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Housing in Wales: Evidence for Welsh Government 2021-26



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All opinions expressed here, any errors and omissions, remain our sole responsibility.

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Evidenced priorities for the incoming Government

Drawing upon the CaCHE evidence base we have identified 12 key priorities for Welsh Government housing policy between 2021-2026.

Affordable Housing Supply

- The next Welsh Government should ensure increased funding to further boost the supply of affordable housing, with priority given to social housing provision which is genuinely affordable to meet need. We recognise that this will need to be supported by encouraging increased investment to address the needs to modernise and retrofit the existing housing stock to encourage decarbonisation.
- CaCHE research has highlighted that investment in social housing in particular can stimulate increased and sustainable higher levels of employment. The next Welsh Government should ensure that investment in additional housing is used effectively to promote employment and training opportunities and support the Welsh economy.

Homelessness

- Homelessness prevention must move upstream. Welsh Government should explore wider-ranging public sector prevention duties to target earlier multi-disciplinary assistance towards high risk groups and risky transitions, learning from emerging developments in Scotland.
- The use of inappropriate hostels and shelters as emergency and often long-term accommodation should end. Moves to embrace housing-led solutions are to be warmly welcomed and should be scaled up at pace, whilst also removing key legislative barriers such as the Priority Need test.

Private Rented Sector

- Wales has developed an innovative national registration and licensing scheme (Rent Smart Wales) designed to improve standards in the private rented sector. Efforts have also been made to increase security of tenure for those living in the sector. However, evidence suggests that more could be done to learn from experiences beyond Wales in terms of supporting local strategies towards the private rented sector and co-ordinating appropriate enforcement action.

- Rent Smart Wales has improved the database for private renting in Wales, enabling a better understanding of the nature of the sector and improved communications with landlords and tenants. However, CaCHE research has argued that there are still gaps in our knowledge of what is a significant tenure and more needs to be done by Welsh Government in terms of data collection and analysis both to understand the private rented sector and how it is changing across Wales and over time.

Tenant Engagement

- CaCHE research has argued that regulation can drive approaches to tenant participation. Welsh Government should consider how its approaches to housing regulation could be developed to ensure all social landlords in Wales are facilitating effective policies and practices for tenant engagement.
- Welsh Government should do more to ensure that the voices of tenants (in both the social and private sector) are heard at a national level in shaping future housing policy, perhaps through the creation of a National Tenants' Forum.

Creating Sustainable places

- The Welsh Government should adopt 'design value standards' that place neighbourhood urban form principles in regulation and embed the economic, social and environmental value of design at the heart of planning and housebuilding.
- COVID-19 has demonstrated that resilience starts with the home, its design and its context. Welsh Government must commit to ensuring all homes have flexible space as they increasingly become places of work. All homes should also have access to green space, daylight and broadband.

Health and housing

- Welsh Government should drive improved interactions between health, housing and social care, based upon the following six principles: 1] shared analysis of issues and solutions, 2] person-centred design, 3] strong leadership, 4] Joint budgets, 5] Shared interpretation of legislation, and 6] recognition of power imbalances.
- Landlords, particularly in the private rented sector, need to be supported to improve their knowledge of mental health issues, and how to assist tenants to access support. This requires leadership at a national level but may also draw in partners to deliver training and advice services.

Introduction

The next Welsh Government, due to be elected in 2021, will face difficult choices and there will be continuing resource constraints, yet the COVID-19 pandemic also creates a juncture to reflect on and seek to address some of the most pressing housing challenges in Wales. The purpose of this document is to collate recent evidence published by the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) in order to inform policy and decision making as Wales moves into its next term of Government.

The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) is a multi-disciplinary UK-wide research centre which represents a partnership between academics and housing policy and practice. It was established in August 2017 and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Our work is organised into seven, overlapping themes. This permits a holistic, systematic, and rigorously evidence-based approach to understanding the workings of the housing system, exploring the complex and dynamic connections and inter-dependencies between different parts of the system. This approach also recognises the quite different challenges found across the UK within local, metropolitan, devolved administration and regional housing systems.

The themes are: [Choice](#), [Economy](#), [Governance](#), [Homelessness](#), [Markets](#), [Place](#), and [Wider Drivers](#).

Following this introduction, we set out the wider context for the paper. There are then six main sections which focus on major housing challenges for Wales: affordable housing supply, homelessness, the private rented sector, tenant engagement, creating sustainable places, and health & housing. Each of these sections briefly describes the current Welsh policy context before summarising recent CaCHE evidence on the issue. There is then a penultimate section highlighting new and emerging CaCHE research which we consider relevant to Wales before we offer some concluding thoughts. We have drawn upon CaCHE research to set out above 12 key evidenced priorities for housing for the next Welsh Government.

Setting the Context

The Wales Knowledge Exchange Hub

At the heart of CaCHE's work is Knowledge Exchange (KE); a process that brings together academics, users of research, wider groups and communities to exchange ideas, evidence and expertise. At the outset of our work we established a Knowledge Exchange Hub for Wales (one of 5 across the UK), made up of key stakeholders (government, private sector, representative bodies, third sector organisations etc.) from across Wales, and we have also engaged with residents and tenants through a Residents' Voice Focus Group. These mechanisms have been used to co-produce our research priorities and to comment critically on emerging research projects.

In May 2018 we held a workshop with members of the **Wales Knowledge Exchange Hub** in order to identify research priorities for Wales in relation to CaCHE's key themes and these are set out below.

Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues of housing affordability across different tenures, understanding the relationships between costs and incomes and the interface with welfare. • Ensuring existing and new homes are fit for the future, in terms of space and quality. • Understanding the housing system and how to engage with it to ensure different voices are heard.
Economy/ Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a better understanding of housing needs and demand in Wales at different spatial scales.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising the importance of housing at a strategic policy level. • Consideration of the powers Wales has and what powers it might benefit from to deliver suitable housing provision.
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research to inform tackling homelessness through both short-term (preventative measures) and long term (ending priority need) solutions. • Funding arrangements for supported accommodation.
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an effective planning system that delivers suitable housing and places where people want to live, ensuring that local people are involved in policy making processes.
Wider Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The links between housing and health: making the case for spending on housing to achieve health benefits. • Evaluating the effectiveness of housing related support. • Improving the quality of datasets (and sharing of data).

The CaCHE Wales Hub also argued the need for more emphasis on understanding the private rented sector, the importance of recognising geographical differences across Wales (in particular not to ignore the rural dimensions of housing), of raising the importance of housing as a policy area within Welsh Government and to consider policy development in the context of the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015.

In Autumn 2018, in collaboration with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Cymru, we ran a separate event with Welsh tenants to identify their views on the main housing issues in Wales. Whilst there was considerable overlap between the priorities identified by the Wales Knowledge Exchange Hub, there were also differences. The four priorities identified were:

- The need for more affordable housing for life.
- Addressing issues of welfare reform.
- Putting tenants at the heart of housing and the need for the voice of tenants to be heard in policy development and decision-making.
- Raising standards of housing services and accountability.

CaCHE has used the prioritisation events in Wales (and other similar events in other parts of the UK) to shape its current research priorities and the development of specific research projects. Our website (housingevidence.ac.uk) provides details of our work across the UK, our published outputs (research reports, evidence reviews, policy briefings, working papers etc.) as well as series of blogs addressing current housing issues. We have also used meetings of the CaCHE Wales Hub and other dissemination events to reflect upon the relevance of our research projects to Wales.

Housing, COVID-19 and a reset agenda

Of course, research priorities are never fixed, and during the last 12 months CaCHE, like everyone else, has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, not only in terms of how we organise our work, but also in terms of the work we do. Housing is the site where people have been locked down. It has offered a source of safety and security for many, but it has also exacerbated the housing challenges for others (as well as creating new ones). Across the UK we have seen the development of policies to respond to these housing challenges, both in terms of health and well-being emergencies as well as injecting additional funding to support housing and households.

We are currently undertaking a research project¹ across the UK examining the development of housing policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall aim of the research is to provide an understanding of the housing policies which have emerged and are emerging in response to the virus, drawing on documentary evidence and interviews with key informants (to be undertaken twice during the period of the research). It seeks to understand the trajectories that different policies take over space (across the devolved nations of the UK) and time to consider how the COVID-19 experience is reshaping housing policy. The research is taking place over a period of around 15 months (early Summer 2020 – Autumn 2021) and is being organised around 5 sub-projects, each following similar research methods to allow for direct comparison within the UK. The 5 sub-projects are:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the economy and UK housing market.
- Housing systems, their institutions, and their resilience (including; the impact of the pandemic on housing and placemaking).
- COVID-19 and homelessness: learning from crisis to inform future policy.
- COVID-19 and domestic abuse: tracing changes in policy, legislation, and discourse.
- The rented sector, evictions, and activism.

The CaCHE Wales Hub discussed the COVID-19 research in July 2020, focusing on two broad questions in relation to each of the sub projects: 1] What have been the impacts of/responses to COVID-19 in Wales? 2] What are the challenges/opportunities going forward for the housing sector in Wales? The key emerging challenges identified during these discussions are set out under several themes in a CaCHE paper².

Housing Evidence for Government 2021-2026

Since its establishment CaCHE has worked closely with Welsh Government (with officials from both the Housing and Regeneration Directorate and Knowledge and Analytical Services represented on the Wales Hub) and with the wider Welsh housing sector. In the lead in to the 2021 Senedd Election we would wish to highlight, through the work of CaCHE, some of the research evidence available to address housing policy challenges and to inform future policy development.

¹ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/our-work/research-projects/housing-policies-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

² <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Wales-Hub-July-2020-CaCHE-discussion-Final-Write-Up-3.pdf>

Affordable housing supply

Current context

Across Wales (as in many other parts of the UK) there are growing issues of housing affordability. For many households (or potential households) rising housing costs, changes in the relationships between housing costs and incomes (in particular the decline of social rented sector housing and the growth of private renting) have all contributed to a growing crisis in housing, increasing inequalities and significant numbers of people who are either homeless or living in insecure accommodation or in housing of poor quality or which does not meet their needs.

Several national and regional assessments of housing need and the need for non-market affordable housing have highlighted current and projected shortfalls in housing. These have informed Welsh Government affordable housing targets (including the 20,000 target of the current Administration for 2016-2021), which have themselves become ambitious and challenging over time. However, the evidence indicates a continuing gap between the level of needs and the rate of supply. The provision of additional affordable housing has been driven by a combination of subsidy arrangements and financial mechanisms. However, social rented housing has continued to dominate affordable housing provision and the current Administration has indicated that this remains a top priority. The delivery of additional social housing in Wales has been predominantly through housing associations, although there are signs that local authorities are beginning to increase their contribution to new supply.

In April 2018 the then Minister for Housing and Regeneration in Wales appointed an independent Review of Affordable Housing Supply for Wales. This reported a year later (Welsh Government, 2019a) with 22 key recommendations for Welsh Government covering the following issues:

- Developing a better understanding of housing need;
- Implementing a new 5-year rents policy in the social housing sector;
- Introducing a reformed grant funding system for social housing organisations;
- Encouraging local authorities to increase their provision of additional housing;
- Developing new housing quality standards for new build grant funded homes;
- Continuing to support the development of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC);
- Undertake a financial review of the Welsh large scale voluntary transfers (LSVTs) in receipt of dowry and the housing revenue accounts of Welsh local authorities in receipt of Major Repairs Allowance (MRA), linking any ongoing commitments to an accelerated programme of decarbonisation in the social housing sector;
- Create an arms-length body to help accelerate the development of public land.

The recommendations have all been accepted by Welsh Government and considerable progress has been made in implementing policy change. Work has been undertaken by Welsh Government to update estimates of housing need at national and regional levels and consideration is being given to whether the model used to assess needs can be applied at a local authority level in Wales.

A new five-year social rent policy was announced in December 2019 and a revised grant framework to support additional affordable/social housing is being developed with full implementation expected from 2022/23.

Local authorities in Wales (11 councils have a retained housing stock) have been encouraged to use the flexibilities created by the lifting of the borrowing cap to increase their contribution to additional affordable housing supply. There has also been encouragement for enhanced collaboration across the social housing sector in Wales and consideration will be given to local authorities having access to support under the proposed new grant framework.

A new housing quality standard (Beautiful Homes and Spaces) has been developed and following consultation is expected to be adopted in 2021. A strategy for off-site manufacturing/modern methods of construction (OSM/MMC) was published in February 2020 and the Welsh Government's Innovative Housing Programme (IHP) has provided additional resources to support these initiatives in 2020/21.

A Land Division has been established within Welsh Government to work across the public sector in Wales to stimulate a more proactive approach to developing publicly owned land for social housing.

Wales' Help to Buy programme is due to continue until at least March 2022 (and may be extended to March 2023), though in line with the recommendations of the Independent Review of Affordable Housing a reduced-price cap for eligible properties (£250,000) is being introduced from April 2021.

Finally, there are proposals from Welsh Government to include a revised energy efficiency measure within the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) post 2020 to improve levels of energy efficiency within existing social housing in Wales as well as accelerating the decarbonisation of existing housing. This is in line not only with the recommendations from the Independent Review of Affordable Housing Supply (Welsh Government, 2019a) but also a separate independent review, Better homes, Better Wales, Better World (Welsh Government, 2019b) which has called for ambitious targets so that Wales can achieve "net zero" carbon by 2050.

Meanwhile, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Welsh Government, 2018) provides the policy framework for the preparation of local development plans (LDPs), which are vital not only to placemaking more broadly but to the delivery of additional homes, in particular affordable housing. There is an expectation that LDPs must be informed by estimates of housing need and Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMAs) and make appropriate provision for affordable housing. In addition, local authorities in Wales are being encouraged to bring back into use vacant housing, using compulsory purchase powers where appropriate.

The CaCHE evidence base

Approaches for improving affordability: Policy Briefing

Early work by CaCHE addressed some of the important debates in relation to understanding housing affordability in the UK. A policy briefing³, based on more detailed research, made several key points:

- Affordability is not a problem for most households. The problems are primarily for those on lower incomes or those aspiring to be first time buyers.
- The most important factors affecting affordability come from the macroeconomy (e.g., interest rates) and labour markets (e.g., incomes).
- But initiatives specifically aimed at the housing market still have an important role. The rise in the ratio of house prices to incomes over time partly reflects low interest rates and so considerable caution is needed in its use as an affordability indicator.

³ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/P2018_02_02_Affordability_Briefing_Paper.pdf

Tackling the UK housing crisis: is supply the answer?

In terms of tackling the UK housing crisis there has been a broad consensus that the problems are essentially down to the long-term undersupply of housing. CaCHE has encouraged debate around the extent to which increasing supply is the answer. A paper⁴ examining official data argued that analysis did not support the view that simply boosting supply will solve the housing crisis.

Commentaries on the analysis by Meen⁵ and Bramley⁶ nevertheless argued that increasing supply is part of the solution, not least because it enables more direct interventions through the provision of more social and affordable housing.

Social housing policy working group

We have noted above that in Wales the emphasis of Welsh Government policy in relation to affordable housing has been to increase the supply of social housing. The CaCHE Social Housing Policy Working Group published a series of papers⁷ in 2018 reflecting on a number of the issues that need to be considered in any programme of increased provision of social housing.

As well as individual papers examining social housing policy in different parts of the UK (including one paper specifically looking at Wales⁸) there are separate papers considering the governance⁹ of social housing, design¹⁰, and social housing finance¹¹.

Housing and social exclusion/inclusion

The lack of affordable, secure suitable housing is a key driver of exclusion in the housing system. CaCHE has published research¹² on this issue highlighting perceptions that housing exclusion is worsening, that a number of groups are experiencing greater constraints over access to good quality, secure affordable housing (e.g. younger, lower income groups; some BME households) and that housing exclusion can vary considerably across different housing markets .

- The scarcity of social housing inevitably introduces some form of rationing, increased competition for homes and pushes up costs in the private sector.
- The interaction of housing and immigration policy has had a significant impact on access to housing
- Changes to the welfare system, particularly since 2010, have restricted access to certain types of housing.
- In the social housing sector, the interaction of welfare and housing policy (such as rent policy and funding for the development of social housing) can reinforce exclusion.
- A lack of (or limited) regulation in both the private and social sectors can impact in negative ways on tenants' rights.

⁴ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/20190820b-CaCHE-Housing-Supply-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/190820-Geoff-Meen-comments_final-1.pdf

⁶ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/190820-Glen-Bramley-comments_final.pdf

⁷ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/our-work/social-housing-policy-working-group/>

⁸ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/R2018_SHPWG_04_Bob_Smith.pdf

⁹ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/R0218_SHPWG_03_Governance_Alex_Marsh.pdf

¹⁰ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/R2018_SHPWG_01_Promoting_Design_Value_final.pdf

¹¹ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/R2018_SHPWG_funding_models_Ken_Gibb_final.pdf

¹² https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/200204-forms-and-mechanisms-of-exclusion-in-contemporary-housing-systems_final.pdf

CaCHE has also provided research support to the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to inform their inquiry into the links between housing and employment, to understand the employment and earnings gap in social housing and how this might be resolved. The research, published in December 2020, concluded that:

- Social housing can support the conditions needed to secure and sustain employment.
- Devolved, local and tailored interventions work well in a diverse range of communities.
- National employment programmes can work locally through social housing partners.
- Labour markets and social housing will benefit from medium to long-term commitments to work together, supported by government.
- Social housing investment can multiply its benefits and economic impacts.

The contribution of affordable home ownership

Affordable home ownership has been an important part of government housing policy across all four countries of the UK for several decades. A recent report¹³ for CaCHE and the Building Societies Association undertaken by academics at the London School of Economics examined a range of government initiatives to support affordable home ownership (part own/part rent schemes such as shared ownership, shared equity programmes such as Help to Buy and direct subsidy programmes). The study concludes that:

- There is no simple way of transforming housing affordability for first-time buyers or others on lower incomes.
- There is a need for a clearer view of the scale of the affordable home ownership “gap”, taking account of different house prices, incomes, the capacity to raise a deposit and attitudes to risk.
- Many existing government schemes have been in response to short-term pressures and have often been ill-defined and poorly targeted.

The study suggests governments should set out a vision for home ownership (and affordable home ownership in particular), looking at the scale of provision, risks, potential demand, funding, and supply. The authors also argue for improved data on affordable home ownership.

¹³ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Thinking-outside-the-box-Exploring-innovations-in-affordable-home-ownership-Final-for-publication-11.11.20.pdf>

Homelessness

Current context

In Wales there has been considerable policy focus on homelessness in the past decade; most notably this resulted in the development and implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014¹⁴, which ushered in new duties on local authorities to provide meaningful assistance to all homeless households and it placed a much greater focus on crisis prevention. More recently in June 2019, the Welsh Government set up the Homelessness Action Group and tasked it with recommending the steps needed to end homelessness in Wales. The Action Group produced three reports, published in October 2019¹⁵, March 2020¹⁶ and July 2020¹⁷, and these set out the framework of policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales. Crucially, the Minister for Housing and Local Government accepted in principle all the recommendations from the Action Group, and agreed to come up with a plan to deliver on these recommendations. In October 2019, and in parallel to the work of the Action Group, Welsh Government produced a Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness¹⁸.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 led to an unprecedented Welsh Government response. The Welsh Government provided clear direction that everyone should be accommodated and this was backed by an initial £10m funding commitment. Further funding was committed to the Phase Two response (July 2020 - March 2021) and local authorities were required to submit Phase 2 Plans in order to access this funding. Importantly, requirements of these transitional plans were informed by prior thinking set out in the Action Group reports and the Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness. In many ways the pandemic forced Welsh Government to bring forward these existing plans and commitments.

The CaCHE evidence base

CaCHE publications on the issue of homelessness have already begun to inform plans and actions in Wales. Four studies constitute the primary CaCHE evidence base on homelessness. We briefly summarise the key learning from each of these studies.

Ending rough sleeping: What works? An international evidence review

The earliest of the CaCHE studies, conducted in 2017 in collaboration with Crisis, was a review of international evidence¹⁹ on what works to end rough sleeping. This review was cited widely in the National Assembly for Wales ELGCC Inquiry into rough sleeping and informed the Homelessness Action Group reports in Wales. The study discussed the effectiveness of key interventions and set out principles of an improved approach to ending rough sleeping:

- Incorporate views - of rough sleepers and those who work with them;
- Recognise heterogeneity – of individual rough sleepers' housing and support needs and their different entitlements to publicly funded support. Local housing markets and rough sleeper population profiles will also vary.

¹⁴<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/7/contents/enacted>

¹⁵<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/homelessness-action-group-report-october-2019.pdf>

¹⁶https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf

¹⁷<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/homelessness-action-group-report-july-2020.pdf>

¹⁸<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/homelessness-strategy.pdf>

¹⁹https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/238368/ending_rough_sleeping_what_works_2017.pdf

- Take swift action – to prevent or quickly end street homelessness, thereby reducing the number of rough sleepers who develop complex needs and potentially become entrenched.
- Employ assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer – by actively identifying and reaching out to rough sleepers and offering suitable accommodation.
- Be housing-led – offering swift access to settled housing
- Offer person-centred support and choice – via a client-centred approach based on cross-sector collaboration and commissioning

The study also pointed towards key barriers to implementing an improved approach, these include:

- A lack of suitable settled accommodation within existing housing stock;
- Difficulties accessing funding which is secure for the longer-term and can fund sustainable interventions;
- Tendencies towards commissioning of support services in SILOs when there is a clear need for collaborative approaches between sectors (e.g. health, criminal justice etc);
- Insufficient understanding about the effectiveness of interventions with different subgroups
- Ineligibility of some rough sleepers to access publicly funded services;
- If legislation is to be changed, this requires significant political support, is time consuming, and technically challenging;
- A shift towards person-centred support may be hampered by overly bureaucratic and burdensome processes

Homelessness prevention in the UK

The CaCHE review of homelessness prevention in the UK²⁰, published in 2019, adopted a five-category typology (Universal, Targeted, Crisis, Emergency, Recovery) to examine key policy developments and to highlight areas for further policy focus. This work has already impacted significantly on policy thinking in Wales by helping to frame discussions and recommendations of the Homelessness Action Group. Crucially, this study concludes that much work remains to be done on more upstream universal and targeted forms of prevention, in addition to improvements in the emergency housing and recovery support available to single homeless people and to those sleeping rough in particular. Key recommendations include:

- The primary driver of homelessness is the inadequate protection afforded to low income households via the social security system, much diminished since 2010. The UK Government must improve the social security safety net, whilst devolved and local governments, and housing associations, also have a role in enabling access to more affordable and secure housing.
- Greater collaboration and investment in services are required to ensure nobody becomes homeless because of leaving a state institution such as prison or the care system.
- Wider-ranging public sector prevention duties are required to target earlier multi-disciplinary assistance towards high risk groups.

²⁰<https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Homelessness-Prevention-in-the-UK-Policy-Brief-July-2019-final.pdf>

- The use of inappropriate hostels and shelters as emergency and often long-term accommodation should end. Moves to embrace housing-led solutions are to be warmly welcomed, particularly the Housing First model for homeless people with complex needs.
- The engagement of health and social services is crucial to recovery prevention amongst vulnerable homeless people. There must also be investment in housing-related support.

Forgotten mothers: the case for a policy focus on the experiences of motherhood and homelessness

This study²¹, published in early 2020 sought to understand the experiences of mothers who have become homeless and the ways in which existing policy and legislative frameworks in England meet their needs. Whilst the geographical focus of this study was England, the findings are likely to be highly relevant to Wales. The research found that many of the women in this study lost their homes and their children in quick succession during periods of intense vulnerability - often including domestic abuse. Their capacity to prevent these losses and to rebuild a family home was then significantly hampered by the (sometimes conflicting) policies and procedures they encountered in the housing and social work systems. The disadvantage faced by many of the women interviewed was therefore reinforced, rather than resolved by support services, potentially perpetuating cycles of trauma and poverty. Headline recommendations include:

- It is imperative that homeless mothers living apart from children who should reside with them are classed as a 'family' under the terms of the homelessness legislation, and are rapidly assisted to secure suitable family housing.
- A government-led national review should be undertaken to identify vulnerable groups to be exempted from policies implemented by local authorities and social landlords that restrict eligibility to housing.
- Local authorities should be supported by relevant government departments to put in place systems and processes to guarantee joint working between local authority housing departments, Children's Social Care Services, and domestic abuse services so that women's circumstances are assessed and responded to holistically.
- At present, homeless mothers are remaining in temporary accommodation that often does not meet their parenting needs for lengthy periods. The temporary housing offer to homeless mothers - including those escaping abuse - requires scrutiny through a comprehensive national government review, the conclusions from which should inform local commissioning.
- Local authorities must ensure that they pay careful consideration to locational needs when allocating temporary accommodation to homeless mothers.

²¹ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Motherhood-and-homelessness-policy-brief.pdf>

The COVID-19 crisis response to homelessness in Great Britain: Interim Report

The interim²² report provides an important contemporary insight into homelessness policy challenges in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study provides a systematic, comparative examination of responses to homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis across England, Scotland and Wales. The interim report focuses on the period from the start of the initial national lockdown in the UK (March 2020), until the end of the year (December 2020). Key learning includes:

- The overarching conclusion across all three GB nations is that the immediate crisis response to homelessness during the pandemic was swift and effective, with almost everyone accommodated safely, albeit there were particular challenges in housing those with the most complex support needs.
- The study documents the importance of five emergent trends during the crisis, including; strong central government leadership, appropriate levels of funding, crucial changes to welfare and labour market policy, collaborative working between sectors and organisations, and a workforce that adapted and rose to the unprecedented challenges, despite their unequal standing with health and social care professionals.
- Whilst there were similarities in the crisis responses of GB nations, there were also fundamental differences, particularly between Scotland and the rest of GB. The study unearths the central influence of the pre-COVID-19 context on the form of the emergency response. The distinctive position in Scotland, where the legislative framework confers rights to accommodation on all homeless households, meant far fewer additional households had to be temporarily accommodated and so there was less necessity for a large-scale emergency response of the form witnessed in England and Wales.
- Looking to the horizon there are sector concerns relating to the effectiveness of move on provisions for people temporarily accommodated during the crisis and the potential path dependencies being created through major investment in congregate forms of temporary accommodation. More optimistically, there is some hope that the positive and progressive crisis policies and practices will persist and evolve to enable the sector to 'build back better'.

²²https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/12544_UoG_CaCHE_Covid_Homelessness_Report-Final.pdf

Private rented sector: Regulation, compliance, and security of tenure

Current context

The private rented sector in Wales, as in other parts of the UK, has grown significantly over the last two decades, now accounting for 14% of the Welsh housing stock. As it has come to play a more important role in meeting housing needs and demand, policy makers have become concerned with issues such as the affordability of private sector rents and regulating standards in the sector. Landlords and agents managing private rented housing in Wales are now required by law to be registered and their individual properties licenced under the Welsh Government's Rent Smart Wales (RSW) scheme, with the enforcement of compliance a shared responsibility between RSW and Welsh local authorities.

The broad approach in Wales has been about improving the quality and management of private rented housing in Wales, getting clarity on rights and responsibilities and, more recently, improving the security of tenure of private sector tenants. The Welsh Government has used primary legislative powers to underpin these objectives – the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced landlord registration and licensing through Rent Smart Wales and the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 reformed underpinning housing law and provided important protections, such as protection against retaliatory eviction and the fitness for human habitation obligation. A current Senedd Bill proposes increasing security of tenure by introducing six-month notice for a 'no fault' eviction, with guaranteed minimum occupation of one year.

After almost a century of decline the resurgence in the private rented sector has placed it at the heart of the housing system. This has prompted a range of policy responses and interventions, the nature and extent of which have differed across the UK.

The CaCHE evidence base

CaCHE has undertaken several studies designed to understand the diversity of the private rented sector and the experiences and aspirations of those living in the sector. In addition, CaCHE has collaborated with the TDS Charitable Foundation and the Safe Deposit Scotland Charitable Trust to undertake a range of research on issues relating to developments in, and the operation of, the UK private rented sector.

Housing experiences and aspirations of private renters

In 2018 CaCHE researchers explored the experiences and "frustrated" aspirations of young people (aged 35 and under) living in the private rented sector. The report²³ concluded:

- There is a gap between young people's aspirations and expectations because of low earnings, insecure employment, lack of financial support and (for some) student debt.
- The private rented sector was seen as the only option in the short-term. However, research participants expressed long-term aspirations for home ownership (or in some instances) social housing.

²³ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/R2018_06_01_Frustrated_Housing_Aspirations_of_Gen_Rent.pdf

- Lack of security of tenure is a major source of anxiety and stress for young tenants. The relatively high cost of private renting also contributed to a sense of precarity (which itself has negative impacts on well-being).
- The research (which did not specifically include tenants in Wales) also noted that tenants' experiences varied according to where they lived and the policy approaches taken to regulating the private rented sector.
- In terms of change, young people wanted more affordable housing (both for rent and to buy), greater protection for renters and policies (particularly through the labour market) to tackle wider income inequalities.

A separate CaCHE study²⁴ looked at the experiences and aspirations of older private renters (aged 35-54). This research found that as well as encountering similar issues as younger private renters – unaffordable rents, insecure housing and poor-quality properties, older private renters also experienced their own distinct issues. These included the challenge of adapting properties to address age related and health and mobility impairments, impacts on family life and being aged out of accessing mortgage finance.

CaCHE has also published an international evidence review²⁵ of the experiences of different groups living in “lightly regulated” private rented markets. The study noted:

- Across all groups and all sampled countries, the research identified a strong association between housing quality and tenants' economic resources.
- Extremely poor housing conditions at the lower end of the private rented sector were extremely common and experienced by lower income households. Poor housing conditions put tenants' physical and mental health (and even their lives) at risk.
- The international evidence suggests tenure insecurity cuts across the socio-economic and demographic spectrum (except for students).
- The study noted the importance of listening to the voice of tenants (considered in further detail in the next section) as well as recognising their diverse circumstances, experiences and preferences.

Improving compliance with private rented sector legislation: Local authority regulation and enforcement

In August 2020 CaCHE published its findings from an in-depth UK qualitative study, explaining how approaches to enforcement in the private rented sector have been adopted at a local level. The report²⁶ also offered suggestions for improving regulation in the sector. Key conclusions and recommendations from the study were as follows:

- Current thinking on enforcement in the UK private rented sector fails to account for the wide range of activities that are important in achieving compliance. Our ability to improve compliance and therefore standards would be enhanced by adopting a more nuanced understanding of how to encourage landlords to comply with the law.
- There are at least four types of regulatory approaches currently operating in the sector: light-touch, hard-line, compliance-focused, and creative approaches. There are several challenges and limitations associated with both light-touch and hard-line approaches: blended approaches using complementary tools can be effective.
- The research identifies the broader regulatory techniques that UK local authorities should take into consideration when designing their approach to regulating the sector, including clear aims and purpose, holistic thinking and multi-agency working, a tenant-focused approach, internal design and how outcomes are defined and measured.

²⁴https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/190827-Beyond_Gen_Rent_FINAL2.pdf

²⁵https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200429_PRS_evidence_review_exec_summary_final.pdf

²⁶https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/200803_ComplianceReport_Final.pdf

- An exclusive focus on formal enforcement overlooks some of the most important aspects of the work of local authorities. The research adds new insight into the principles and approaches that support the effective use of more informal compliance-focused activities.
- UK and devolved governments have a key role to play in improving enforcement by ensuring local authorities are properly resourced, improving the data which is available on the PRS and considering codification of existing legislation.
- UK and devolved governments should improve the data available to local authorities on the private rented sector.
- UK and devolved governments should consider technical amendments to their existing suites of legislation as well as codification of the legislative provisions which currently exist.

As well as the main research report CaCHE has also published a separate policy briefing paper providing information for the UK and devolved administrations²⁷ and a practice briefing for local authorities²⁸.

UK private rented sector data: Briefing Paper

On the issue of data, CaCHE has argued that coherent and robust statistics are key to understanding the private rented sector and the ways in which it is changing. A briefing paper²⁹ identified and critically evaluated 30 key data sets which could be used to estimate the changing scale of the private rented sector in each UK jurisdiction. However, the paper concluded:

- Although there have been some encouraging developments, there needs to be continued and sustained emphasis on the development of private rented sector data by UK government statistical agencies.
- UK and devolved governments need to improve the accessibility and quality of data which is available to local authorities on the private rented sector. We believe that appropriately designed national systems of registration or licensing are key in providing local authorities with the data they need to regulate the sector effectively.
- UK and devolved governments should explore how aggregate administrative data sets such as national registration scheme data could be made available on a lower geographical level.
- UK and devolved governments should continue to explore opportunities to improve harmonisation and comparability of data between nations to facilitate learning from different policy developments.
- Data sets also need to be improved to allow comparisons over time so we can better understand the nature of the sector and how it is changing. There are gaps in our understanding of the stock of the private rented sector, what it looks like and how it has changed over time. UK and devolved government should ensure adequate statistics are available to measure the sector both at an aggregate and at a local housing market level.

Wales has seen innovative changes in the regulation of the private rented sector in recent years (not least with the introduction of Rent Smart Wales). However, research suggests that more needs to be done, both in terms of data collection and analysis but also in ensuring effective compliance with legislation at a local level. It remains an open question as to whether there is the political will and adequate resources to implement effective local strategies and to take appropriate enforcement action in the private rented sector.

²⁷ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/200803_Compliance_Policy_Briefing.pdf

²⁸ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/200803-Compliance_Practice_Briefing.pdf

²⁹ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CaCHE_1.3_UK-Private-Rented-Sector-Data-Briefing_upload.pdf

Tenant engagement

Current context

Wales has a long and creditable history of tenant engagement. Looking back to the 1970s the tenant movement in Wales developed from concerns with the poor quality of some housing, issues around the affordability of rents and the standard of housing services. In the 1980s and beyond support grew with the establishment of organisations such as the Tenant Participation Advisory Services Wales (now TPAS Cymru), the Welsh Tenants' Federation (subsequently Welsh Tenants) and then funding for the Tenant Empowerment Grant (TEG) programme as well as support for the Tenant Advisory Panel (TAP) to advise on housing association regulation.

Research commissioned by Welsh Government (2014) noted support from a range of stakeholders for the continued adoption, promotion, and support for tenant participation in Wales. However, in recent years Welsh Government funding to support tenant participation has reduced significantly and there is now only one national organisation (TPAS Cymru) supported by Welsh Government to work with landlords to help shape housing services, although there are other organisations committed to increasing the opportunities for effective tenant engagement.

The tragedy at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 highlighted the dangers of not listening to tenants and has changed the nature of debates around social housing, the role of regulation and the extent to which tenants' voices are heard and listened to. In 2019 the Regulatory Board for Wales (RBW) undertook a strategic review of tenant engagement and developed a model for tenant involvement (RBW, 2019). It set out a vision for tenant involvement in Wales, underpinned by a series of key values. It concluded by setting out opportunities (for the housing sector, the regulator and Welsh Government) to strengthen tenant participation in Wales. In the case of Welsh Government it argued for a wider strategic approach to tenant involvement and to consider the options to support an independent tenants' voice on national/local issues, which would enable better direct communication between tenants and government policy makers.

The CaCHE evidence base

The recent work of CaCHE has provided further evidence to support the benefits of tenant engagement.

Understanding the approaches to tenant participation in social housing: an evidence review

CaCHE published an evidence review³⁰ of research into tenant participation in social housing. This considered conceptual issues, different approaches to tenant participation (and how these have changed over time) and perceptions of the purpose, drivers, barriers, and benefits of tenant participation for different groups. Among its findings were:

- Tenant participation activities happen along a spectrum of involvement in the governance of social housing providers. However, many of these activities are landlord-initiated and take place within participation structures created by landlords.
- There is evidence of a shift in tenant participation towards the use of technology and customer data analysis.
- Tenant motivations for participation are diverse, but some individuals and groups may face barriers to participation which may relate to structures, perceptions of lack of influence, individual atmospheres, or practical issues.

³⁰<https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/190725-understanding-approaches-to-tenant-participation-in-SH.pdf>

- Housing providers have different motivations for promoting tenant participation (e.g. improving housing management, contributing to value for money agendas). Regulatory approaches can drive approaches to tenant participation.

Understanding social housing landlords' approaches to tenant participation: scoping study

CaCHE has also published a scoping study³¹ on tenant participation seeking to explore and understand social landlords' approaches to tenant participation. This examined the priority which organisations gave to tenant participation, the purposes and drivers of participation and the key challenges to be addressed. Some of the main conclusions from this research are set out below:

- Tenants should be involved in determining the approach to tenant participation in their areas so that it matches their needs. One way that this can be done is through [revisiting the idea of] a 'tenant participation compact', an agreement drawn-up by landlords and tenants working together, which outlines the scope, remit and form of tenant participation.
- The approach taken to tenant participation by landlords, ideally developed in partnership with tenants, should comprise a range of participation mechanisms, so that tenants can choose how they are involved. This will make it more likely that they will be able to identify a mechanism that is compatible with their circumstances and needs and, in particular, the level of commitment (principally in the form of time) that they are prepared to devote to engaging. This should result in more tenants being involved and tenant participation being more representative of the broader tenant population, with a greater range of voices being heard. Landlords need to think carefully about their processes for managing, and responding to, dissenting views and how they manage conflict in the participation process.
- Formal tenant participation structures will continue to play an important role going forward. Tenant and Resident Associations will be important, fulfilling key community and social functions and providing a more 'bottom-up' and independent perspective on key housing issues. However, there was also a belief that if more tenants are to be engaged, with different voices being heard, then more resource needs to be dedicated to developing informal engagement mechanisms, which allow tenants to engage more flexibly and in ways more suited to their lifestyles.
- If tenants want to participate, then it is important that they are able to influence the decision-making process in meaningful ways, rather than their involvement being tokenistic.
- It is vital that tenants can see the impact of their involvement because, if they can, they will be more likely to engage in the future.
- Notwithstanding the difficulties associated with measuring its impact, it is important that landlords evaluate what they do. They should do so for two reasons. First, in a context where welfare reforms (and Universal Credit, in particular) are having an adverse effect on their finances, demonstrating impact will help them to defend tenant participation budgets. Second, evaluating their activities will allow landlords to develop a better understanding of the impact of different engagement mechanisms.

³¹ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Hickman_Preece_TP_Report_v3.pdf

- Creating a tenant participation 'function' within organisations, through the employment of tenant involvement officers and teams, can be an effective way of delivering tenant participation, and it is the most common way of doing so across the UK. However, this 'functional' approach is not without its weaknesses, the most important being that it can be a barrier to tenant participation becoming 'embedded' as a way of working across the organisation as a whole, with a culture of valuing participation being confined to one part of the organisation, rather than being infused throughout the organisation as a whole. If tenants are to be given meaningful voice, then it is important that tenant participation is mainstreamed, although not at the expense of tenant participation officers and teams.

Tenant participation in the private rented sector: A review of existing evidence

In December 2019 CaCHE also published an evidence review³² on tenant participation in the private rented sector. The main findings from the research are set out below:

- There is a paucity of research evidence relating to tenant activism in the private rented sector, which needs to be addressed by academia and other bodies with an interest in the wellbeing of private sector tenants. There is a particular lack of research into how private tenants might be better supported and empowered within the various legislative contexts of the countries of the UK.
- Despite the diversity and relative transience of the private sector tenants in the UK, effective collective action is possible, has improved the housing conditions of many tenants and has empowered many more.
- There remain significant challenges for tenants in this sector, particularly those on a low income. Many of the challenges revolve around the need to protect and enforce the rights that tenants already have under existing legislation, a responsibility which currently falls heavily on tenants and tenant-activists.
- Landlords and letting agents should recognise the value of sharing power with tenants – genuinely involving tenants in decision-making can help to sustain tenancies and maintain landlord income, as well as supporting tenants' quality of life, health and wellbeing.
- Policy makers could support improvements in the private rented sector most effectively by ensuring that tenant activism is facilitated and that the voices of tenants are heard. A more empowered tenant-base in the private rented sector would be protective of tenants' housing conditions and quality of life.

³² https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/191216_tenant_participation_in_PRS_final.pdf

Creating sustainable places

Current context

Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (2018)³³ situates people and placemaking at the heart of planning policy and sits alongside the Welsh Government's future generations agenda³⁴. This compels public bodies in Wales to "think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change" (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2020, p. 1). It is also supported by a new Placemaking Wales Charter that was launched by the Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales in September 2020 (Design Commission for Wales 2020). Furthermore, in July 2020 Welsh Government published 'Building Better Places: The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures – Placemaking and the Covid-19 recovery'³⁵, a document that accompanies Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 and pinpoints the most relevant policy priorities and actions to aid in the Covid-19 pandemic recovery. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040³⁶, Wales's draft National Development Framework Document is also in development and sets out Welsh Government spatial strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.

The CaCHE evidence base

The importance of placemaking and design value for health sustainability, social cohesion and the economy is gaining traction in policy and practice and is a core concern for CaCHE. Under this broad theme, a wide range of reports have been published³⁷. We briefly summarise the learning from two key studies.

Delivering design value: the housing design quality conundrum

The pinnacle report, 'Delivering design value: the housing design quality conundrum'³⁸, was published in December 2020 and its aim was to understand why design quality is so often undervalued and how design-sensitive planning and development might be encouraged in the future. Sponsored by the RTPI and the four UK governments, the report examines the process of planning, designing and developing new homes and neighbourhoods using data collected from across the UK. The key conclusions were:

- The design quality of new homes and neighbourhoods across the UK remains stubbornly low: Our research found that new homes and neighbourhoods fail to meet the aspirations of the national planning policy statements in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- The responsibility for delivering design value is shared: The four UK governments, local authorities, housebuilders, and their consultants, are all accountable, in different ways, for allowing poorly designed places to be created.

³³ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

³⁴ <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

³⁵ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/building-better-places-the-planning-system-delivering-resilient-and-brighter-futures.pdf>

³⁶ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/working-draft-national-development-framework-document-september-2020.pdf>

³⁷ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/category/place/>

³⁸ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/delivering-design-value-the-housing-design-quality-conundrum/>

- Despite differences in policy emphasis and articulation, the four planning systems in the UK do not deliver better (or worse) design outcomes than each other: Our research found that housing and neighbourhood design is undervalued across the UK and, more often than not, planning decisions are driven by the need to achieve housing targets or to make a planning decision quickly and efficiently.
- The barriers to design value are wide-ranging and include:
 - National and local design policy is frequently overlooked
 - Housebuilders are driven by profit, not placemaking
 - Local authorities rarely refuse poorly designed housing
 - Design governance is underfunded and design skills in local authorities are limited
 - Silos in local authorities lead to risk averse decision making
 - Opportunities for public engagement are too 'top down' and tokenistic
 - Sophisticated design tools are poorly enforced by local authorities
 - Design outcomes are poorly monitored

The principal recommendation of the study is that the four UK governments should adopt 'design value standards' that place neighbourhood urban form principles in regulation and embed the economic, social and environmental value of design at the heart of planning and housebuilding. Further recommendations for policy and practice include:

- Creating well-designed places should be a core national planning objective in each of the four nations.
- Volume housebuilders should be held to account on design matters.
- The four UK governments should encourage and support a more diverse housebuilding industry.
- Housing land allocations should be based on sustainable development principles and prioritise brownfield development.
- Design governance leadership should be championed in local authorities.
- Local plans should be more place-based and outcome-focused.
- Masterplans should be produced and enforced for larger housing sites.
- Genuine community engagement should be undertaken early in the planning and design process where it can have the most influence.
- Design and construction procurement decisions should be more design driven.
- Post occupancy analysis and development monitoring should be used much more widely.
- The four governments should provide more direct funding for design governance, especially at the local level.

The impact of housing design and placemaking on social value and wellbeing in the pandemic: Interim Report

The pandemic has highlighted the key role of the built environment of homes and neighbourhoods in fostering resilience. In October 2020, CaCHE published an interim report³⁹ that sought to develop an understanding of the impact of the pandemic, largely in terms of social value, on the built environment of housing and places. The report draws upon interviews with stakeholders, drawn largely from government, local government and housing provider backgrounds across the UK. The report captures some of the changes that happened during the initial lockdown and sets out a series of important themes that need to be addressed if we are to build back better. Key lessons include:

- The pandemic offers an opportunity to build back better both for future resilience and to address the Climate Change Emergency which has not been forgotten. Changes to the planning system to accelerate economic growth have been shown not to work. Planning is too important to be done hastily. Planning policy and local authorities that focus on wellbeing and placemaking are more resilient to events such as the pandemic.
- Resilience starts with the home, its design and its context. Flexible space is needed in all homes as they increasingly become places of work. All homes should have access to balconies, daylight and broadband.
- Parks, green space and walking routes have been well used during the pandemic. Not only as a place for exercise and meetings with friends, but also as a place of escape from overcrowded and uncomfortable accommodation during the summer months. A statutory requirement for adequate levels of good quality green and amenity space for all new planning proposals is needed across the UK. The pandemic offers an opportunity to rethink density and the way people move around their neighbourhoods. Travel and health need to be seen as an integrated agenda. Public investment is needed in integrated transport systems to ensure access for all.
- The use of local services and materials needs to be encouraged at every level, especially public procurement and in the choreography of our high streets. This includes local construction companies who need support and investment. Community spaces need to be protected and enhanced. They play a major role in volunteering efforts and in reducing social isolation and could be expanded to include other purposes such as health education and the support of small businesses. Redundant buildings such as empty office and workspaces, shops and student accommodation needs to be repurposed in a responsible, holistic way that offers spillover benefits to the community.
- The way that government and local authorities deliver services needs to be reviewed in light of learning from the pandemic. Some had great difficulty delivering services in the initial stages of lock down simply because of a lack of laptop provision and IT support, a situation that seemed to be worse in the public sector. Organisations that already had flexible working arrangements with staff that regularly work from home were able to bounce back more quickly. Advanced budgetary planning is needed for emergencies enabling national governments and local authorities to act responsibly and efficiently without concerns about who will pay. After years of austerity there is not enough fat in the system to cover such emergencies.
- Going forward the centralisation of services needs to be reconsidered, with the government taking the lead on better dispersion of jobs across the UK, including rural areas, facilitated by digital communication. Dispersed small scale solutions may not lend themselves to current ways of auditing and promoting government achievements in this area (for example numbers of hospitals built). Other forms of auditing that measure impact more holistically are needed to capture the value of small interventions. Perhaps the most important lesson coming from the interviews is that new administrative groupings are needed in government and local authorities to ensure joined up strategy across the health, social care, transport and planning agendas.

³⁹ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Impact-of-housing-design-and-placemaking-Final-30.10.2020.pdf>

Health and housing

Current context

CaCHE's 'wider drivers' theme focuses on the housing system's complex inter-relationships with other key sectors (work, health, education, environment, etc.) and the belief that good housing and policies can prevent other social 'bads'. Welsh Government strategy also explicitly draws these links between housing and other policy areas. The National Strategy, Prosperity for All⁴⁰, focuses on the importance of integration and collaboration between services and states that the bedrock of living well is a good quality, affordable home which brings a wide range of benefits to health, learning and prosperity.

The CaCHE evidence base

Recent research by CaCHE researchers, and wider studies funded by CaCHE, have placed a particular focus on the relationship between housing and health, including a specific focus on mental health and housing. The conclusions of these studies are summarised here.

The Impact of Social Housing: Economic, Social, Health and Wellbeing

This study⁴¹ was funded by a partnership between SFHA and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), Public Health Scotland and the Rural and Islands Housing Association Forum (RIHAF) and was authored in collaboration with HACT. The study aimed to demonstrate, through an evidence review and case study research, the range and depth of beneficial effects that follow from investment in social housing and the operational activities of social housing providers. Some of the key findings in relation to health and housing include:

- The estimated cost of non-decent homes in England to the NHS is £1.4 billion per annum.
- Since good quality housing has important health benefits and can impact positively on health inequalities, it is not surprising that there are perceived to be significant benefits from energy efficiency, thermal insulation, appropriate space and safe shelter.
- Research has proven, to varying degrees, that respiratory and mental health effects follow warmth improvements in housing.
- The GoWell Research and Learning Programme investigated the multiple impacts of neighbourhood-level housing investment, regeneration and renewal across Glasgow neighbourhoods over a 12-year period starting in 2005. The longitudinal study found that higher investment helped physical health trajectories over time (a 'protective' effect) and led to mental health improvements.

⁴⁰<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-10/prosperity-for-all-the-national-strategy.pdf>

⁴¹<https://www.sfha.co.uk/media/library/other/english/66627.pdf>

Good health brought home: What makes a good partnership between housing, health and social care?

The need for improved interactions between health, housing and social care has been a consistent feature of discussions within the housing sector in Wales. CaCHE funded Tyfu Tai Cymru to undertake case study research, exploring services that have been effectively designed and delivered jointly between health, housing and social care. The study⁴² identified six key principles which encourage collaboration:

- Shared analysis of issues and solutions
- Person-centred design
- Strong leadership
- Joint budgets
- Shared interpretation of legislation
- Recognition of power imbalances

Housing insecurity and mental health in Wales: An evidence review

Delivered in partnership with Mind Cymru, this project produced two outputs; the first is a review of evidence⁴³ on the issue of housing insecurity and mental health, and the second is a Policy Briefing⁴⁴, which sets out lessons for UK, Welsh and local governments. The policy recommendations are:

Learning for UK Government

- The protective role of the UK welfare state in supporting mental health is significant, but is undermined by austerity programmes. Policy interventions must recognise the psychological distress caused by welfare reforms and Local Housing Allowance caps, and disproportionate geographical impacts.

Learning for Welsh Government

- Policy interventions that seek to reduce mental ill health should target individual socioeconomic deprivation, as well as increasing the affordability of housing across tenures for low-income groups.
- Residents across sectors need consistent access to housing advice, to help limit housing-related stress before it escalates to more serious mental health issues. The Welsh Government should consider this in relation to the increasing emphasis on digital methods of communication, and limited access to broadband internet in some areas of Wales.
- An advice service would be particularly valuable for people living in areas with more HMOs, and in rural areas.
- Landlords, particularly in the private rented sector, need to be supported to improve their knowledge of mental health issues, and how to assist tenants to access support. This requires leadership at a national level, but may draw in partners to deliver training and advice services.

⁴² https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Good-health-brought-home.pdf

⁴³ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/190327-Housing-insecurity-and-mental-health-in-Wales_final.pdf

⁴⁴ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Housing-insecurity-and-mental-health-Policy-Briefing.pdf>

- There is a significant opportunity to build on and learn from the mandatory registration and licensing scheme, Rent Smart Wales. Monitoring evictions, no-fault evictions, grievances, and discrimination against tenants, would provide a national-level focus on understanding security of tenure in the private rented sector. It would also provide a clear pathway for tenants to raise complaints.
- The legislative framework for environmental health emphasises building maintenance and hazards to physical health. A more holistic approach should consider the psycho-social impacts of lack of privacy and the condition of communal areas, particularly in relation to HMOs.

Learning for local authorities and housing providers

- Social and private landlords, and local housing authorities, need to ensure adequate training for staff, so that they can better understand the mental health needs of their tenants, as well as how this may change in relation to different stressors.
- Landlords across sectors, property agents, and mortgage providers should review the information that is given to residents as part of arrears escalation processes and eviction proceedings, as this is a key point at which to signpost mental health support services. This is particularly important given the proportion of vulnerable households in the private rented sector.
- Private and social landlords should be recognised as key partners within local housing and social care strategies, alongside floating support services, which support people with mental health problems living in general needs accommodation.
- Given the importance of secure housing in supporting recovery, mental health services should ensure that care and treatment plans outline clearly what housing support service users can expect and how to access it. Co-locating mental health professionals within housing services could also improve inter-agency working and holistic support.
- Local authorities, landlords and floating support services should consider their role in facilitating shared housing schemes, especially in relation to managing household conflict, and potential for access to mediation and floating support services.
- The use of Discretionary Housing Payments should also be considered by local authority housing teams, where the placement of individuals experiencing mental health problems in shared housing schemes would be inappropriate.

Out of harm's way? Critical remarks on harm and the meaning of home during the 2020 Covid-19 social distancing measures

The working paper⁴⁵ reports on evidence reviews on the impacts of quarantine in previous epidemics. Findings included a wide range of negative psychological effects. The paper identifies eleven harms which may emerge during the Covid-19 social distancing measures, and in particular the instruction to stay at home and stay away from others:

- Loneliness is associated with excess morbidity. The risk of physical harm at home as a direct result of loneliness experienced during social distancing measures is significant.
- Poor mental health, depression, anxiety and suicide. Far from offering a respite against ontological insecurity, for many people, home is a space of mental health crisis and suicidal ideation. These risks are likely to increase during social distancing measures.
- Intimate partner violence/Domestic violence (IPV/DV) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) most frequently occur in the home environment. Increased exposure to these harms will occur as a result of social distancing measures.
- Most unintentional injuries take place at home. Home is where those most at risk of death by unintentional injury; that is the very old and the very young, spend most of their time. The risks of harm from trips/falls and poisoning will increase in direct proportion to the length of time spent there.
- Most health harming behaviours (excess alcohol consumption, smoking poor diet and lack of exercise) which are the prime cause of excess morbidity occur at home. The risks of these harms will also increase in direct proportion to the length of time spent there.
- Loss of liberty. The paper reports on the negative effects of harms for liberty from the literature on hometention and the limited work on "folk" ideas of cabin fever. It seems the consequences of liberty harms are significant.
- Although coercive control is a form of domestic violence and is discussed above it also represents an liberty/autonomy harm and so is discussed separately in the paper. Under the current circumstances, prolonged exposure to controlling and coercive behaviour is likely to amplify victims' pre-existing feelings of fear and alienation from home.
- Household-based harms may occur as a result of power relationships within the household. Thus younger people in family-based households or economically weaker people in non-familial settings may be able to exert less control and thus will experience greater autonomy/liberty harms.
- Harms surrounding borders. There is likely to be a struggle for space between home/work, and caring/professional spaces in those households where home-working is taking place. The paper notes that there is a long standing tradition of geographical research which considers borders as places of danger.
- Relational harms associated with sexuality and identity may be experienced during lockdown for people who are forced to conceal their sexuality.
- The absence of emotional security for people living alone, in a couple, or in other household forms can have profound psychological impacts which are likely to be amplified under conditions of lockdown.

⁴⁵ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200408-out-of-harms-way-craig-gurney-final.pdf>

New and emerging CaCHE research

We have noted how the CaCHE research agenda has been shaped by engagement with policy makers, practitioners, and tenants. Through our Knowledge Exchange hubs we have worked to shape research priorities and co-produce key research questions which need to be addressed. In Wales we have worked with key stakeholders to understand the nature of the housing challenges and to help navigate the research evidence which we hope speaks to these issues and highlights and might inform the development of housing policy and practice. However, we have also tried to ensure that our own research agenda is dynamic and evolving and that we are able to be responsive to changing research priorities and opportunities.

In this paper we have focused attention on several broad issues and the already published CaCHE research evidence which we hope will inform further changes in policy and practice. However, in this penultimate section we highlight other ongoing but yet unpublished studies which we believe will be of particular relevance to Wales over the next few years.

Increasing affordable housing delivery is likely to remain a priority in Wales and the Welsh Government's own evidence shows that levels of need are still significantly greater than current levels of provision. We noted that through the Innovative Housing Programme additional emphasis has been placed on the contribution which Modern Methods of Construction/Off-Site Construction might make to increase the output of additional affordable housing in Wales.

CaCHE researchers are currently investigating the potential role of modular construction⁴⁶ in addressing systemic housing supply issues. This is seeking to evaluate:

- What business models and regulatory practices drive the adoption of modular construction?
- What evidence exists to explain the low uptake of modular construction in residential development practice?
- What policy and market processes might enhance the adoption of modular construction in the UK housing system?

We have also noted that Wales is looking to progress an agenda of decarbonisation of the existing housing stock, to improve the energy efficiency of homes (with additional public monies recently provided through the Optimal Retrofit Programme) and to tackle issues of fuel poverty, all of which represent considerable challenges. This raises several key questions.

- What will be the demand for retrofitting the existing housing stock, and over what timescale?
- How will this work be paid for?
- What will be the implications of the demand for the supply and capacity of skilled staff and resources in the construction sector?

Wales will need to develop the evidence as to what works and how demonstration projects can be scaled up. Whilst modest programmes such as 'Nest' and 'Arbed' have been in place in Wales for some time and the work of the Decarbonisation of Housing in Wales Advisory Group (Welsh Government, 2019b) has been informed by research, there will be need for much more learning from experience elsewhere. CaCHE staff are currently engaged in an evaluation⁴⁷ of a small-scale demonstration project retrofitting traditional Glasgow tenement housing.

⁴⁶<https://housingevidence.ac.uk/our-work/research-projects/the-potential-role-of-modular-construction-in-addressing-systemic-supply-issues/>

⁴⁷<https://housingevidence.ac.uk/our-work/research-projects/retrofit-of-pre-1919-glasgow-tenement-housing-demonstration-project/>

Wales, with a relatively older housing stock, often lower average earnings than many other parts of the UK and a relatively older population also needs to consider its policies and practices in relation to poor quality housing more generally, particularly for older people. CaCHE researchers are undertaking an evidence review⁴⁸ for the Centre for Ageing Better. The project seeks to explore and assess policies, programmes and interventions introduced over the last 40 years to address the problems of poor housing in both the private and social housing sectors. It aims to consider delivery, efficiency and effectiveness, critical factors for success and to distil key lessons drawn.

Earlier in the paper we looked at the changing private rented sector and issues of regulation. One aspect of rent regulation, and often a contentious one, is the question of the merits (or otherwise) of intervening to control private sector rents. Later this year CaCHE will publish a cross-disciplinary international evidence review of recent experiences of rent control beyond the UK. The authors of this research have explored some of the issues in Welsh Housing Quarterly (Gibb and Marsh, 2021). We hope that this research will contribute to policy debates over rent control and broader questions of housing affordability and inequality.

Finally, we return to the issue of housing data and the wider context in which it exists. Considerable information on housing in Wales is collected and published (not least through the Welsh Government itself). However, housing data sets in Wales are often less well developed than in other parts of the UK, and do not always allow for in-depth or localised analysis. Through its Data Navigator⁴⁹ CaCHE has sought to raise awareness of existing housing data and some of the gaps and limitations. In developing effective housing policies in Wales there is a continuing need to improve the quality of housing data in Wales as well as the skills and capacity for analysis and interpretation.

⁴⁸ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/our-work/research-projects/addressing-poor-quality-housing-in-older-age/>

⁴⁹ <https://cache-web-live.cf.ac.uk/>

Final thoughts

Since political devolution in 1999 Wales has introduced a wide range of often progressive housing policy initiatives, and in several respects has developed policies and approaches distinct from other parts of the UK in seeking to address a range of housing issues. During the period of the current Welsh Government (2016-2021) housing has been recognised as one of five key areas of policy seen as having the greatest potential to contribute to Wales' long-term future prosperity and well-being. Prosperity for All: the national strategy (Welsh Government, 2016) has focussed on increasing the supply of affordable housing, supporting new and innovative housing design, tackling homelessness, and increasing investment in improving the quality of the existing housing stock. A number of independent reviews have been undertaken, for example on affordable housing supply and the decarbonisation of homes (Welsh Government, 2019a; 2019b) and progress made in implementing some of their recommendations. However, there are many challenges still to be addressed and as with other parts of the UK the focus of policy over the last 12 months or more has been shaped by responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. The crisis has also exposed the significant inequities and inequalities between different households and communities in terms of access to good quality, affordable homes and highlighted the need to put housing at the core of Wales' post-Covid recovery (Homes4All Cymru/Shelter Cymru, 2020; WCPP, 2020).

In this paper we have highlighted what we see as the major housing challenges for Wales and for each we have set out (briefly) the current Welsh Policy context and then summarised key findings from recent CaCHE research. Drawing on this evidence we have identified what we see as 12 key priorities for the next Welsh Government. We have also identified several new and emerging CaCHE studies which we hope may inform future housing policy in Wales. Whilst we have identified six broad areas of housing policy and linked the CaCHE research evidence and our priorities to these, we would emphasise the importance of understanding the links across different aspects of housing policy and between housing and other areas of public policy (economic, social, environmental etc.). CaCHE research has argued that there is a strong case for housing being considered as a system and that systems thinking, which focuses on the relationships between the different elements of the system, can provide a valuable tool of analysis to facilitate policy change⁵⁰.

Finally, whilst we have highlighted evidence to inform housing policy in Wales over the next five years (2021-2026) we would also stress the importance of developing a longer term, evidence-based vision and strategy for housing in Wales. We look with a degree of envy towards the Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 vision (Scottish Government, 2019) and their recently published Housing to 2040 Route Map (Scottish Government, 2021). There are examples of longer-term plans for housing futures in Wales (e.g., CHC, 2017), and of course Wales introduced the ground-breaking Well-being of Future Generations Act in 2015, with requirements for longer-term thinking about the impacts which policy interventions may have. However, if Wales is to address its housing challenges, then it needs to develop a stronger vision and strategy towards housing which extends beyond just the next five years; one which is comprehensive, generational, evidence-based, and capable of monitoring, evaluation and ongoing review. There is considerable work to be done but we hope that this synthesis of a range of housing research will help inform future strategic thinking and policy development in Wales.

⁵⁰ https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Housing-and-Systems-briefing-paper_final_170704.pdf

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