

Rapid Rehousing and Equality Considerations

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promoting equality in housing
hybu cydraddoldeb ym maes tai

Summary

Using evidence from Wales and internationally, this briefing explores and identifies practical equality considerations for Rapid Rehousing.

Context

Rapid Rehousing is crucial to the Welsh Government's [Action Plan](#) to make homelessness, rare, brief and unrepeated. As a driver of the [White Paper](#) on homelessness reform, Rapid Rehousing will continue to influence future housing policy, strategy, and legislation.

What is Rapid Rehousing?

In Wales, Rapid Rehousing operates on the following [principles](#):

- Everyone is assumed to be 'housing ready' with the right support
- People spend as little time as possible in temporary accommodation
- When people do need temporary accommodation, it is of a high standard
- People are able to access the right home in the right place for them
- For most people, an independent, mainstream home will be the default approach, but others may choose supported accommodation
- People are able to access high quality, multi-agency support, tailored to individual needs, where this is required



Good practice from the USA, where the approach originated, identifies three core components:

- Housing Identification - a Rapid Rehousing programme helps people identify affordable homes and recruiting (and supporting) landlords willing to rent as part of the programme.
- Rent and move-in assistance – this is usually time-limited and can cover full or part of the costs. Funds should be used flexibly based on the needs of the household.
- Rapid Rehousing case management and services – this ensures people have a home that meets their needs and can remain there when support ends. This could include benefit maximisation, employment support, but taken in the broadest sense means whatever support the individual needs to sustain a tenancy.

Equality and Rapid Rehousing

A recent review into Rapid Rehousing in Scotland, recommended guidance should be revised to ensure “it is equalities proofed”¹. In Wales, the Minister for Climate Change and Housing stated that “local authorities should routinely undertake Equality Impact Assessments... including their Rapid Rehousing Transition plans.”

Our homelessness system in the UK is overrepresented by disabled people, survivors of domestic abuse, sole parent families, refugees and people with substance/alcohol use and mental health problems. Rapid Rehousing evidence from the USA has shown support “must be attentive and informed to address the unique needs of... the programme’s target subpopulations such as youth, survivors of domestic abuse or persons who experience chronic homelessness.”

Tai Pawb's research into people with protected characteristics and their experiences of homelessness highlighted particular challenges engaging with homelessness services, which could be a barrier for Rapid Rehousing.

For Rapid Rehousing to succeed and help end homelessness in Wales, it must take account of equality issues. Attempting to rehome people more quickly, without taking account of their needs risks repeat homelessness, with all the negative impacts on people lives and cost to the public purse.

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans

Welsh Government has required all local authorities to produce a Rapid Rehousing Transition plan. These plans lay out the means for the local authority and partners to move towards a new model of delivery. They should contain the following details:

- an understanding of the level housing and support needs, including how many households are moving or waiting to move into temporary settings; how much and what type of housing is required to permanently house people; and who needs support, and at what level, to maintain their tenancy
- a coordinated and strategic approach to identify sources of housing from local authorities, Registered Social Landlords and within the Private Rented Sector
- house-building programmes that factor in housing need, for example through Local Housing Market Assessments.
- landlord and local authority allocation policies that prioritise households with no permanent home
- a multi-agency commitment to providing support, particularly by mental health and substance misuse services
- a comprehensive range of prevention activities, such as mediation and advice services.
- people with lived experience of homelessness having a role in informing and co-producing plans and services within the transition to RRH.

Welsh Government guidance also states that an Equality Impact

Assessment should be undertaken on these plans. Given the data that already exists about the homeless population, it is essential that equality considerations are a golden thread through Rapid Rehousing plans at every stage. For instance, supply of homes, type of support and location of homes will have diversity implications, as will understanding language or communication needs of the local population in terms of mediation and advice services.

Recommendation – While most local authorities have now completed their transition plans (December 2023), when they next review them, an updated Equality Impact Assessment should be undertaken to ensure they have adequately considered equalities as they transition to a Rapid Rehousing approach. It is also important to consider assessing individual activities which follow from the Transition Plan, as this may provide practical insights on a delivery level. Guidance on doing this can be found [here](#). Consideration should also be given to undertaking Equality Impact Assessments

Robust data to aid planning and delivery

Robust data on the homelessness (and general) population is central to planning for existing and future trends. Collecting this data proactively can help deliver the right homes and services for people based on their needs as well as identifying the type of properties required in the future. For instance, data on household size, disability, and ethnicity, sex, and gender, as well as understanding any challenges they face, preferred location or support needs. Having this data up-to-date and regularly reviewed can also support prevention work, identifying communities who are increasingly becoming homeless.

Recommendation – Rapid Rehousing is used as an opportunity to review and reflect on data collection, to inform and assess future commissioning and the delivery of services, including prevention.

Data-driven supply

Supply should be suitable for the needs of the homeless population, including size and accessibility. This could differ for an area based on their population. While a high proportion of homes will need to be one bedroom accommodation, there will also need to be a supply of accessible homes, and a need to cater for larger families who may seek to live in intergenerational households. For some communities, it may also mean wider design considerations such as ensuring a separation of the kitchen and cooking facilities from other rooms. After collecting and analysing this data, local authorities must ensure the right properties are available, through engagement with private and social landlords, as well as developers.

Recommendation – Rapid Rehousing needs to be aligned with a local authority's plan to supply homes, including the Local Housing Market Assessment and data on the requirements of the homeless population.

Location and connections

The location of a home may be particularly important for people who are disabled or from ethnically diverse communities. For disabled people, a location close to a hospital, amenities or accessible public transport may be key in sustaining a tenancy. For people from ethnically diverse communities, there may be benefits to homes where there are higher levels of diversity, culturally appropriate shops (i.e., Halal butchers) and potential networks of support.

Local authorities may traditionally consider family connections when rehousing homeless people. Our research into homelessness in Gwent for LGBTQ+ people highlighted that for some members of the community, close friendships had replaced the more traditional support of a family. Therefore, in order to give some LGBTQ+ people the best chance of sustaining a tenancy, consideration could be given to being placed close to friends, as it would to family for others. This may also be relevant to any 'local connection' tests.

Hate Crime can be a factor in people becoming homeless. We also know that some groups (i.e., refugees, LGBTQ+ people) are at increased risk of experiencing it. Understanding existing levels of hate crime in an area is useful in helping people sustain tenancies. For instance, if an area is known to have high levels of hate crime in the past, it may not be appropriate to place individuals who are at increased risk of experiencing it.

Support needs

Some households, in particular those who are disabled, refugees, have mental health or substance/alcohol use, may require more intensive and longer-term support. Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans require local authorities to plan for people's support needs based on low, medium, high, and intensive needs. When making decisions on people's needs, this should be done in a way that understands the impact of protected characteristics/and or intersectionality, with decisions recorded to make sure there is no bias in categorisation.

Research across homelessness in Yorkshire, Nottingham and London found key actions for maintaining tenancies included:

- Active and practical tenancy support – (benefit claims, arrears payment schedules, setting up utility bills, decorating properties)
- Furnished properties or starter packs.
- Transport to assist people to move in
- Support with employment and training
- Peer mentors to support people integrate and settle in the community

These services should be designed to meet the needs of diverse communities to give people the best chance of sustaining a tenancy.



Intersectionality and accessibility of services

Research from Shelter Scotland has shown providers need to consider intersectionality to achieve successful transfers from temporary accommodation. In particular, the research identified how ethnicity can interact with gender, low income, or disability, to complicate the challenges in finding permanent and stable accommodation, leading to prolonged stays in temporary accommodation. Access to responsive advice services based on the needs of each individual was beneficial to take account of multiple challenges and secure a permanent home.

Affordability

Placements should be in homes which are affordable to people moving into them, so as not to put tenancies at risk before they start. Support should be offered for budgeting and to maximise an individual's benefit claims (including any pensions they may be entitled to but not yet claimed). Learnings from the USA has shown the benefit of providing subsidies to support or pay rent for a period of time before it is tapered. Innovative ways to do this could be explored, whether that is through discretionary housing payments or other flexible budgets. To ensure tenancies are viable, living costs as a whole must be understood. For instance, research by Disability Wales highlighted some disabled people may need additional heating or electricity costs.

Domestic Abuse

Good practice from the USA has identified how Rapid Rehousing can best support survivors of domestic abuse.

Elsewhere, Dundee City Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan highlights gender specific support. Working alongside Dundee Women's Aid, a coordinator and support worker will continue to work in partnership with the mainstream Housing First service to deliver specific support to women and their children and inform future gender specific support service requirements.

Renfrewshire Council funded a 0.5 FTE post through SAY Women to provide emotional support for young women aged 16 to 25 who are survivors of sexual abuse, rape, or sexual assault.

SAY Women aim to prevent repeated cycles of homelessness and to increase tenancy sustainment for the young woman they work with. By July 2021, they had assisted eight young women through 43 sessions and 83 welfare calls.

Consideration should be given to the location of new homes to ensure the victim is safe from the perpetrator (including their family and friends). This may involve having properties in lots of different areas or the ability to refer to other local authorities. Rapid Rehousing should consider circumstances where the perpetrator is rehoused; allowing the victims to remain in their household. While controversial, doing this may give the survivor the best chance of rebuilding their life. In these circumstances, consideration should be given to the location compared to victim and also proximity to other vulnerable people who may be at increased risk of exploitation.

Supported accommodation

Supported accommodation will remain an important part of homelessness services regardless of Rapid Rehousing. Feedback from our research of homelessness accommodation in Gwent identified that offering inclusive services provided better outcomes and helped prevent future experiences of homelessness for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Accommodation, services, and training should be tailored to meet the needs of the homeless population that are staying there. With lower numbers of people in supported accommodation, opportunities to explore more specialised services could be explored.

The Wallich set up the Ty Tom Jones hostel during the Covid-19 pandemic. The hostel operates 24 bedrooms and aims to move people from rough sleeping to their own home as quickly as possible. Working in a psychologically informed way, after 18 months, 50 people had secured their own accommodation with 88% of 'move-ons' having sustained their accommodation. Operating in partnership with other agencies, The Wallich provides intensive wrap-around support based on client's needs, whether that relates to housing support, counselling, substance use or help with employment. Based on individual needs, some stays are as short as a few weeks while others are longer based on the support they need. While the service and wrap around support is set up to deliver rapidly, a barrier remains the lack of social homes and access to the PRS.

Young people

In the USA , the National Alliance to End Homelessness has produced a [toolkit](#) for rapidly rehousing young people. While following the same approach as Rapid Rehousing, lessons learnt include following a Housing First philosophy, landlord engagement and the importance of support service which are flexible in style, funding, and outcomes. Research by [End Youth Homelessness Cymru](#) can also help guide services.

Making connections

Once households are homed, good Rapid Rehousing support will help people connect to whatever services are important to them in the community. These should include anything relevant to the household sustaining a tenancy such as peer support networks, churches or mosques, childcare services, and doctors. This can help people rebuild their lives and help sustain tenancies.

Recruiting private landlords

Given the tenure mix in Wales, Rapid Rehousing needs the Private Rental Sector to succeed. Some private landlords may be reluctant to let their properties to people who were homeless. [Caerphilly Keys](#), led by Caerphilly County Borough Council, helps private landlords find long term tenants for properties, while also preventing homelessness. Support offered includes managing a tenancy, budgeting, maximising income, alleviating debt, support with education, learning and employment, and referral to other organisations. At a national level, the Welsh Government have established [Leasing Scheme Wales](#) to offer a similar service.

Having the right approach to engage and talk to PRS landlords is also important. Tai Pawb have produced guidance on [how to engage PRS landlords](#) as well as an [A-Z on equality](#) to help them understand equality issues.

Recommendation - Local authorities to identify and implement methods to recruit and retain private landlords, in particular for properties that may be let to clients with complex needs.

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers

Rapid Rehousing plans will need to cater for homelessness amongst Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers. This could include instances when their vehicles and homes are removed under the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act. Our [research](#) into experiences of homelessness amongst Travellers highlighted challenges around temporary accommodation, including size, a lack of culturally appropriate accommodation and an aversion amongst some to traditional bricks and mortar homes. These needs, and others, will need to be considered for Rapid Rehousing to be relevant and work for Traveller communities.

Refugees

Home Office asylum policy has changed in the UK with all Welsh local authorities required to help house a number of asylum seekers. When Asylum Seekers have right to remain granted and become refugees, just 28 days' notice to leave a property is usually granted – putting people at risk of homelessness. Inability to secure employment prior to this means a lack of funds or credit history makes accessing the PRS difficult. Given the timescales, [refugees often present as homeless](#) or don't access housing support at all due to a lack of awareness or knowledge – particularly the case for single men or couples. The Welsh Refugee Council's [Move on service](#) can provide crucial support during this period. Where refugees end up in temporary accommodation, our [refugee feasibility study](#) guides the type of evidence-based support needed.

Recommendation - Rapid Rehousing teams should be aware of the asylum population in their local authority and the composition/needs of each household to help plan appropriate properties and services. Further information on this can be found [here](#) in our Good Practice Briefing. Links should be established with the local authority resettlement lead who has contact with the Home Office via Wales Strategic Migration Partnership.

People with No Recourse To Public Funding

Rapid Rehousing must still have consideration for people whose migration status means they are no recourse to public funding (NRPF), including destitute asylum seekers or certain homeless migrants. While there are no confirmed figures – the Welsh Government estimate this could be between one hundred and over a thousand people in Wales every year. If we are to have a 'no one left out approach', consideration needs to be given for how people can be supported. While people may be ineligible for support due to migration status, they may still be eligible under certain circumstances. For instance, under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act or the European Convention on Human Rights. The Welsh Refugee Coalition has produced [guidance](#) on common misconceptions of what support can be offered. This [Welsh Government feasibility report](#) identifies potential models of accommodation and the need for increased training and guidance for staff to better understand how people can be supported. In cases where support can be offered, it should be holistic and include advice and advocacy while increased training for staff can help identify circumstances where support can be granted.

Monitoring and evaluating Rapid Rehousing

As with any programme of scale, regular monitoring is important to measure the success of the intervention. The National Alliance to End Homelessness has produced a [Toolkit](#) containing suggestions on how and what to monitor. A more equalities-focused tool could be established, tweaking the measures used in this toolkit by focusing on any differences by people with protected characteristics to the average.

Next steps

Rapid Rehousing is new to Wales as a policy. However, the principles and good practice have similarities to other areas of work for local authorities, RSLs such as including housing first and prevention. Organisations may benefit from reviewing and transferring good practice from these existing initiatives. We'd also like to hear from members of their successes and challenges as they continue to transition to this way of working.

Support Available from Tai Pawb

Tai Pawb can help members in relation to Rapid Rehousing in the following ways:

- Our [Resources page](#) contains information on topics including on homelessness, tenancy management and accessibility and our publications.
- Our new [Anti-Racism](#) page containing a toolbox of information on helping organisations.
- We can provide training to members and non-members – details of available courses can be found [here](#).
- Local Authorities can find more information over how their membership benefits [here](#).
- Guidance on [Equality Impact Assessments](#) can be found here with [training](#) available too.



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