

# Why we chose our objectives and priorities



promoting equality in housing  
hybu cydraddoldeb ym maes tai

## Advancing rights and increasing fairness

### Increasing the provision of accessible housing in Wales.

39% of social housing tenants in Wales are disabled. Currently, there is no clarity with regards to the true housing need of disabled people in Wales as the information available has serious gaps in it. However, what we do know is that there is a shortage of accessible and adapted housing.

Where information does exist in relation to the social housing need for disabled people in many cases this information is held by an accessible housing register or AHR. AHRs are a mechanism used to match an individual's need for accessible or adapted housing with available accessible housing in their location.

There are significant differences in relation to the quality and effectiveness of AHRs across Wales. Currently there is no single set of standards to which an AHR has to adhere or even base standards which they need to meet to ensure they are operationally functional and fit for purpose.

According to a Leonard Cheshire report 'The Hidden Housing Crisis' (2014)<sup>1</sup> on a UK level:

- 72% of disabled people cannot get in and out of their own home on their own as they live somewhere without an accessible front door.
- For people who struggle with stairs a stair lift can be a lifeline ensuring they can have safe access to bedrooms and bathrooms but the same reports say that 54% of people who need a stair lift report their stairs are too narrow to have one.

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<https://www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/Hidden,P20Housing,P20Crisis,P20July,P2014.pdf.pagespeed.ce.MN43aacwrV.pdf>

- 1 in 10 people in the UK report a mobility problem, if we were to use this 1 in 10 figure for Wales alone that equates to 310,000 people who may require some form of accessible or adapted home (of course this doesn't include those who might need accessible or adapted housing for other disabilities).

In 2008 the Living in Wales Survey found that 22% of Welsh households had needs for adaptations which had not been met. This was the last time that this survey was completed.

From our substantial experience of work within the field of accessible housing provision we suggest that a significant number of social housing providers and local authorities do not know how many accessible or adapted properties they have, or their locations. This is often due to the significant resource implication to undertake a whole stock survey.

It is our view that this lack of information compounded by an inconsistent approach to collating and monitoring housing need, from an applicant's point of view, makes it extremely difficult for local authorities and housing providers in Wales to either fully understand or plan to meet the housing needs of disabled people.

## **Improving race relations and addressing race inequality and hate crime**

National homelessness statistics show that there are disproportionate numbers of BME people getting through to the last, discharge stage of homelessness duty under Section 75 of the Housing Wales Act (15% are BME compared to BME population in Wales of 4%). The proportion of BME people accessing prevention however is quite low in comparison (6%) and the success rates of those accessing prevention are similar to those of the general population.

Whilst this needs to be explored further, current available evidence suggests that to a large extent this is caused by the inadequacy of the immigration system related to move-on period arrangements for asylum seekers receiving refugee status and having to vacate their state provided accommodation. We have also seen some evidence of barriers related to lower awareness of

homelessness prevention, lack of availability of appropriate PRS accommodation during relief (Section 73) stage, area preferences, cultural differences and expectations.

A recent National Assembly Inquiry into Asylum Seekers and Refugees<sup>2</sup> (2016/2017) also highlighted issues related to the quality and management of asylum seeker accommodation.

Low levels of home ownership and socio-economic inequalities mean that proportionally more BME people live in social housing (16.5% of White population vs. 22.4% BME) and Private Rented Sector (14.9% White vs. 35.6% BME) therefore any issues of access or discrimination affecting these communities will be statistically more relevant to social housing. These issues include prejudice, hate crime, poor access to some forms of accommodation and services, mental health issues, criminal justice issues and economic disadvantage.

Our role here is to explore whether and how we could work with landlords to help address some of these issues. For example, it has been widely reported that the EU referendum has led to a rise in race hate crime, Islamophobia and prejudice towards immigrants. We know that in Wales (according to All Wales Hate Crime Research Project)<sup>3</sup>, hate crime is much more likely to happen in or around people's homes than anywhere else placing a responsibility on landlords to promote race equality, community cohesion and tackle hate crime.

## **Addressing inequality in the private rented sector**

The rapid expansion of the private rented sector (PRS) over the last decade has meant that an increasing number of people are now tenants within this sector. Coupled with problems with the supply of social housing, this has meant that this is now a diverse sector containing tenants with needs that traditionally would have been met by social landlords.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=16180>

<sup>3</sup> <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/60690/13/Time%20for%20Justice-All%20Wales%20Hate%20Crime%20Project.pdf>

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has enabled local authorities to discharge their homelessness duties into the PRS which meant that more vulnerable people requiring support are moving into PRS.

The consequence of this is that private sector landlords now require additional support in ensuring that all tenants, including diverse and vulnerable tenants, have their needs met by the sector and receive good levels of service. Similarly, diverse tenants living in PRS do not receive the same level of support as the one provided by social landlords, resulting in a need to build their knowledge, skills and capacity to deal with any issues.

Our own review of evidence and consultation activities carried out for the Open Doors project identified a range of issues which are specific to diverse tenants and landlords who house them, or more prevalent for these groups.

Some of the key issues identified were:

- 18% of LGB people had experienced eviction from their accommodation due to their sexuality (Stonewall, 2003)
- 29% of Black Caribbean, 28% of Black African and 27% of Pakistani survey respondents felt discriminated against when applying for private housing (Runnymede, 2014)
- Every BME group is more likely than White British people to live in the PRS (Census, 2011)
- 25% of survey respondents said their landlord had refused to carry out minor adaptations or let them make their own adjustments (Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, 2012)
- Much higher numbers of younger than older people living in the PRS: 60% of those aged 24 and under live in the PRS compared to 6% aged 64-74. (Census, 2011)
- High numbers of migrants living in the PRS: 38% of those born outside the UK live in the sector compared to 15% of those born in the UK. 61% of those who have arrived since 2001 live in the PRS, (Census, 2011)
- 31% of hate crime takes place in or immediately outside someone's home (Race Equality First, 2013)

The exact extent of the problem with discrimination in the private rented sector is difficult to quantify. The nature of the relationship between landlord and their potential tenant and the way in which decisions are made mean that it would be very easy for any landlord who wished to discriminate to never be caught doing so.

## **Alleviating the impact of welfare reform and tackling socio-economic inequality**

There is extensive research (e.g. WG 2013<sup>4</sup>) showing that welfare reform and austerity have had a disproportionate impact on some groups of people, including those that are disabled, women, under 35's and BME people. This has led to acute housing affordability problems faced by these groups.<sup>5</sup>

There is also evidence that poverty and socio-economic inequality have been increasing for over 30 years leading to pressures on social housing and a change in the role of private rented sector.

We know that poverty, socio-economic inequality and inequality defined by the Equality Act are inextricably linked (e.g. see Objective 7 of WG Strategic Equality Plan<sup>6</sup>). Alleviating poverty and socio economic inequality and advancing prosperity for all can therefore make a huge contribution to eliminating inequality in the more general, traditional sense.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act promotes equality for all, not only those groups defined by the Equality Act. Welsh Government has also been given powers to introduce a socio-economic duty under the Equality Act 2010 to alleviate broader income and social inequalities.

At the same time both UK and Welsh Government have recognised housing as being at the core of more generally understood well-being and prosperity and nationally there is an increasing call to recognise and view housing as a human right (for example Welsh Government is piloting Housing First approaches).

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<sup>4</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dsijlg/report/130717wr-stage3-analysisv2-en.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170925-well-being-wales-2016-17-en.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dsijlg/publications/equality/161214-strategic-equality-plan-en.pdf>

In this context, we believe that taking action on alleviating the impacts of welfare reform and tackling socio-economic inequality should be one of our priorities.

## **Facilitating better understanding and response to mental health issues**

Many people suffer from mental health issues but do not feel able to talk about them openly, or seek help. There are positive signs of social change, but more still needs to be done to break down the stigma surrounding mental health conditions.

Forty per cent of work-related illness is reported as stress and results in an average absence of 24 days and 1 in 4 people will be affected by mental health problems in their lifetime (e.g. Mind<sup>7</sup>).

Mental health problems are likely to be more prevalent amongst social housing tenants than amongst homeowners (e.g. CHC<sup>8</sup>). There is also evidence that welfare reform has led to an increase in the prevalence of some mental health problems<sup>9</sup>.

The prevalence of mental health problems among the general population is increasing. There is growing recognition of this increase, and of the need to help people so that problems, if they occur, can be prevented from becoming more complex and more costly in terms of treatment and impact.

Mental health problems and mental illness can cause significant problems, some of which can lead to homelessness. It has been recognised that the housing and other sectors need to improve the ways in which people with a mental illness can be helped to find and keep accommodation and to live as independently as possible (WG, 2015<sup>10</sup>).

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/#.Wd86Uo9Sy1s>

<sup>8</sup> <https://chcymru.org.uk/publications/mental-health-and-housing/>

<sup>9</sup> Reeves, et al. 'Reductions in the United Kingdom's Government Housing Benefit and Symptoms of Depression in Low-Income Households'

<sup>10</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/meeting/150211-housing-info-meeting-helping-people-mental-health-report-en.pdf>

Mental health issues as well as poverty and other vulnerabilities means that housing organisations are rethinking their relationships with tenants focusing on more face to face interaction and relationship management. Enabling a focus on solving more complex issues and support vulnerable tenants and customers. This also means that the role of a housing officer is changing (CIH, 2014<sup>11</sup>)

Greater awareness around mental health amongst housing staff and PRS landlords can help sustain tenancies and increase people's life chances.

Mental health issues can form part of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and, when combined with other adverse experiences, can seriously reduce later life chances (Public Health Wales<sup>12</sup>). Understanding how ACES affect people's mental health is crucial to developing effective support and housing services.

## Fostering excellence in equality and diversity

### Delivering our QED Award

While Tai Pawb believes strongly that housing providers in Wales are leading the way in their commitment to equality and diversity it is not an easy area to tackle, especially without a consistent way of testing commitments against reality and of measuring progress. There is certainly a desire amongst our members to improve their services, remove barriers and meet the needs of diverse customers.

The QED Award, our newly developed quality mark for housing providers is a response to our members needs and is already proving popular as well as being transformative for organisations. It is a response to this need for consistent standards and for a product that would be all-encompassing in terms of a continuous equality and diversity improvement framework for an entire organisation.

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<sup>11</sup>

<http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Frontline%20futures%20report%20final.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/88524>

The QED Award has been developed in close collaboration with the Welsh Government Regulation Team and achieving the QED Award has been accepted by the regulator as sufficient evidence of compliance with the Regulatory Framework for Wales.

## **Retaining and increasing membership**

Austerity and welfare reform has led to reduced housing budgets, including a reduction in our core funding. It has also meant that many of our members place greater emphasis on value for money and the benefits of our membership to justify spending and supporting Tai Pawb as an organisation.

This means that we will need to have greater focus on being a proactive and engaging organisation, focused on retaining current members and attracting new organisations.

This is also one of the reasons why we will review our membership benefits, fees and services.

## **Increasing involvement and co-production**

Our experience of developing QED Award as a co-production effort with Melin Homes, and extensive engagement with members and stakeholders throughout the development phase, has taught us that closer collaboration with members and stakeholders leads to greater quality services and products that meet people's needs.

Our SWOT analysis has also shown the need to engage with communities of interest and our members on a more regular basis, so that our evidence base for developing great solutions is broadened and rooted in real experiences.

We will improve our engagement with and active involvement of our members, partners and their communities in what we do, so that our work is rooted in their experiences and success is shaped by cooperation and collaboration.

We will also promote greater involvement of diverse tenants in the governance of the sector, including tenant scrutiny and transparency.



## **Delivering great services**

Our analysis and engagement with members has shown that our services were sometimes developed in response to key developments rather than being a proactive proposition on how to tackle existing and future challenges.

Our experience with QED Award and analysis of competition as well as members' needs showed that we need to focus on developing meaningful and streamlined services with less focus on the quantity of products on our menu.

## **Running an innovative and proactive organisation**

### **Developing our research and evidence capacity**

Our engagement with key stakeholders helped us identify a need to develop more research and focus on evidence we use to propose and implement our equality and diversity solutions. It will ensure that our proposals and products are better supported and informed by evidence and experiences of our members, their tenants and communities.

### **Nurturing forward-thinking partnerships**

Feedback from stakeholders and PEST analysis of our environment helped us identify the need to engage in partnerships with third sector and private organisations with an interest in housing and government departments other than housing.

Working in partnership with other organisations will enable us to maximise our capacity as a small organisation with a national remit and better respond to the public sector integration agenda.

### **Improving communications and marketing**

Our analysis and consultation showed that Tai Pawb punched well above its weight and size in terms of the amount of high quality work it delivered. It became evident however that we could do better in terms of communicating the impact of our work and our offer to our membership and beyond.

Better communication can also help us streamline and improve how we connect with members and it will be one of our key focuses over the next 4 years.

## **Increasing long term sustainability**

The levers for the need to increase sustainability are similar to those outlined in the retaining and increasing membership section. Please refer to this [section](#).

## **Increasing our policy influence**

Our main focus over the past few years has been on service and product development and delivery and supporting our members with their work. We have also supported and advised the Welsh Government and influenced national policy through the assembly, research and various Welsh Government working groups, however we identified the need to increase our capacity in this area to enable us to be more proactive and to help us translate policy challenges into practice solutions.

## **Embedding new structure**

We have recently changed the structure of our organisation to enable us to deliver on this strategy and better face future challenges. As with all new teams and roles, we know that it will take a while to develop and set out how we work together as a team and how our staff are best supported to deliver their roles and our objectives.

We also see this as an opportunity to develop new systems and frameworks of working positively with and within our team to meet future challenges.