

Public Policy Statement

Housing

April 2025

Summary

The Welsh Government recognises that the bedrock of living well is a good quality affordable home, and given the link between housing and health, good quality affordable housing must be seen as a preventative intervention.¹

For most of us, at whatever age, 'home' is a safe place that enables us to truly be ourselves, to live the life we want, to pursue our interests, to connect with family, friends and wider community and feel that we belong.²

The housing needs of people may change as they get older, so it's important that older people have access to a range of good quality housing options and services that meet their needs. People must be able to live safe, independent and active lives in the setting most appropriate to them, and their home or location may need to change to adapt to their changing needs. The impact of people living longer on the availability of accessible homes and the management of home improvements are key issues.

Poor and inaccessible housing conditions can have profound implications for our ageing population. The design, location and condition of a home can impact on the ability of older people to live healthy and independent lives. Accessible housing is essential for older people to be able to live independently for longer, and the availability of community support networks is important for their wellbeing and quality of life.

Specialist retirement housing, including sheltered accommodation and extra-care housing, can offer basic support for many older people allowing them to live independently for longer within a safe and secure environment. Further investment is needed in the provision of specialist housing, as it is often cost-effective over the long term because it reduces demand on residential care homes and hospitals, and can provide community living and associated benefits to quality of life. All forms of retirement housing need to be built within age friendly communities, to ensure that residents have full access to public or community transport and local services, health care, shops and post office and facilities that support independence and wellbeing.

¹ [Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

² [Our Future Homes: Housing that promotes wellbeing and community for an ageing population - GOV.UK](#) Older People's Housing Taskforce report (2024), for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department of Health and Social Care, UK Government.

All public authorities in Wales must treat older people as individuals and recognise the inherent diversity of later life. The needs of older people with multiple protected characteristics must be accommodated in housing policy and service delivery.

Older people need to have access to information about housing options, aids and adaptations, and related financial information, to help them make an informed decision about where they want to live in later life. Such advice should be promoted before retirement to allow forward planning, greater choice, and to facilitate independent living.

Accessible housing is essential to older people being able to live independently for longer. Adapting homes to make them suitable for the needs and capabilities of the older occupant reduces disability and risk of accidents, increases independence, and improves health and wellbeing. Improved efficiency is needed in the delivery of publicly funded home adaptations services for older people, and adaptations must be completed in line with the Welsh Government's Housing Adaptations Service Standards.

We want to see all new homes in Wales built to Lifetime Home standards,³ making them suitable for people of all ages, and which will be easier and less costly to adapt if people's needs change.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) has led to improvements in social housing. The Welsh Government must set out clear timescales and milestones to extend the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) to other housing types and tenures, further to their review of the new WHQS 2023 Standard.

Age Cymru's national surveys in 2023 and 2024 reported that nearly a quarter of older people said that their house was in need of repairs. For those who owned their own homes, key issues were the costs of repairs and maintenance, which for many were unaffordable. We heard about the poor condition of some houses with concerns around health and safety. We also heard about some repairs being needed and problems with damp and mould in both the private rented sector and social housing. The Welsh Government must repeat the Welsh Housing Conditions survey to provide an update on the current condition of housing in Wales.

An issue raised in our annual surveys by those who rent privately was the high cost of rent, notably for those older people who are unable to retire and have to continue to work to pay rent. We believe that the Welsh Government should call on the UK Government to uplift the Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

Security of tenure was also raised in our annual surveys by those who rent. We believe that the Welsh Government should do more to improve the security of renters by taking measures to end no fault evictions in Wales.

Older people are most likely to suffer fuel poverty; a contributing factor is that they tend to live in older, energy inefficient properties. Current estimates of fuel poverty continue

³ Lifetime Homes <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>

to be modelled on the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey 2017-18,⁴ which was prior to the energy and cost-of-living crisis. Updated estimates on fuel poverty in Wales are needed to identify households in need of support.

Welsh Government should undertake equality impact assessments to ensure that low income and vulnerable households are not disproportionately affected financially by the decarbonisation of the existing housing stock, to ensure a fair transition in the move towards net zero.

Summary of public policy proposals

- Welsh Government must set out clear timescales and milestones to extend the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) to other housing types and tenures, further to their review of the new WHQS 2023 Standard.
- Welsh Government should ensure that all new homes in Wales are built to Lifetime Home standards, making them suitable for people of all ages, and which will be easier and less costly to adapt if people's needs change.
- The Welsh Government should call on the UK Government to uplift the Local Housing Allowance (LHA).
- Welsh Government should take further measures to improve the security of tenants in rented accommodation by repealing no fault evictions.
- Welsh Government must repeat the Welsh Housing Conditions survey to provide an update on the current condition of housing in Wales.
- Welsh Government must further invest in specialist retirement housing to help reduce the demand on residential care whilst promoting independence for older people
- Local authorities need to ensure that all forms of retirement housing are built within age friendly communities, to ensure that residents have full access to public or community transport, healthcare and local services and facilities that support independence and wellbeing
- The UK, Welsh and local governments need to provide information on housing options, aids and adaptations, and related financial information, which should be promoted before retirement to allow forward planning, greater choice and to facilitate independent living.
- Local authorities must take the needs of older people with multiple protected characteristics into account in housing policy and service delivery.
- Local authorities and other providers of housing services must understand and address the additional barriers that older LGBTQ+ people may encounter when accessing housing services, and support their needs.
- Local authorities should ensure that language needs are effectively addressed in the provision of information and advice for older Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people on housing and housing support options.

⁴ [Welsh Housing Conditions Survey | GOV.WALES](#)

- In exercising their duty to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a need has been identified, local authorities should ensure good access to community services and healthcare.
- Welsh Government must provide updated estimates on fuel poverty in Wales, to enable the identification of households in need of support.
- Home improvement decarbonisation measures must include advice on how to use new technology effectively, eg heat pumps.
- Welsh Government should undertake equality impact assessments to ensure that low income and vulnerable households are not disproportionately affected financially by the decarbonisation of the existing housing stock, to ensure a fair transition in the move towards net zero.

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