

Agenda – Local Government and Housing Committee

Meeting Venue:

Virtual

Meeting date: 16 February 2023

Meeting time: 12.45

For further information contact:

Manon George

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddHousing@senedd.wales

Pre-meeting (12.45 – 13.00)

- 1 Motion to elect a temporary Chair for today's meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.22**

- 2 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

- 3 Papers to note**
 - 3.1 Letter from the Minister for Climate Change in relation to Homelessness**

(Pages 1 – 4)

Paper 1
 - 3.2 Submission from Cymorth Cymru in relation to the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023–24**

(Pages 5 – 12)

Paper 2
 - 3.3 Letter from the Minister for Climate Change in relation to the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill LCM**

(Page 13)

Paper 3



- 3.4 Letter from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change in relation to the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023–24**
(Pages 14 – 17)
Paper 4
- 3.5 Letter from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to Business Committee in relation to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill**
(Pages 18 – 30)
Paper 5
- 3.6 Report by the Bevan Foundation: A snapshot of poverty in Winter 2023**
(Pages 31 – 53)
Paper 6
- 3.7 Letter from the Wallich in relation to the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023–24**
(Pages 54 – 61)
Paper 7
- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting**
- 5 Consideration of the draft report on homelessness**
(13.00 – 15.00) (Pages 62 – 125)
- 6 Update on the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM)**
(15.00 – 15.10)
[Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum \(Memorandum No 5\)](#)

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA/JJ/3556/22

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

John Griffiths MS
Chair
Local Government and Housing Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

26 January 2023

Dear John,

Follow-up information after homelessness evidence session

Thank you for your letter of 21 December 2022 requesting some additional information following my Committee appearance on 7 December 2022. I am grateful for the Committee's work and the acknowledgment in your letter of the considerable work that local authorities, service providers, Welsh Government and others have undertaken to implement the no-one left out policy in Wales, and that this approach has undoubtedly saved lives.

Winter Pressures

As set out in my evidence paper to the Committee, I recognise the considerable pressures on housing and homelessness services. The ongoing impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, affordability of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and the humanitarian crisis arising from the war in Ukraine, have all placed considerable pressures on housing services and wider partners and have necessitated an increased reliance on temporary accommodation in the short term.

The Committee will wish to note that in response to the pressures and to support local authorities to ensure they are able to secure sufficient temporary accommodation for those who need it, increase prevention measures, and increase move-on, I have announced additional funding for this financial year. An additional £10m revenue funding has been allocated to local authorities in 2022/23 to support with homelessness prevention and the costs of temporary accommodation. This is being realised as a result of the ongoing cooperation with our Co-operation Agreement partners Plaid Cymru. This is on top of the £10m already allocated in this financial year for temporary accommodation, and £6m for discretionary homelessness prevention, and will increase our no-one left out and prevention funding to £26m in 2022/23.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In respect of the pressures in the PRS, I welcome the Committee's intention to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions regarding the impact of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates on levels of homelessness. As set out in both my written and oral evidence, we continue to press the UK Government to uplift LHA rates. As the Committee will be aware, the current LHA rates reflect the level of rents which existed in the private rental market for the period ending September 2019. This is against a backdrop of reports of private sector rents, particularly those for new tenants, rising at their fastest rate for 13 years, meaning the gap is widening between actual rents and LHA rates. Inevitably this creates an affordability and accessibility crisis for low income tenants in the PRS. LHA rates need to reflect the most recent rent officer market data submitted to DWP, or the percentage increase afforded to other benefit rates, whichever is higher. It is also important to reflect that when introduced the LHA rate was set at the 50th percentile, and not the 30th percentile as is now the case and I have repeatedly made the case to UK Government Ministers to reinstate the 50th percentile. I am grateful for the Committee's support in pressing the UK Government on this matter.

Homeless at Home

As discussed at my Committee appearance, there are considerable merits to the 'Homeless at Home' proposal, and I can assure the Committee my officials are currently working to explore with stakeholders whether and how such an approach could be introduced to provide the flexibility to local authorities, whilst also ensuring authorities comply with their duties and ensure the rights of the individual are protected.

Rough Sleeping

I share the Committee's concern that the number of people sleeping rough has increased during the latest published data from September. As the Committee notes, rough sleeping is a complex issue and highlights the importance of person-centred assertive outreach, not only to support people into accommodation, but to help them sustain and thrive in accommodation. It is also important to not lose sight of the wider context and the 1,514 people presenting as homeless during the month of September who were supported into accommodation.

I have been very clear that no-one should be forced to sleep rough in Wales, and the regulations the Senedd passed in October, to create an 11th category of Priority Need, ensures the continuation of our no-one left out policy and that anyone street homeless in Wales is now priority need for accommodation. The additional in-year funding mentioned above will also support local authority to continue to implement this approach.

Standards of temporary accommodation

As discussed in my written and oral evidence, and as noted by the Committee, this is a complex area. Whilst our overall aim remains to reduce our dependency on temporary accommodation, in particular hotels and B&Bs, we need to work with local authorities to drive down usage in a manageable way that avoids the risks of a sudden removal of this type of provision. We also need to do it in a way that allows for other accommodation solutions to come online, such as those we are funding through the Transitional Capital Accommodation Programme.

The Committee will wish to note that existing statutory guidance makes it clear that temporary accommodation should be suitable, and authorities should be providing appropriate support to those in temporary accommodation so that movement into settled longer-term accommodation can be facilitated as quickly as possible. The [Code of Guidance](#) specifies local authorities must have regard for the individual circumstances of the

applicant, and local authorities are encouraged to ensure assessment of needs in the broadest sense is applied when determining suitability, to ensure they meet their duties in terms of both the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

As set out in your letter, part of the consultation on the transitional legal arrangements also included consultation on potential amendments to the suitability requirements in the legislation, in respect of hotel and B&B accommodation. The consultation responses highlighted the complexity of this issue given the increasing pressures on local authorities and further work and engagement with partners is underway to determine the most appropriate transitional measures in this area, and we expect to set out the proposed way forward shortly.

Housing Supply

We discussed the Transitional Capital Accommodation Programme at my Committee appearance, and the importance of this in being flexible and creative in order to increase good quality longer term accommodation to support all those in housing need and increase move-on to reduce pressures in temporary accommodation. The Committee will therefore wish to note that I have announced an additional £24m to the Transitional Capital Accommodation Programme for this year, taking the total funding for this to £89m in 2022/23.

In respect of Leasing Scheme Wales, a number of local authorities have identified potential opportunities to bring on additional properties this year, and we are actively working with them on securing these. In terms of making the scheme more attractive to landlords, we have recently increased the potential grant funding available to landlords through inclusion of an additional £5,000 grant to improve the energy efficiency of the property towards an EPC C rating. This means that those landlords signing up to the scheme for 5 years could access up to £10,000 whilst those who sign up for 25 years could be eligible for up to £30,000.

Ending Homelessness Action Plan

As outlined in my evidence to Committee, we will be updating the actions in our Ending Homelessness Action Plan early this year. I anticipate an updated Action Plan to be published by early Spring, with updated and new actions to be included at this point.

In respect of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, I can update the Committee that we have now received final plans from 8 local authorities and anticipate receiving the final 14 plans from the remaining authorities in the coming weeks. The submission of some plans has been delayed in a number of local authority areas as a result of different internal approval processes both at an officer and political level.

Legislation

I can confirm that given the considerable work already undertaken on ending homelessness in Wales, the forthcoming White Paper on homelessness legislative reform is entirely separate to the proposed Green and White Papers on right to adequate housing and rent controls. Whilst work on each paper has some synergies, they are at very different stages of development and will be taken forward separately.

Once again, I thank the Committee for your continued interest, engagement and support in taking forward our shared long-term goal to end homelessness in Wales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

The Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023/24

Evidence submitted to:

- Senedd Finance Committee
- Senedd Local Government and Housing Committee

A response from Cymorth Cymru

1st February 2023

Contact: Policy@CymorthCymru.org.uk

Website: www.cymorthcymru.org.uk

Twitter: [@CymorthCymru](https://twitter.com/CymorthCymru)

1. About Cymorth Cymru:

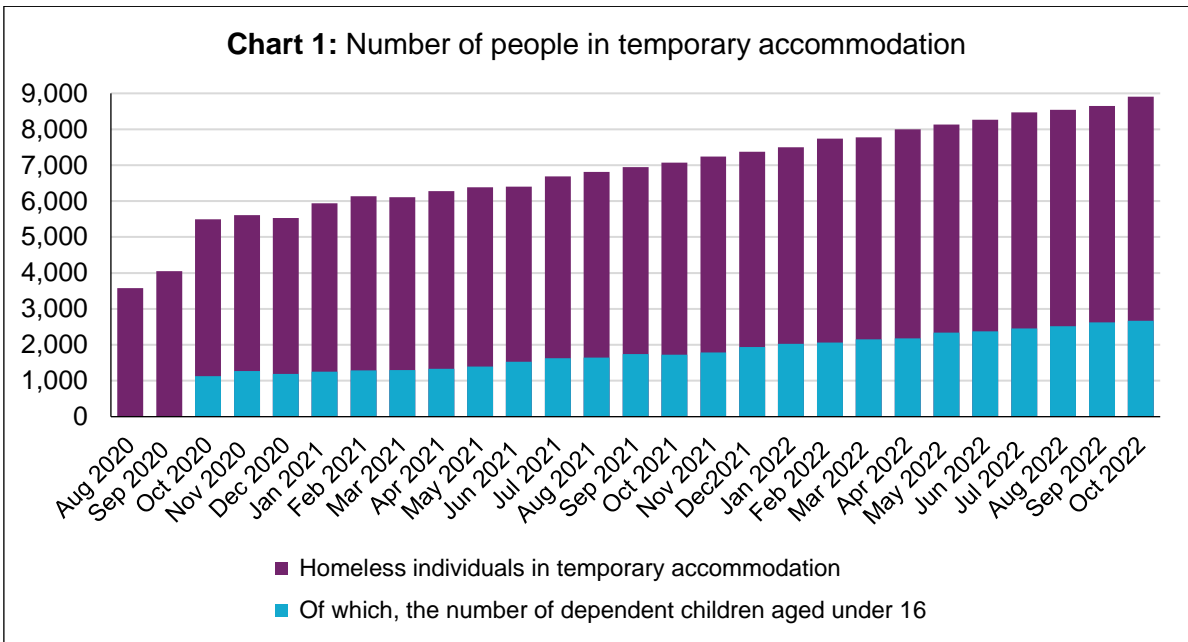
- 1.1 Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for providers of homelessness, housing and support services in Wales. We act as the voice of the sector, influencing the development and implementation of policy, legislation and practice that affects our members and the people they support.
- 1.2 Our members provide a wide range of services that support people to overcome tough times, rebuild their confidence and live independently in their own homes. This includes people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, young people and care leavers, older people, people fleeing violence against women, domestic abuse or sexual violence, people living with a learning disability, people experiencing mental health problems, people with substance misuse issues and many more.
- 1.3 We are committed to working with people who use services, our members and partners to effect change. We believe that together, we can have a greater impact on people's lives. We want to be part of a social movement that ends homelessness and creates a Wales where everyone can live safely and independently in their own homes and thrive in their communities.

2. Introduction

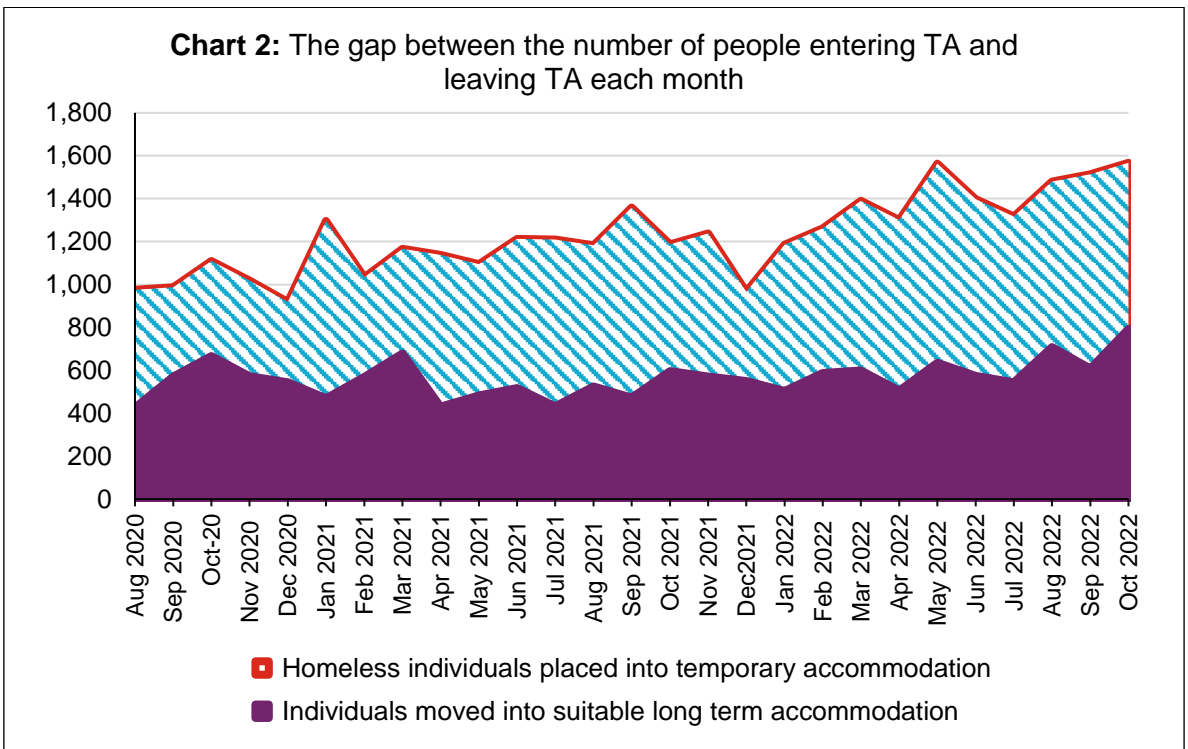
- 2.1 We welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to the Senedd Finance Committee and the Senedd Local Government and Housing Committee about the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2023/24.
- 2.2 This evidence focuses exclusively on the **Housing Support Grant**, which funds the vast majority of homelessness and housing support services in Wales.
- 2.3 The Welsh Government has allocated £166.7 million to the Housing Support Grant (HSG) in its Draft Budget for 2023/24. This is the same as the amount allocated to the HSG in 2022/23 and in 2021/22.

3. Context

- 3.1 The Housing Support Grant funds the vast majority of homelessness and housing support services in Wales, supporting over 60,000 people every year, through the provision of:
 - Tenancy support that prevents homelessness and keeps people in their homes.
 - Supported accommodation for a range of client groups, including refuge for survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
 - Housing First projects that support people with a history of repeated homelessness to access and maintain a tenancy.
- 3.2 Throughout the pandemic, these services continued to provide critical support to thousands of people, despite the very real health risks posed to frontline workers and their families. They did extraordinary work to keep people safe from COVID-19, to prevent homelessness, to bring thousands of people into emergency accommodation, and to provide vital support to people who were struggling with domestic abuse, mental health problems and other crises during a very difficult time.
- 3.3 At the present time, the homelessness sector is under more pressure than ever. The most recent Welsh Government [statistics](#) show that 8,906 individuals were in temporary accommodation as of 31st October 2022, of which 2,672 were dependent children under the age of 16 (Chart 1), a number that has been increasing steadily for the past two years.



3.4 Over the last two years, an average of 1,225 people have been placed in temporary accommodation (TA) every month. The average number of people moving out of TA and into suitable long-term accommodation is only 561 per month (Chart 2).

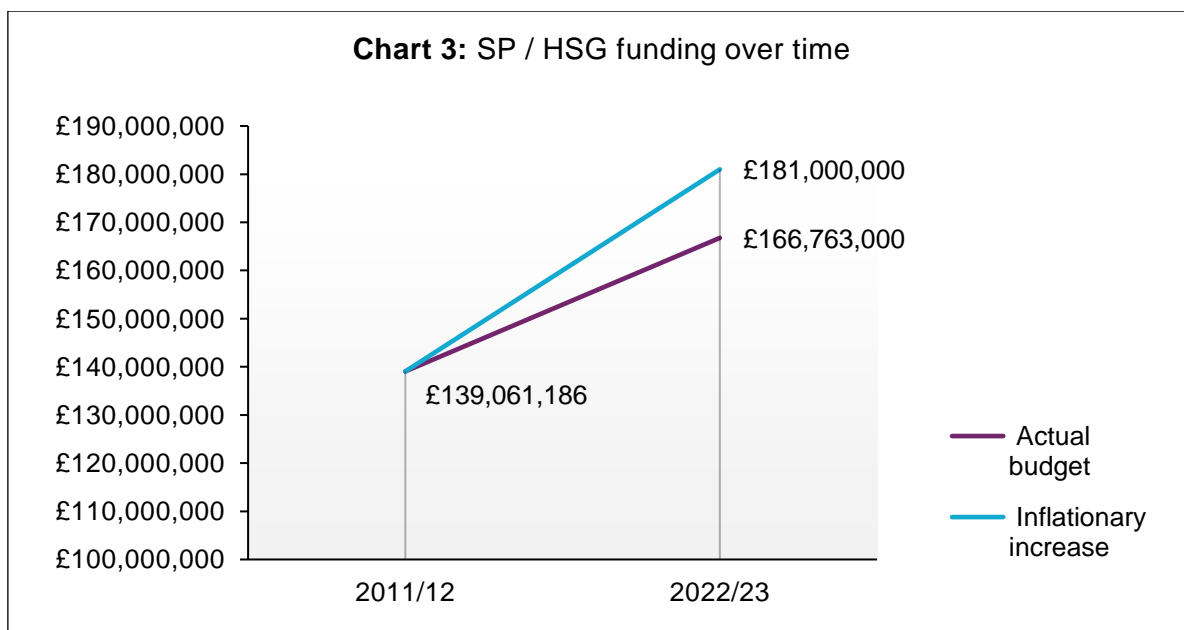


3.5 Support services are absolutely critical to helping people to cope with the trauma of homelessness and the stresses of living in temporary accommodation, as well as supporting people to find and move into a settled home and maintain that tenancy. It is clear that they are desperately needed to support local authorities at this time.

3.6 Looking to the future, HSG services are absolutely vital to the delivery of the Welsh Government’s ambitions to end homelessness, including the transition to [Rapid Rehousing](#) and the implementation of the [Ending Homelessness Action Plan](#). These services are key to making homelessness **rare** (tenancy support to prevent homelessness), **brief** (enabling people to move into supported accommodation or their own home) and **unrepeated** (by continuing to provide support that enables people to maintain their tenancy).

4. Funding over time

- 4.1 Over the past decade, Housing Support Grant funding (formerly the Supporting People Programme Grant) has reduced in real terms. In 2011/12 it was £139 million, which equates to £181 million in 2022, according to the Bank of England's [inflation calculator](#).
- 4.2 This means that the HSG budget has been cut by over £14million in real terms, even if the demand for homelessness services had remained the same.
- 4.3 In reality, demand has grown and services are under much more pressure than a decade ago. The temporary accommodation figures referenced above help to illustrate the increased pressure on services.



- 4.4 In response to scrutiny of the Draft Budget, the Welsh Government has pointed to the increase to the HSG during the pandemic. While we warmly welcomed this investment at a time of crisis, it predominantly helped to fund additional services to meet growing demand, rather than providing financial support for existing services and staff pay.
- 4.5 And as Chart 3 demonstrates, the increase has not kept pace with inflation.
- 4.6 The Welsh Government has also highlighted the increase to the Homelessness Prevention Grant during this scrutiny process. Again, this is welcome, but it is important to point out that this will predominantly help local authorities to continue providing temporary accommodation. This increase has no impact on the vast majority of homelessness and housing support services in Wales, which are funded through the HSG, and will therefore not help to sustain these services or the HSG workforce.

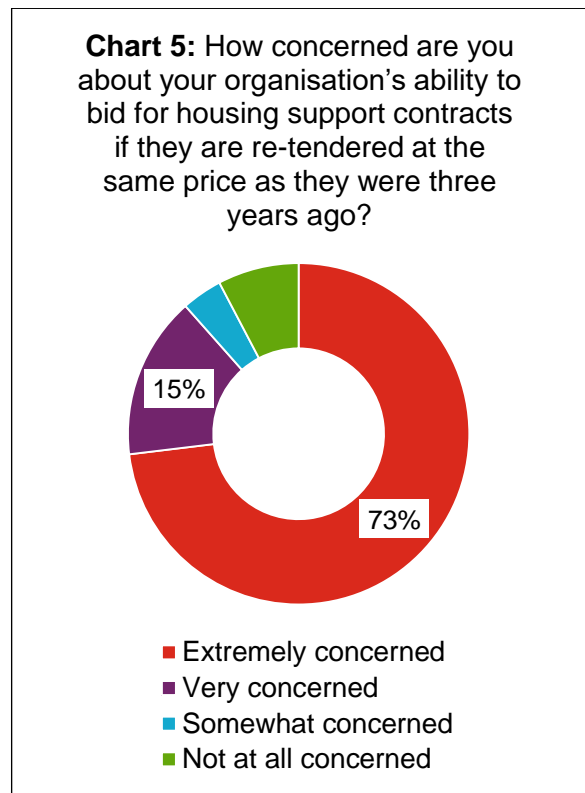
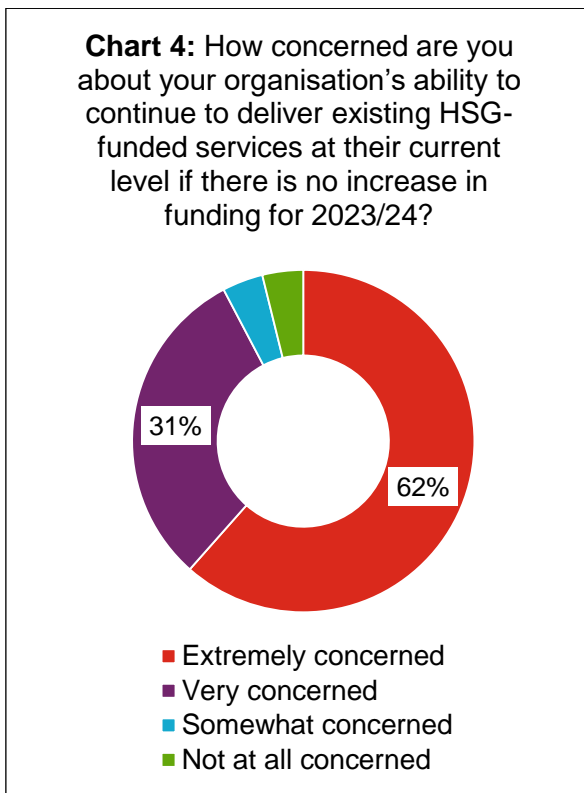
5. Risk to service delivery

- 5.1 The absence of any increase to the HSG budget means that service delivery is now at risk. Homelessness and housing support providers are increasingly concerned about the cost of running services and their ability to recruit and retain staff. Accommodation-based services such as supported accommodation are particularly affected by the increase in energy bills.
- 5.2 Some providers have told us they feel unable to bid for certain housing support contracts, as the funding offered does not cover the true cost of delivering the service. In some cases, the contract value is the same as a few years ago, with no inflationary increase to reflect the cost of running the service today.

5.3 As well as choosing not to bid for contracts, there is a risk that some providers may walk away from existing agreements or be forced to reduce service capacity. Service providers are increasingly concerned about their ability to deliver existing contracts if there is no increase in the HSG. Some may have to reduce the number of people they can support at a time when homelessness and housing support services are more important than ever. One support provider, which delivers services across a number of local authorities, told us:

“We have made the decision that if we do not receive the required uplifts from commissioners in 23/24, we will not be tendering for new contracts and will be giving notice on some of our current contracts where we're struggling to retain staff and are seeing a financial deficit. We have given notice on a number of contracts in 22/23 for this very reason and we've seen that no other provider is prepared to step forward to take on these contracts. The demand for our services has never been higher and we will be unable to meet needs as providers will inevitably withdraw from existing contracts and not take the risk of bidding for new ones.”

5.4 Our survey of HSG service providers showed that the majority of them are extremely or very concerned about their ability to continue delivering services without an increase in the HSG:



5.5 These concerns are being echoed by local authority commissioners, who are facing incredibly difficult choices if there is no increase to the HSG budget. One commissioner told us that the absence of any increase to the HSG means they will need to choose between cutting service capacity in order to afford a wage rise for frontline staff, or retaining service capacity and continuing to lose staff. This isn’t a choice at all, particularly with the huge numbers at risk of homelessness, in temporary accommodation and in need of support.

5.6 One support provider has told us:

“Given the demand on service, the quality of service provided and the work/ life balance for staff (and pressures put upon them) it is concerning to hear that no extra funding is forthcoming for the new financial year. I believe that making no additional increase to the budget will stretch services to breaking point and no doubt impact the lives of the vulnerable people we support in our community. I believe the housing crisis will only be intensified if support services are stretched past capacity.”

5.7 Another support provider told us:

“The Supported Accommodation services that we deliver just about break even or make a very small surplus. Whilst we are very proud of the services, the increase in the living wage of 10.1 % (from April) coupled with a significant rise in utility costs, will put the schemes into deficit unless Local Authorities are given the additional funds required to cover the true cost of services. Unless this happens, as contracts are up for tender, we would have to consider whether we retender or walk away as the Group cannot afford to subsidise the cost of services.”

6. Shortfall between wages and National / Real Living Wage

6.1 Over the last two weeks we have collected data from homelessness and housing support providers about staff wages in their Housing Support Grant funded services. We received data from 21 support providers, including charities and housing associations, who provided information about the wages of 2,125 staff members working in HSG-funded projects. Due to the short timescale for responses, this is only a proportion of the staff employed by HSG services across Wales, but we believe it is representative of the wider sector.

6.2 This sample showed that:

- **28.8%** of staff working in HSG funded services are currently **paid less than the forthcoming National Living Wage (NLW)** of £10.41 per hour.
- **29.3%** of staff working in HSG funded services are currently **paid less than the new Real Living Wage (RLW)** of £10.90 per hour.

6.3 However, several of those who were paying above the RLW were keen to point out that this was due to them subsidising wages from other parts of the organisation, as they were not given enough funding from their commissioner to cover this through the HSG contract.

“Providers often end up giving this pay rise through a cost to themselves and this isn't how we should run a business, but we want to do our best as preventing homelessness is of paramount importance to us. Year after year we stretch our budgets.”

6.4 The average shortfall between the current wages of these staff and the NLW is £0.45 per hour, which equates to **£819 per worker per year**.

6.5 The average shortfall between the current wages of these staff and the RLW is £0.92 per hour, which equates to **£1,674 per worker per year**.

6.6 One support provider told us it will cost them an **additional £500,000** to pay their staff the RLW in the 2023/24. Another told us that it would cost them **in excess of £1million**.

6.7 This data illustrates the huge challenge for homelessness and housing support services in Wales: How are they supposed to pay staff the legally required NLW – never mind the Welsh Government's commitment to pay the RLW – if there is no increase in the Housing Support Grant budget?

6.8 One support provider has told us:

“If there is no increase in the funding we risk losing experienced, trained, talented and knowledgeable colleagues from services and this will massively impact those who are accessing and need our services. We cannot attract or retain colleagues in roles if we cannot afford to pay them well. Inflation is running at 10% we have to be part of a solution for colleagues who are struggling to pay their bills and have some quality of life, work should not be exacerbating an already difficult situation. If we are not able to offer any increase to salary we cannot expect commitment or development from colleagues, if we cannot bid for new services how do we expand the offer of support to our communities.”

7. Frontline workers: Cost-of-living crisis

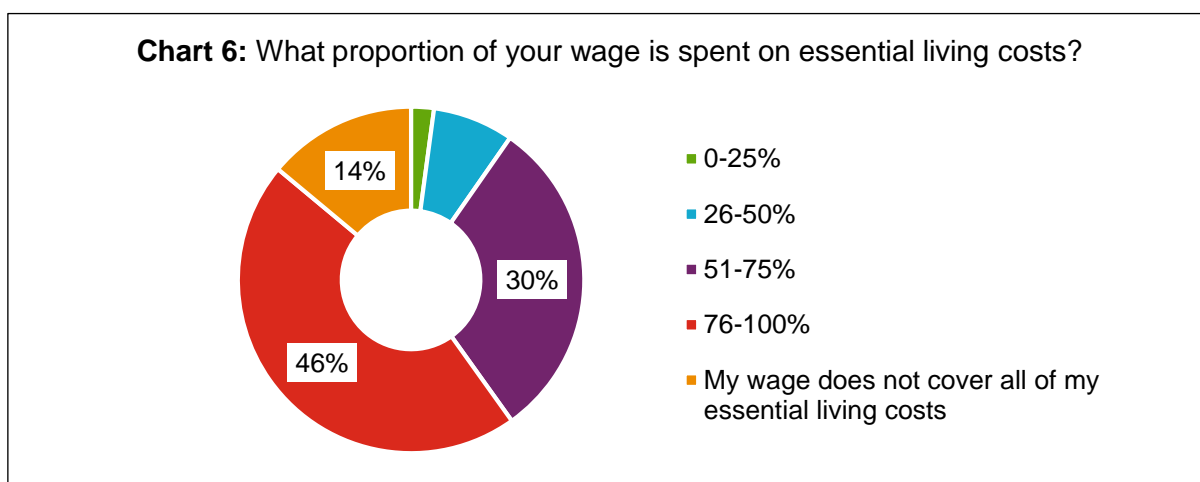
7.1 The cost-of-living crisis is having a significant impact on frontline homelessness and housing support workers in Wales. We have conducted two surveys about this issue - during the summer of 2022 (560 respondents) and in January 2023 (583 respondents).

7.2 One the most frustrating elements of the Draft Budget was the [reference](#) (page 33) to our statistics about the impact of low pay and the cost-of-living crisis on frontline homelessness and housing support staff – while failing to increase the HSG.

Proportion of frontline worker wages spent on essential costs

7.3 The 50/30/20 rule suggests that people should spend 50% of their income on essential living costs, 30% on discretionary spending, and 20% on savings or paying off debt. We asked frontline homelessness and housing support workers to estimate what proportion of their wage is spent on essential living costs, such as rent / mortgage payments, bills, food, school, healthcare, childcare, and transport to work (Chart 6).

7.4 Worryingly, only 10% said that they spent the recommended 50% or less of their wage on essential living costs. A huge 46% said they spent 76-100% of their wage on essential living costs. A shocking 14% said their wage does not cover all of their essential living costs.



Impact of the cost-of-living crisis on people's lives

7.5 The survey last summer showed that most frontline workers were struggling with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, but the results from January 2023 are much worse. 9% have used a foodbank, 18% are struggling to pay their rent, 56% are struggling to pay their bills, and over 85% are turning off heating, lighting and electrical appliances to reduce costs.

7.6 12% of frontline workers feel at greater risk of homelessness – which has doubled since the summer. These are the very people whose job is focused on preventing and alleviating homelessness – but increasing numbers of them are at risk of losing their home too.

Has the cost of living had any of the following impacts on you over the last 6/9 months?	Summer 2022	January 2023
I have needed to use a foodbank	7%	9%
I feel at greater risk of homelessness	6%	12%
I am struggling to pay my rent	10%	18%
I am struggling to pay my bills	44%	56%
I am not putting on the heating in order to reduce costs	79%	86%
I am turning off lighting or electrical appliances to reduce costs	86%	89%
I am not engaging in social activities in order to reduce costs	70%	72%

Quotes from frontline workers

7.7 The following quotes from frontline workers illustrate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis:

"I miss meals so that my child can eat."

"I have begun selling belongings of mine to make up costs."

"I have two children and the worry of putting the heating on the way prices are rising is a concern, I won't let them have a bath only a two-minute shower due to the rising costs."

"I love my job but my neighbour is on more money than me who works in Aldi behind a till."

"It is quite disheartening to learn that a Mcdonalds employee is now earning £2 more per hour."

"Eating only one meal a day."

"It has had a great impact on my well-being, increased my anxiety but have to put on a brave face during working hours."

"I have had to take on another job to keep my home running day to day, I now have to work an extra 25 hours per week on top of my fulltime day job just to keep on top of my bills."

"I have to work extra hours on a relief basis each month as my basic salary doesn't cover my bills."

"House issues due to not being able to put heating on. Damp / mould appearing in most rooms, unable to complete house repairs that is required to prevent further issues."

"I have a generalised sense of dread about everything - I'm worried about my clients and friends, as well as my own situation. More than anything I would like affordable housing with a decent heating system, no damp and a secure tenancy - this simply seems unattainable."

"In the past 6 months there have been times when I have been really cold in my house but I have not turned the heating up and as a 66 year old I never imagined I would have to sit wrapped in a quilt in the evening."

8. Well-being of Future Generations

- 8.1 The Draft Budget documents reference the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, yet the decision not to increase the Housing Support Grant (HSG) is not in line with the Act's focus on prevention. It also fails to balance both short-term and long-term needs, such as the significant numbers of people in temporary accommodation who need support now, as well the future goal of ending homelessness.
- 8.2 HSG services are important preventative services and [research](#) by Cardiff Metropolitan University and Alma Economics has demonstrated that they deliver a net saving of £1.40 for every £1 invested by the Welsh Government by preventing homelessness, easing pressure on health and social care, and reducing interaction with the criminal justice system.
- 8.3 One support provider has shared further evidence of the impact on public services:

"HSG services are preventative, our SROI (Social Return on Investment) report demonstrated every £1 of investment, generates a saving of £5.77 in public services. Unless the importance of HSG services are recognised and adequately invested in, further demand will undoubtedly be put on other reactive services, which are already stretched."

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 As you can see from our evidence, the challenges facing homelessness and housing support services are stark and it is heart-breaking to hear that these incredible frontline workers are being pushed further into poverty. These services are critical to preventing and alleviating homelessness, but are at serious risk if there is no increase to the HSG budget.
- 9.2 We urge Members of the Senedd to consider this evidence and use their voices to raise these concerns in their scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2023/24.

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

Agenda Item 3.3

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

John Griffiths MS
Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

SeneddHousing@senedd.wales

6 February 2023

Dear John,

I am writing to thank you and the Committee members for your consideration of the fourth Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Government's Social Housing (Regulation) Bill.

I welcome the report of the Committee published on 13 January, and the conclusion that that the majority of members continue to agree with my recommendation that granting legislative consent is appropriate in the case of this UK Bill.

As I acknowledged in my response to your earlier report, I appreciate the Committee's frustration about the amount of time which on some occasions is afforded by the legislative consent process for Committee scrutiny. In the interest of being as open as possible with the Committee, I understand that UK Ministers are due to table further amendments to the Bill at House of Commons Report stage. We continue to highlight to the UK Government the importance of early engagement and of accommodating Senedd processes in their Bill timetabling considerations.

Yours sincerely



Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Agenda Item 3.4

Lee Waters AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

John Griffiths MS
Chair - Local Government and Housing Committee

SeneddHousing@senedd.wales

31 January 2023

Dear Chair,

Further to the commitments made by the Minister for Finance and Local Government during the Committee for Local Government and Housing's scrutiny of the Welsh Government draft budget 2023-2024 on the 12 January, I have been asked to update the Committee regarding school transport and grid capacity to charge electric vehicle fleets, as these fall under my portfolio.

School Transport

The Minister for Education and Welsh Language and I met on 11 January as part of a series of bilateral meetings taking place with fellow Ministers to explore new opportunities to deliver Cymraeg 2050 across all Government policies. The Minister took the opportunity to update me on issues relating to home to school transport arrangements affecting families attending Welsh-medium education, as raised in his recent meetings with local authorities to discuss progress against their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. During the meeting I confirmed a wider programme of work regarding the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 was underway following an initial review in 2020 and that this will feed into discussions on the Bus (Wales) Bill.

An initial review of the Learner Travel Measure (Wales) 2008 took place during 2020 – 2021, concluding at the end of the previous government term. It gathered evidence and views on potentially:

- reducing the distance thresholds for free school travel;

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- free travel for post-16 learners, children of nursery age and learners attending their nearest Welsh medium school and faith school; and
- revising the guidance.

It became apparent that a wider review of the Measure was required due to the complex nature and implications of home to school transport. An official has now been appointed to lead on the wider learner travel review. The wider review is presently being planned and will ensure full engagement and collaboration with local authority partners, as well as other key stakeholders, to inform the development of this important piece of work. I will be happy to share details of the timetable for that review with the Committee when it becomes available.

The government has published a White Paper, One Network, One Timetable, One Ticket, which sets out an ambitious vision for transforming bus services in Wales. The proposed bill will offer us a chance to look a fresh at bus service delivery across Wales, including the provision of school transport. As our aims are ambitious, these reforms will take time, but it is vital that we get this right to support learners and our wider reform programme

My officials have been in discussions with local authorities and school transport providers throughout Wales regarding the general cost of school transport, as they continue to discharge their statutory duties in providing home to school transport to learners. Local authorities confirm that the cost of school transport services has increased significantly.

There have been differences across Wales in the way local authorities have dealt with increases to school transport costs. Some automatically provide an annual inflationary rise to contract prices, some provide when requested, whilst others do not provide at all.

With regards to the availability of bus drivers, we continue to work closely with the bus industry and other government agencies to support and stimulate driver recruitment and retention.

The volatility of fuel prices has also been a major issue for school transport providers. The duty charged on fuel is not a devolved matter within the Welsh Government competencies and remains a matter for the UK Government. It was hoped that the UK Government would offer widespread support to assist with the current global uncertainties we're facing.

Welsh Government Ministers have written to the UK Government to express our deep concern about the increase in domestic energy price. We await a response.

Grid Capacity to charge electric vehicles

We need to be clear on the size of the challenge decarbonisation presents. Electrification is clearly the way forward for many forms of transport and heating: the impact of this is to increase the demands on the electricity infrastructure. Building new networks to meet this demand, across the nation, is an enormous undertaking. In Wales there is little transmission infrastructure, which in the current way networks are funded mean there are no financial signals that trigger new infrastructure.

Last July, National Grid ESO identified the need for a transmission link from North to South Wales, and National Grid Electricity Transmission will now have to look at options for routes. We are actively looking for the earliest opportunity to feed into this process and identify how it can deliver solutions for Wales's grid challenges. In addition, the recent funding round for distribution network operators, for 2023-28, does allow some development ahead of need. However, network companies need clarity on exactly what technologies will need to connect to the networks and when, so they can target activity.

Our local energy plans, which are currently being developed in all local authorities, are intended to bring much more clarity to local requirements – though these will clearly evolve in future. We have also been working with the Energy Systems Catapult on our Future Energy Networks for Wales project to identify where we can add clarity about the future need for infrastructure. We've modelled a range of futures to see what is needed across most reasonable scenarios. We are working with all the networks on this project, so they can also build these insights into their planning.

Following the publication of the EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Wales ([Electric vehicle charging strategy for Wales | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/electric-vehicle-charging-strategy-wales-action-plan-html)) and its Action Plan in 2021 (<https://gov.wales/electric-vehicle-charging-strategy-wales-action-plan-html>), Welsh Government set out to accelerate the roll-out of EV charging infrastructure across Wales. We have collaborated closely with Transport for Wales (TfW), local authorities and the private sector to start delivering a baseline infrastructure across Wales, and to identify future opportunities that will support different charging needs; that will ensure sufficient provision of charging infrastructure is available to allow equal access and create a seamless and enjoyable experience for all users.

The Welsh Government, TfW and local authorities in Wales have been collaborating with the Distribution Network Operators (Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) and National Grid) to maximise the availability of power for EV charging. National Grid and SPEN have used the Green Recovery funding awarded by Ofgem to reinforce certain areas of their network.

National Grid selected sites across the South Wales region on the basis of proximity to the Welsh Strategic Road Network (SRN) and also for proximity to key substations which will make connections to the electrical network more cost effective. Whilst SPEN have also done this, they have worked closely with us to choose 17 electrical connections of up to 1MVA (megavolt amperes) across their North Wales region specifically for EV charging. These connections have an average value of £100k each. The locations were set against a preferred network of proposed rapid charging stations across the SRN generally located at key road junctions. The SPEN approach has proved successful, leveraging private sector investment in EV rapid charging infrastructure at all 17 sites.

Welsh Government and TfW have also collaborated with the DNOs in developing tools that model the electricity network and its constraints and help pinpoint constraints on the grid where investment is most likely to lead to significantly improved opportunities for EV infrastructure development.

Going forward, we will look at the creation of a connections group that can help maximise the availability of power for charging EVs even further; and help realise the benefits as described in the Action Plan.

TfW has been leading a project to deliver 17 rapid EV charging points on the Strategic Road Network. This is being delivered by a unique partnership whereby the network is largely funded commercially, but public funding is focused on “unlocking” sites with severe grid constraints through funding DNO works. The location of these sites is focused in areas which are considered unlikely to benefit from purely commercial investment in the near to mid-term, yet are vital for ensuring consistency of provision across the SRN for “top up” charging en-route to key tourist and other destinations across Wales.

Please write to me if you require further information on these issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Lee Waters AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

—
**Legislation, Justice and
Constitution Committee**

Rt Hon Elin Jones MS
Llywydd
Chair, Business Committee

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27 January 2023

Annwyl Lywydd

Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill

Further to my letter of 21 December 2022 in relation to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, at our meeting on 23 January 2022 we considered a letter from the Counsel General (dated 19 January) which responds to a series of questions we asked following the Counsel General's attendance at our meeting on 5 December. On 23 January, we also considered your letter of 19 January, in which you asked if we could continue to draw relevant matters to the attention of Business Committee, in particular those aspects with potential implications for Senedd Business.

The Counsel General's letter of 19 January provides an update on the Welsh Government's approach to the Bill, as well as information on how it is reviewing retained EU law, matters related to capacity and resource, and the impact on and role of the Senedd.

We agreed that we would draw the correspondence to your attention, and to the attention of relevant Senedd Committees.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies
Chair

Mick Antoniw AS/MS

Y Cwnsler Cyffredinol a Gweinidog y Cyfansoddiad
Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
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19 January 2023

Dear Huw,

Thank you for your letter of 14 December seeking responses to questions following my appearance on 5 December in relation to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill. We are grateful to the Committee for its dedicated work to consider the implications of this Bill.

The responses to your questions are set out in an Annex to this letter. However, to contextualise these correctly, I would like to make two important and fundamental observations that the Committee might wish to consider in its work on the Bill.

Firstly, the Welsh Government fundamentally opposes the whole intent of the Bill. In general, our position is that retained EU law, like EU law before it, works well. Consequently, beyond gradually amending the law as appropriate with evidence-gathering, public consultation, and legislative scrutiny in the normal way, over time as with any body of law, we had no intention to repeal, revoke or amend REUL to an arbitrary deadline on ideological grounds. However, simply to propose legislation such as this that, by default, would repeal essential economic, social and environmental protections is unacceptable and irresponsible. This is especially true because of the use of valuable time by governments and legislatures when a good deal of this work will be merely to maintain in law those essential provisions that the Bill would otherwise automatically remove. This nugatory work has no demonstrable benefit to anyone and is a regrettable use of finite resource in both the Welsh

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Government and the UK Government, caused by the decisions made by UK Government Ministers.

Secondly, the Bill is essentially an enabling Bill and its full implications will be influenced by policy choices of UK Government Ministers about which pieces of legislation should be retained, amended, or left to sunset. Unless and until that detailed information is provided, we are all working in a very uncertain situation, with the obvious attendant difficulties that that causes both for the Welsh Government, and for your Committee in a scrutiny role. I hope we can continue to engage collaboratively in dealing with this Bill in these regrettable circumstances, recognising our distinctive institutional roles but also common interests in relation to the integrity of the devolution settlement.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mick Antoniw". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

Mick Antoniw AS/MS

Y Cwnsler Cyffredinol a Gweinidog y Cyfansoddiad
Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution

ANNEX

Wales-made REUL

- 1. You told us that the Welsh Government's focus "has got to be firstly to ensure that we analyse and retain our own EU retained law, that we focus on that law that's been made within Wales" (RoP, 242). Has that analysis been completed? If not, what is your target date for its completion?**

We are working to have a settled list of this REUL as soon as we are able to do so. This is a complex task and we will be happy to update your Committee on progress.

Reviewing REUL

- 2. You and your officials said that Welsh Government policy teams are working closely with their Whitehall counterparts to analyse spreadsheets of data prepared by those Whitehall departments "to see whether [you] agree with that analysis" (RoP, 242 to 254). What is the target date for the completion of that work?**

While we have received some information from the UK Government this is not comprehensive. We are continuing to receive this in something of a piecemeal fashion but are considering and assessing it as we receive it. We hope to have a more complete picture in the near future so that we can conduct a proper assessment of it.

Welsh Government's approach

- 3. Has the Welsh Government had any reassurance from the UK Government that it will not change or remove devolved REUL without the consent of the Welsh Government? If so, does the UK Government intend to amend the Bill to reflect this commitment?**

We remain in dialogue with the UK Government on this issue, but still await the necessary reassurance.

- 4. You told us that "if you don't take measures to be able to identify and understand what it is you want to retain, then everything else is going to go." (RoP, 295). You also told us that you have not yet decided on your approach to retaining REUL but that you want to "make sure that [the Welsh Government] focus on those areas that are most important to us".**
 - a. Can you therefore confirm that you do not intend to save all REUL in devolved areas?**
 - b. On what basis will you decide which areas are most important to the Welsh Government?**
 - c. Can you tell us which areas these are, or if not, when you will be able to tell us?**
 - d. What are the risks to the areas deemed not important or less important and how have they been determined?**

e. How will you mitigate and manage the risks associated with this, particularly if you are not carrying out your own impact assessment (RoP, 256)?

It is not our intention to allow REUL in devolved areas to come to an end, unless there are very good reasons for this to take place. However, as a matter of good governance, our final position on specific instruments will need to take into account what the UK Government decides in relation to existing REUL for England; or in relation to existing REUL on reserved matters that impacts on devolved matters in Wales. Where the UK Government wishes to review any piece of REUL that impacts on a devolved matter, we would expect the UK Government to work collaboratively and pro-actively with us on this.

Further to this our ambition is to retain all REUL pertaining to Wales, subject to the caveat above.

5. You told us that you may adopt a “triage approach”, where you try to “identify those that are most obviously relating to devolved issues that may be the most important issues, rather than technical issues, so that we make sure we focus on those areas that are most important to us” (RoP, 277). What do you mean by “technical issues”?

We await a mature and comprehensive list of REUL, and statements of policy intent regarding REUL instruments, from the UK Government. Given the complexity of the interrelationships between and within REUL across the UK, knowledge of the detail of the UK Government’s intentions will help to inform our analysis of the pieces of REUL that could be retained without creating complexities (and so require a technical piece of work to preserve them but no more), and those which require a more substantive consideration of whether we should retain them and how, for example because the UK Government is proposing to repeal or amend them in relation to England or in relation to reserved matters that impact on devolved matters in Wales.

6. You told us that you think the Bill has created a great deal of uncertainty for the Welsh Government. However, stakeholders have accused you of ‘fuelling’ / exacerbating this by not clearly setting out your approach. To what extent could the Welsh Government reduce this uncertainty?

7. What will the Welsh Government do to reassure stakeholders of its overall strategy in relation to REUL and about the steps it is taking to address their concerns?

Regarding Questions 6 and 7, as set out in the covering letter, the Bill is a UK Government initiative with which we do not agree. It is its commitment to the Bill, without clarity on what will happen to each piece of legislation, which is creating the uncertainty. Our ability to mitigate that for stakeholders in Wales is very limited until we have that clarity from the UK Government. We plan to engage with both the Senedd, and with stakeholders, on this work.

8. You told us “We will want to retain law and not see any diminution of standards. So, we will want to ensure that we retain those standards out of

this.” (RoP, 277) How will you maintain or improve standards if they are weakened or reduced under the Bill, either by omission or by action taken by the UK Government?

The Welsh Government’s position is clear as above at Question 4: We have no desire or intention to repeal, or allow to end through the Bill, any REUL that applies to Wales and is within devolved competence, unless there are very good reasons for this to take place. However, as outlined above, the issue of cross-border divergence means that we will want to take into account the UK Government's position and intentions when making our decisions regarding the implications for Wales in certain policy areas of taking particular approaches.

Saving REUL

9. You said “The complexity comes in knowing the scale of what we're going to do. If, for example, in a whole large area of these 3,800-plus pieces of legislation, the UK Government equally decides that what they should do is retain a large number of them, then that actually solves part of that problem. It solves part of that problem and it makes it a lot easier to manage those areas that have not been retained.”

a. This suggests to us that the Welsh Government will defer decision-making and action to the UK Government to make regulations. Is this correct? Do you have concerns for what this approach means for Wales, including the Senedd?

Our preference is to maintain all REUL that applies to Wales, unless there are very good reasons not do this. Broadly, if the UK Government maintains a piece of REUL for England, then we will very likely do the same in relation to devolved matters in Wales. The mechanics by which this would be achieved will also need to be considered.

b. Will the Welsh Government wait to see what the UK Government saves and subsequently decide what it may need to save itself?

As stated in answer to a. above, our preference is to maintain all REUL that applies to Wales, unless there are very good reasons not do this. However, if the UK Government decides to change REUL on the English side of the border, there are complex policy decisions to be made. Each of these areas of change to the status quo initiated by the UK Government would require a proper assessment of the economic, social and environmental implications and risks for Wales. Similar considerations will need to be made in relation to proposed UK Government changes to reserved legislation that impacts on devolved matters in Wales.

Amendments

10. In addition to the single amendment to the Bill we know you have requested (in relation to the Welsh Ministers having the ability to extend the sunset date up to 23 June 2026), you said that you would be “encouraging changes to be made that give us the guarantees that we have sought” and you specifically

mentioned concurrent powers in the Bill and the powers of the law officers in devolved Governments (RoP, 285). You also said that the Welsh Government would “do the normal things in terms of briefings, in terms of discussions, in terms of engagement with the UK Government and interested parties, who will all make their own representations” (RoP, 289).

- a. What specific changes to the Bill are you seeking?
- b. Can you confirm that you have made formal requests to the UK Government and, if not, when will you do so?
- c. Why are your suggested changes not detailed in your LCM, which only lists one amendment put forward, for consideration by this Committee and wider Senedd?
- d. You said that we can expect the Welsh Government to put forward further amendments and that you have set these out. When will the Senedd have the opportunity to scrutinise these?
- e. You mention that an option available to the Welsh Government is to rely on others to bring forward amendments which reflect your position rather than acting collaboratively. Could you provide more information on this and confirm who the “others” might be?

We have engaged with the UK Government over several months on the concerns that we have with the Bill. As set out in the Legislative Consent Memorandum, these include not only who can exercise the power to extend the sunseting deadline but also the issue of consent for the exercise of concurrent powers by UK Government Ministers in devolved areas, the sunseting deadline itself, the regulatory burden and the intervention and reference powers exercisable by the Law Officers within the UK. We have sought changes to the Bill on all these matters. We have raised these concerns in correspondence with the lead UK Ministers for the Bill, in Ministerial meetings and in my written response to the Public Bill Committee on the Bill, with the objective of having them addressed through amendments.

While we have hoped for progress and for common sense to prevail, UK Government Ministers have yet to give us reassurance that they are willing to make changes to the Bill to address our concerns.

Alongside seeking to secure changes to the Bill from UKG, the Bill was among those topics discussed with members of the House of Lords last week.

11. Under clause 15 of the Bill, Ministers will be prevented from increasing the regulatory burden when revoking or replacing REUL. You described this as a “constraint that is totally unacceptable” (RoP, 269). Why have you not, therefore, requested an amendment to remove this constraint from the Bill?

Please see the answer to question 10 above.

12. You have previously commented on the enormous powers that will be given to Ministers via this Bill. You told us that these are “powers that, in normal circumstances, you would not wish to give to governments”. You also said “it’s not a question of whether we want them; we will probably have no choice because if we want to do anything about retaining legislation that maintains

standards and so on, things that we agree with them in devolved areas, then we're going to have to exercise them” (RoP, 291). Have you requested that the Bill be amended to uplift the scrutiny procedures attached to the powers if and when they are exercised by the Welsh Ministers?

As noted above, we have strongly expressed our concerns about the Bill to the UK Government. However, if passed as drafted we will have to exercise the powers conferred on the Welsh Ministers in order to make decisions about REUL in devolved areas, where possible, as part of our work to defend the devolution settlement. However, the Legislative Consent Memorandum sets out our concerns that the sunset provision will mean that parliament and the devolved legislatures will have no scrutiny or oversight role where REUL is allowed to sunset automatically and will likely not provide sufficient time for effective consultation on proposed modifications to REUL, which could result in unidentified issues and potential negative impacts, for example on protected groups.

Divergence and disputes

13. Have you identified any areas where you have policy intentions which diverge from those of the other governments of the UK?

Since the detailed and comprehensive policy intentions of the UK Government in any given area are either not yet clear or are just emerging, it is not possible to give a definitive answer to this at this stage.

14. When we asked you how disputes could be resolved you told us that the new inter-governmental process that has been established “is probably not going to be particularly ideal process” and “It may be that you can create something specifically to try and resolve those disagreements” (RoP, 279).

- a. Can you clarify why the recently created structures for intergovernmental dispute resolution would not be the appropriate structures to use to resolve any disputes in this area?**
- b. Can you confirm that, where relevant, disputes would go through the relevant common framework process in the first instance?**
- c. Given the need for timely action because of the 31 December 2023 sunset date, how realistic is it that a new dispute resolution process could be created?**

We will always reserve the right to escalate issues within the Dispute Avoidance and Resolution procedure agreed following the joint Review of Intergovernmental Relations (IGRR), wherever it becomes appropriate to do so. The resolution process in the IGRR should be seen as part of a much wider system of active IGR, and as a process of last resort. This is embedded into the machinery it sets up – it is agreed that machinery should “promote dispute avoidance by ensuring there are effective communication and governance structures at all levels, from working-level officials to ministers”. As you will know, the Dispute Avoidance arrangements are without prejudice to the legal provisions within the devolution settlements which govern matters relating to legislative competence. We would always need to consider the

appropriate forum to which to take our concerns, particularly where there is a dispute as to whose competence a piece of legislation is within.

Common Frameworks will play some part in elements of dispute resolution related to REUL, though the timescale available to undertake this work will massively impact the ability to engage fully in this process, along with the fact that not all areas of REUL are covered by a Common Framework.

The current sunseting deadline means it is unrealistic that a suitable dispute resolution process could be created in time to service the process appropriately. This is the responsibility of the UK Government, not the Welsh Government.

Capacity and resource

15. The First Minister told the Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee on 9 December that, as the Welsh Government has no spare capacity, “diverted capacity” will be needed away from its legislative programme to work on the Bill. Given the First Minister's comments, when will decisions be taken about when and where resources will be diverted, and will you commit to updating the Senedd as soon as decisions are made?

16. You told us that the Welsh Government wants to deliver its legislative programme but there was uncertainty around the demands the Bill will place on resources. Are you coordinating Cabinet discussions regarding your concerns about delivery of the legislative programme?

Regarding Questions 15 and 16, for the reasons set out above, it is not possible to assess fully the scale of the impact on the legislative programme until we know the detail of the UK Government's plans for REUL as it applies in England, particularly the extent to which it intends to amend this body of law.

Discussions on this matter will continue between Ministers as the situation develops as will our liaison with the Senedd on the legislative programme.

Impact and role of the Senedd

17. You also said “I think one thing is clear: it makes the sort of detailed scrutiny and the timescale for that scrutiny incredibly difficult” and “we have to look at how that will work”. You told us that there is “going to be a need for very close co-operation between the Government and the Senedd in terms of an understanding as to precisely what is required, what is happening and how we best manage that. It's not just an issue for the Welsh Government; obviously, it's an issue for the Senedd itself, in terms of how it scrutinises and assesses those steps as well” (RoP, 307).

- a. How will the Welsh Government maximise the scrutiny opportunities afforded to the Senedd?
- b. How will the Welsh Government involve the Senedd in determining what is required as a consequence of the Bill?

In general, it is premature to answer this question with complete precision as we are again seeking comprehensive information from the UK Government about its decisions.

I would expect the Senedd to have the opportunity, in the normal way, to scrutinise any proposals regarding REUL. We will engage with the Senedd on this.

The task of determining what is required is difficult to quantify, or to identify precisely. I would expect Ministers to keep the Senedd informed by way of Ministerial Statements once the task is clearer.

18. You did not confirm to us that you are liaising with the Llywydd and the Business Committee regarding the potential impact on the Senedd's timetable. Could you confirm that discussions are taking place? If not, is the Welsh Government waiting on clarity from the UK Government before doing so?

We will certainly be in contact with the Llywydd and Business Committee regarding the Senedd's timetable once we have sufficient information from the UK Government to be able to have meaningful discussions about the potential implications.

Regulatory landscape

19. Would the Bill introduce a regulatory ceiling?

The power within clause 15 of the Bill to revoke or replace includes a requirement that any changes to, or replacement for, a piece of REUL, cannot "increase the regulatory burden". However, the precise meaning of this in the context of the Bill is not clear, though the Bill appears to have been drafted so as to mean that what could be considered a regulatory burden can be interpreted very widely. Moreover, the UK Government has made no particular policy statement on the meaning of this provision.

However, the nature of the Bill, and potential UK Government changes to REUL, may arguably increase the regulatory burden for some businesses, at least in the short term, as they adjust to new standards, even if they are lower.

20. How could the Bill impact the Welsh Government's policy and ability to improve standards, where possible, post-Brexit?

The Bill fundamentally fails to appreciate how the principles of devolution need to be applied in the field of regulatory policy in the UK, now that it has left the EU. There are also concerns that the effects of the UK Internal Market Act will have further impacts should regulatory divergence occur (for example through the UK Government amending or repealing REUL for England). This could have significant implications for the ability to maintain and improve standards, in effect, in REUL in Wales.

21. The UK Government has stated that environmental protections will not be weakened and that the devolved nations can preserve legislation within

competence. Which environmental protections will the Welsh Government preserve?

The Welsh Government has no intention to weaken existing environmental protections, the majority of which are derived from REUL. We intend to consider all options and, as a minimum, will be working to seek to ensure that REUL on environmental protections is assimilated by the sunset deadline.

Stakeholders

22. You told us “There’s going to have to be engagement with stakeholders because we’re going to have to have that understanding of some of the steps that have been taken. I think the problem is, at this stage, it’s not completely clear who we will be engaging with, to what extent, and within what framework.” (RoP, 350)

- a. **Could you clarify whether the Welsh Government is engaging stakeholders on the Bill at this stage, or when it plans to if this is not yet the case?**
- b. **You identified agriculture and environment as areas where there will be a “big focus” which you anticipate to be “very intense” (RoP, 323). Is the Welsh Government prioritising stakeholder engagement in these fields?**
- c. **How will you engage stakeholders in order to determine what issues are important to them?**

We have already made clear our general concerns about the Bill and opposition to it. The real engagement will need to be with stakeholders on a sectoral basis in light of the UK Government’s decisions about changes to REUL that it intends to make.

The areas you refer to account for a significant amount of the REUL that is within devolved competence. Accordingly, we will expect to engage with stakeholders in those areas as fully as possible, once the UK Government’s approach is clear.

Agriculture Bill

You told us that the Agriculture Bill “contains within it elements of retained EU law, and there may be issues that will arise during this process that need to be addressed; it’s just not clear what they might be at this stage” (RoP, 335).

23. Why was it appropriate to use the Agriculture Bill as a vehicle to provide broad powers for the Welsh Ministers to amend retained EU law when the Welsh Government has undertaken no analysis of the implications of the REUL Bill in this policy area?

As indicated above, we are considering our response to the situation, in effect, imposed by the UK Government on reviewing REUL. In general our position is that retained EU law, like EU law before it, works well and, consequently, beyond gradually amending the law as appropriate over time as with any body of law, we had no

intention to repeal, revoke or amend REUL to an arbitrary deadline on ideological grounds.

Furthermore, there is currently no certainty as to what the final version of the REUL Bill will look like, whether it will actually proceed to Royal Assent, nor what will happen to each piece of REUL. As a result, the Agriculture (Wales) Bill is proceeding on the basis of what is currently known.

24. Is it the Welsh Government's intention to save the REUL on which the Agriculture Bill relies under the REUL Bill? What happens if the REUL on which it relies is revoked by the UK Government? Is the UK Government aware of the Welsh Government's need for the REUL to remain in place for the operation of the Agriculture Bill?

As currently drafted, the REUL Bill has powers which the Welsh Government could exercise to preserve REUL in areas of devolved competence. The Welsh Government is considering how it will respond to this Bill and is working with the UK Government to identify all devolved REUL, including those instruments made by the UK Government and Parliament.

25. When do you anticipate being in a position to understand the breadth and detail of any issues which need to be addressed during the passage of the REUL / Agriculture Bills?

We will continue to engage and, in parallel, are considering how to respond in the coming months as the new UK Government's position on the REUL Bill is understood.

26. Is it your intention to make amendments to the Agriculture Bill to address any such issues?

As above, we will continue to engage and are considering how to respond as the new UK Government's position on the REUL Bill is understood.

27. Does the Welsh Government intend to adopt this approach of taking broad executive powers to deal with the uncertainty of REUL rather than bring forward primary legislation when the picture is clearer

As above, we will continue to engage with the UK Government and are considering how to respond as its position is understood. In the meantime, there are no plans to change the executive powers in the Agriculture (Wales) Bill.

A snapshot of poverty in Winter 2023

February 2023



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1. Introduction and summary

The Bevan Foundation's *Snapshot of Poverty* series is a vital tool for anyone who wants to understand poverty in Wales. This is the fifth report published as part of our series. With high inflation dominating the headlines our latest *Snapshot* takes a deeper look at who is being pushed into severe hardship by rising living costs. The survey also examines the impact of surging costs on people's health and the possible reasons for it.

This report is divided into three sections. The first section sets out to provide an overview of how people in Wales are managing rising costs. The second section looks in greater detail at the experiences of the groups that are being most affected by rising costs. The final section explores the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on people's health.

1.1 Key findings

The latest *Snapshot* survey contains some good news. There has been no significant national level deterioration in how households in Wales are managing with rising living costs nor in the number of people in debt, since the publication of our last *Snapshot of Poverty* report in July 2022.¹ This is perhaps an unexpected finding. Costs have continued to rise over the autumn and into early winter,² while incomes have struggled to keep pace.³

This does not mean that the grip of the cost-of-living crisis on Wales is easing. There has been no improvement in national level data on the impact of the crisis. This means that very high numbers of families in Wales are facing considerable financial hardship through this winter.

Across Wales:

- More than one in eight households (14 per cent) either sometimes, often or always do not have enough for all the basics.
- Large numbers of people are going without essentials including four in ten going without heating in their home and one in four eating smaller meals or skipping meals in their entirety.
- Debt is a significant problem with 28 per cent of people borrowing money between October 2022 and January 2023 and 13 per cent being in arrears on at least one bill.

¹ Bevan Foundation, *A snapshot of poverty in summer 2022* (July 2022) available at -

<https://www.bevanfoundation.org/resources/a-snapshot-of-poverty-in-summer-2022/>

² CPI inflation peaked at 10.7% in November 2022; Office for National Statistics, *Consumer price inflation, UK: November 2022* available at -

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/november2022>

³ Median earnings of all employees in Wales were 6.7% higher in October 2022 than in October 2021; Office for National Statistics (2022) *Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted*. November 2022. Available at -

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/realtimetypeinformationstatisticsreferencetableseasonallyadjusted>

- More than one in ten people (11 per cent) are concerned about the prospect of losing their home over the next three months with some indication that mortgage holders are becoming increasingly concerned.

The cost-of-living crisis is not affecting everyone in Wales equally. The extent of the hardship faced by some groups in Wales is worrying. Among the groups that are being most significantly affected are:

- **People in receipt of benefits** – people on Universal Credit are five times as likely to report that they sometimes, often or always struggle to afford the basics as the general population.
- **Disabled people whose condition limits them a lot** - over half (52 per cent) have gone without heating in their home over the past three months.
- **Social renters** - nearly half (46 per cent) report that they have had to cut back on food for themselves or skip meals in the three months to January 2023.
- **Households with children** - around twice as likely to be in debt as a result of the cost-of-living crisis as households with no children.
- **Adults under the age of 65** - twice as likely to report that their household sometimes, often or always struggled to afford the basics as households over 65 years old.
- **Unpaid carers** - significantly more likely to have borrowed money between October and January than people who are not carers.

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting people's health:

- Nearly half of people in Wales (48 per cent) report that their mental health is being negatively affected by their financial position.
- Three in ten report that their physical health has been negatively affected by their financial position.
- A combination of going without essential goods and services, and broader factors such as an inability to participate in hobbies are having an impact on people's health.

1.2 About this briefing

All figures quoted in this briefing unless otherwise stated are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 1,116 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between the 16th and 20th of January 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted (unless specified otherwise) and are representative of all Welsh adults (aged 16+).

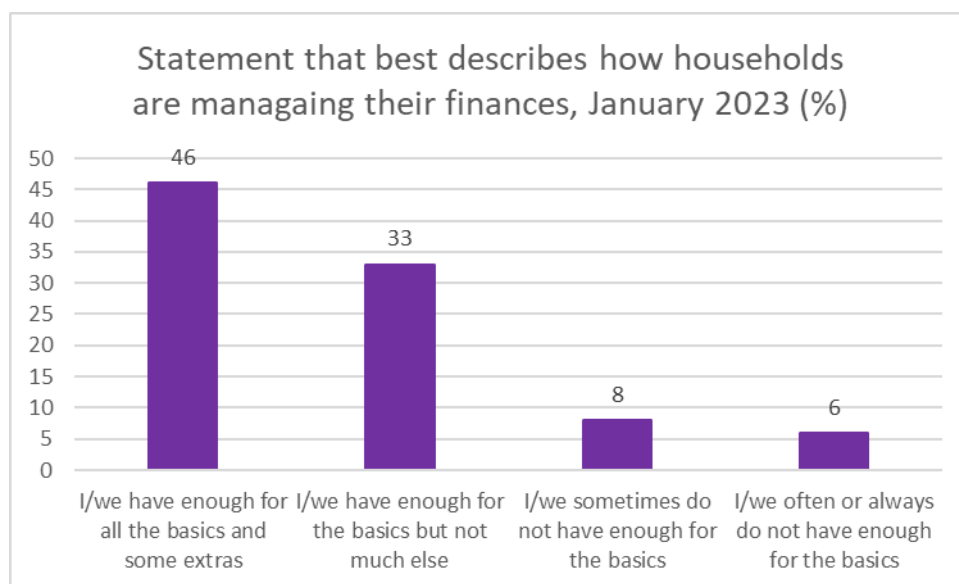
2. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis in January 2023 – a national overview

There has been no significant deterioration in the national level data as to how households in Wales are managing the pressures of the cost of living crisis since our last survey in July 2022. This finding is perhaps surprising given that the period between surveys coincides with the highest rate of inflation for 40 years and unprecedented energy costs. The reasons cannot be deduced from the data: it may be that the additional cash support provided to households by all tiers of government has played a role, as well as some managing households adjusting to higher prices.

What is clear is that, despite the national situation not deteriorating further, very large numbers of people in Wales are trapped in severe financial hardship this winter. This section sets out to explore the extent of this hardship in greater detail.

2.1 Living standards

More than one in eight Welsh households (14 per cent) either sometimes, often or always do not have enough for all the basics. A further third report that whilst they do have enough for all the basics, they don't have enough money to afford much else. When both figures are combined it shows that nearly half of all households in Wales (47 per cent) struggle to afford anything beyond day-to-day items.

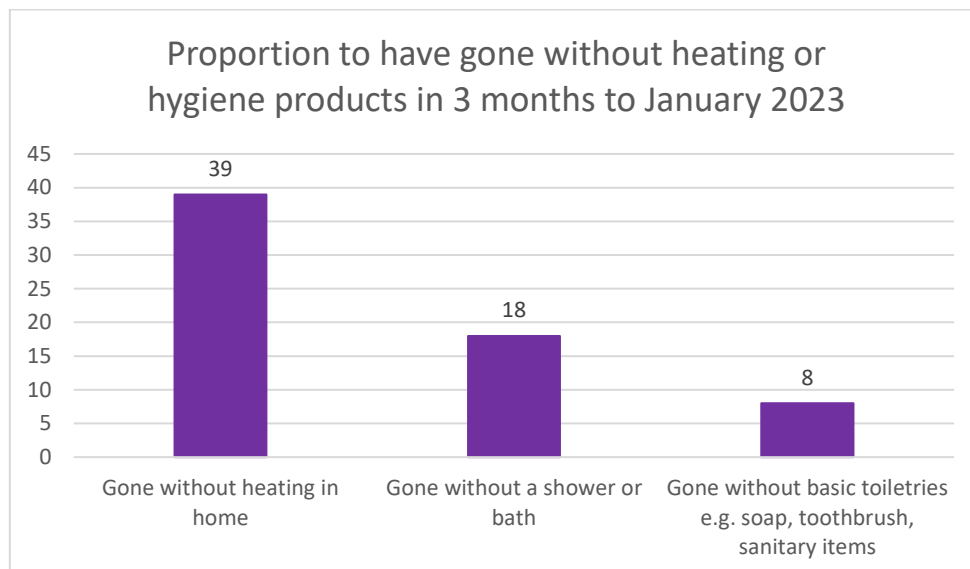


2.2 Access to essentials

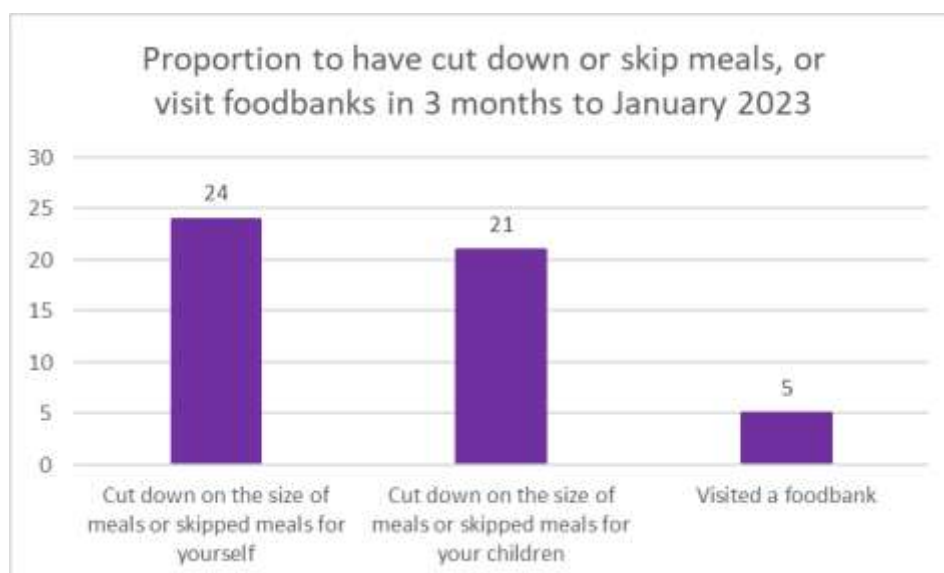
To get a sense of how difficult people are finding the challenge of affording the cost of everyday essentials the Bevan Foundation has added a new question to our latest survey. The question asked respondents whether they had been unable to afford access to certain goods or services.

Perhaps unsurprisingly heating is the household essential that the largest proportion of people in Wales have gone without in the three months to January 2023. A staggering four in ten people (39 per cent) reported that they had gone without heating in their home at some point over this period.

At the same time, nearly one in five (18 per cent) reported that they had gone without a shower or a bath whilst nearly one in ten (8 per cent) had gone without basic toiletries such as soap, toothbrush, or sanitary products.

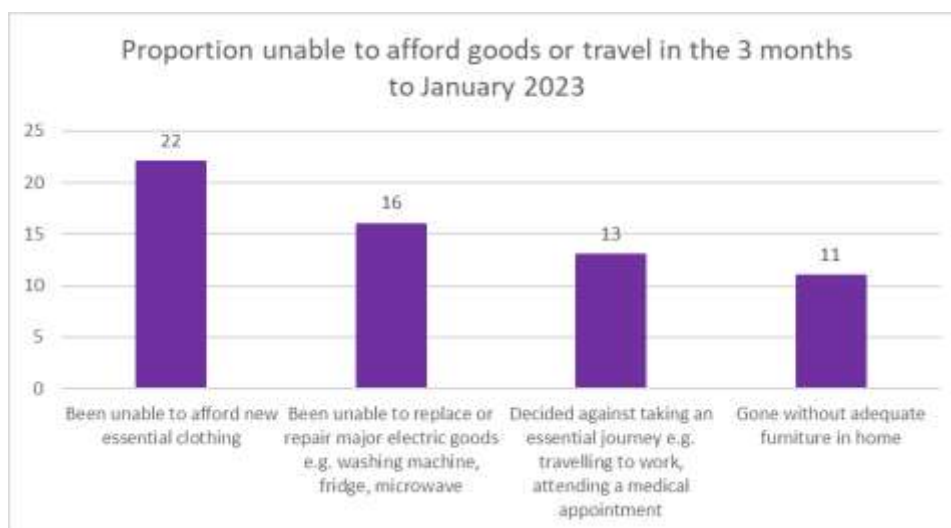


Food is another key essential that many have struggled to afford over the past three months. A quarter of respondents (24 per cent) reported that they had cut down on the size of their own meals or had skipped a meal entirely, with one in twenty (5 per cent) reporting that they had visited a foodbank. On top of this, a fifth (21 per cent) of respondents living in a household with a child reported that they had cut back on the size of their child's meal or that their child had been forced to skip a meal.



For many, the difficult choices they have faced this winter have extended beyond heating or eating. A fifth (22 per cent) of survey respondents report that they have been unable to afford new essential clothing with 16 per cent reporting that they had been unable to replace or repair major electrical goods such as washing machines, fridges or microwaves. Others have decided against taking essential journeys with 13 per cent

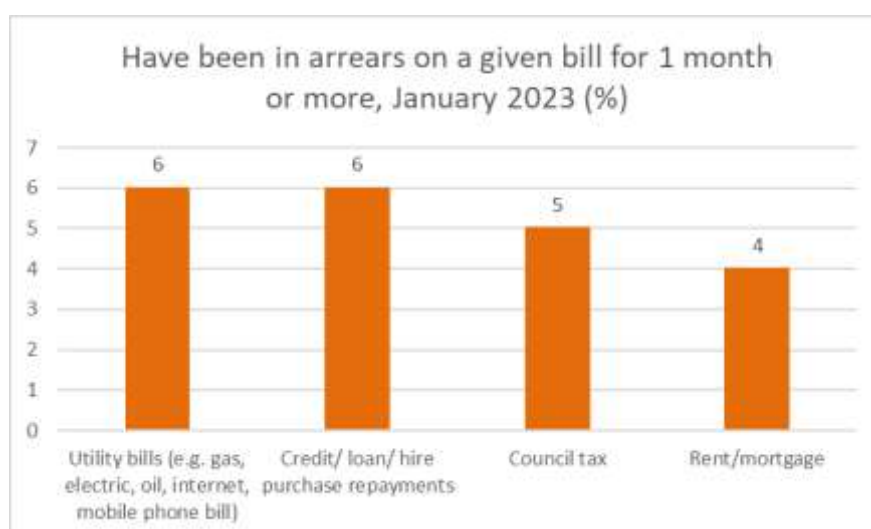
reporting that they had decided against making trips such as travelling to work or to a medical appointment, with 11 per cent having gone without adequate furniture in their home.



2.3 Debt

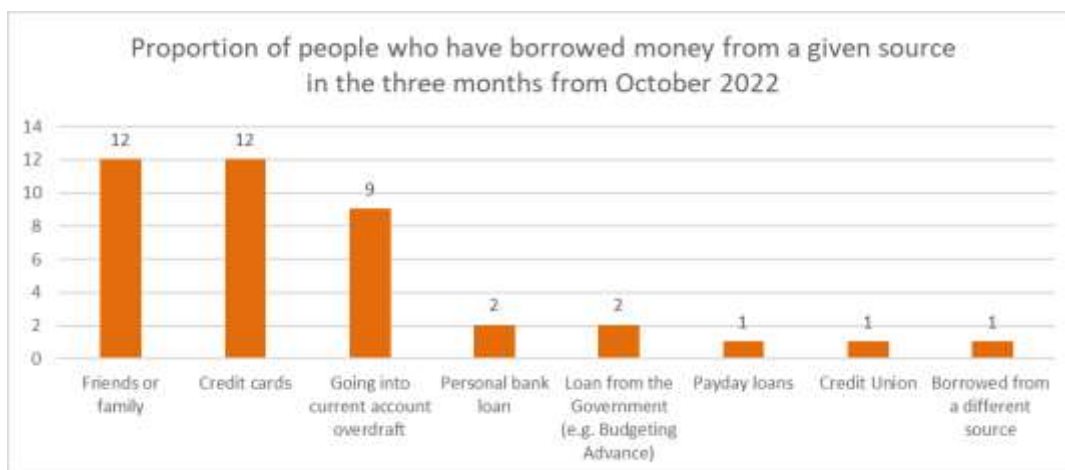
This the second successive *Snapshot* survey that has shown no significant increase in the number of people reporting that they are in debt. This is perhaps surprising given the broader economic context. It should be noted that our data does not allow us to analyse the depth of people's debt. It is therefore possible that whilst the headline figures as to the number of people in debt has remained broadly similar the amount owed by those in debt has increased.

The latest results show that 13 per cent of people in Wales had been in arrears on a bill for more than one month in January. There is no significant variation as to the source of people's arrears by bill type.



The proportion of people that have borrowed money to cover everyday costs over the past three months stands at 28 per cent. This is up slightly on the position in July 2022 (25 per cent), but the increase is within the margin of error.

There are three primary sources that people have drawn on to borrow money between October 2022 and January 2023; friends or family (12 per cent), credit cards (12 per cent) and their bank overdraft (9 per cent). There are significant differences as to where people borrow money from, depending on their characteristics. For instance, while only 2 per cent of the population as a whole have taken out a loan from the government, this jumps to 10 per cent for people in receipt of Universal Credit. More detail on this can be found in the section 3.

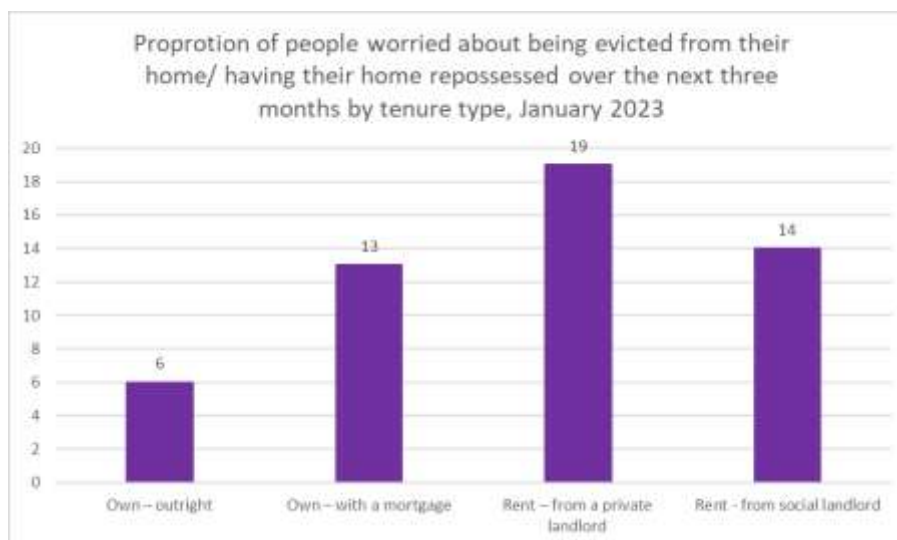


2.4 Housing

In total, 11 per cent of people in Wales are worried about the prospect of losing their home over the next three months. This is unchanged on the position in July 2022. Whilst the headline rate has not changed significantly there have been some modest but none the less important changes as to the levels of concern by tenure type.

People living in the private rental sector remain the most concerned about the prospect of losing their home in the next three months. Nearly one in five private renters (19 per cent) report that they are concerned about the prospect of being evicted. Whilst this figure is still concerningly high, it is down on the position in July where a quarter of private renters reported being concerned about the prospect of losing their home.

There has been a modest growth in the proportion of people who own their home with a mortgage reporting concern about the prospect of having their home repossessed over the next three months. As of January 2023, more than one in eight people (13 per cent) who own their home with a mortgage reported that they are concerned that they might lose their home over the next three months. This is an increase on July 2022 when the figure stood at 10 per cent. Whilst this change is within the margin of error, the July 2022 figure was itself modestly higher than the figure in November 2022 (9 per cent) suggesting that over time there is increasing concern among mortgage holders about their ability to keep a roof over their head.



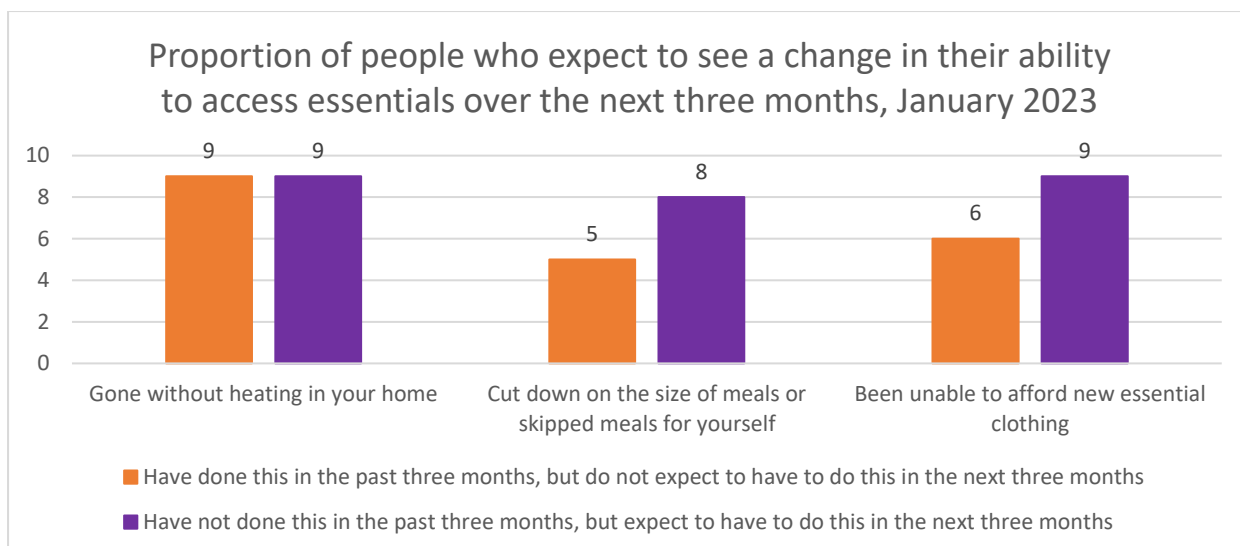
2.5 Confidence in the future

There is little indication that the Welsh population as a whole thinks that the challenges that they currently face will ease over the next three months. There are suggestions that there are individual households however, that expect their own personal circumstances to improve.

Respondents to our question on accessing essentials were presented with four options. They could select that they:

1. Had cut back/ gone without a selected good or service within the past three months and expected to have to do so again over the next three months.
2. Had cut back/ gone without a selected good or service in the past three months but did not expect to do so in the next three months.
3. Had not cut back/ gone without a selected good or service in the past three months but did expect to do so over the next three months.
4. Had not cut back/ gone without a selected good or service in the past three months and did not expect to do so over the next three months.

A number of respondents selected option 2 when providing their response. For instance, 9 per cent of respondents noted that they had gone without heating in the past three months but they did not expect this to be the case over the next three months. The number of people reporting some optimism about their personal financial position, however, is offset by the number of people who expect their position to deteriorate and expect to have to cut back or go without having avoided doing so over the past three months. Indeed, in some circumstances the number of households expecting their position to deteriorate was greater than the number who expected their position to improve.



Our survey also asked households about whether they expect to have to borrow money or fall behind on a bill over the next three months. In total 11 per cent of people expect to be in at least one month's arrears on a bill over the next three months, whilst 23 per cent expect to have to borrow money. A position that is broadly unchanged on July 2022 when 12 per cent expected to be in arrears over the next three months and 20 per cent expected to have to borrow money.

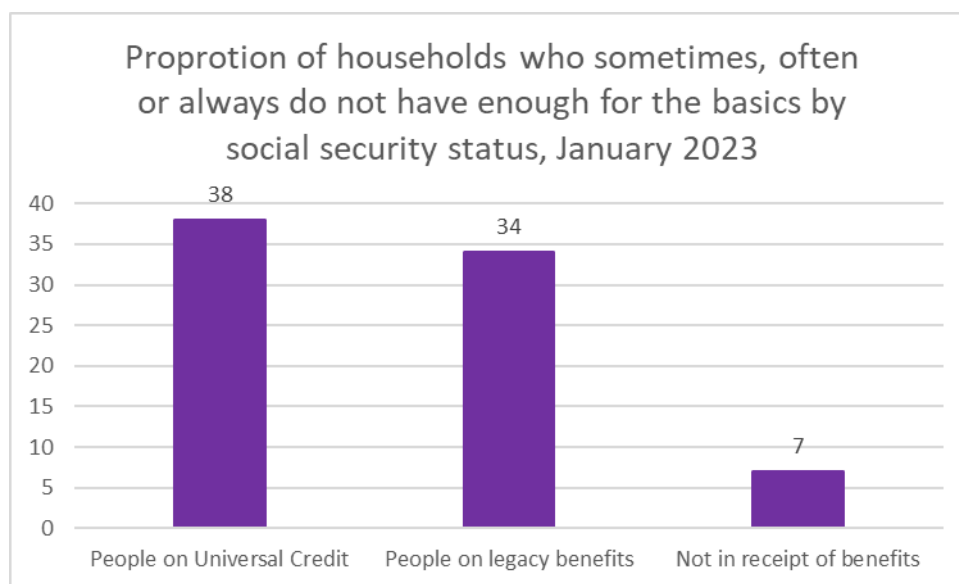
3. The unequal impact of the cost-of-living crisis in January 2023

There is no doubt that the vast majority of people across Welsh society have felt the impact of rising living costs. It is not right to say that it has affected everyone equally, however. Our primary concern when undertaking our analysis has been to understand who in Wales has been pushed into deep poverty and is facing significant hardship this winter. This next section draws attention to the groups that are being worst affected.

3.1 People in receipt of benefits

The social security system should provide a lifeline for everyone, ensuring that, no matter their circumstances, everyone has enough money to enjoy a decent standard of living. It has long been known that the social security system fails to do so. Our latest survey results lays bare the extent to which the current system is failing to protect Welsh families from incredible hardship this winter.

People on Universal Credit are five times as likely to report that they sometimes, often or always struggle to afford the basics as people who are not on benefits. A staggering 44 per cent of people on Universal Credit and 36 per cent of people on legacy benefits have cut down on the size of meals or skipped meals for themselves, whilst 17 per cent and 11 per cent respectively have visited a foodbank.



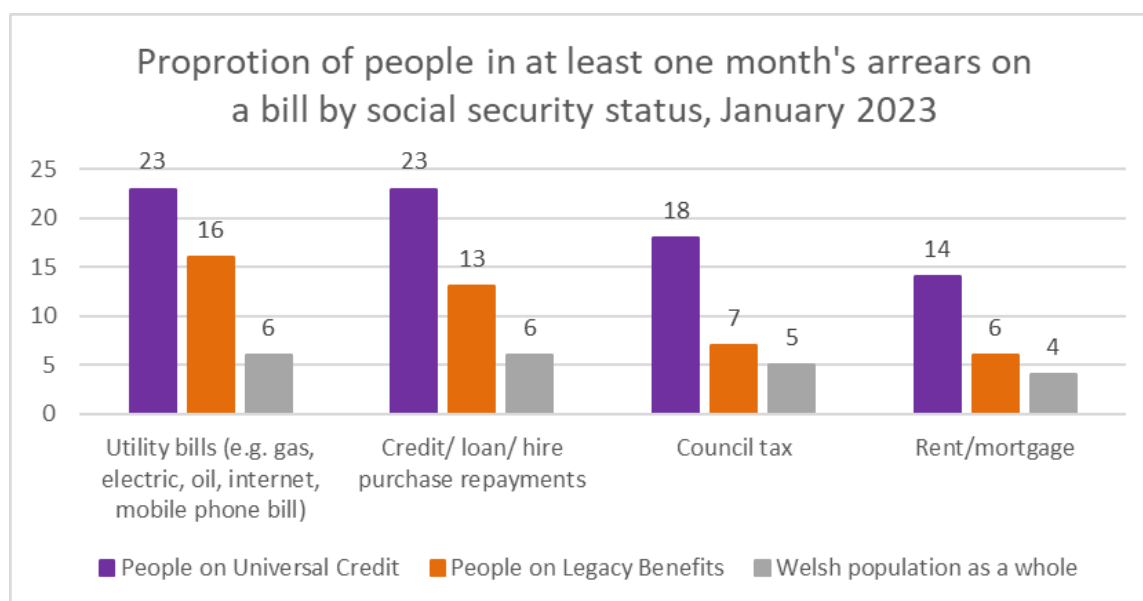
People who are in receipt of benefits are also significantly more likely to be in debt than the broader Welsh population, in particular those on Universal Credit. More than half of people on Universal Credit (51 per cent) have borrowed money due to increased financial pressure over the past 3 months whilst 44 per cent are in arrears on at least one bill. The same is true for 47 per cent and 29 per cent of people on legacy benefits.

Not only are people on benefits more likely to have fallen into debt than the general population, but there are also some important differences as to who they are in debt to.

When it comes to borrowing, friends and family, and credit cards are the primary source of borrowing for people on benefits in Wales as with the population as a whole. Loans

from the Government (e.g. a Budgeting Advance) account for a larger proportion of people's lending than across the population as a whole, however, standing at 10 per cent for people on Universal Credit, 7 per cent for people on legacy benefits compared with 0 per cent of people not on benefits.

There are also some important differences as to on which bills people who are in receipt of benefits are in arrears on. Whilst across the population the proportion of people in arrears on their utility bills, their Council Tax, their credit payments and their rent/ mortgage are broadly consistent, people who are in receipt of benefits are significantly more likely to be in arrears on their utility bills and on credit repayments. Understanding this difference is crucial if we are to develop solutions that prioritises support in the place that it is most greatly needed for those on the lowest incomes.

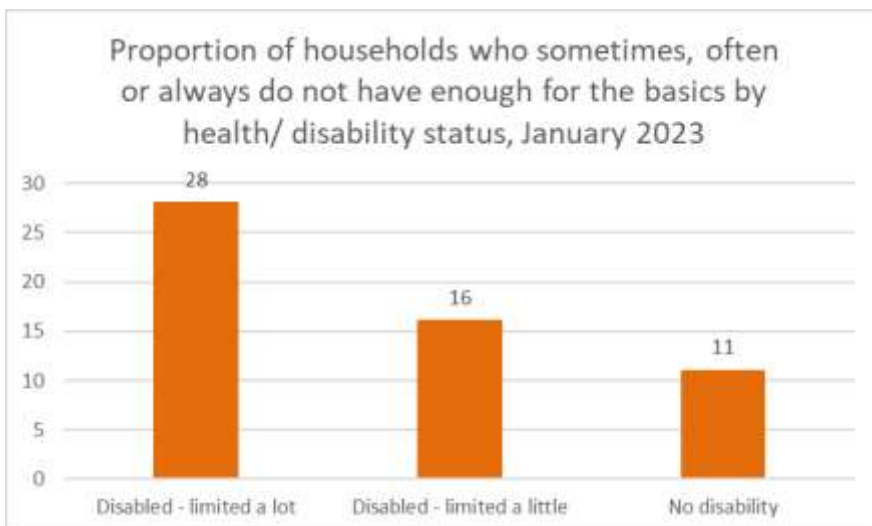


When looking at concerns about the prospect of losing their home a distinction can be drawn between the position of people on legacy benefits and the position of people on Universal Credit. In total 13 per cent of people who are in receipt of legacy benefits reported being worried about losing their home in the three months from January 2023, not significantly different to the national average (11 per cent). By contrast 20 per cent of people on Universal Credit reported being concerned about the prospect of losing their home. This difference may in part relate to differences as to the way that support with housing costs is calculated and administered under Universal Credit as compared to legacy benefits.

3.2 Disabled people

All our previous *Snapshot* surveys have established a clear link between disability and financial hardship. Despite this the extent of the differences in the experiences of disabled people, in particular those whose conditions limits them "a lot" and the broader Welsh population is stark.

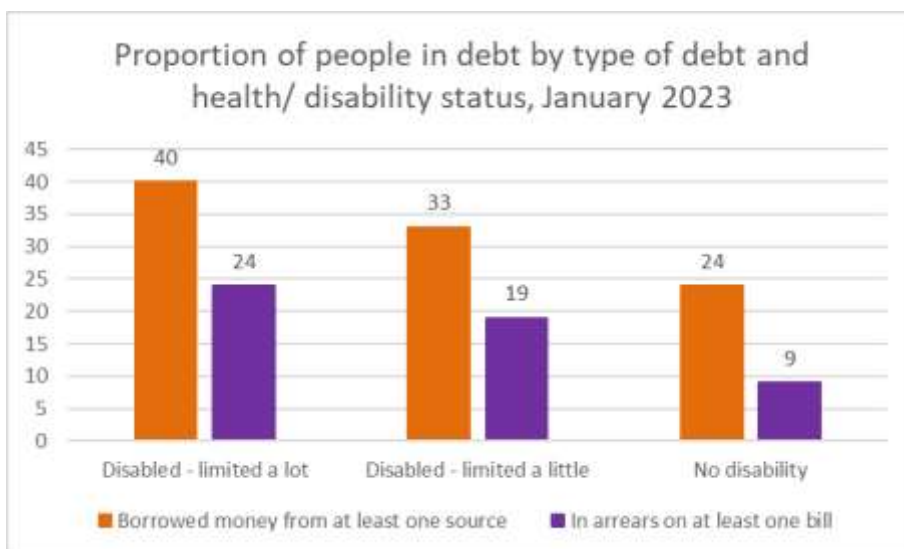
In total 28 per cent of people with a disability or a health condition that limits them "a lot" report that they either sometimes, often or always struggle to afford the basics. This compares to 16% of people whose condition limits them "a little" and 11 of people who do not have a disability or a long-term health condition.



The links between health and disability, and how people are managing during the cost-of-living crisis is illustrated even more starkly when looking into the data in greater detail.

Over half of disabled people whose condition limits them a lot (52 per cent) have gone without heating in their home over the past three months. The only other group to report similar levels of energy rationing are families with children. Nearly four in ten disabled people whose condition limits them a lot (39 per cent) reported cutting back or skipping meals both for themselves and for their children whilst 32 per cent report that they had to go without a bath or a shower at some point over the past three months.

Disabled people whose condition limits them a lot are also much more likely to be in arrears on a bill or to have borrowed money than people whose condition limits them “a little” or people who have no disability. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of disabled people whose condition limits them a lot reported being in arrears on at least one bill in January compared to 9 per cent of people with no disability. When looking at borrowing 40 per cent of disabled people whose condition limits them “a lot” borrowed money between October and January (an increase of 7 percentage points when compared to July 2023) compared to 24 per cent of people with no disability.

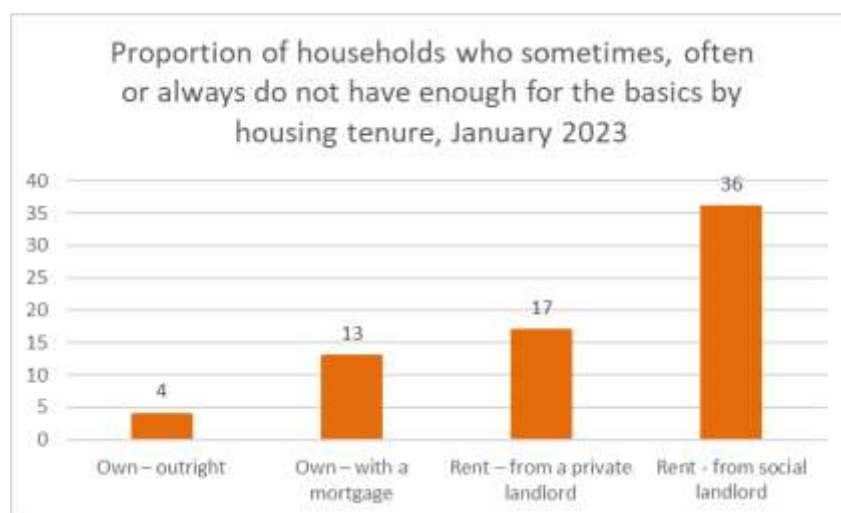


The position of disabled people whose condition limits them “a little” and “a lot” is more aligned however when looking at housing. Disabled people, regardless of how significantly their condition limits them, are twice as likely to be concerned about the prospect of losing their home over the next three months (16 per cent) than non-disabled people (8 per cent).

3.3 Housing tenure

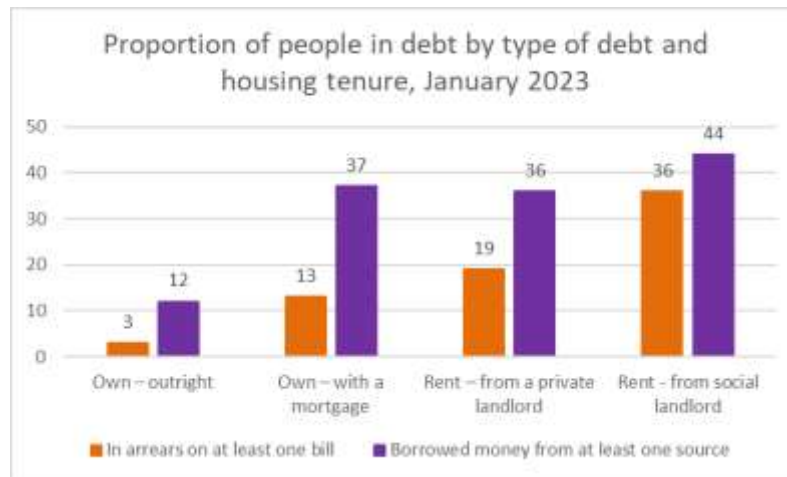
This report has already revealed significant differences between the position of renters and owner occupiers when it comes to how concerned people are about the prospect of losing their home over the next three months. This is not the only area where renters are being more significantly affected by rising living costs.

The group least affected by rising living costs are people who own their home outright. Only 4 per cent of people who own their property outright report that they either sometimes, often or always don't have enough for the essentials. By contrast the same is true for 36 per cent of social renters.



The headline data is supported by insights shared by respondents to questions on access to specific essentials. Perhaps the most concerning finding of all relates to food. Nearly half (46 per cent) of social housing tenants report that they have had to cut back on food for themselves or skip meals in the three months to January 2023. The same was true for 26 per cent of private renters and 24 per cent of people who own their property with a mortgage.

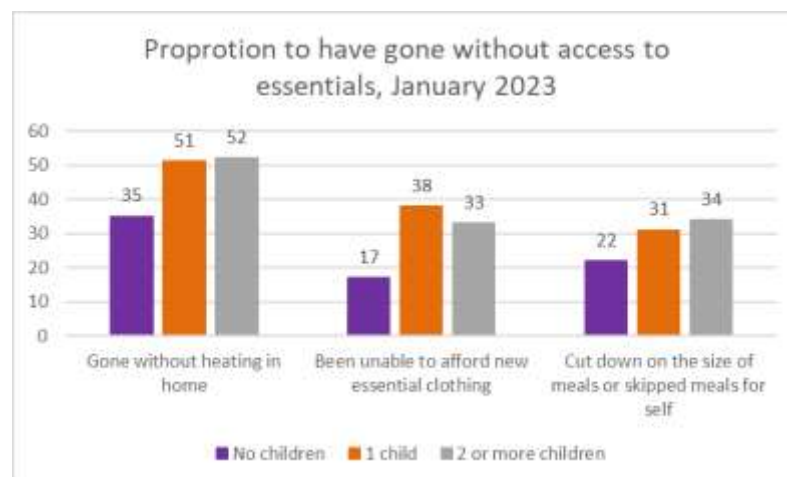
Levels of debt are also significantly higher among social housing tenants. More than one in three social housing tenants (36 per cent) are in arrears on a bill whilst more than four in ten (44 per cent) have borrowed money. By contrast 3 per cent of people who own their home outright are in arrears on a bill and 12 per cent have borrowed money.



3.4 Households with children

With nearly a third of children in Wales living in poverty⁴ it is not surprising that many families with children are finding it difficult to manage as costs rise. In total 19 per cent of families with one child and 23 per cent of families with two children report that they either sometimes, often or always struggle to afford all the essentials. Looking at the data in greater detail unveils some concerning insights as to the difficult choices being taken by families all over the nation.

Over half of people living in household with children reported that they had gone without heating at some point over the three months to January 2023 (51 per cent of households with one child, and 52 per cent of households with more than two children). Around a third reported that they had cut back on food for themselves (31 per cent in households with one child and 34 per cent in households with two or more children) with similar proportions reporting that they had been unable to buy new essential clothing (38 per cent in households with one child and 33 per cent in households with two or more children).

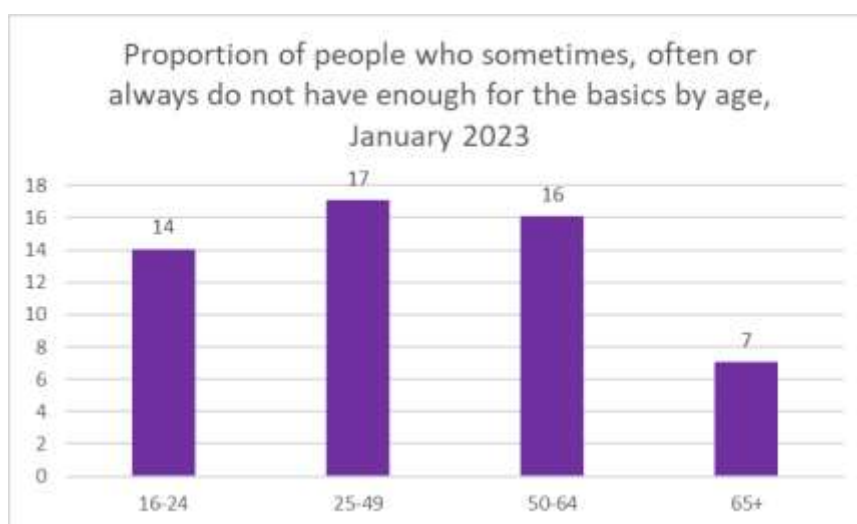


⁴ Stats Wales, *Percentage of all individuals, children, working-age adults and pensioners living in relative income poverty for the UK, UK countries and regions of England between 1994-95 to 1996-97 and 2017-18 to 2019-20 (3 year averages of financial years)* available at - <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Poverty/householdbelowaverageincome-by-year>

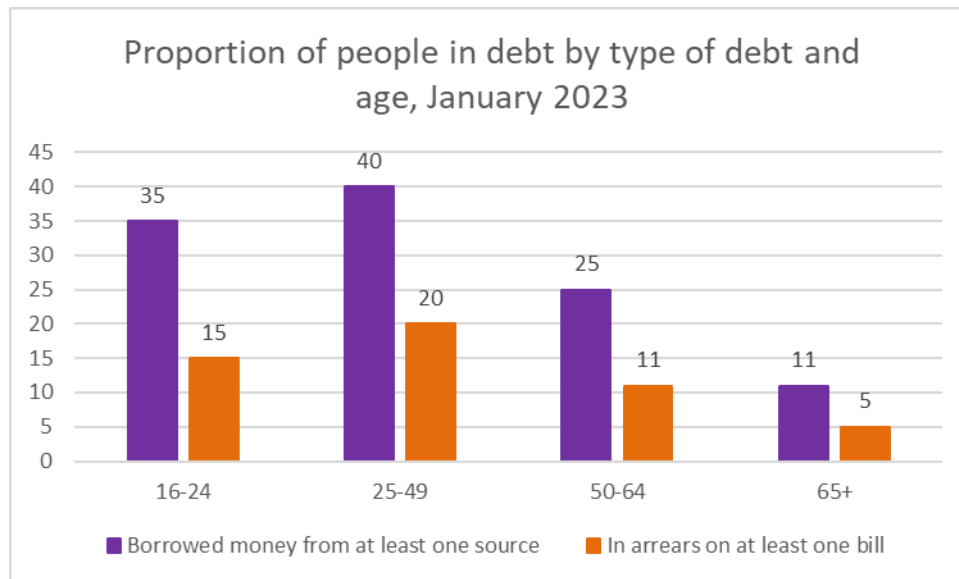
The other area where families with children are appearing to be faring especially badly is debt. People living in households with children are around twice as likely to be in debt as a result of the cost-of-living crisis as people living in households with no children. In total 23 per cent of people living in households with one child and 22 per cent of people living in households with two or more children are in arrears on a bill compared to 10 per cent of people in households with no children. Four in ten people in households with children borrowed money between October and January 2023 (40 per cent in households with one child and 41 per cent in households with two or more children) compared to 24 per cent of people in households with no children.

3.5 Age

There is a clear divide between how people aged under 65 and aged over 65 are being affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Respondents under 65 years old were twice as likely to report that their household sometimes, often or always struggled to afford the basics (14 per cent for people aged 16 to 24, 17 per cent for those aged 25 to 49 and 16 per cent for those aged 50 to 64) compared to 7 per cent of those aged 65 and over.



There are greater differences in the experiences of those aged under 65 when it comes to debt. Unsurprisingly adults under 65 are more likely to be in debt as a result of the cost-of-living crisis than adults aged 65 or older, it is the younger working age adults however, that are most likely to report that they have fallen into debt. Adults aged 25 to 49 are twice as likely to be in arrears on a bill than any other age group (20 per cent) whilst those aged 16 to 24 and 25 to 49 are at least ten percentage points more likely to have borrowed money over the past three months than those aged over 50.

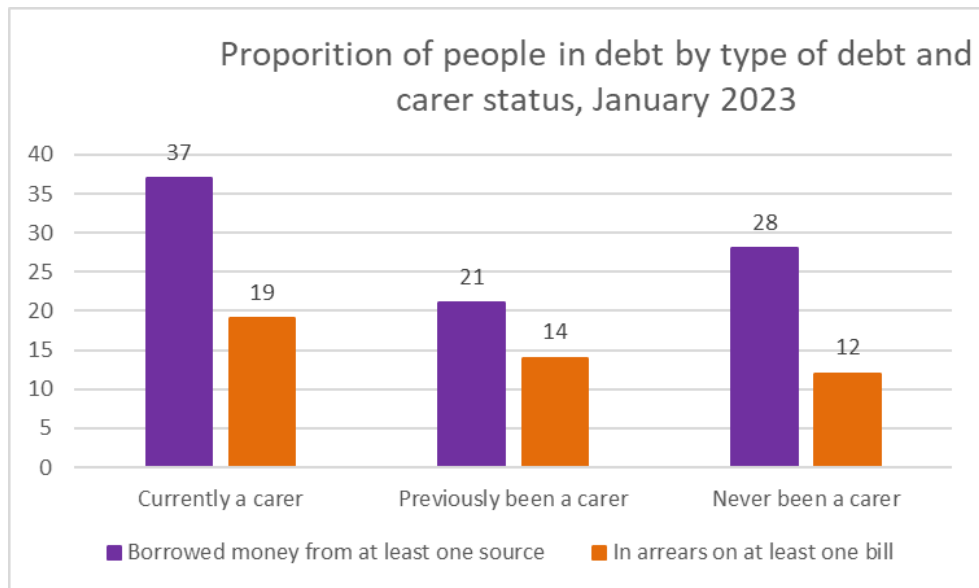


3.6 Unpaid carers

This *Snapshot* survey is the first time that the Bevan Foundation has commissioned YouGov to specifically look at the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on carers. The decision to do so followed feedback from partner organisations who reported concerns that the position of unpaid carers was being overlooked in broader discussions on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Their concerns appear well founded.

In total 17 per cent of carers report that they either sometimes, often or always don't have enough for all the basics, compared to 16 per cent for people who used to be carers but who no longer act in that capacity and 12 per cent for people who are not and have never been carers. The difference between the position of current carers and the broader population becomes starker when looking at more detailed questions, in particular on debt.

In total 37 per cent of carers have borrowed money between October and January, significantly higher than the proportion of people who have never been carers (28 per cent) and people who have previously been carers (21 per cent). When looking at arrears 19 per cent of carers were behind on at least one bill in January 2023 compared with 14 per cent of people who had previously been carers 12 per cent of people who have never been carers.



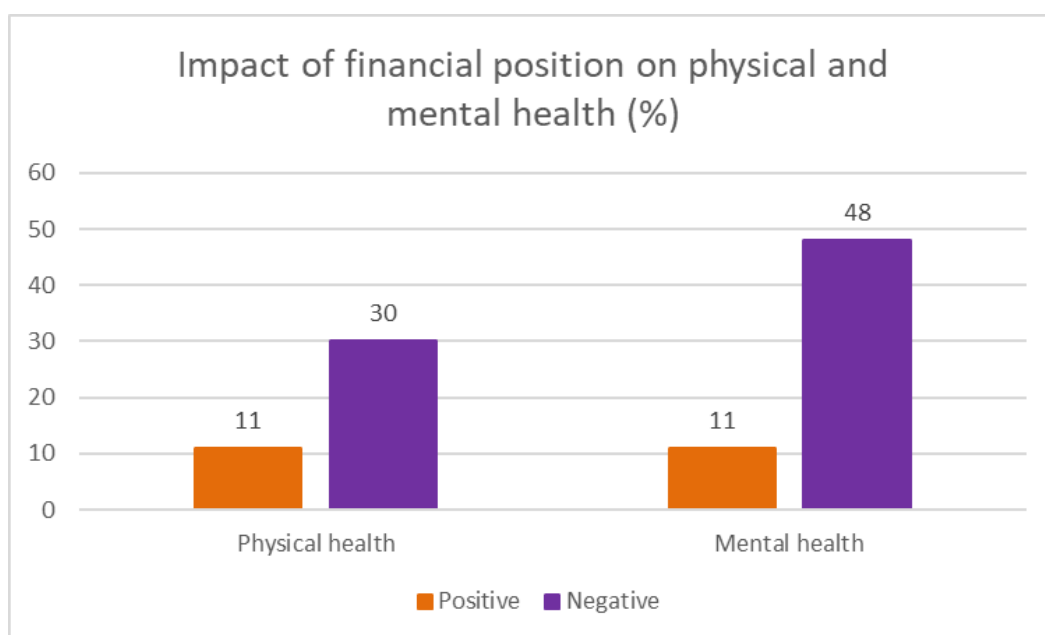
In other areas however, there is less difference between the position of carers and non-carers. For instance, whilst carers are slightly more likely to report that they are worried about the prospect of losing their home over the next three months (14 per cent) the difference between their responses and the responses of people who have never been carers (11 per cent) is within the margin of error.

4. Health

One of the most concerning findings of our *Snapshot of Poverty in summer 2022* report was the impact that people felt that increased financial pressures was having on their health. To further our understanding of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on people's health we have not only repeated our original questions but have inserted new questions to ask people why they thought their physical and mental health is being negatively affected by their financial position.

4.1 The impact of the crisis on people's health

Respondents to the survey were asked what impact, if any, their current financial position had on both their physical and mental health. Nearly half of Welsh adults (48 per cent) reported that their current financial position had had a negative impact on their mental health, with 30 per cent reporting that their current financial position had had a negative impact on their physical health. Whilst the number of people reporting that their current financial position had had a negative impact on their physical health was unchanged when compared to July 2022, the number of people reporting that their financial position has had a negative impact on their mental health has deteriorated (from 43 per cent in July 2022).



A particularly concerning finding for the latest survey is the deterioration in people's mental health appears to be concentrated within particular groups. The proportion of people who own their home with a mortgage reporting that their mental has been negatively affected by their current financial position has increased by 14 percentage points, and now stands at 60 per cent. There has also been a significant increase in the number of people living in households with children reporting that their mental health has been negatively affected with 62 per cent of people living in households with one child and 63 per cent of people living in households with two or more children reporting that their mental health has been negatively affected.

The group within Welsh society that is most likely to report that their mental health is being negatively affected by their financial position is a group that has not seen a major

deterioration since our last survey. A staggering 68 per cent of people on Universal Credit in Wales report that their mental health has been negatively affected by their financial position. Other groups where over six in ten respondents report that their mental health has been negatively affected by their financial position include carers (62 per cent), disabled people whose condition limits them a lot (61 per cent) and private renters (60 per cent).

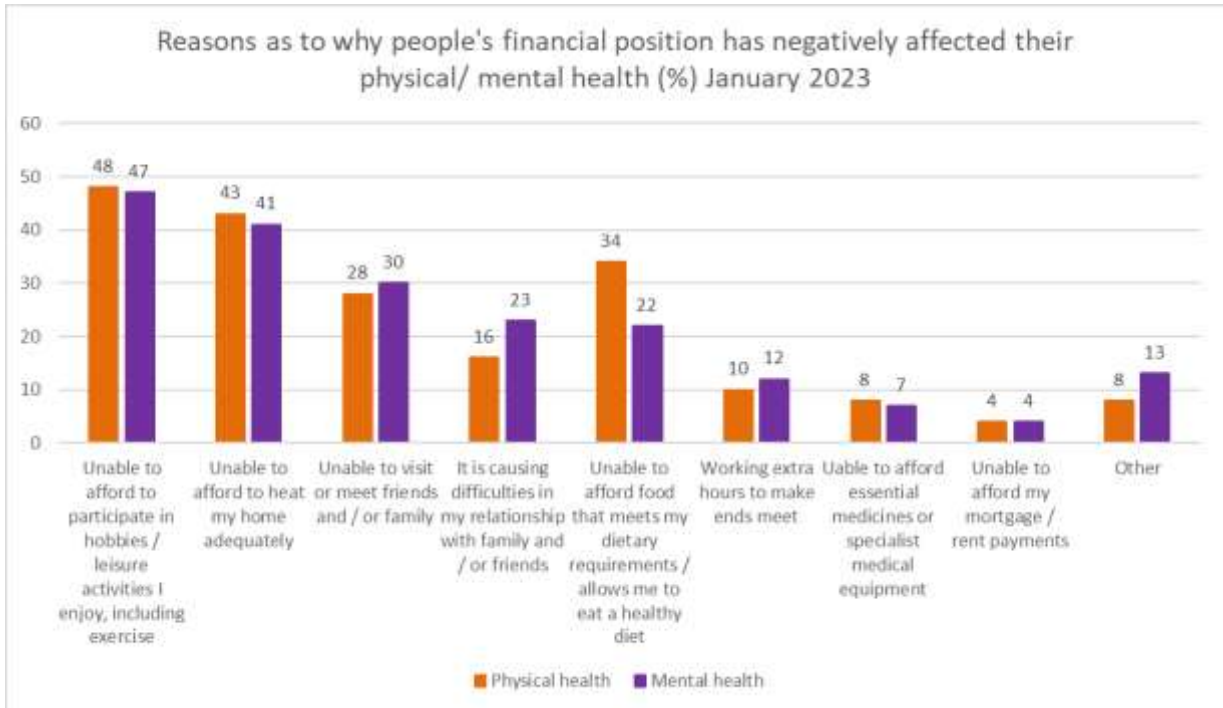
Concerningly whilst the number of people who report their physical health has been negatively affected by their financial position has remained flat, one of the groups that has seen a deterioration is the group that was already most likely to report that their physical health had been negatively affected, disabled adults whose condition limits them a lot. In total 55 per cent of disabled people whose condition limits them a lot report that their physical health has been negatively affected in our most recent survey, compared to 51 per cent in our July 2022 survey. The only other group with a sufficient sample size to see more than half of respondents report that their physical health has been negatively affected by their financial position is people who are on legacy benefits, 52 per cent.

4.2 Reasons as to why people's financial position has negatively affected their physical/ mental health

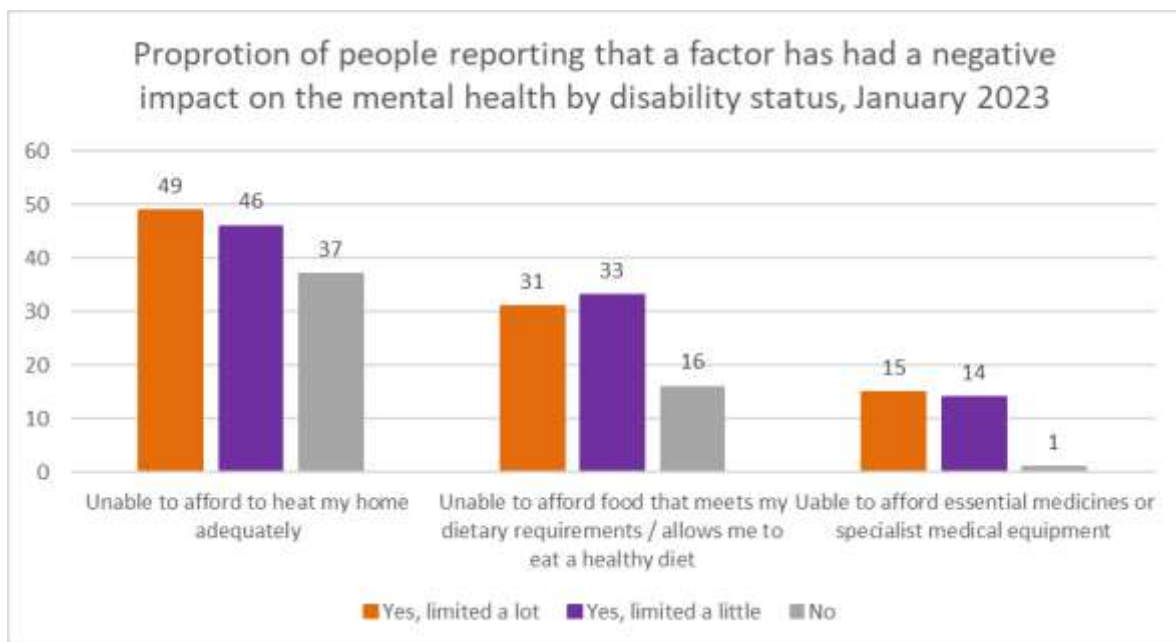
The Bevan Foundation held a number of conversations with stakeholders following the publication of our July *Snapshot* to explore what might be the reasons that so many households were reporting that their physical and mental health have been negatively affected by their financial position. To try and deepen our understanding on this we have added two new questions to our latest survey. These questions asked people to select from list of factors that might explain why their current financial position has had a negative impact on their health. Respondents were allowed to select as many factors as they felt had, had an impact.

A clear message from the data is that it is not just going without essentials such as heating and food that people think is having an impact on their health, but also broader factors. Nearly half of people who report that their health has been negatively affected reported that a lack of ability to participate in hobbies and exercise was a reason why their health had deteriorated (48 per cent physical health and 47 per cent mental health). Three in ten report that their inability to meet family and friends had, had a negative impact on their health (28 per cent physical health and 30 per cent mental health) whilst 23 per cent report that a relationship difficulty had, had a negative impact on their mental health.

This should not distract from the fact that people do believe that difficulties in accessing essential goods and services has had a negative impact on their health. More than four in ten people whose health has been negatively affected attribute a lack of heating in their home as a contributory factor (43 per cent physical health, 41 per cent mental health), whilst over a third (34 per cent) report that a lack of access to good quality food is having an impact on their physical health.



A lack of access to essential goods and services appears to have had a more significant impact on the health of disabled people and people with long term health conditions. This is especially true with regards to mental health. Disabled people were twice as likely to report that an inability to afford food that meets their dietary requirements/ allows them to eat a healthy diet had had a negative impact on their mental health than people who are not disabled. The difference is even more stark with regards to medicines and specialist medical equipment. Whilst 15 per cent of disabled people whose condition limits them a lot and 14 per cent of disabled people whose condition limits them a little report that their mental health has been negatively affected by a lack of access to medicines and medical equipment, the same is only true for 1 per cent of people with no such conditions.



5. Conclusion

This report has laid bare the scale of the hardship endured by Welsh families this winter. Whilst the headline figures may not have deteriorated from our last *Snapshot* survey, now is not the time for complacency. There are worrying indications at a political level, however, that this may happen.

The decisions of the UK, Welsh and local governments to increase the provision of financial support to households throughout 2022 appears to have helped prevent an already grim situation deteriorating further. Much of this additional support is due to come to an end over the coming months. Despite forecasts that inflation will reduce significantly over the next year, there is no indication that costs themselves will return to pre pandemic levels. With more than one in eight households in Wales already sometimes, often or always struggling to afford the essentials, there are real concerns that reducing the level of support at this time will cause greater hardship.

This report has highlighted how the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is not affecting everyone across Welsh society equally. For any extra support to effectively reduce deep poverty in Wales then this support should prioritise those in greatest need. A clear action that could be taken to reduce deep poverty in Wales is improving the generosity of the social security system. The fact that 44 per cent of people on Universal Credit have cut down on the size of meals or skipped meals for themselves provides a clear indication of just how inadequate the current system is.

The decision of the UK Government to increase some social security benefits in line with inflation from April 2023 is to be welcomed. This decision will only see social security benefits retain their real terms value rather than address the fact that social security benefits do not provide adequate support. Furthermore, many benefits will not be updated this April, most significantly the Local Housing Allowance, whilst the Welsh Government has so far failed to increase the value of its own grants and allowances in line with inflation.

The findings of the report with regards to people's health also provides us with a reminder about how important it is to think about poverty more broadly rather than just think about the need for families to be able to afford to put food on the table and heat their homes. It is clear that people who feel that their health is being negatively affected by their financial position put just as great an emphasis on the health benefits of interacting with other people or enjoy their hobbies as they do on ensuring that they have access to all essentials. It is crucial that the depth of the current crisis does not see us lose sight of the need to address both factors when we think about how we support people over the next few months and years.



23 January 2022

R.E. Draft Welsh Government Budget – Housing Support Grant

Dear Members of the Senedd Local Government and Housing Committee,

We are writing to you regarding the need for additional investment in homelessness and housing support services in Wales in the upcoming budget. We strongly believe that the Housing Support Grant (HSG) should be one of the Welsh Government's priorities and given an inflationary increase.

We are The Wallich. We believe that everyone deserves the right to a home, but more than that, that everyone deserves the right to feel safe, to feel valued and to feel positive about their future.

We operate 112 services across 18 Welsh local authorities. The vast majority of these services are commissioned by the local authorities, with funds from the Housing Support Grant (HSG), in order to meet statutory duties to prevent or alleviate homelessness.

The context

In the Welsh Government's draft budget for 2023/24, the total HSG budget for all Welsh authorities is £166m, which due to inflation represents a real-terms cut on the current level of funding.

What this means in practice is that all housing support workers in HSG-funded projects are likely to see a pay-freeze – and a real-terms pay cut – for the next year, despite the spiralling costs of living. Staff working in these projects have not had a meaningful pay rise in the last decade.

Like many other frontline health and care workers, housing support staff worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to keep people safe, undoubtedly saving many lives. However, after nearly three years of ever-increasing pressures on services, many are exhausted and demoralised, and are considering leaving the sector. This is causing a recruitment and retention crisis, something which has already been identified as a priority by the Ending Homelessness National Advisory Board.

The evidence

Recent research from Cymorth Cymru, referenced in the [draft budget narrative](#), found that 79% of frontline housing support workers were cutting back on heating to save money, and 44% were struggling to pay rent and bills. 7% reported using food banks, and many more are skipping meals or taking on additional jobs to make ends meet.

In our own organisation, we have heard anecdotal evidence that suggests staff are using annual leave to take on second jobs.

There are currently record numbers presenting to local authorities in need of housing support – at the end of September there were 8,652 individuals in temporary accommodation and 160 people sleeping rough – and there is a real risk that services will be unable to recruit and retain enough staff to maintain service delivery.

The consequences

We have previously expressed concern in our evidence to the Local Government and Housing Committee, about the race-to-the-bottom on price caused by competitive commissioning of HSG services. If local authorities are not able to provide sufficient funding to meet the actual cost of delivering services, providers will face the choice between delivering understaffed (and potentially unsafe) services, or choosing not to bid for contracts.

Finally, research from Cardiff Metropolitan University demonstrated the significant value for money of investments into the HSG. Services such as those run by The Wallich typically support people who have experienced significant trauma or adverse life experiences, and without appropriate support are likely to have more chaotic lives with regular contact with health, criminal justice and other public services. Conversely, the university research found a net-saving of £1.40 across all public services for every £1 invested in the HSG.

We understand that the Welsh Government face extremely difficult decisions in setting the budget for the coming year, but we believe that the risks posed by failing to increase HSG funding in line with inflation must not be discounted.

We hope the issues raised in this letter will prompt a consideration of the vital nature of the work that we do, and the need to reward support staff fairly for our contributions to communities across Wales.

Signed:

A G Evans	Senior Support Worker	Anglesey
Abi Street	Digital Communications Coordinator	Cardiff
Adam Neville	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Swansea
Alan Charlton	Support Worker	Bridgend
Aleksandrs Rubins	Support Worker	Swansea
Alexander Oyego	Night Support Worker	Swansea
Alyson Carlsen	PRS Assistant Manger	Swansea
Amy Gee	Talent & Resourcing Assistant	Cardiff
Amy Lee Pierce	Head of Communications & Public Affairs	Vale of Glamorgan
Andrea Faulkner	Senior Support Worker	Flintshire
Andrea Reffell	Assistant Service Manager	Cardiff
Andrew Ireland	Area Manager	Bridgend

Angharad Griffiths	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Anna Hooper	Service Manager	Swansea
Annette Burch	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Anthony Vaughan	Head of PIE Operations & Therapeutic Services	Cardiff
Anuoluwapo Oladipupo	Night Support Worker	Swansea
Ashleigh Hunt	Housing First Worker	Anglesey
Ashley Bowditch	Support Mentor	Cardiff
Ashton Dacombe	Senior Support Worker	Ceredigion
Ben Ramsay	Area Manager	Cardiff
Ben Roberts	Engagement and Wellbeing Mentor	Anglesey
Ben Stoker	ISFL Group Facilitator	Swansea
C Maunders	Housing First Worker	Swansea
Calum De Claire	Assistant Service Manager	Bridgend
Carla	Night Support Worker	Ceredigion
Carline Anne Maguire	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Cath Wilson	Service Manager	Carmarthenshire
Ceri Duffy	Assistant Service Manager	Bridgend
Ceri Thomas	Area Manager	Denbighshire
Chelsea Harrington	Regional Fundraiser	Cardiff
Cheryl Mably	Asset Coach	Swansea
Chris Charles-Wyatt	Safeguarding Manager	Vale of Glamorgan
Christine Griffiths	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Christopher John	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Claire Mcphee	Senior Support Worker	Flintshire
Colette James	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Craig Herbert	Head of Business Systems	Cardiff
Cristal Coles	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Daniel Warner	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
David Jones	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Newport
David Unwin	Senior Support Worker	Flintshire
David Wylie	Service Manager	Wrexham
Dawn Dunstan	Assistant Service Manager	Torfaen
Dawn Kenny	Social Enterprise Development Coordinator	Gwent
Dean Harris	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Debbie Harris	Support Worker	Swansea
Deborah Allison	Volunteer Befriender Coordinator	Neath Port Talbot
Deborah Twigg	Service Manager	Vale of Glamorgan
Debra Ambury	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Debra Jones	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Denise Rogers	Service Manager	Cardiff
Deon Everton	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Dione Thomas	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Dr Lindsay Cordery-Bruce	Chief Executive Officer	Cardiff

Elizabeth Collins	Personal Assistant/Hub Coordinator	Cardiff
Elizabeth Crowther	Service Manager	Neath Port Talbot
Elizabeth Evans	Service Manager	Carmarthenshire
Elle O'Connor	Support Worker	Bridgend
Ellie Pearson	Strategic Operational Lead	Cardiff
Emma	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Emma Hime	Support Worker	Bridgend
Emma Matthews	Landlord Liaison Officer	Swansea
Endaf Wyn Jones	Service Manager	Anglesey
Eric Wills	Service Manager	Swansea
Eric Wills	Service Manager	Swansea
Erin Cleaver	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Fiona Leong	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Gareth Corbin	Director of Risk and Compliance	Caerphilly
Gareth John	Service Manager	Cardiff
Gareth Jones	Strategic Operational Lead	Cardiff
Gemma Gauci	Peer Mentor	Cardiff
Gemma Lancaster	Senior Support Worker	Anglesey
Gemma Thomas	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Geraldine Bragger	Support Worker	Bridgend
Gia Stokes	Assistant Service Manager	Neath Port Talbot
Gideon Way	Support Worker	Torfaen
Gordon Lewis	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Grant Hyatt	Area Manager	Wrexham
H Walker	Assistant Service Manager	Swansea
Hayley Rose	Assistant Service Manager	Torfaen
Helen Arnold	Service Manager	Swansea
Helen Harvey	Support Worker	Swansea
Hollie Wilson	Housing First Worker	Carmarthenshire
Holly Llewellyn	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Hugh Bevan	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Ian Coughlin	Recruitment and Workforce Manager	Cardiff
Ian Harris	Fundraising Administrator	Cardiff
Iestyn Leccrass	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Ishrat Subhan Eva	Support Worker	Swansea
Jade Childs	Senior Support Worker	Cardiff
Jake Stocker	Senior Support Worker	Denbighshire
James Edwards	PRS Development Worker	Torfaen
Jamie-Lee Cole	Brand and Communications Manager	Cardiff
Jan Jordan	Trust, Foundation and Statutory Manager	Cardiff
Jane Newman	Health & Safety Manager	Cardiff
Jane Reynolds	Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot

Janet Ashman	Support Worker	Bridgend
Janet Davies	Senior Support Worker	Vale of Glamorgan
Janine Bennett	Senior Support Worker	Cardiff
Jasdeep Singh Waraich	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Jason Nancurvis	Head of Mobile Operations	All Wales
Jayne Coombs	Payroll Co-Ordinator	Cardiff
Jeffrey Konten	Senior Support Worker	Cardiff
Jennifer Harris	Support Worker	Swansea
Jess Ellson	Conflict Resolution Worker	Wrexham
Jessica Hughes	Support Worker	Denbighshire
Joanne Parry	Service Manager	Anglesey
Joanne Roberts	Housing First Worker	Carmarthenshire
Joel Baldock	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
John Davies	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Jonathan Williams	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Jonny Matson	Housing First Worker	Anglesey
Jordan O'Hara	Learning and Employment Mentor	Bridgend
Julia Thomas	Invisible Cardiff Service Manager	Cardiff
Karen	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Karina Winter	Service Manager	Swansea
Kate Thomas	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Kath Monington	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Kathryn Measday	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Katrina Couture	Housing First Worker	Anglesey
Kayleigh Bartlett	Support Worker	Torfaen
Keiron	PRS Access Worker	Swansea
Kelly Akhurst	Senior Support Worker	Cardiff
Kelly Prosser	Assistant Service Manager	Bridgend
Kelsey Pritchard	Support Worker	Swansea
Kenny McCausland	Service Manager	Ceredigion
Kerry Edwards	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Kerry Smith	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Kerstyn Phillips	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Kev Carpenter	Rough Sleeper Intervention Officer	Newport
Kevin Tucker	Assistant Service Manager	Swansea
Kim McGuinness	Senior Support Worker	Denbighshire
Kirsty Miller	People Partner	Cardiff
Kirsty Thomas	Housing Compliance Manager	Cardiff
Kumar Chetri	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Kyleigh Chard-Maple	Activities Co-ordinator	Carmarthenshire
L L'Estrange	Night Support Worker	Swansea
L Rees-Jones	Service Manager	Carmarthenshire
Laura Jones	Senior Support Worker	Denbighshire

Lawrence Davies	Business Systems Development Technician	Caerphilly
Leah Hardwick	Bond Board Administrator	Merthyr Tydfil
Leanne Davies	Assistant Service Manager	Carmarthenshire
Leonne Edwards	Support Worker	Bridgend
Leigh	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Leo Doran	TCI Project Coordinator	Ceredigion
Leonne Edwards	Support Worker	Bridgend
Lesley Thomas	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Lewis Hayes	Support Worker	Bridgend
Liam Doverman	Senior Support Worker	Cardiff
Liam Healy	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Lisa Jane Jenkins	Support Worker	Torfaen
Lisa Mort	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Lissa Vardy	Support Worker	Denbighshire
Louisa Foster	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Louise Davies	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Luke S	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Lynne Nicklin	Senior Support Worker	Wrexham
Marie Dyer	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Marie-Louise Flanagan	Mediation Worker	Denbighshire
Mark Jordan	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Mark Peck	Senior Support Worker	Wrexham
Mark Price	Senior Support Worker	Ceredigion
Martin Woodgates	Head of Development	Bridgend
Martine Taylor	Support Worker	Torfaen
MB	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Megan Neilly	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Melanie Newcombe	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Swansea
Melissa Gauci	Service Manager	Cardiff
Michael Cowley	Head of Income Generation	All Wales
Michael George	Service Manager	Swansea
Michael Goldwyn	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Michael Lloyd	Support Worker	Swansea
Michael Mitchell	Night Support Worker	Swansea
Michelle Graystock	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Mike Franks	Support Worker	Cardiff
Mike Walmsley	Fundraising and Community Engagement Manager	Vale of Glamorgan
Natasha Hughes	Assistant Service Manager	Carmarthenshire
Neil Beveridge	Senior Support Worker	Wrexham
Neville Wheeler	Service Manager	Cardiff
Nici Lamerick	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Ceredigion
Nicola Davies	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Nicola O'Keefe	Senior Support Worker	Vale of Glamorgan
Nina Roberts	Senior Support Worker	Anglesey
Oli Noble	Senior Support Worker	Cardiff

Oliver Jones	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Olivia Tucker	Housing First Worker	Swansea
Opeyemi	Support Worker	Swansea
Owen Scourfield	Housing First Worker	Swansea
Pamela Longville	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Paul Miller	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Swansea
Paul Osborn	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Paul Sheridan	Area Manager	Carmarthenshire
Paul Thorpe	Service Manager	Wrexham
Phill Stapley	Strategic Operational Lead	Swansea
Raad Radef	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Rachel Dickinson	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Raheem Ali	Assistant Service Manager	Swansea
Rasool Ebbin	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Neath Port Talbot
Rebeca Lucy	Fundraising Coordinator	Cardiff
Rebecca Edwards	Assistant Service Manager	Bridgend
Rebecca Fackrell	Senior Support Worker	Ceredigion
Rebecca Hyde	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Rebecca Sherlock	People Partner	Cardiff
Renee Clutton	Senior Support Worker	Wrexham
Rhian Francis	Bond Board Administrator	Blaenau Gwent
Rhian Mason	Assistant Service Manager	Carmarthenshire
Rhian Richards-Manning	Senior Support Worker	Neath Port Talbot
Rhiannon Williams	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Rhys John Howells	Support Worker	Bridgend
Rob Brook	Service Manager	Denbighshire
Robert Gillett	Night Support Worker	Bridgend
Robert Lee Fender	Senior Support Worker	Swansea
Rosie Seager	Creative Arts Coordinator	Cardiff
S Dyke	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Sam Flook	Support Worker	Newport
Sam Taylor	Service Manager	Gwent
Sarah Ayres	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Sarah Mawer	Homelessness Worker	Bridgend
Sarah Taylor	Assistant Service Manager	Swansea
Sarah Watkins	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Swansea
Sharon Job	PRS Development Manager	Swansea
Sharon Murray	Support Worker	Bridgend
Shelley Griffith	Housing First Worker	Anglesey
Shelley Johns	Assistant Service Manager	Swansea
Shian Thomas	Service Manager	Flintshire
Shogun-Li Thomas	Service Manager	Bridgend
Sian Aldridge	Director of Services and Support	All Wales
Sian Landon	Service Manager	Swansea
Sianni	Senior Support Worker	Anglesey
Sigita Valaikaite	Housing First Worker	Swansea

Sophie Walters	PRS Access Worker	Swansea
Stephen Falvey	Senior Support Worker	Denbighshire
Steve Masterman	Reflections Network Manager	Cardiff
Stuart	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Stuart Southwell	Assistant Service Manager	Neath Port Talbot
Suzanne Rees	Support Worker	Bridgend
T J Williams	Support Worker	Swansea
Theresa Reece	Support Worker	Bridgend
Thomas Hollick	Policy & Public Affairs Coordinator	Cardiff
Tim Atkinson	Trusts, Foundation Statutory fundraiser	Cardiff
Tina Rigby	Service Manager	Swansea
Tom Hall	Director of People and Talent	All Wales
Tracey Adams	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Tracey Hardy	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Tracey Law	Senior Support Worker	Bridgend
Travis McLeod	Graphic Designer	Cardiff
Trina Mayo	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Vicky Hughes	Night Support Worker	Bridgend
Victor Adekunle	Night Support Worker	Swansea
Vikki Rees	Rapid Rehousing Officer	Carmarthenshire
Wendy Dagnall	Senior Support Worker	Carmarthenshire
Zaria Heywood	Senior Support Worker	Anglesey
Zian Dewitt	Senior Support Worker	Torfaen
Zoe Gardner	Senior Support Worker	Conwy

Agenda Item 5

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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