit of partnership, the performance plan is monitored and incentives are connected to the achievement of shared objectives, CHAs can have a significant impact, ensuring local authorities and housing associations share common objectives and work closely to achieve them.

2.5 Conclusion

The effectiveness of CHAs to date has been limited. However, this does not mean that CHAs, or a similar type of agreement, could not be effective in the future. The effectiveness of CHAs has been hampered by two main factors - a lack of guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government and the limited resources provided to the strategic housing function at a local level.

If CHAs had been promoted extensively by the Welsh Assembly Government and guidance provided on their development and use, it is possible the agreements developed would:

- be more numerous;
- more closely match the original intention of CHAs in relation to their format and development; and
- have achieved greater corporate engagement and greater corporate ownership.

⁶⁰ Beirnie, K. (2006).

If the strategic housing function of Welsh local authorities had greater capacity it is possible:

- the number of CHAs in place would have been more numerous;
- the profile of housing and the contribution it can make to the delivery of corporate objectives would have been raised, helping to achieve wider corporate engagement and greater corporate ownership of the CHA; and
- a greater proportion of CHAs would have been implemented in accordance with the limited guidance produced in the model CHA.

We feel a revised form of CHAs can play a role in strengthening the strategic housing function and moving forward the partnership and collaborative working agenda in housing, but that much needs to be done to address these two factors. We address these issues in chapter five.

Summary of Findings

- CHAs are not widely used - just eight (36%) of Welsh local authorities have one in place.
- One of the main reasons cited for CHAs not being introduced was the level of resources required to develop and implement an agreement.
- Regarding those CHAs that are in place:
 - there was variation in the parties to the agreements, the approaches adopted to develop the agreements and their content; and
 - the majority of CHAs were regarded as effective catalysts for improving partnership working when initially developed.
- The long term usefulness of CHAs:
 - was determined by the process of developing the agreement;
 - tended to depend on the quality of the schedule, and in most cases these were weak, with tasks, responsibilities and timescales not specified in any detail; and
 - tended to depend on the arrangements for monitoring the schedule, in most cases these were poor.
- Most local authorities appear to view the CHA as more a framework for drawing together and formalising existing agreements and partnership arrangements.
- A common weakness of CHAs was their tendency to be viewed corporately as “housing agreements” and were not, in practice, “owned” by the authority corporately or, tied in with other local authority departments/directorates.
- CHAs did not appear to have a significant impact on partnership working around homelessness, although in one local authority where the performance of housing associations was monitored and used to determine the allocation of Social Housing Grant it was reported that the agreement has had a big impact.

- The effectiveness of partnership working does not seem to be dependent on whether or not there is a CHA in place, although local authorities with CHAs in place are more likely to have other forms of operational agreements in place.
 - Effective partnership working appears mainly to be due to the culture of the organisations involved, especially the culture of the local authority and appears to hinge on a series of relational issues such as:
 - trust;
 - openness;
 - willingness to share information and experiences;
 - recognition of the skills and aptitudes of partner agencies and the contribution that all parties can potentially make; and
 - willingness to engage partners not just in agreeing documents, but in identifying issues that need tackling and in developing solutions.
 - The research found many examples of creative partnership working initiatives which had been developed in the absence of a CHA, or outside of the existing CHA arrangements.
- The quality of guidance on CHAs and the absence of guidance by the Welsh Assembly Government on the development and implementation of CHAs has meant that:
 - the use of CHAs has been limited;
 - CHAs have not achieved corporate ownership;
 - there has been a lack of consistency in the approaches to their development; and
 - there is considerable variation in their quality and content.
 - The lack of capacity of the strategic housing function in Welsh local authorities has meant that:
 - the use of CHAs has been limited;
 - CHAs have not achieved wider corporate ownership; and
 - there has been a lack of consistency in the approach to the development of CHAs and their implementation.

Chapter 5 Community Housing Agreements:- proposals for a way forward

1 Introduction

This chapter draws together key strands from the previous chapters before setting out proposals for a revised form of agreement between local authorities and housing associations. The proposal was initially set out in the discussion paper (attached at appendix 10) and further shaped in the light of responses received from the consultation process with practitioners and key stakeholder agencies.

2 Key themes

A number of key themes have emerged from the telephone surveys and case study interviews, discussions with practitioners and key stakeholders and the policy and literature reviews, which have informed the shape and content of the proposals for the way forward.

First, the drift of local government policy in the UK over the past two decades. This has been away from the direct provision of services towards an increasing emphasis upon the strategic community leadership role and working in partnership with a range of public, private and voluntary sector providers to deliver commonly agreed objectives. This UK-wide trend has recently been given greater emphasis in Wales by the Beecham review of local service delivery. One of the four critical success factors for effective delivery of local services identified by the Beecham review is partnership working. The Beecham review identifies that partnership working needs to move to a more sophisticated level requiring changes in culture and leadership behaviour, the development of appropriate skills and capacity and greater partnership ambition.

Within the housing sector, the community leadership role is manifest through the strategic housing role of local authorities. This function requires the local authority to intervene in partnerships with other agencies to help shape the local housing system and ensure the delivery of the housing-related objectives of the Community Strategy. Housing associations are key partners in ensuring the delivery of local authority housing and broader strategic objectives. However, the performance of the strategic housing role in Welsh local authorities is highly variable. In a small number of areas, the importance of a balanced housing system as a fundamental building block in the development of socially just and sustainable communities is clearly understood. In these areas, the strategic housing function is well-funded and operates effectively. However, in most local authority areas, this understanding is poorly developed and the function is insufficiently resourced.

Second, the revised local government planning framework, set out in the plan rationalisation proposals, could potentially undermine the strategic housing function at a local level. To avoid this, the implementation of these proposals will require the Welsh Assembly Government to carefully consider the guidance it offers to local authorities on the effective delivery of the strategic housing function, to ensure housing associations are involved in the development of the Community Strategy and the three high-level statutory plans.

Third, we have recently seen the growth of collaborative working in the public sector stimulated, in part, by the Assembly's

Making the Connections agenda. In the housing sector, this collaboration has primarily been on a regional basis and involved local authorities. In the housing association sector, the establishment of development consortia has created widespread collaboration between housing associations and this is starting to extend beyond the development of social housing to incorporate central services and housing management activities. In the medium-term, the *Making the Connections* agenda is likely to lead to increased collaboration across sectors and administrative boundaries.

Fourth, the evaluation of CHAs found they were not widely used. In a number of instances where they were used, after acting as an initial catalyst for action, they appeared to have a marginal impact upon partnership working. The reasons why the impact of CHAs was less than expected can be attributed to a number of factors. The most important ones were lack of promotion, the limited nature of the guidance and the limited capacity at a local authority level to develop and deliver the agreements. The impact of limited capacity has meant that, in a number of areas, the development of a CHA, although planned, did not take place. In the majority of areas where CHAs were developed, limited resources meant that either the schedule, or performance plan, was not fully developed, or its implementation was not effectively monitored.

Fifth, where CHAs were developed, they failed to become fully corporately embedded within the local authority. This could be attributed to the housing function failing to connect with and demonstrate the importance of housing to other corporate functions, or to the fact that CHAs are voluntary agreements between local authorities and housing associations which meant there was

no compulsion on the wider corporate functions of the local authority to become engaged in the agreement.

3 Proposal for a way forward

If in Wales, the public sector is to achieve the ambitious vision set out in the Beecham review, a step change will be required in central-local relations and in the way the community leadership role and partnership working are performed within each of the 22 local authorities.

In relation to the housing function, a similar step change will be required in respect of the performance of the strategic housing role, the principal role of which is to articulate the role of housing in contributing to the delivery of the authority's Community Plan objectives. To deliver such a transformation will require resources, support and guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government. At a local level, it will need the investment of resources to develop capacity and ensure the correct skills are in place to deliver effective partnership working, as well as changes in culture and leadership behaviour.

We see a revised form of community housing agreement playing a key role in strengthening the strategic housing function and moving forward the partnership and collaborative working agenda in housing. We believe a revised form of CHA could act as the housing element of the PACts proposed by Beecham.

As the local authority-housing association relationship is of critical importance to the delivery of the strategic housing role, our proposal aims to ensure housing associations contribute towards the delivery of high level plans of every Welsh local authority and that the key objectives of housing associations and local authorities are aligned in this respect.

The proposal sets out a series of policy suggestions in relation to the Welsh Assembly Government's role. These focus on strengthening the strategic housing function and ensuring that housing associations contribute to the high-level policy objectives of every Welsh local authority. Local authorities and housing associations have an equally important role to play, acting on guidance and advice provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to improve the delivery of housing services. Their responsibilities, in respect of the proposed revised form of Community Housing Agreements, are set out in a series of principles shown in appendix 12.

The proposal set out below is set within the context of the need for the importance of the strategic housing role of local authorities to be better and more widely understood. We also feel a revised form of agreement could be one of the key tools for delivering the strategic housing role locally and propose the development of a revised form of agreement is made a requirement for Welsh local authorities. We suggest this as a means of raising the profile of the strategic housing function within local authorities and ensuring that agreements are corporately embedded.

We propose the Welsh Assembly Government should:

- provide training for local authority members and senior officers on the strategic housing function, in partnership with the WLGA, to:
 - raise awareness of the importance of the function;
 - raise awareness of the need for the function to be provided with sufficient resources locally to enable it to be performed effectively; and
 - promote collaborative working between local authorities.
- Make the development of a revised form of CHA a requirement for Welsh local authorities, by making its development one element of the Policy Agreement (or any agreement which succeeds the Policy Agreement), negotiated between the Welsh Assembly Government and all Welsh local authorities.
- Encourage local authorities and housing associations to develop the revised form of agreement by:
 - providing incentives to local authorities to develop the agreements via the Performance Improvement Grant fund;
 - establishing a distinct fund (similar to the Social Housing Management Grant fund) to enhance the capacity of the strategic housing function at a local level and promote the development of agreements;
 - top slicing the Social Housing Grant budget to enable local authorities, where an agreement has been developed and properly implemented, to be allocated additional Social Housing Grant; and
 - showcasing positive practice and providing financial resources to enable local authorities and housing associations that perform well to mentor poorly performing areas.
- Amend guidance for local authorities on the preparation of the Community Strategy and the three high level plans to reinforce the involvement of housing associations in the development of each.
- Develop guidance for local authorities on the effective performance of the strategic housing function, which incorporates guidance on the development and implementation of a revised form

of CHA, which should be renamed the “community partnership agreement”.

- Produce guidance on the development and implementation of community partnership agreements, which:
 - recommends the agreement is a common agreement between each local authority and all the associations operating in that area, with the aim of maximising transparency, and encouraging the sharing of good practice and joint working. Given the advent of housing association consortia, it may be appropriate for certain aspects of the agreement, specifically relating to the development of new social housing, to be between an authority and consortia;
 - recognises the scope and content of agreements signed between a local authority and individual housing associations will vary depending upon the role that each association plays within the local housing market;
 - recommends careful attention should be paid to the process by which agreements are developed. The guidance should promote processes for developing an agreement which encourages to share knowledge;
 - the guidance should be based around the six key partnership principles, identified in the partnership assessment tool developed by the Nuffield Institute⁶¹, namely:
 - recognising and accepting the need for partnership;
 - developing clarity and realism of purpose;
 - ensuring commitment and ownership;
 - developing and maintaining trust;
 - creating clear and robust partnership arrangements; and
 - monitoring, measuring and learning.
- Set out principles to be followed in the development of the agreement and the form of the agreement, but does not prescribe a model form of agreement or a process to be followed in its development. We suggest this approach for a number of reasons:
 - the evaluation found a wide variety of positive practice in partnership working between local authorities and housing associations, both within the context of a CHA and where CHAs are not in place. It will be important that the introduction of a revised form of agreement takes account of, and builds on, current levels and models of partnership working. A more prescriptive model would not allow for that;
 - a model which is based upon process will not necessarily deliver the outcomes that partnership working seeks to deliver. It is the outcome of the process of partnership working which is of critical importance; and
 - the evaluation found that ‘soft’ relational issues (e.g. trust, openness and, mutual respect) were of greater importance in effective partnership working

⁶¹ Nuffield Institute for Health (2003)

than the presence or absence of a CHA. These issues are difficult, if not impossible, to capture in a prescriptive, process-based model.

- Suggest the development of an agreement should start with an objective analysis of the state of relations between the local authority and housing associations.
 - Not establish a rigid national deadline for the completion of agreements, but set locally agreed timescales, recognising the development process will vary from area to area.
 - Set out clearly how housing can contribute to the delivery of wider corporate objectives, such as health improvement, educational attainment, economic development, social inclusion and should suggest who should be involved in the development of the agreement within the local authority, such as the Cabinet Member with the housing portfolio, Head of Corporate Planning and a member of the local authority Corporate Management Team. This is to ensure there is corporate and political commitment across the local authority to the agreement.
 - Recommend the agreement contains strategic and operational elements, to ensure the two are knitted together, recognising that harnessing the capacity of housing associations to deliver on strategic objectives is as important as harnessing their contributions to strategic thinking and priorities.
- Clearly set out the respective responsibilities of both local authorities and housing associations in relation to both the strategic and operational elements of the agreement. We believe that these should not be prescribed and should set out the principles of partnership working.
 - Suggest the agreement should ultimately include all aspects of the operational contribution which associations could make, but we recommend agreements begin by including those elements that associations and authorities are most comfortable with. In some authorities, these will be wide-ranging; in others they will be more limited.
 - Set out a list of activities the Assembly recommends should be included in an initial agreement.
 - Set out an expectation that agreements should:
 - set out the activities that are incorporated initially; and
 - contain an action plan setting out the timescales for further activities to be incorporated.
 - Set out an expectation the agreement incorporates arrangements for monitoring and the expectation the agreement is regarded as a living document. Guidance should recommend to local authorities and housing associations the initial agreement incorporates arrangements for regular review:
 - of strategic objectives;
 - of performance against existing operational elements;

- of amendments necessary to existing operational arrangements;
- to agree the next tranche of activities which can be incorporated; and
- to consider whether the agreement should be extended to include other housing providers.

We believe the approach we are proposing could, and should usefully, be expanded to include other housing providers and stakeholders (such as private sector landlords, support providers and providers of housing advice) but that the initial focus is on the development of agreements with housing associations. Rather than expand the agreements to incorporate other providers, we suggest that similar, but separate, agreements are developed with other types of housing and housing service providers, once agreements with housing associations are demonstrated to be operating effectively.

4 Conclusion

The *Making the Connections* agenda and the report of the Beecham review set out a bold agenda for transforming the delivery of public services in Wales. Both emphasise the importance of partnership and collaborative working in helping to deliver this transformation.

In the housing sector, local authorities can pursue this agenda by strengthening the strategic housing function and working collaboratively with key stakeholders to:

- identify the key issues in the local housing system;
- develop approaches that deliver both national and local targets and priorities; and
- evaluate and monitor the achievement of targets.

The key relationship for local authorities in relation to the strategic housing role is with housing associations whose activities have a major impact on the local housing system. A revised form of agreement which builds upon the benefits of CHAs will act as a tool, helping to:

- improve the delivery of the strategic housing function across Wales;
- harness the contribution of housing associations to the delivery of locally agreed objectives; and
- improve the delivery of housing services to their users and create efficiency gains by providing agencies the chance to discuss opportunities for collaboration in the delivery of services and share effective practice.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Web Based Sources of Information

Employers' Organisation for Local Government - Making the most of partnership working. A web tool to help users improve their partnership skills and performance. The site provides toolkits, case studies and links to further material on partnerships. Available at <http://www.lgpartnerships.com/>

IDeA Improvement Network - a web-based source of information and guidance on partnership working. Available at <http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=5022665>

Ourpartnership.org.uk promotes best practice for individuals and organisations working in partnerships between the voluntary and public sectors. Available at <http://www.ourpartnership.org.uk/>

COMMUNITY HOUSING AGREEMENTS

A proposal by the
WELSH NATIONAL SOCIAL LANDLORDS FORUM

supported by

WELSH FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATION

and

WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

October 1998

EXPLANATORY GUIDANCE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Community Housing Agreements are seen as the successors to the 'Strategic Housing Agreements' adopted by Housing for Wales and would be between local Registered Social Landlords and the relevant unitary authority. The Agreements are seen to have a much wider role than was formerly the case, with the emphasis on the range of contributions which housing, both in terms of the authority and the association(s) can make to not only meeting housing needs, but also to assisting the regeneration of healthy communities.

1.2 It should be noted that the proposed Agreement is in two parts:

- i. *A formal agreement stating the primary aims and objectives of the parties to the agreement, and including monitoring, liaison and review mechanisms.*
- ii. *A schedule which can be developed to be a performance plan between an authority and a single association. This will outline the respective targets for a coming year and will be the basis for the review at the end of the year. It is seen as being renewed annually in line with the working arrangements and expectations between the authority and the association.*

2.0 PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT

2.1 Rather than an agreement being entered into between a Housing Department and the Association(s), it is felt important to refer to the Council in its entirety. This is aimed at achieving a corporate ownership to the agreement and ensuring that Registered Social Landlords are drawn into the wider aims and objectives of the authority(ies).

3.0 ROLE OF THE PARTIES

3.1 It was considered important that the respective roles of the parties to the agreement are clearly stated so as to remind everyone of the aims and objectives of the respective organisations and for these thereafter to be put into a housing context.

3.2 Of critical importance is the authority's role in preparing a Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP), which is considered to be a corporate document reflecting a housing strategy within a wider corporate plan. Other strategies such as the social care plan, economic development, drugs and alcohol, anti-poverty, community safety strategies etc., all have a bearing on housing and community viability, and as such should be reflected within the HSOP. Links between poor housing and poor health should additionally be reflected in the new Health Improvement Plans.

3.3 Registered Social Landlords are seen as contributing to meeting the wider needs not only in terms of joint working arrangements and development, but also in terms of 'housing plus' and community initiatives.

4.0 HOUSING NEEDS STATEMENT

4.1 The strategic role of the housing authority is recognised as the party responsible for establishing the housing needs of its area. This can be extended in terms of community development and regeneration, and include reference to other community strategies which would be included within the HSOP.

5.0 DURATION AND TERMINATION AND RENEWAL OF THE AGREEMENT

5.1 It is understood that Housing for Wales has undertaken an arbitrating role in relation to the zoning etc. of Registered Social Landlords. A method of arbitration should be agreed by the parties concerned in terms of disputes arising from the Agreements.

6.0 MONITORING OF THE AGREEMENT

6.1 Although the Agreement is signed by 'the Council', the Housing Department becomes the lead department in terms of co-ordinating and monitoring.

6.2 Whilst the mechanism of monitoring is outlined, the effectiveness will depend to a great deal on the content of the Schedule to the Agreement and the detailed actions, targets etc. specified between each association and authority.

7.0 LIAISON AND CONSULTATION

7.1 In terms of working in partnership, it is important that an open and honest relationship is developed, yet respecting confidentiality.

7.2 It is felt important that the role of members of both parties is understood and appreciated and included within the consultation process.

7.3 Both parties will have regard to the views of their service users.

7.4 The parties to the Agreement will agree mutually acceptable monitoring mechanisms, for the particular Council and Registered Social Landlord, with the appropriate reporting mechanisms to Council/Board of Management.

8.0 RESOURCES

8.1 As the Welsh saying says "Diwedd y Gan yw'r Geiniog" (in the end it's the money that matters) and it has to be recognised that within a regime of diminishing resources, every avenue to utilise those resources more effectively has to be considered. It is recognised that Registered Social Landlords do have access to private finance. At the same time, authorities have various finance sources which could be utilised through the Registered Social Landlords and it is proposed, therefore, that both parties, while endeavouring to maximise their housing investment, should be aware of the various resources and funding mechanisms available to each other.

8.2 Both parties to the Agreement will strive to become Quality Social Landlords.

9.0 THE SCHEDULE

9.1 As previously mentioned, it is proposed that the Schedule refers to specific actions expected from each party during any operational period. The draft prepared includes a detailed list of items which could form the basis of a Schedule if the parties to the agreement so wish.

- 9.2** Of importance, however, is the clear understanding of what is expected, by whom and by when, and that this is incorporated into the review mechanism.
- 9.3** It will be up to authorities/associations to develop this concept within their own local circumstances and within their own context to joint working.
- 9.4** It is suggested, however, that the Schedule would also be viewed as a performance plan in terms of a best value regime, and as such is to be encouraged.

COMMUNITY HOUSING AGREEMENT

This Agreement is between _____ Council and _____ Housing Association Ltd.

Council is the unitary authority responsible for the provision of services to the population of the _____ area. This responsibility includes the formulation and implementation of Community Development and Service Delivery Plans in partnership with other agencies active in the _____ area.

Council may act as the Provider or the Enabler in respect of this provision, as appropriate.

Integral to this process is the formulation of Community Housing Agreements in partnership with Approved Social Landlords active in the provision of accommodation and services in the area.

The aim of the Agreement is to reflect and complement the corporate activities of the Council integrating the provision of housing services with national, local and community needs. The Agreement takes the form of a statement of principles between the Council and Registered Social Landlords, with a Schedule of specific issues relevant to each individual Registered Social Landlord which will be used as the basis of the annual performance review.

Both parties to the Agreement will act at all times in compliance with the principles associated with Quality Landlord status.

PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT

Council is the unitary authority serving the _____ area. It has the legal responsibility to consider housing conditions and needs in the area, including dealing with problems in the existing housing stock and the provision of additional housing.

Housing Association Ltd is a registered Social Landlord within the meaning of the Housing Act, 1996. It is a 'not for profit' Industrial and Provident Society and is registered with the Welsh Office zoned to work in the _____ Council area.

ROLES OF THE PARTIES

Council is required to produce an annual Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP) which considers housing issues across all sectors and tenures.

The HSOP to include reference to the Council's strategic planning documents as detailed in the Appendix to the Agreement along with other relevant Corporate strategies and policies. Integral and concurrent with the HSOP is the Community Housing Agreement.

Housing Association Ltd will assist _____ Council in meeting its statutory obligations in accordance with this Agreement on the terms specified in the Schedule to the Agreement with reference to joint working, Development and Community initiatives.

Council will also promote the involvement of _____ Housing Association Ltd in the development of all relevant Community Development initiatives both with the Council and in partnership with external agencies.

The Council will establish the Housing and Community needs within its area in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and other agencies.

DURATION TERMINATION AND RENEWAL OF THE AGREEMENT

The Agreement will apply for a period of 3 years subject to an annual review.

If at any time either party wishes to terminate the Agreement three months notice of the intention to terminate the Agreement must be served on the other party, stating the reasons for the termination. If the other party wishes to dispute the termination they have a right to use the agreed arbitration procedure.

Within the six month period prior to the expiration of the Agreement both parties will meet to consider renewal of the Agreement and the terms associated with such renewal.

MONITORING OF THE AGREEMENT

Responsibility for monitoring the Agreement will rest with the Chief Housing Officer, or equivalent, within _____ County Council and the Chief Executive, or equivalent, of _____ Housing Association Ltd.

At the commencement of the Agreement appropriate performance standards will be agreed by both parties and applied to both parties against which performance will be monitored with appropriate adjustments being agreed at the annual review.

Performance against the Agreement will be monitored by means of regular meetings between the parties with a minimum of two meetings per annum. The Agreement will also be reviewed at a Corporate level on an annual basis.

LIAISON AND CONSULTATION

The Council and Registered Social Landlords shall agree a consultation process in terms of any new policies and procedures within the terms of the Agreement.

To ensure that the provision of the Housing service in the _____ area is co-ordinated the parties agree to share information that will assist in fulfilling the purpose of this Agreement. Each party will not divulge information that will breach its own policies or guidance on confidentiality.

Information shared must not be divulged to a third party without the consent of the party providing the information.

RESOURCES

At all times both parties will endeavour to utilise their full resources to ensure compliance with the Agreement and attached schedule.

Both parties will attempt to maximise the investment of funding to achieve the strategic aims of

Council in meeting Housing Needs.

Council will support Housing Association in its application for Social Housing Grant, plus associated Supported Housing Revenue Grant in accordance with the priorities identified within the HSOP. Housing Association Ltd will endeavour to obtain private funding on the most beneficial terms to assist in meeting housing needs. Similarly both parties will be mutually supportive whenever possible in the attempt to obtain alternative forms of investment.

Whenever possible Council will endeavour to support the activities of Housing Association Ltd in accessing external funding sources to support the needs identified within the HSOP.

CONTACT PERSONS

The contact persons for day-to-day management of the Agreement will be:

	-	Council
Tel. #:		
Fax #:		
	-	Housing Association Ltd
Tel. #:		
Fax #:		

DECLARATION

Both parties agree to comply with the terms of the Agreement and the associated Schedule and that during the period of the Agreement both parties will conduct themselves in an open and honest manner, respecting confidentiality when appropriate, endeavouring at all times to promote and develop good practice and compliance with the standards associated with Quality Social Landlords and Best Value.

.....

**on behalf of
Council**

**on behalf of
Housing Association Ltd**

SCHEDULE TO COMMUNITY HOUSING AGREEMENT

The Terms and what is included in the Schedule is up to each individual Council and Registered Social Landlord to agree in the context of what is happening within their area and the existing working relationship and will act as the basis for the annual review.

Both parties to the Agreement confirm their commitment to act in accordance with the following items:

(Detailed below are various items that parties may wish to include in their Agreement. Obviously Agreements will differ due to varying local circumstances and local policies.)

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- | | |
|--|--|
| Consultation in preparation of HSOP | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- timetable- details of degree of involvement- monitoring of HSOP- HSOP review |
| Assessment of housing needs - details of degree of involvement | |
| Opportunities for member involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- consultation on lettings, transfers and exchanges.- representation on Association Board / Committees.- attendance at meetings- enquiry procedures |
| Area(s) of activity | |
| Types of accommodation to be provided | |
| Types of associated services to be provided | |
| Supported housing provision | |
| Common/Shared services | |
| Service Level Agreements | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Planning; Highways; Legal; and Estate issues. |
| Regeneration | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- extent of involvement. |
| Strategies for 'problem' estates | |
| Home ownership strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- assessment of needs- types of provision- areas of activity- marketing policies |

Environmental issues

Energy efficiency issues

Housing Plus

Crime prevention and security issues

Care and repair activities

Communication procedures with relevant departments of the Council

HOUSING SERVICES ISSUES

Access to housing

- application procedures
- common waiting lists
- common allocation policy
- Member consultation
- Equal Opportunities policies
- exclusions

Transfers and exchange policies

Anti-social behaviour strategies

Homelessness

- legal responsibilities
- provision to meet needs
- move-on accommodation

Nomination agreements and procedures

Affordability issues

- Rent levels
- Service Charges

Housing Benefit - Service Level Agreement

- consultation on maximum levels

Provision of benefits advice

Arrears and evictions policies and procedures

Sharing of information

Supported housing

- accessibility
- service responsibilities
- support agreements
- move-on arrangements
- funding support provision
- management agreements

Tenant participation policies

- strategies
- shared activities
- funding arrangements

Role of community representatives/advocates

Complaints policy and procedures

Compensation policy and procedures

Service charter agreements

Maintenance

- contract procurement
- services

Appendix 3a

LOCAL AUTHORITY STATUTORY PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Existing

- Children's Services Plan
- Economic Development Plan
- Housing Strategy and Operational Plan
- Social Care Plan
- Unitary Development Plan

New

- Behaviour Support Plan
- Community Plan
- Community Safety Strategy
- Early Years Development Plan
- Education Strategic Plan
- Health Improvement Plan
- Performance Plan
- Service Reviews

Appendix 4

Telephone interview Questionnaires Local Authority Questionnaire

1. Is there a CHA in place?

NO CHA IN PLACE:

2. Has there ever been a CHA in place?
3. Why hasn't a CHA been introduced/why is there no longer a CHA in place?
4. Are there plans to introduce/ re-introduce a CHA?
5. How well progressed are the plans, what is the likely timing?
6. Why is a CHA being introduced?
7. Who will the partners be?
8. What will the agreement cover?

IF CHA IN PLACE

9. When was the CHA introduced?
10. Who are the partners? (*Ask for names of key RSL staff*)
11. Why was the CHA introduced?
12. What policy/service areas does the CHA cover?
13. Does the CHA include annual actions/targets?
14. Does the CHA include arrangements for joint working?
15. Does the CHA include arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the CHA?
16. Has the CHA improved partnership working?
17. Why has partnership-working improved/not improved?
18. Has the CHA led to any changes in the authorities priorities/ways of working?
19. What changes have there been?
20. Why haven't there been any changes?
21. Has the CHA led to any changes to the priorities/ways of working of RSL partners?
22. What changes have there been?
23. Why hasn't there been any change?
24. Has the CHA, or the way it operates, changed since its introduction (e.g. due to changes in external circumstances such as increased levels of homelessness)?
25. What are the changes, and what have been the influences?
26. How effective is the CHA overall?
27. What are the main strengths/advantages?
28. What are the main weaknesses/disadvantages?

ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES

29. Do you have any of the following **OPERATIONAL** agreements in place (other than a CHA) - i.e. covering the implementation of policy/service delivery?
30. For each operational partnership/agreement in place, record: -
31. Are there any STRATEGIC partnerships that the council's housing service AND RSLs are partners to (i.e. that develop housing policy, agree strategic priorities for housing and related issues)?
32. For each strategic partnership in place, record: -
33. How well do the arrangements for working in partnership with RSLs fit with the authority's broader partnership arrangements (e.g. community strategy partnerships, health and social well-being partnerships)?
(If LA has a CHA ask specifically about the fit with other forms of partnership working.)
34. On a scale of 1-10 how effective are the authority's arrangements for working in partnership with RSLs.
35. In terms of strategic partnership arrangements, why do you say that?
36. In terms of operational partnership arrangements, why do you say that?
37. In your experience, is it easier to work with some RSLs than others?
If so, why are there differences?

(NOTE: information is confidential, it will be used to select case studies of positive practice.)

Appendix 5

Telephone interview questionnaire Housing Associations

1. Name of RSL:
2. Details of person interviewed:
3. Is the association a partner to a CHA?

CHA IN PLACE

4. Which local authority is the CHA with?
5. When was the CHA introduced?
6. Why was the CHA introduced?
7. What policy/service areas does the CHA cover?
8. Does the CHA include annual actions/targets?
9. Does the CHA include arrangements for joint working?
10. Does the CHA include arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the CHA?
11. Has the CHA improved partnership working with the LA?
12. Why has partnership working improved/not improved?
13. *Where RSL works with more than 1 LA: - Are there differences of approach to partnership working between LAs that have a CHA and those that don't?*
14. Has the CHA led to any changes in the association's priorities/ways of working?
15. What changes have there been?
16. Why haven't there been any changes?
17. Has the CHA led to any changes in the authority's priorities/ways of working?
18. What changes have there been?
19. Why haven't there been any changes?
20. Has the CHA, or the way it operates, changed since its introduction (e.g. due to changes in external circumstances such as increased levels of homelessness)?
21. What are the changes, and what have been the influences?
22. How effective is the CHA overall?
23. What are the main strengths/advantages?
24. What are the main weaknesses/disadvantages?

NO CHA IN PLACE:

25. Are there plans to introduce a CHA?
26. How well progressed are the plans, what is the likely timing?
27. Why is a CHA being introduced?
28. Who will the partners be?
29. What will the agreement cover?

30. What do they see as the advantages/disadvantages of a CHA?
31. Why isn't there a CHA in place?
32. Would association support the introduction of a CHA/CHAs?
33. What do they see as the advantages/disadvantages of a CHA?

ALL RSLs:

34. I'd now like to ask you about other arrangements for working with local authorities at the operational level (i.e. covering the implementation of policy/service delivery). Do you have any of the following agreements in place with any LA (in addition to a CHA)?
35. For each operational partnership/agreement in place, record: -
36. Can you now tell me is your association party to any strategic partnerships or with local authorities on housing and related issues (i.e. that develop policy/agree strategic priorities)?
37. For each strategic partnership/agreement in place, record: -
38. How good is the fit between these different types of partnership arrangements?
(If there is a CHA in place, ask specifically about links to other partnerships).
39. Overall, on a scale of 1-10 how effective are the partnership arrangements of the LAs you work with?
40. In terms of strategic partnership arrangements, why do you say that?
41. In terms of operational partnership arrangements, why do you say that?
42. *(Where RSL works with more than one LA): -*
In your experience, is it easier to work with some LAs than others?
If so, why are there differences? Are there examples of good/effective practice?
(NOTE: information is confidential, it will be used to select case studies of positive practice.)

Appendix 6

Telephone Interviews

Participating Local Authorities

Blaenau Gwent

Cardiff

Conwy

Merthyr Tydfil

Newport

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Vale of Glamorgan

Bridgend

Carmarthenshire

Denbighshire

Monmouthshire

Pembrokeshire

Swansea

Wrexham

Caerphilly

Ceredigion

Flintshire

Neath Port Talbot

Powys

Torfaen

Ynys Mon

Participating Housing Associations

Aelwyd

Cadwyn

Eastern Valley

Gwerin

Pembrokeshire

Swansea

Tai Clwyd

Wales & West

Bro Myrddin

Cardiff Community

Family

Merthyr Tydfil

Pontypridd & District

Taff

United Welsh

Cadarn

Cynon Taff

Glamorgan & Gwent

Mid Wales

Rhondda

Tai Cantref

Valleys 2 Coast

Appendix 7

Key Stakeholder Agencies Interviewed during the Project

Chartered Institute of Housing
Cymorth
House Builders Federation
Shelter Cymru
TPAS Cymru
Wales Audit Office
Wales Council for Voluntary Organisations
Welsh Assembly Government - Housing
Local Government Modernisation
Welsh Federation of Housing Associations
Welsh Local Government Association

Appendix 8

Questions for case studies - local authorities with CHA in place

Interviewee: Head of Housing

Background

1. Name of officer, position
2. When was CHA developed?
3. Who led on the development of the CHA?
4. Where did the original idea for a CHA emanate (LA or RSL initiative)?
5. Who are the housing associations who are party to the CHA?

The CHA and its purpose

6. What is your understanding of the CHA, its purpose and what it seeks to achieve?
7. Describe which activities performed by the Council the CHA relates to?
8. What does it seek to achieve in respect of each activity?

The impact of the CHA

9. How does the CHA actually influence activities?
10. What are the strengths of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
11. What are the weaknesses of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
12. How could the CHA be improved?
13. What benefits accrue to the authority and its key partners from the CHA?
14. Do the benefits of the CHA outweigh the costs of developing the CHA, implementing the CHA and monitoring its implementation?
15. Has the CHA improved partnership working between the housing function and housing associations?
16. Has the CHA improved partnership working between the authority as a whole and housing associations?
17. Has the CHA improved joint working across the authority?

Reviewing/monitoring the CHA

18. How often is the CHA reviewed/monitored?
19. Who is involved in the review/monitoring of the CHA?
20. How is the effectiveness and the implementation of the CHA reviewed/monitored?
21. How effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
22. Has the CHA, or the way that it operates, changed since its introduction?
23. If yes, please describe how it has changed and in response to what factors.

Partnership working and the CHA

24. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations?
(Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1= very poor and 10 = excellent)
25. Why do you say that?
26. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Community Planning
 - Strategic Housing function
 - Social Care - Adults
 - Social Care - Children's services
 - Homelessness
 - Nominations
 - Community Safety
 - Planning Policy
 - Development Control
 - Economic Development
 - Community Development
27. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1= very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
28. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
29. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
30. What factors do you attribute these changes to?
31. How much of this change would you attribute to the CHA?

CHAs and the future

32. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
33. If yes, what are your reasons for saying this?
34. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Interviewee: Head of Planning

Background

1. Name of officer, position
2. Are you familiar with the CHA?
3. Were you or any other officer from your Dept/Division involved in the development of the CHA?
4. If yes, how were they involved and what impact did their involvement have upon the CHA?

The CHA and its purpose

5. What is your understanding of the CHA, its purpose and what it seeks to achieve?

The impact of the CHA

6. Describe how the CHA relates to the planning function?
7. What does it seek to achieve in respect of the planning function?
8. How does the CHA actually influence planning activity?
9. What are the strengths of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
10. What are the weaknesses of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
11. How could the CHA be improved?
12. What benefits accrue to the authority and its key partners from the CHA?
13. Do the benefits of the CHA outweigh the costs of developing the CHA, implementing the CHA and monitoring its implementation?
14. Has the CHA improved partnership working between the Planning function and housing associations?

Reviewing/monitoring the CHA

15. How often is the CHA reviewed/monitored?
16. Are you or any other planning officer involved in the review/monitoring of the CHA?
17. How is the effectiveness and the implementation of the CHA reviewed/monitored?
18. How effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
19. Has the CHA, or the way that it operates, changed since its introduction?
20. If yes, please describe how it has changed and in response to what factors?

Partnership working and the CHA

21. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations?
(Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent)
22. Why do you say that?
23. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Planning Policy
 - Development Control

24. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1= very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
25. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
26. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
27. What factors do you attribute these changes to?
28. How much of this change would you attribute to the CHA?

CHAs and the future

29. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
30. If yes, what are your reasons for saying this?
31. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Interviewee: Senior Homelessness Officer

Background

1. Name of officer, position
2. Are you familiar with the CHA?
3. Were you or any other officer from your Team involved in the development of the CHA?
4. If yes, how were they involved and what impact did their involvement have upon the CHA?

The CHA and its purpose

5. What is your understanding of the CHA, what is its purpose and what does it seek to achieve?

The CHA and its impact

6. Describe how the CHA relates to the homelessness function?
7. What does it seek to achieve in respect of the homelessness function?
8. How does the CHA actually influence activity in relation to the discharge of the authority's homelessness function?
9. What are the strengths of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
10. What are the weaknesses of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
11. How could the CHA be improved?
12. What benefits accrue to the authority and its key partners from the CHA?
13. Do the benefits of the CHA outweigh the costs of developing the CHA, implementing the CHA and monitoring its implementation?
14. How well do housing associations contribute to assisting the local authority to meet its homelessness obligations?
15. Has the CHA improved how housing associations assist the local authority to meet its homelessness obligations?

Reviewing the CHA

16. What mechanisms are used for reviewing/monitoring the effectiveness and the implementation of the CHA?
17. How often is the CHA reviewed/monitored?
18. In your view, how effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
19. Are you or any other homelessness officer involved in the review/monitoring of the CHA?
20. Has the CHA, or the way that it operates, changed since its introduction?
21. If yes please describe how it has changed and in response to what factors?

Partnership working and the CHA

22. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations?
(Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent)
23. Why do you say that?
24. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Homelessness
 - Nominations
25. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
26. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
27. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
28. What factors do you attribute these changes to?
29. How much of this change would you attribute to the CHA?

CHAs and the future

30. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
31. If yes, what are your reasons for saying this?
32. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Interviewee: Head of Corporate Planning

Background

1. Name of officer, position
2. Are you familiar with the CHA?
3. Were you or any other officer from your Team involved in the development of the CHA?
4. If yes, how were they involved and what impact did their involvement have upon the CHA?

The CHA and its purpose

5. What is your understanding of the CHA, what is its purpose and what does it seek to achieve?

The CHA and its impact

6. Describe how the CHA relates to the corporate planning function?
7. What does it seek to achieve in respect of the corporate planning function?
8. How does the CHA actually influence activity in relation to the authority's corporate planning function?
9. What are the strengths of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
10. What are the weaknesses of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
11. How could the CHA be improved?
12. What benefits accrue to the authority and its key partners from the CHA?
13. Do the benefits of the CHA outweigh the costs of developing the CHA, implementing the CHA and monitoring its implementation?
14. How well do housing associations contribute to the corporate planning function?
15. How well do housing associations contribute to the delivery of community plan objectives?
16. Has the CHA contributed in any way towards a change in how housing associations assist the local authority in terms of the corporate planning function or the delivery of the authorities strategic objectives?

Reviewing the CHA

17. What mechanisms are used for reviewing/monitoring the effectiveness and the implementation of the CHA?
18. How often is the CHA reviewed/monitored?
19. In your view, how effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
20. Are you or any other corporate planning officer involved in the review/monitoring of the CHA?
21. Has the CHA, or the way that it operates, changed since its introduction?
22. If yes please describe how it has changed and in response to what factors?

Partnership working and the CHA

23. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations?
(Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1= very poor and 10 = excellent)
24. Why do you say that?
25. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Community Planning
 - Community Safety
 - Economic Development
 - Community Development
26. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1= very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
27. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
28. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
29. What factors do you attribute these changes to?
30. How much of this change would you attribute to the CHA?

CHAs and the future

31. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
32. If yes, what are your reasons for saying this?
33. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Questions to Housing Associations operating in Case Study Local Authorities where a CHA is in place

1. What is your understanding of the CHA, its purpose and what it seeks to achieve?
2. How does the CHA actually influence activities?
 - a. What are the strengths of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
 - b. What are the weaknesses of the CHA operationally in relation to what it was designed to achieve?
 - c. How could these weaknesses be overcome?
3. What impact has the CHA had on the delivery of services to homeless people?
4. How often is the CHA reviewed/monitored?
 - a. Who is involved in the review/monitoring of the CHA?
 - b. How is the effectiveness and the implementation of the CHA reviewed/monitored?
 - c. How effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
 - d. Has the CHA, or the way that it operates, changed since its introduction?
 - e. If yes, please describe how it has changed and in response to what factors.
5. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with the local authority in the past 5 years?
 - a. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
 - b. What factors do you attribute these changes to?
 - c. How much of this change would you attribute to the CHA?
6. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
 - a. If yes, what are your reasons for saying this?
 - b. If no, what would improve partnership working with local authorities?

Appendix 9

Questions for case studies - local authorities without CHA in place

Interviewee: Head of Housing

Background

1. Name of officer, position
2. Was a formal decision taken by the Council not to develop a CHA?
3. If yes, why was that decision taken?
4. If no, why has no CHA been developed?
5. Did housing associations lobby for a CHA to be introduced?
6. If yes, which associations?

CHAs and their purpose

7. What is your understanding of CHAs, what is their purpose and what do they seek to achieve?
8. If a CHA were introduced in the authority, what activities would you see it relating to?

Partnership working with housing associations

9. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations?
(Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent)
10. Why do you say that?
11. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Community Planning
 - Strategic Housing function
 - Social Care - Adults
 - Social Care - Children's services
 - Homelessness
 - Nominations
 - Community Safety
 - Planning Policy
 - Development Control
 - Economic Development
 - Community Development
12. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
13. Would a CHA improve partnership working with housing associations?
14. If yes, why?

15. If no, why not?
16. Would a CHA improve joint working across the authority?
17. If yes, why?
18. If no, why not?
19. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
20. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
21. What factors do you attribute these changes to?

Reviewing/monitoring partnership working

22. What mechanisms are used for reviewing/monitoring the effectiveness of the authority's partnership working with housing associations?
23. How often do you review/monitor the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
24. In your view, how effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
25. Who is involved in the review/monitoring of the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
26. Have the monitoring/review arrangements lead to the introduction of change where weaknesses were identified during the process?

CHAs and the future

27. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
28. If so, what are your reasons for saying this?
29. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Interviewee: Head of Planning

Background

1. Name of officer, position

CHAs and their purpose

2. What is your understanding of CHAs, what is their purpose and what do they seek to achieve?
3. If a CHA were introduced in the authority, what activities would you see it relating to?

Partnership working with housing associations

4. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent)
5. Why do you say that?
6. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Planning Policy
 - Development Control
7. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
8. Are the partnership working arrangements set down formally in an agreement?
9. In your view would a CHA improve partnership working with housing associations?
10. If yes, why do you think that it would lead to an improvement in partnership working?
11. If no, why not?
12. In your view would a CHA improve joint working across the authority?
13. If yes, why do you think that it would lead to an improvement in joint working across the authority?
14. If no, why not?
15. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
16. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
17. What factors do you attribute these changes to?

Reviewing partnership working

18. What mechanisms are used for reviewing/monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's partnership working with housing associations?
19. How often do you review/monitor the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
20. In your view, how effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
21. Who is involved in the review/monitoring of the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?

22. Have the monitoring/review arrangements lead to the introduction of change where weaknesses were identified during the process?

CHAs and the future

23. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
24. If so, what are your reasons for saying this?
25. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Interviewee: Senior Homelessness Officer

Background

1. Name of officer, position

CHAs and their purpose

2. Are you familiar with the idea of CHAs?
3. What is your understanding of CHA?

Partnership working with housing associations

4. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent)
5. Why do you say that?
6. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Homelessness
 - Nominations
7. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
8. Are the partnership working arrangements set down formally in an agreement?
9. In your view would a CHA improve partnership working with housing associations?
10. If yes, why do you think that it would lead to an improvement in partnership working?
11. If no, why not?
12. In your view would a CHA improve joint working across the authority?
13. If yes, why do you think that it would lead to an improvement in joint working across the authority?
14. If no, why not?
15. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
16. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
17. What factors do you attribute these changes to?

Reviewing partnership working

18. What mechanisms are used for reviewing/monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's partnership working with housing associations?
19. How often do you review/monitor the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
20. In your view, how effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?

21. Who is involved in the review/monitoring of the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
22. Have the monitoring/review arrangements lead to the introduction of change where weaknesses were identified during the process?

CHAs and the future

23. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
24. If so, what are your reasons for saying this?
25. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Head of Corporate Planning

Background

1. Name of officer, position

CHA's and their purpose

2. Are you familiar with CHAs?
3. What is your understanding of CHAs?

Partnership working with housing associations

4. How well does the authority work in partnership with housing associations? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1= very poor and 10 = excellent)
5. Why do you say that?
6. How does the authority work in partnership with housing associations in relation to the following activities :
 - Community Planning
 - Economic Development
 - Community Development
 - Community Safety
7. Please can you rank partnership working with housing associations on each of the activities and give reasons for your scores? (Please rank on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1= very poor and 10 = excellent. If you are unable to judge please state)
8. Is there a formal agreement which sets out how housing associations are involved in community planning activities?
9. How well do housing associations contribute to the delivery of community plan objectives?
10. How could partnership working between the council and housing associations be improved, in relation to the community planning function?
11. Would a CHA improve partnership working with housing associations?
12. If yes, why do you think that it would lead to an improvement in partnership working?
13. If no, why not?
14. Would a CHA improve joint working across the authority?
15. If yes, why do you think that it would lead to an improvement in joint working across the authority?
16. If no, why not?
17. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
18. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
19. What factors do you attribute these changes to?

Reviewing partnership working

20. What mechanisms are used for reviewing/monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's partnership working with housing associations?
21. How often do you review/monitor the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
22. How effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
23. Who is involved in the review/monitoring of the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
24. Have the monitoring/review arrangements lead to the introduction of change where weaknesses were identified during the process?

CHAs and the future

25. Do you feel that CHA's are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
26. If no, what would improve partnership working with housing associations?

Questions to Housing Associations operating in Case Study Local Authorities where a CHA is not in place

1. Has the local authority taken a formal decision not to establish a CHA?
 - a. If yes, why was that decision taken?
 - b. If no, why has no CHA been developed?
 - c. Did you lobby for a CHA to be introduced?
2. What is your understanding of the CHA, its purpose and what it seeks to achieve?
3. Would a CHA improve partnership working with the local authority?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If no, why not?
4. Describe how you work in partnership with the local authority to tackle homelessness?
5. What mechanisms are used for reviewing/monitoring the effectiveness of the authority's partnership working with housing associations?
 - a. How often do you review/monitor the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
 - b. In your view, how effective are the review/monitoring arrangements?
 - c. Who is involved in the review/monitoring of the effectiveness of partnership working with housing associations?
 - d. Have the monitoring/review arrangements lead to the introduction of change where weaknesses were identified during the process?
6. Have there been any noticeable changes in partnership working with housing associations in the last 5 years?
 - a. Have these changes been positive or negative, please describe?
 - b. What factors do you attribute these changes to?
7. Do you feel that CHAs are an appropriate form of agreement to take forward joint working between local authorities and housing associations, particularly in the light of plan rationalisation and the community leadership role?
 - a. If so, what are your reasons for saying this?
 - b. If no, what would improve partnership working with local authorities?

Appendix 10

Community Housing Agreements - Proposals for the way forward

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper has been produced by Housing + Cymru as one element of the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned research project which seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of Community Housing Agreements (CHAs). The paper has been produced towards the end of the research project to aid discussions around future policy options for partnership working between local authorities and housing associations.
- 1.2 This discussion paper briefly sets out:
- some of the findings from the research; and
 - the changing policy context.

Both the findings from the research and the changing policy context have shaped the proposed model set out in sections 5 and 6.

- 1.3 The paper provides an opportunity for key stakeholders and practitioners to influence the findings of the research and the possible shape of future policy proposals to emerge from the Welsh Assembly Government. Housing + Cymru will be arranging workshop sessions on behalf of the Assembly Government to discuss the paper, and the proposals it contains. Stakeholders and practitioners who are unable to attend these events can send their comments on the paper and the proposals electronically to Housing + Cymru at the following e-mail address simon@simoninkson.com.

2. Research Findings

- 2.1 The research found that:
- CHAs are not widely used. Only eight local authorities (36%) currently have a CHA in place;
 - in some areas, CHAs were signed with all housing associations that operate in the locality; in others, the agreements were with some of the associations and in one local authority area, the agreement was with one housing association;
 - one local authority stated that the process around the development of the CHA was all about driving change. However, most local authorities appear to view the CHA as more a framework for drawing together and formalising existing agreements and partnership arrangements;
 - local authorities with CHAs in place for more than a year were divided about how useful they still were. Roughly half said that CHAs had been effective catalysts for improving partnership working in the late 1990's/early 2000's when relations between local authorities and housing associations were more difficult. Some associations said that, initially, CHAs had played a big part in creating collaboration where there had previously been none. One local authority reported that the process of developing the CHA was one that had been used to develop a culture of collaborative working;

- all CHAs tended to be viewed corporately as “housing agreements” and were not in practice “owned” by the authority corporately or tied in with other local authority departments/directorates;
- the usefulness of CHAs tended to depend on the quality of the schedule/action plan; in most cases, these were weak, with tasks, responsibilities and timescales not specified in any detail;
- the effectiveness of partnership working does not seem to be dependent on whether or not there is a CHA in place. The research found many examples of creative partnership working initiatives which had been developed in the absence of a CHA, or outside of CHA arrangements;
- effective partnership working appears mainly to be due to the culture of the organisations involved, especially the culture of the local authority and appears to hinge on a series of relational issues such as:
 - trust;
 - openness;
 - willingness to share information and experiences;
 - recognition of the skills and aptitudes of partner agencies and the contribution that all parties can potentially make; and
- willingness to engage partners not just in agreeing documents, but in identifying issues that need tackling and in developing solutions.

3. Changing Context

3.1 Since the model CHA was produced by the Welsh National Social Landlords Forum in 1998, the environment within which both local authorities and housing associations operate has changed considerably. Key issues which have contributed to this changing context are:

- an increased recognition of the importance of a balanced housing market as a fundamental building block in the development of socially just and sustainable communities. This contrasts to the situation in the late 1990s when the contribution of housing to achieving national and local policy aims and objectives was often seen as marginal;
- a slowly emerging appreciation of the importance of the strategic housing role of local authorities in ensuring the delivering of the housing related objectives of the Community Strategy, through a range of delivery vehicles, and the primary importance of housing associations in delivering those objectives;
- the implementation of the Plan Rationalisation proposal which will introduce a new planning framework for local authorities in Wales requiring local authorities to produce 4 high level strategies and end the requirement for local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy beyond 2008. The revised planning framework could potentially undermine the strategic housing function at a local level and will require the Welsh Assembly Government to carefully consider the guidance that it offers to local authorities on the effective delivery of the strategic housing function, to ensure that this is not undermined;

- the consequences for the strategic housing role in local authorities who achieve a positive outcome to balloting their tenants on stock transfer. Any future arrangements for partnership working between local authorities and housing associations will need to cater for a situation in which the local authority has no housing stock and where one of its key housing relationships is with the housing association that has taken on that stock;
- a shift towards regional collaborative working across public services in Wales:
 - the Wales Spatial Plan People, Places, Futures introduced a national planning framework based upon 6 regions;
 - Making the Connections seeks to deliver improvements in public services in part based upon regional partnerships, sometimes to realise efficiencies, to jointly bid for funds or to tackle issues that transcend local authority boundaries;
 - in the housing field, regionalism is also on the agenda, evidenced by a number of collaborative local authority consortia such as South East Wales Regional Housing Forum (SEWRHF), the North Wales Regional Housing Partnership and the Rural Housing Authority Network (RHAN);
 - the development of housing association consortia adds to the trend of regionalism, as the consortia themselves are in part based upon models of regional collaboration.
- introduction of the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) for local authorities, which takes the principles of best value and places them in a context of self assessment and risk based improvement action. WPI guidance places considerable emphasis upon involving partners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services;
- the introduction of the new Regulatory Code for housing associations, which includes a fundamental obligation for associations to work in partnership with local authorities to identify and provide for the housing related needs of the area, and the new regulatory regime, including whole association analysis and inspection, to back up that Code.

4 Proposal

4.1 The research has generated a number of overarching points which inform the way forward for Community Housing Agreements:

- the growing importance of the strategic housing function of local authorities is the main driver for the suggested, revised form of agreement proposed. Our proposal aims to ensure that housing agencies, in particular housing associations, contribute towards the delivery of high level plans of every local authority in Wales and that the key objectives of housing associations and local authorities are aligned in this respect;
- the evaluation showed that some CHAs were between an authority and all the housing associations operating in their area, whilst others had separate agreements between the authority and each association. We are proposing a common agreement between each local authority and all the associations operating in that authority area, with the aim of maximising transparency, and encouraging the

sharing of good practice and joint working. Given the advent of housing association consortia, it may be appropriate for the agreement to be between an authority and a consortium, but this will be dependent on the stage of development of the individual consortium;

- the evaluation has shown that the process of developing an agreement between an authority and associations can be very important in terms of developing the trust, openness, respect, transparency and willingness to share knowledge that make partnership working effective. Careful attention should therefore be paid to the process by which an agreement will be developed;
- the evaluation showed that, whilst in some authorities CHAs had helped to raise awareness of the potential contribution of housing to other department's strategic objectives and the corporate objectives of the authority, CHAs were predominantly seen as documents "owned" by the housing department. It will be important that future agreements are properly embedded corporately. We feel that this would be facilitated by the production of guidance for local authorities on the preparation of the 4 high level plans, reinforcing the involvement of housing associations in the development of each;
- the evaluation has shown that problems occurred in some authorities from trying to make CHAs too ambitious, i.e. progress not being made on some or many of the intended actions. Ultimately, we believe that the agreements we are proposing would include all aspects of the operational contribution which associations could make, but we would suggest that agreements begin by including those elements that associations and authorities are most comfortable with. In some authorities, these will be wide-ranging; in others they will be more limited. An alternative approach would be to accept that some activities are essential and need to be incorporated in the agreement from the outset, (an example is shown in appendix 1). In either case, agreements should then include a specific commitment to iteratively expand the range of the issues covered. Views are invited on the whether any guidance should be prescriptive to the extent that it identifies activities that must be incorporated into agreements, or whether it should be left to local authorities and housing associations to determine the initial functions that are incorporated;
- in this paper, we have limited our consideration to the relationship between authorities and housing associations, but we believe the approach we are proposing could, and should usefully, be expanded to include other housing providers and stakeholders, (such as e.g. private sector landlords, support providers);
- the evaluation showed that many CHAs have fallen into disuse as a result of them being overtaken by new developments which were not envisaged when the CHA was first introduced. It is important that the agreement is regarded as a living document. It should include arrangements for regular review:
 - of strategic objectives;
 - of performance against existing operational elements;
 - of amendments necessary to existing operational arrangements;
 - to agree the next tranche of activities which can be incorporated

- to consider whether the agreement should be extended to include other housing providers.
- 4.2 We are proposing a non-prescriptive and outcome-based approach. This is for a number of reasons:
- the evaluation found a wide variety of positive practice in partnership working between local authorities and housing associations, both within the context of a CHA and where CHAs are not in place. It will be important that any new proposals for partnership working take account of, and build on, current levels and models of partnership working. A more prescriptive model would not allow for that;
 - a new proposal which is based upon process will not necessarily deliver the outcomes that partnership working seeks to deliver. It is the outcome of the process of partnership working which is of critical importance;
 - the evaluation found that 'soft' relational issues (e.g. trust, openness, mutual respect, etc.) were of greater importance in effective partnership working than the presence or absence of a CHA. These issues are difficult, if not impossible, to capture in a prescriptive, process-based model.
- 4.3 The model we are proposing contains both strategic and operational elements. This is to ensure that the two are knitted together recognising that harnessing the capacity of housing associations to deliver on strategic objectives is as important as harnessing their contributions to strategic thinking and priorities and similarly in relation to the contribution of local authorities to association priorities. Our proposal also seeks to ensure that the operational elements are clearly linked to strategic priorities. The evaluation showed that some CHAs have been effective in enabling associations to contribute strategically, but have been weaker on implementation and delivery, while others have been stronger on operational issues and less effective in relation to strategic issues. In addition, where there has been strong strategic engagement in relation to CHAs, operational issues included in the agreement are not always clearly linked to the strategic priorities.
- 4.4 The model is also set in the context of plan rationalisation where local authorities will be required to submit 4 high level plans to the Assembly.

5 Housing Agreement - Strategic Element

- 5.1 The principal role of the strategic housing function of a local authority is to articulate the role of housing in contributing to the delivery of the authority's Community Plan objectives. We see the principal role of a housing agreement as one that articulates and maximises the contribution of local housing agencies to the delivery of those objectives.⁶²
- 5.2 The aim of this aspect of the agreement is to maximise the contribution of housing associations to local authority strategic thinking and planning and the contribution of local authorities to the strategic thinking and planning of housing associations.

⁶² For this paper, we have limited our proposals to housing associations.

5.3 We see the relative responsibilities of local authorities and housing associations in respect of this element of this agreement as being as follows:

The local authority should:	The housing association ⁶³ should:
Engage with housing associations at an early stage in the process of strategic thinking	Contribute fully to local authority strategic thinking and planning
Seek the views of housing associations on the problems facing local communities and solutions to these, rather than consulting them on draft proposals	Contribute its views on problems facing the communities it works with and share its experience and ideas on how to resolve them
Acknowledge that associations' views or contributions are not limited to 'traditional' housing issues (e.g. nominations, development), but that they can also make contributions across the authority's wider strategic objectives (e.g. skills training, financial inclusion via credit unions, support for vulnerable people)	Provide views and contributions including and beyond 'traditional' housing issues
Engage with associations and seek their views on the development and content of the authority's 4 high level plans (Community Strategy, Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy, Local Development Plan and Children and Young People's Plan) and any other relevant plans that the local authority chooses to produce	Provide views on the content of the authority's 4 high level plans and any other relevant plans that the local authority chooses to produce
Ensure that the agreement is embedded corporately across the authority and does not reside exclusively with the housing function	Ensure that the authority's key strategic objectives (from Community Strategy and other high level plans) inform the association's strategic thinking and planning
Adopt modes of engagement between the authority and associations which minimise resource demands (e.g. by engaging via consortia or via agreed representatives of groups of associations, by rationalising the range of strategic and operational fora that associations are expected to attend)	Discuss and agree modes of engagement which minimise resource demands
Recognise that the impact and value of the agreement will be limited unless the culture of the authority is one of listening, openness and transparency.	Recognise that the impact and value of the agreement will be limited unless the culture of the association is one of listening, openness and transparency

⁶³ The singular form of housing association is used to indicate that it is each housing association's responsibility even if engagement is via consortia or agreed representatives

6 Housing Agreement - Operational Element

6.1 The aim of this aspect of the agreement is to maximise the contribution that services delivered by housing associations make to the operational delivery of the authorities key strategic objectives.

6.2 We see the relative responsibilities of local authorities and housing associations in respect of this element of this agreement as being as follows:

The local authority should:	The housing association ⁶⁴ should:
Identify specific operational areas where housing associations can contribute to the delivery of the key strategic objectives of the authority (see Annexe 1 for areas of activity where housing associations are currently contributing)	Identify where the local authority can contribute to the delivery of the association's own strategic objectives
Make clear connections between the elements of operational delivery outlined in the agreement and the key strategic objectives in the authority's 4 high level strategic plans	Make clear connections between the elements of operational service delivery outlined in the agreement and its own strategic objectives
Be aware of, and acknowledge, the experience, expertise and capacity of housing associations in specific areas of operational activity (e.g. development of social housing, supporting people, delivery of services to older people, tackling anti social behaviour, social inclusion initiatives, etc.)	Be aware of, and acknowledge, the experience, expertise, capacity and statutory responsibilities of the local authority in specific areas of operational activity (e.g. homelessness, community well being, economic well being, etc.)
Be open to the possibility of achieving operational objectives in partnership with housing associations (e.g. via joint working or joint projects)	Be open to the possibility of achieving operational objectives in partnership with the local authority
Identify specific operational areas where the authority can contribute to the delivery of housing association strategic objectives	Identify specific operational areas where it can contribute to the delivery of the key strategic objectives of the authority
Jointly agree with housing associations outcomes, activities and targets for operational delivery which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART)	Jointly agree with the authority outcomes, activities and targets for operational activity which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART)

⁶⁴ The singular form of housing association is used to indicate that it is each housing association's responsibility even if engagement is via consortia or agreed representatives

7 Ensuring agreements are put into practice

- 7.1 The evaluation showed that only 8 authorities currently have CHAs in place. The Assembly Government needs to consider how it can ensure that any new guidance it produces will be followed in practice.
- 7.2 For housing associations, we believe that the requirement to develop agreements should be incorporated into the Regulatory Code for RSLs.
- 7.3 For local authorities, we believe that the requirement to develop agreements should form one element of guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government on the delivery of the strategic housing function.

8 Comments

- 8.1 We would welcome general comments on the contents of the paper and the proposed form of agreement. For example:
- (a) should guidance contain a requirement for local authorities and partner housing associations to develop such agreements?
 - (b) should guidance on agreements be prescriptive to the extent that it identifies activities that must be incorporated into agreements?
 - (c) should local authorities and housing associations who fail to develop agreements or to implement the agreements meaningfully be penalised and, if so, how?

Annex 1: List of areas where housing associations are currently contributing to operational issues

Essential

Allocations/lettings (e.g. via nominations, common housing registers, common allocations policies, common exclusions policies)

Homelessness (e.g. via provision of temporary and permanent accommodation, prevention activity)

Housing benefit (e.g. via the verification framework)

Desirable

Anti-social behaviour

Community Development

Energy efficiency (e.g. via HEES)

Financial inclusion (e.g. via credit unions)

Regeneration

Tenancy management/sustaining tenancies

Tenancy related support

Tenant participation

Welfare benefits advice

Appendix 11

Report of the outcome of the consultation on the policy proposals contained in the discussion paper “Community Housing Agreements - proposals for a way forward”

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides a summary of the comments on the discussion paper which were received from:

- participants who attended the workshop sessions; and
- stakeholders who provided their comments in writing.

2. Background

2.1 In late May 2006, the discussion paper (appendix 10) was sent to all local authorities and housing associations in Wales and key stakeholder agencies.

2.2 Agencies were invited to send a representative to either one of two workshops. Agencies were also invited to provide their comments on the proposals in writing.

2.3 The two workshops were held on the following dates and in the following locations:

- 27th June, National Waterfront Museum, Swansea; and
- 5th July, Plas Tan y Bwlch, Gwynedd.

2.4 The workshops provided participants with background information about the development of Community Housing Agreements (CHAs), the results of the research, the emerging policy environment and set out the detail of the proposals contained within the discussion paper.

2.5 The workshops also incorporated a facilitated discussion session where the views and comments of the participants were sought on the proposals contained in the discussion paper.

2.6 In total, 25 participants attended the two workshop sessions and written responses were received from three practitioners.

3. Consultation Outcomes

3.1 The discussions held during the workshops were structured around the key aspects of the proposals.

3.2 Participants in the workshops and those who provided written comments are referred to as respondents.

3.3 General Comments

3.3.1 There was unanimous support for the introduction of a revised form of CHA. Respondents also expressed strong support for the production of guidance on a revised form of CHA being one element of the guidance provided by the Welsh Assembly Government on the delivery of the strategic housing role of local authorities.

3.3.2 A significant number of respondents suggested that the Welsh Assembly Government should support the strengthening of the strategic housing role of local authorities in Wales by delivering a training session for politicians and senior officers of each local authority on the importance of the strategic housing role and that local housing associations should participate in the delivery of the session.

3.4 Revised form of agreement linked to the delivery of high level plans

3.4.1 Overall, there was strong support expressed for the proposals contained within the discussion paper for the introduction of a non-prescriptive outcome based agreement between local authorities and housing associations. The respondents agreed that a key function of the strategic housing function of local authorities is to translate the high level objectives of local authority strategies into practical housing tasks and activities delivered by a range of partners. Therefore, agreements would usefully provide some structure to the relationship between the local authority and housing associations.

3.5 Common agreement between local authorities and housing associations/consortia operating in area

3.5.1 There was broad agreement that all housing associations and consortia operating in an area should be signed up to a revised form of community housing agreement.

3.5.2 The contents of those agreements will need to reflect the role played by each association in the locality, possibly through a common agreement at a high level, with flexibility below that via separate operational arrangements with each association.

3.6 Careful attention paid to the process of development

3.6.1 The process of developing the community housing agreement was seen as critical to its success, and an off-the-shelf agreement was agreed to be of little value. Respondents stated that the process of development should:

- involve staff from other functions of the council, Cabinet members and a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team (to ensure that the agreement is corporately embedded);
- involve operational and strategic staff;
- commence with an objective analysis of the state of relations between the local authority and housing associations, for example via a SWOT analysis;
- not set a rigid deadline for its completion, recognising that the process of development may be substantial.

3.6.2 Respondents felt that the Welsh Assembly Government should state in guidance who should be involved in the development of the agreement, to ensure that there is corporate and political commitment.

3.6.3 Respondents also stated that guidance should contain examples of positive practice in terms of the development process.

3.7 *Corporately embedded*

3.7.1 There was broad agreement on the need to ensure that agreements were corporate in nature. However, concerns were raised that making the agreement too corporate could mean that operational housing matters may be ignored.

3.7.2 Respondents stated that:

- guidance issued to local authorities on the production of the four high-level plans should make it a requirement for local authorities to consult with housing associations and involve them in the development of the plans;
- guidance on the production of a community housing agreement should set out clearly how housing can contribute to the delivery of wider corporate objectives, such as health improvement, educational attainment, economic development, social inclusion, etc;
- the term Community Housing Agreement was not helpful and meant that the agreement tended to remain within the housing silo in the local authority. Renaming the agreement "Community Partnership Agreements" would resolve this difficulty.

3.7.3 A number of respondents indicated that the strategic housing function of the local authority was poorly resourced at a local level and the corporate recognition of the potential contribution of housing to wider corporate objectives is likely to be low. Some respondents felt that, by making the establishment of agreements a requirement for local authorities and providing financial support to authorities to strengthen the strategic housing function, the Assembly Government would ensure that housing and the activities of housing agencies, in particular housing associations, would be far more corporately embedded.

3.8 *Limited approach initially*

3.8.1 There was broad agreement that the current state of local partnership between housing associations and the local authority should determine the content of the initial coverage of the agreement and that this should follow the local authority's strategic objectives and reflect the aspirations of both the local authority and the housing associations.

3.8.2 Respondents stated that:

- guidance should recognise that the content and scope of agreements will vary from area to area;
- guidance should contain an expectation that agreements should set out the activities that are incorporated initially and contain an action plan setting out the timescales for further activities to be incorporated in the future;
- guidance should contain a list of activities that the Assembly recommends (but not requires) should be included in an initial agreement.

3.9 Expanded to incorporate other housing providers

3.9.1 There was an acceptance that the strategic housing role of local authorities incorporated partnership working with other agencies. However, there was strong support for the agreement to be limited to housing associations and/or housing association consortia. Respondents suggested that similar forms of agreement could be introduced with voluntary sector and private sector agencies, but that these should be kept separate from agreements with housing associations.

3.9.2 Respondents also suggested that:

- the agreements could be expanded in time to become tripartite agreements incorporating the Welsh Assembly Government;
- there could be potential in developing regional agreements between associations and authorities across a number of local authority areas.

3.10 Arrangements for regular review

3.10.1 There was broad agreement that agreements should be subject to regular review and should set out the arrangements for review along with indicators for monitoring the performance of both local authorities and housing associations.

3.11 Non - prescriptive outcome based approach

3.11.1 There was unanimous support from respondents that the agreements should be non-prescriptive and outcome based. Non-prescription was felt necessary to encourage innovation, but it was recognised that non-prescription would also make it difficult for the Assembly to evaluate the quality of different agreements. However, the success of agreements should be measured by the real difference that they make on the ground.

3.11.2 Respondents suggested that the potential scope of the agreement should include all of the activities that housing associations deliver which contribute towards community plan objectives and that these activities should be identified (but not prescribed) in guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly Government.

3.11.3 There was no clear agreement on whether essential and desirable activities to be incorporated should be determined centrally. Some felt that this went against the grain of the proposal itself, whilst others felt it might be helpful. If the guidance were to offer an element of prescription, it was agreed that the following activities are key, and could be labelled as essential:

- issues relating to lettings (nominations, access to housing register, etc.);
- contribution to tackling homelessness;
- housing benefit;
- community safety/antisocial behaviour; and
- issues relating to housing need and the supply of social housing.

3.12 Contain strategic and operational elements

All respondents agreed that the agreements should contain both strategic and operational elements.

3.13 Guidance to contain a requirement for local authorities and partner housing associations to develop such agreements

- 3.13.1 Respondents, whilst recognising that a relationship cannot be forced to develop, felt strongly that the development and implementation of a community housing agreement should be a requirement. For housing associations, it was felt there were sufficient levers within the housing association regulatory regime to make it a requirement for associations to work in partnership with local authorities. There was strong support from associations and local authority housing departments represented to make a revised form of agreement an Assembly requirement for local authorities. Respondents suggested that the development of an agreement could be incorporated into policy agreement targets, and incentives provided to local authorities via the provision of performance improvement grant (PIG).
- 3.13.2 Respondents felt there needed to be a requirement for the Welsh Assembly Government to regulate and monitor the agreements.
- 3.13.3 Respondents recognised that the resource requirements in developing and monitoring agreements would raise issues of capacity within a number of local authorities and housing associations (particularly the smaller associations).

3.14 Penalties for local authorities and housing associations who fail to develop or properly implement

- 3.14.1 Respondents stated that a mixture of penalties and incentives could be used to ensure that local authorities and housing associations develop and fully implement a revised form of agreement. Respondents felt that the main focus should be incentives to encourage the development of agreements.
- 3.14.2 Respondents suggested the following mechanisms:
- top-slicing and withholding a proportion of social housing grant from local authorities and housing associations where a community housing agreement has not been developed or has not been fully implemented;
 - additional social housing grant could be allocated where community housing agreements have been developed and are operating effectively;
 - establishing a community partnership fund, (similar to Social Housing Management Grant), which could be used to promote the development of community housing agreements;
 - part of the SHMG programme could also be top-sliced for local authorities who have developed and successfully implemented community housing agreements;
 - the Welsh Assembly Government to showcase positive practice, and to fund authorities and associations with successful agreements to act as mentors to others;
 - the naming and shaming of poorly performing local authorities and housing associations and the publicising of positive performance.

Appendix 12

Proposed roles and responsibilities of Parties in respect of the revised form of Community Housing Agreement

Revised form of Agreement - Strategic Element

The principal role of the strategic housing function of a local authority is to articulate the role of housing in contributing to the delivery of the authority's Community Plan objectives. We see the principal role of a housing agreement as one that articulates and maximises the contribution of local housing associations to the delivery of those objectives.

The aim of this aspect of the agreement is to maximise the contribution of housing associations to local authority strategic thinking and planning and the contribution of local authorities to the strategic thinking and planning of housing associations.

We see the relative responsibilities of local authorities and housing associations in respect of this element of this agreement as being as follows:

The local authority should:	The housing association ⁶⁵ should:
Engage with housing associations at an early stage in the process of strategic thinking	Contribute fully to local authority strategic thinking and planning
Seek the views of housing associations on the problems facing local communities and solutions to these, rather than consulting them on draft proposals	Contribute its views on problems facing the communities it works with and share its experience and ideas on how to resolve them
Acknowledge that associations' views or contributions are not limited to 'traditional' housing issues (e.g. nominations, development), but that they can also make contributions across the authority's wider strategic objectives (e.g. skills training, financial inclusion via credit unions, support for vulnerable people)	Provide views and contributions including and beyond 'traditional' housing issues

⁶⁵ The singular form of housing association is used to indicate that it is each housing association's responsibility even if engagement is via consortia or agreed representatives

The local authority should:	The housing association should:
Engage with associations and seek their views on the development and content of the authority's 4 high level plans (Community Strategy, Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy, Local Development Plan and Children and Young People's Plan) and any other relevant plans that the local authority chooses to produce	Provide views on the content of the authority's 4 high level plans and any other relevant plans that the local authority chooses to produce
Ensure that the agreement is embedded corporately across the authority and does not reside exclusively with the housing function	Ensure that the authority's key strategic objectives (from Community Strategy and other high level plans) inform the association's strategic thinking and planning
Adopt modes of engagement between the authority and associations which minimise resource demands (e.g. by engaging via consortia or via agreed representatives of groups of associations, by rationalising the range of strategic and operational fora that associations are expected to attend)	Discuss and agree modes of engagement which minimise resource demands
Recognise that the impact and value of the agreement will be limited unless the culture of the authority is one of listening, openness and transparency.	Recognise that the impact and value of the agreement will be limited unless the culture of the association is one of listening, openness and transparency

Revised form of Agreement - Operational Element

The aim of this aspect of the agreement is to maximise the contribution that services delivered by housing associations make to the operational delivery of the authorities key strategic objectives.

We see the relative responsibilities of local authorities and housing associations in respect of this element of this agreement as being as follows:

The local authority should:	The housing association ⁶⁶ should:
Identify specific operational areas where housing associations can contribute to the delivery of the key strategic objectives of the authority (see Annexe 1 for areas of activity where housing associations are currently contributing)	Identify where the local authority can contribute to the delivery of the association's own strategic objectives
Make clear connections between the elements of operational delivery outlined in the agreement and the key strategic objectives in the authority's 4 high level strategic plans	Make clear connections between the elements of operational service delivery outlined in the agreement and its own strategic objectives
Be aware of, and acknowledge, the experience, expertise and capacity of housing associations in specific areas of operational activity (e.g. development of social housing, supporting people, delivery of services to older people, tackling anti social behaviour, social inclusion initiatives, etc.)	Be aware of, and acknowledge, the experience, expertise, capacity and statutory responsibilities of the local authority in specific areas of operational activity (e.g. homelessness, community well being, economic well being, etc.)
Be open to the possibility of achieving operational objectives in partnership with housing associations (e.g. via joint working or joint projects)	Be open to the possibility of achieving operational objectives in partnership with the local authority

⁶⁶ The singular form of housing association is used to indicate that it is each housing association's responsibility even if engagement is via consortia or agreed representatives

The local authority should:	The housing association⁶⁷ should:
Identify specific operational areas where the authority can contribute to the delivery of housing association strategic objectives	Identify specific operational areas where it can contribute to the delivery of the key strategic objectives of the authority
Jointly agree with housing associations outcomes, activities and targets for operational delivery which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART)	Jointly agree with the authority outcomes, activities and targets for operational activity which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART)

⁶⁷ The singular form of housing association is used to indicate that it is each housing association's responsibility even if engagement is via consortia or agreed representatives