

Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 5

Meeting date: 27 March 2023

Meeting time: 11.00

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

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Pre-meeting registration: (11:00–11:30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(11:30)

2 Data Justice: the use of personal data in the Welsh NHS: evidence session 1

(11.30–12.45)

(Pages 1 – 33)

Chris Carrigan, Expert data advisor, Use MY data

Dr Robert French, Associate Member, Use MY data

Ann John, Health Data Research UK

Break (12.45–13.30)

3 Data Justice: the use of personal data in the Welsh NHS: evidence session 2

(13.30 – 14.45)

(Pages 34 – 39)

Rhidian Hurle, Executive Medical Director/Chief Clinical Information Officer
Wales, Digital Health and Care Wales

Ifan Evans, Executive Director of Strategy, Digital Health and Care Wales

Darren Lloyd, Associate Director for Information Governance and Patient
Safety, Digital Health and Care Wales



Break (14:45 – 15:00)

4 Data Justice: the use of personal data in the Welsh NHS: evidence session 3

(15.00 – 15.45)

Professor Ronan Lyons, Co-Director of SAIL Databank, Swansea University

5 Papers to note

(15:45)

5.1 Correspondence from Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales to the Equality and Social Justice Committee regarding Agenda for Digital Inclusion

(Pages 40 – 62)

5.2 Correspondence from the Local Government and Housing Committee to the Equality and Social Justice Committee regarding housing Ukrainian refugees

(Page 63)

5.3 Correspondence from the NSPCC to the Equality and Social Justice Committee regarding an inquiry into the relationship between poverty and children's social care involvement in Wales

(Page 64)

6 Motion under SO17.42 (vi) and (ix) to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting

(15:45)

7 Data justice: consideration of evidence

(15:45–16:05)

8 Forward work programme

(16:05–16:20)

(Pages 65 – 109)

9 Experiences of the criminal justice system: young people with speech, language and communication needs – consideration of draft report

(16:20– 16:55)

(Pages 110 – 135)

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Agenda Item 3



The Equality and Social Justice Committee is undertaking a one-day inquiry into data justice and the use of personal data in the Welsh NHS. The focus is intended to be on the how data is currently used and future plans alongside how secure and safe this data is.

How data is currently being used

DHCW's statutory functions include responsibility for ensuring that data is made available to approved users to improve health and care, where there is an appropriate legal basis, and where they demonstrate they can use the data safely.

Examples include: access to data through secure clinical systems in a direct care setting; approved uses for the understanding of health conditions and diseases; supporting population health; understanding health outcomes; and supporting health and social care planning and service commissioning.

DHCW also has responsibility for publishing and continuously reviewing open datasets and official statistical products, in line with its publication obligations and the Code of Practice for Statistics. This data drives transparency and improved understanding of Health & Social Care services and operations.

Keeping personal data safe

DHCW works with other NHS Wales organisations to maintain and assure the highest standards of data management, in terms of how we store, secure, analyse, manage, and allow internal and external access to data.

We understand that patient data is special and sensitive, and we have robust principles, processes and safeguards which provide assurance that data is protected and secured, and that access to confidential data is managed and audited. Transparency is key to maintaining public confidence in how NHS Wales obtains, holds, uses, disseminates, and protects data.

We also understand that data and information are central to the delivery of health and care. We cannot deliver or improve health and care services or outcomes without using and sharing personal data, including extremely sensitive data. The Digital Health and Care Record has to include all the relevant data which is needed to support clinical decisions and good patient care.

There must be a way in providing mechanisms so that those organisations responsible for the collection, processing and dissemination of Health & Social Care data can prove tangible evidence of safe ways of working.

In Wales we have a number of products that allow us to assure both the public and organisation to organisation, that robust information governance rules are in place.

Some of these products include:

The Wales Accord for Sharing Personal Information (WASPI)

Organisations directly concerned with the health, education, safety, crime prevention and social wellbeing of citizens of Wales have embraced the WASPI as a tool to help them share information effectively and lawfully. The WASPI framework is managed by Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) and supported and funded by Welsh Government.

The current WASPI was established to address challenges faced by stakeholders who needed to share the personal data of citizens to offer care, treatment, support, education and protection.

The various iterations of the Accord have drawn on the legislation and available guidance, such as the Information Commissioner's Data Sharing Code of Practice, to introduce a set of principles that signatories agree to apply when sharing personal data.

WASPI provides a framework which builds confidence that personal data can, and may, be shared to deliver services that benefit people in Wales.

A consultation exercise on WASPI becoming an Official Code of Conduct with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) is currently underway.

Information Governance (IG) Toolkit for Wales

The Welsh Information Governance Toolkit is a self-assessment tool enabling organisations to measure their level of compliance against national Information Governance standards and legislation.

This provides assurance to staff and patients that their information is processed securely and appropriately, and assure other organisations where sharing is made that appropriate IG arrangements are in place.

The National Intelligent Integrated Audit Solution (NIIAS)

National Intelligent Integrated Audit Solution (NIIAS) is the pro-active audit monitoring system which is utilised within NHS Wales.

NIIAS detects potential instances of unauthorised access to patient information held within certain national electronic information systems, including the Welsh Clinical Portal, Welsh Patient Administration System & Choose Pharmacy System.

NIIAS is applied to protect patient confidentiality across specific Health & Care Services. NHS Wales Organisations use the system to monitor access and produce automated reports highlighting suspicious activity where further investigation may be required.

The implementation of NIIAS helps organisations act to investigate inappropriate behaviour. In doing so, it assists NHS Wales organisations to build trust, enabling the sharing of patient data where legitimate use cases exist.

NIIAS is an important system in protecting individual's privacy whilst enabling patients records to be accessed throughout NHS Wales through the integrated national applications, wherever geographically the patient is being cared for.

Data Protection Officer advice service for General Medical Practitioners

Under the UK GDPR, there is a duty for organisations who process special categories of data to appoint a Data Protection Officer.

The DHCW Information Governance Team offers a subscription-based Information Governance (IG) Data Protection Officer (DPO) Support Service for General Medical Practitioners (GMPs) throughout Wales.

The aim of the service is to support GMPs across Wales in discharging their Information Governance and Data Protection responsibilities, in compliance with legislation and national standards, whilst establishing an All Wales approach.

The DPO Support Service includes a number of activities, including but not limited to:

Knowledge Base Resources - A range of template documentation for adoption by practices that covers different topics such as Individual Rights, Data Protection Impact Assessments, Breach Reporting and more.

Informing and Advise - Providing practices with bespoke advice on their data protection queries through our call management system.

Training and Learning - Available through various formats including, face to face training, e-learning, workbooks, presentations and webinars.

Information Sharing - Supporting and promoting compliance when sharing as a singular entity or as a cluster collaborative.

Covid-19 pandemic response: data sharing and digital services

Digital platforms and services, and sharing of data, was an essential part of the response to the pandemic in Wales.

Key features of data sharing in Wales during the pandemic were:

- Welsh Government request that relevant organisations should use provisions in existing legislation (the Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations, or "the COPI Regulations") to enable the sharing of data for purposes of planning and delivering the response to the pandemic.
- An all-Wales 'joint data controller' arrangement for contact tracing, including all local authorities and most NHS Wales organisations, which provided a common data platform for this important digital service.

- All-Wales digital services which were developed and delivered as a single platform using one data store, such as the Welsh Immunisation System, supporting vaccine delivery, enabling Wales to achieve a world leading pace of initial vaccine rollout, and UK-leading utilisation of vaccine.

These data sharing arrangements were essential to the delivery of data products and information services, including:

- The Shielded Patient List of people identified as clinically vulnerable, which was used for a variety of purposes including prioritisation of public and private services (eg online grocery delivery) and vaccine delivery.
- Real time covid dashboards combining data from multiple sources, which were used to better understand the spread of the virus, rates of infection, variant types. These dashboards were used for operational planning and delivery and to inform policy choices by Welsh Ministers.

Key digital elements of the pandemic response in Wales were:

- An all-Wales contact tracing system, delivered by DHCW, used by every local authority and health board across Wales. This was developed and delivered in six weeks from May to June 2020 and then further developed on a roughly four-week release cycles. Because the call scripts, screens, data and reporting were consistent across Wales and managed nationally, it was possible to ‘load share’ across the system, including a national ‘surge team’ which could provide additional support into any area in response to an outbreak of infection.
- An all-Wales vaccine management system, delivered by DHCW, used by every health board across Wales and in all settings including Mass Vaccination Centres. This was developed and delivered in late 2020 and then further developed through subsequent vaccine booster campaigns.
- The Welsh Pandemic Record, delivered by DHCW. This was a key part of our data sharing arrangements with England, covering particularly testing data and vaccine delivery. Covid testing was delivered through UK arrangements (mass testing centres and ‘lighthouse labs’) alongside Wales arrangements (through NHS Wales testing and Public Health Wales laboratories). In the early stages of the pandemic the data received from UK arrangements and some other sources was of varying quality. The Welsh Pandemic Record enabled this ‘dirty’ data to be handled appropriately, for example to be used on an urgent basis for contact tracing, or ‘cleaned and filtered’ before being written permanently to the Welsh Digital Health and Care Record.

It would not have been possible to respond to the pandemic in the way that we did without sharing data. It is important to note that there was no change to data protection law or to data protection standards – principles and processes were all maintained and observed throughout the pandemic. DHCW and other organisations worked closely with the

Information Commissioners Office and others to provide assurance, and streamlined regular processes where possible, so that Data Protection Impact Assessments and Privacy Notices could be undertaken and published promptly for all digital services, setting out clearly how data was being used and for what purposes.

The request to share confidential patient information for purposes of responding to the pandemic under the Control of Patient Information (COPI) Regulations was a very important enabler. These arrangements (which in England were issued similarly but as a requirement rather than a request) were maintained in Wales from 2020 to 2022.

Data sharing and all-Wales digital services enabled Wales to deliver a joined up and agile response to the pandemic. There is a lack of comparative research on the costs and benefits / outcomes of these aspects of pandemic response across the UK and internationally. However the Welsh vaccine delivery is recognised as an exemplar for speed of delivery and maximising doses delivery from vaccine allocation, and the contact tracing service delivered consistently better performance (percentage of reported cases and contacts called promptly) at significantly lower cost than in some other parts of the UK. The use of dashboards showing the 'on the ground' situation in close to real time to inform policy decisions at Ministerial was unprecedented.

Our ultimate aim from data relating to patients is better patient outcomes (both clinical and patient-reported) and a sustainable system so we need to define mortality and morbidity plus associated costs. This data generally resides in clinical audits, registries and primary care. Work is being taken forward to ensure an information governance framework to obtain a regular feed of these datasets to Digital Health and Care Wales. Triangulation of this information will be informed by subject matter experts in the clinical networks to drive improvement and service redesign. Poor outcomes could be driven by poor performance and we need the data to inform quality improvement. NHS organisations can be benchmarked based on whether they have gaps in meeting patient need based on outcome data. We saw an excellent example of this working in practice during the Covid vaccine campaign when the data was used to inform new approaches to service delivery in certain demographic groups.

Citizens have to be asked about their quality of life and symptom burden (PROMs) and experience of care (PREMs) e.g. through the NHS Wales App. This data must be linked to the clinical outcome and other data to inform the necessary changes to improving care and resource allocation. This service level use of data is quite different to research but absolutely vital if we are to improve outcomes, value for patients and Wales as a whole.

“Your Privacy Your Rights”

Your Privacy Your Rights is a national set of materials used to help NHS Wales organisations meet their legal obligations on aspects of GDPR when Data Subjects have a “right to be informed”

These documents help NHS Wales organisations meet Articles 13-14 of UK General Data Protection Regulation and are provided as high-level information intended to be used, as a layered approach, by organisations to supplement their existing local privacy policies and notices.

<https://dhw.nhs.wales/ig/information-governance/your-privacy-your-rights/>

The above are the products that when utilised by organisations allow for confidence to be grown in the use of Welsh data.

Agenda Item 5.1

To: Equality and Social Justice Committee, Senedd

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

Dear all,

I am writing to you regarding Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales' launch of its new Agenda for Digital Inclusion: From Inclusion to Resilience 2nd Edition. It is more important than ever that everyone in Wales is able to access the internet and use digital devices confidently and securely. The Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales is a cross-sector and pan-Wales network working to ensure that Wales is a truly digitally-inclusive nation, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with you to ensure that this mission is achieved.

You may have received a copy of the Agenda already via your office but we wanted to share our work particularly with this committee given its remit and scope.

We first published our Agenda at the start of 2021, highlighting five key priority areas that our experience and expertise told us were necessary to ensure that everyone in Wales is digitally-included. Over the past two years we have made significant progress, with more people than ever now using the internet. We have seen new members join the Alliance, cross-sector working to deliver for communities, and examples of good practice across public services.

However, it is vital that we review our progress against the Agenda and consider the new circumstances we are working in. While Covid-19 was the primary backdrop to the Agenda's publication in 2021, the cost-of-living crisis is now presenting the greatest threat to our communities. We hope that our refreshed agenda will set clear goals, create new digital inclusion champions across Welsh public services, and lead to even more organisations from the public and private sectors joining the Alliance.

We also need to ensure that digital inclusion continues to be embedded in policy and practice. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you to ensure that policy is being developed and implemented as successfully as possible. Digital inclusion is everyone's responsibility, and it is vital that this principle is embedded in communities across the country. We hope that the attached copy of the Agenda will support you in your work. If you would like further information or wish to meet to discuss this further, please contact us at

Yours sincerely,

Prof Hamish Laing, Chair, Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales



Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales
Cynghrair Cynhwysiant Digidol Cymru

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About us

The Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales (DIAW) was created as part of the Welsh Government funded Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being programme, delivered by Cwmpas. DIAW brings together organisations from across Wales that are working together to make Wales a digitally-inclusive nation. With over 90 members, the Alliance comprises public and third sector organisations, private sector companies and academia, all focused on ensuring that everyone who wants to in Wales is able to access and use digital tools and technologies in their everyday lives and has the confidence to do so.

If you think this describes the work of your organisation, but you are not yet a member of the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales, please contact us for further information.

diaw@cwmpas.coop / [@DIAWales](https://twitter.com/DIAWales)



Introduction to the second edition

By Hamish Laing, Chair, Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales

'From Inclusion to Resilience' was first published in early 2021. It set out a cross-sector agenda for digital inclusion in Wales. In it we identified five priority areas where a real difference could be made:

- Priority 1 - Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors
- Priority 2 - Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care
- Priority 3 - Addressing data poverty as a key issue
- Priority 4 - Prioritising digital skills in the post-Covid economy
- Priority 5 - Setting a new minimum digital living standard and adopting co-production approaches

Even in the short time since the launch of 'From Inclusion to Resilience', the context has changed considerably and so we are releasing this second edition. Encouragingly the National Survey for Wales found that 93% of adults (aged 16 and over) said they personally use the internet in 2021/22, up from 90% in 2019/20¹. However, as more and more of our lives and public services are online, it is vitally important that we ensure that everyone in our communities has the skills and resources to use the internet confidently and safely. As our communities recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, new economic and social challenges lie ahead. The Cost of Living Crisis continues to deepen across the country, and people are having to make difficult choices about how they spend their money. This makes our work in the five priority areas even more crucial. It is vital that the work to create inclusive and resilient communities is maintained and accelerated.

In the two years since we first published this Agenda, the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has been working hard to make Wales a truly digitally-inclusive nation. In this second edition, we outline the work that has been achieved by the Alliance or its individual members across the five priority areas, discuss what has changed, and propose amendments or re-assessments that need to be made. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of every action taken, but an overview of the new context for digital inclusion in Wales. The five priority areas are:

Priority 1	Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors
Priority 2	Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care
Priority 3	Addressing data poverty as a key issue
Priority 4	Prioritising essential digital skills for work and life in the economy
Priority 5	Implementing a new minimum digital living standard



¹ Nation Survey for Wales

Cross-cutting themes

In the first edition of From Inclusion to Resilience, the Alliance called for the adoption of co-production approaches in Priority 5. However, it is now felt that this should be the approach used across all our priorities, and across all digital interventions in Wales that are addressing these priorities. Co-production principles and user-centred design start with the lived experience of people who face digital exclusion and should be at the heart of the design of all digital interventions. DIAW Network members work in and with communities across Wales to tackle digital exclusion and so they have those lived experiences to help services design better interventions.

Research into digital inclusion has shown that the groups most likely to be digitally excluded are older adults, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, those with lower educational attainment, lower income individuals and families, people in rural areas, Welsh speaking people and others who do not use English as their first language, socially isolated and lonely people, and homeless people². A cross-cutting theme across all five priority areas listed below is the need to focus on these groups when designing any digital services or digital inclusion interventions.



²National Survey for Wales 2022 and Lloyds Bank Consumer Index 2021.

Priority 1

Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors

In 2021 we set out an objective for everyone who wants or needs to be online to be able to access the internet and technology confidently and safely. This necessitated a concerted effort across all sectors and government departments, and the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales wanted to promote and facilitate this. We must recognise that no one organisation or sector can do this on their own, it will only be achieved through partnerships and collaborations across sectors.

There has been continued digital transformation in the public sector in Wales. The Centre for Digital Public Services has published Digital Service Standards for Wales³ following consultation with stakeholders, which have been promoted by the Alliance, aiming to ensure that the needs of the user are always at the centre of the way services are designed and delivered. Audit Wales have published "Digital inclusion in Wales" which sets out questions for public bodies to ask themselves as they consider their approach to digital inclusion⁴.

The Alliance has been successful in bringing different sectors together and supporting the development of better strategic relationships with a consensus that ending digital exclusion is everyone's responsibility, not just the Government's. Organisations such as NHS Health Boards and Trusts, local authorities, charities, and the housing sector, among others, now have a space in which to share what they are doing and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

User-centred design or co-production principles are vital to embedding digital inclusion. They are also vital to the creation of successful digital services and products. Poorly designed digital services and products discourage people from using them and further exclude those who are not digitally confident. Upskilling your workforce and citizens is only useful if the digital services created are usable and designed alongside users. All digital public services and products must also meet WCAG AA accessibility standards⁵ and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018⁶.

A geo-spatial mapping exercise⁷ developed by Welsh Government and CDPS using Data Map Wales has been promoted by the Alliance to identify the many digital inclusion initiatives across the country, leading to a more joined-up and complementary approach. Across different sectors, more organisations are signing up to Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being (DCW)'s Digital Inclusion Charter⁸ and are achieving accreditation in recognition of the work they are doing.

³ Centre for Digital Public Services

⁴ Audit Wales

⁵ Web Accessibility Initiative

⁶ UK Government(a)

⁷ Welsh Government(a)

⁸ Digital Communities Wales

Since the publication of the Agenda, the digital inclusion ecosystem in Wales has become more joined up, with networks and partnerships being developed across sectors, organisations and institutions. The consistently high attendance at Alliance Network meetings is evidence of how much it is valued by its members. In the context of the cost of living crisis and the potential impact of reduced spending within public services, it is essential that this is maintained and developed further. We must ensure our communities are resilient to future challenges and able to protect and support the people and families most severely impacted by challenges including digital exclusion. For the next step to be successful, we believe we need greater engagement with the private sector – especially SMEs and micro-businesses – and this will be a key focus of our work. We will continue to work to embed digital inclusion and facilitate the exchange of best practice that is being developed in the co-production of digital services and user-centred design.

Key Outcomes

- **Welsh Government to incorporate our priority outcomes in future iterations of the delivery plan for the Digital Strategy for Wales⁹.**
- **Build on work already done to raise awareness of how digital inclusion contributes to each of the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales.**
- **Digital inclusion of service users and staff as a core element of all public sector digital transformation projects.**
- **Further action by the private sector, including communications providers, SME's and micro-businesses, to address digital exclusion across Wales.**



⁹ Welsh Government(b)

Priority 2 Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care

We noted in our Agenda that digital - access, skills and confidence - is being recognised as a social determinant of health and identified the health and social care sectors as a vital part of a digitally-inclusive country. The sectors have undergone, and are still going through, a digital transformation. While this can create a stronger health and social care service and fairer communities, it is vital that this does not create a digital "inverse care law"¹⁰ in Wales that exacerbates health inequalities.

A lot of progress has been made on this priority in the two years since the Agenda's publication. We have had successful engagement with the newly formed Digital Special Health Authority, Digital Health and Care Wales, who have recently signed DCW's Digital Inclusion Charter and are working towards accreditation. At a Digital Summit event held to bring together health, care and the voluntary sectors to collaborate on how digital tools can support and enable inclusion Simon Jones, Chair of DHCW, said:

"People are going to see more opportunities for digital engagement with their services and managing their own care much more. As we develop digital systems and application, we want to make certain that those people who need access to services and consume more health and care services than others, aren't in some way worse off than they might otherwise have been. What we want to do in Wales is make inclusion an intended consequence not exclusion an unintended consequence of digital innovation in health care."

Health Boards and Trusts across Wales are now engaging with digital inclusion and progress has been made to embed digital inclusion in their plans. For example, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board have worked with DCW to put digital inclusivity at the heart of their health care¹¹ in implementing its new 'Our Digital Future' strategy, and likewise following consultation and support from DCW, Digital Inclusion is now one of the six themes of Velindre University NHS Trust's new Digital Strategy. Hywel Dda University Health Board has recently appointed a Digital Inclusion Manager and team which is a first for Health Boards in Wales. Alliance members are members of the assurance boards and Programme Board for the NHS Wales app and the Digital Medicines Transformation Portfolio to ensure that the principles of digital inclusion are designed in from the outset. Health Education and Improvement Wales is developing a digital capability framework for healthcare staff which will be launched in April 2023. Social Care Wales has worked with Digital Communities Wales to create an e-learning module for their workforce. Moving forward, the Alliance would support a stronger focus on digital inclusion in the formal and informal care sectors.

¹⁰ Hart, JT

¹¹ Betsi Cadwaladr and Digital Communities Wales

A Wales-wide Digital Strategy for Health and Social Care is being published by Welsh Government with digital inclusion woven into it, thanks to the work of DIAW members. The Alliance is also looking forward to working with the new Chief Digital Officer for Health and Social Care to develop this momentum further.

The feedback we get from our members is that the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has given added credibility and stature to digital inclusion activities within health and social care. Key stakeholders and decision-makers inside and outside of Government are aware of the cross-sector alliance and listen to it. The priority is to ensure that these new relationships are maintained and developed further, as the challenging economic and social contexts that are ahead of us demand a greater focus than ever on ensuring a strong, robust and inclusive health and social care sector in Wales.

Key Outcomes

- **Every health and care provider in Wales recognises digital inclusion as a key determinant of health and supports patients and carers to have digital access, skills and confidence.**
- **Health and social care providers and Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) provide training to develop the digital skills of the Welsh health and social care workforce, so that they can participate safely and effectively in digital services and support patients to do the same.**
- **Addressing digital inclusion is a mandatory requirement in all digital health investment decisions. All digital services and products are designed using co-production approaches or user-centred design principles to meet accessibility standards and the needs of Welsh citizens and our health care professionals.**
- **The new Digital Strategy for Health and Care in Wales is published with a focus on digital inclusion and which supports the outcomes recommended in Digital Inclusion Guide for Health and Care in Wales 2019¹².**



¹² NHS Wales Informatics Service & Wales Co-operative Centre

Priority 3

Addressing data poverty as a key issue

Covid-19 exposed the already prevalent and growing issue of data poverty in Welsh society. Research by Nesta shone a light on the issue¹³, with the conclusion that more research and a greater policy focus was needed. In the time since the publication of the Agenda, there has been a growth in awareness of the problem and the challenges it creates and more interventions focused on reducing it. However, the cost of living crisis that is hitting Welsh communities means that the issue is far from being solved and is, in fact, worsening¹⁴.

The Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has sought to promote awareness of the issue among key stakeholders and partners. Addressing data poverty was a focus for one of the DIAW Quarterly Network meetings¹⁵, with contributions from Alliance members that highlighted both the different ways in which people experience data poverty, and how it impacts their lives and opportunities; and the support which is available - but often not widely used or known about.

At a UK level, Ofcom has published a series of reports on affordability of communications services¹⁶, including broadband and mobile data; and strengthened guidance on 'treating vulnerable consumers fairly'. It is encouraging to see Ofcom reporting on this matter, and we would like to see them continue to strengthen its role as a regulator in this area; reporting on social tariff take-up and households who are disconnected.

Alliance members have helped Good Things Foundation to produce a practical short guide for local charities and organisations on 'Supporting people with data connectivity'¹⁷. The guide fills a gap in information and aims to help local charities and organisations know how they can support people experiencing data poverty. Several Alliance members provided comments on earlier drafts to make the guide clear and useful and are now promoting the guide through their networks. The National Databank¹⁸ has also been set up by Good Things Foundation - local databank partners can now access free mobile data connectivity donated by O2, Vodafone and Three so they can distribute this support to adults and households in their communities / using their services who need this.

The National Device Bank¹⁹ (Good Things Foundation) and other Alliance members provide services which recycle and refurbish I.T. equipment and then distribute them to people in need through organisations. We would encourage all our members to consider donating to these services when they are replacing I.T. equipment across their organisations. These services contribute to a more sustainable solution to digital exclusion.

¹³ NESTA

¹⁴ Public Health Wales

¹⁵ Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales

¹⁶ Ofcom

¹⁷ Good Things Foundation(a)

¹⁸ Good Things Foundation(b)

¹⁹ Good Things Foundation(c)

Public spaces such as libraries and community centres continue to provide internet access for those unable to afford it otherwise. Digital Communities Wales and Good Things Foundation support many of the public spaces in Wales who provide this service and the Alliance would urge Welsh Government and local authorities to ensure these spaces remain open and able to meet rising costs of utilities and broadband contracts. The closing of public spaces such as these disproportionately impacts those who are already excluded. Alliance members have offered to work with the Welsh Government to raise awareness of support such as discounted social tariffs and the National Databank - so that take up within Wales might increase, particularly in the context of the current cost of living crisis and pressures on household bills. Ofcom and the UK Government are calling on industry and charities to promote social tariffs to encourage more uptake.

Given the extremely challenging economic context that communities are now in, addressing data poverty as a key issue should be a bigger priority than ever. The Alliance has identified that the first step should be to better promote the support that is already available. There is also a need for more research in this area to truly understand the contexts of people who are digital excluded due to data poverty. The work to create a Minimum Digital Living Standard in Wales (Priority 5), in partnership with Alliance members, will support work in this priority as the creation of the MDLS will necessitate further research and understanding of the complex issues which contribute to data poverty in Wales.

The Alliance is very well placed to act as a key deliverer of this priority because it is cross-sector, with organisations big and small across the country.

As well as this short-term promotion of what is already available to help communities through the challenging period ahead, the Alliance wishes to continue to be a network and platform for developing further, long term, sustainable Welsh solutions to data poverty such as incorporating fibre where possible in all new social housing builds.



Key Outcomes

- **Internet access is recognised as an essential utility in Wales, with Ofcom continuing to strengthen its role as a regulator in its reporting and in its support for vulnerable customers, groups and communities.**
- **There is co-ordinated, collaborative promotion of available support such as discounted social tariffs for broadband and mobile data and the National Databank.**
- **There is free public provision of safe and easy to use WiFi, and community-based support for digital inclusion across all areas of Wales.**
- **Cross-sector collaboration continues to research and design long term, sustainable solutions to data poverty with a specific focus on Wales.**
- **There should be free and equal access to public services for all people in Wales²⁰. Work should be undertaken to allow the current zero-rating of some public sector websites to be extended to all digital public service websites and apps and they should be designed to minimise data usage as much as possible.**



²⁰ Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales

Priority 4

Prioritising essential digital skills for work and life in the economy

Covid-19 had a huge impact on the economy, as well as our communities and the people in it²¹. On top of being a tumultuous time for businesses and public services, lockdowns changed the way people work, learn and connect. The Agenda sought to ensure that everyone had the digital skills needed for today's Welsh economy, whilst recognising that skills interventions must be accompanied by accessibility, access and well-designed digital services.

The UK Community Renewal Fund provided a channel and resources for combined authorities, city regions and local authorities to partner with others (including industry and the voluntary sector) with an interest in pilot projects supporting the development of basic digital skills to close the digital skills gap. Several DIAW members have been involved in supporting the development of approaches to building basic digital skills in Wales through this.

The new UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a potential route to continue this work. The detailed Regional Action Plans for the Shared Prosperity Fund are anticipated to be completed by end of the current financial year. The Alliance is working together with the Growth and City Region Deals to ensure that digital inclusion remains a priority within this funding stream.

To improve the learner experience across both English and Welsh language versions, Good Things Foundation has been working with support from Cwmpas' DCW programme team on improvements to Learn My Way²². This was created to offer free online courses for beginners to help them to develop digital skills to make the most of the online world – ranging from using a keyboard to support with how to claim Universal Credit.

A programme of digital skills development and support for the third sector, NEWID, has been developed in Wales. This is co-ordinated by WCVA, Cwmpas and ProMo-Cymru, and developed in consultation with the voluntary sector to ensure maximum impact. With 'digital' having a wide-ranging role within the work the third sector undertakes, it is vital that organisations have access to information and support to help make judgements around how digital can complement the range of activities being undertaken. The project has captured information from organisations across Wales to learn more about their relationship with technology, enabling the development of approaches that fulfil the needs of sector. It found that the pandemic had led to a massive surge in the use of digital technology, but that additional support is needed to ensure this reaches everyone in a confident and secure way.

²¹ Wales Centre for Public Policy

²² Good Things Foundation(d)

Digital Communities Wales, a Welsh Government procured digital inclusion programme, delivered by Cwmpas in partnership with Swansea University and Good Things Foundation, has continued its free digital support to organisations across Wales to ensure that everyone has the digital skills, confidence, and access to get online and use digital technology safely and in a way that is meaningful to them. Since the Agenda's publication in March 2021, DCW has conducted digital skills audits with local authorities, health board directorates, third sector organisations, housing providers and other organisations and community groups in Wales, gathering insight on over 2,600 staff and volunteers as of February 2023. DCW's digital skills audit is built from the Essential Digital Skills Framework²³ and allows for an evidence-based approach to benchmarking and increasing digital skills and confidence. It gives organisations a data driven understanding of the digital skills and confidence of the workforce, and what support and training interventions are needed. Health Education and Improvement Wales is developing a version for healthcare staff, working with DCW to ensure close alignment and a common language through the complex pathways in and out of different sectors.

The Alliance has promoted the importance of digital skills in the challenging post-Covid economy but knows there is a lot more to be done to meet the lasting impacts of that challenge and to face the challenges of the future.

Key Outcomes

- **Every adult has access to appropriate, ongoing basic digital skills training and confidence building. This needs to be face-to face where required; it is not sufficient to put learning resources online and assume that the people who need them can and will access them.**
- **A digital skills audit of employees across Wales is undertaken by employers and the data gathered is used to make data-driven decisions about digital skills interventions.**
- **Businesses and employers from all sectors across Wales train and upskill their workforce in core digital skills.**
- **Data collected by capability frameworks, digital skills audits and other research leads to a commitment to funds to address these with co-produced interventions.**
- **Growth and City Region Deals work to ensure that digital inclusion remains a priority within the SPF funding stream and that digital inclusion activities are coordinated to avoid duplication.**



²³ Welsh Government(b)

Priority 5 Implementing a new minimum digital living standard

The Agenda called for the establishment of a Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS) for Wales. This would be an agreed standard of what it is to be digitally included; aligned with our national Well-being Goals.

We were delighted that Welsh Government supported our call around a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales.

This year, Cwmpas and Swansea University have partnered the UK Minimum Digital Living Standard Project Team (from University of Liverpool, Loughborough University, Good Things Foundation and City University) in research commissioned by Welsh Government to explore what a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales should include. The research included a literature review; online interviews and a survey with stakeholders from across the Welsh digital landscape including Alliance members. The team also held a mix of face to face and online deliberative focus groups with members of the public in Wales to test and explore the relevance of the MDLS definition and contents to Wales. The findings from the first Phase of the research are available online²⁴. The MDLS for Wales research sits alongside the interim report from the UK MDLS project team²⁵ which has focused initially on developing the MDLS for families with children.

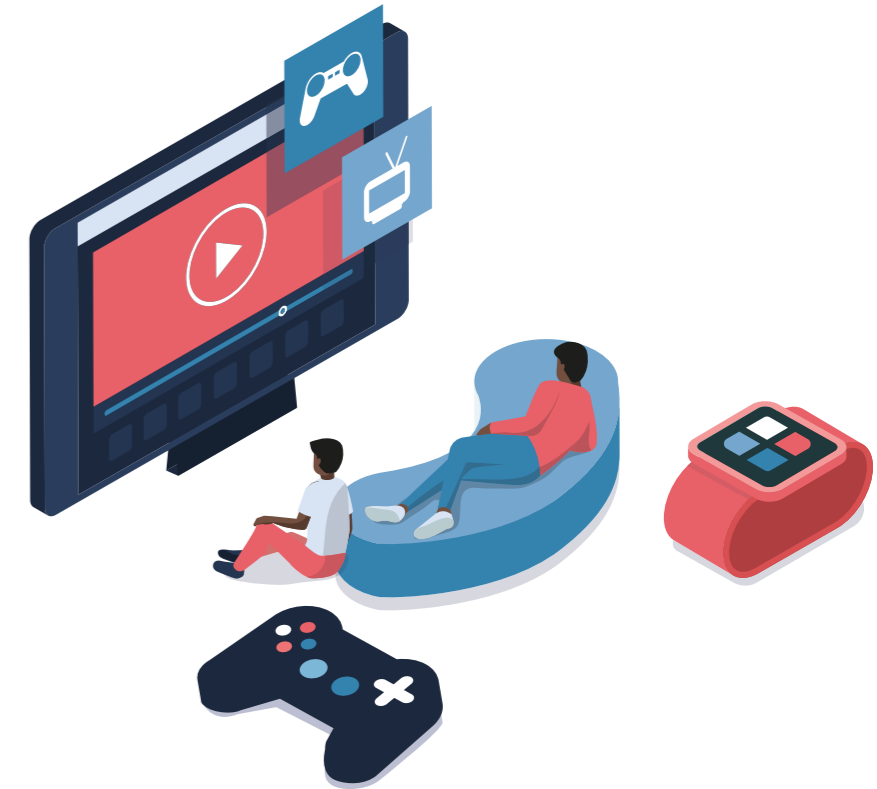
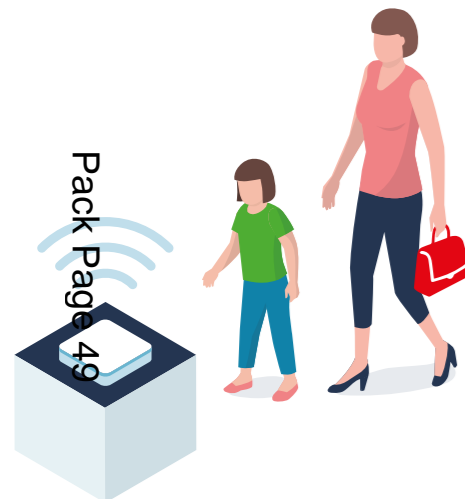
The MDLS was originally defined by the UK Minimum Digital Living Standard project team as:

'A minimum digital standard of living includes, but is more than, having accessible internet, adequate equipment, and the skills, knowledge and support people need. It's about being able to communicate, connect and engage with opportunities safely and with confidence.'

We knew that this would be a complex task, but through the principles of co-design and citizen engagement, the ambitious objective could be fulfilled. Alliance members have already played a key role in setting up focus groups and contributing to the development of this research. Looking ahead, the Alliance will play a significant role in promoting the outcomes of the research and - alongside other key partners - in developing and implementing recommendations about how this can be achieved in Wales. During challenging social and economic times, the MDLS for Wales will be a vital tool to catalyse action and help ensure that everyone in our communities has access to what they need.

²⁴Welsh Government(c)

²⁵Welsh Government(d)



Having a MDLS is not enough in itself. Our Alliance will make the case for the findings of the MDLS research to be implemented and will promote its effective use as a tool to influence policy and practice across different sectors in Wales. This is a crucial step in a journey towards Wales having an MDLS that creates real change in how services are designed and delivered, and we want to see growing awareness of it and the role it can play in creating a digitally-inclusive Wales.

Key Outcomes

- **The creation of a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales for households with children is the catalyst for Welsh Government to commission further research to understand the implications of the Minimum Digital Living Standard on a range of households and communities facing digital exclusion in Wales.**
- **Effective cross-sector strategies, policies and actions are developed together with financial and political commitment to implement a Minimum Digital Living Standard to ensure that no households in Wales are below the MDLS threshold as part of the vision for digital inclusion in Wales.**

Conclusion

Since Inclusion to Resilience was first published, the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has grown to over 90 members and has held six well-attended quarterly meetings where members have been joined by Ministers and Welsh Government policy leads to discuss these priorities, their own challenges and successes within those and forged partnerships and collaborations which have gone on to support Wales to be a more digitally inclusive nation. The Alliance plans to continue this work, sharing with each other, looking at good practice from other nations, fostering collaboration and partnerships, working across sectors and organisations, and creating an environment where digital inclusion is the key to good services and a better quality of life for the people of Wales. The times ahead are challenging but the Alliance will strive to ensure that digital inclusion continues to have a high profile for Welsh Government and for organisations across Wales and that it continues to establish itself as an effective and independent voice for digital inclusion in Wales.



Appendix: DIAW Members

AbilityNet	Home-Start Cymru
Action for Elders	Hywel Dda University Health Board
Active Wales	Iberian and Latin American Association in Wales (ILA)
African Community Centre	Innovate Trust
Age Connects Torfaen	Internet4Everyone Ltd
Age Cymru Gwynedd a Mon	Learning and Work Institute
Antur Cymru Enterprise - Antur Teifi	Learning Disability Wales
ateb Group	Leonard Cheshire Cymru
BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT	Macular Society
Big Lemon	miFuture
Blaenau Gwent Council	Mirus
Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust	Monmouthshire County Council
Blood Cancer UK	Monmouthshire Housing Association
Bridgend County Borough Council	Newport City Council
BT Group	Newydd Housing Association
Caerphilly County Borough Council	Neath Port Talbot Adult Community Learning
Cardiff and Vale Recovery and Wellbeing College	Neath Port Talbot CVS
Cardiff Capital Region	Oxford Internet Institute
Cardiff County Borough Council	Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
Cardiff University	Perago
Care & Repair Cymru	Pobl Group
Carmarthenshire County Council	Powys County Council
Centre for Digital Public Services	Powys Teaching Health Board
Citizens Advice Cymru	ProMo Cymru
Citizens Online	Public Health Wales
ClwydAlyn Housing Ltd	Race Council Cymru
Community Housing Cymru	RareQoL Ltd
Community Lives Consortium	Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)
Competition and Markets Authority	RWG Mobile
Computer Recyclers UK	SCL - Society of Chief Librarians Wales
Computeraid	SCVS - Swansea Council for Voluntary Services
ConnectED Cymru	Serco
Cwmpas	Skills and Volunteering Cymru
Cyngor Ysgolion Sul ac Addysg Gristnogol Cymru	Social Care Wales
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group	SOCITM Advisory
Denbighshire Housing - Denbighshire County Council	Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel
Digital Communities Wales	Swansea Council
Digital Health and Care Wales	Swansea Music Art Digital
Digital Poverty Alliance	Swansea University
Disability Sport Wales	The Big Issue
Disability Wales	the DigiCoach

DVLA	Health Education and Improvement Wales
Dŵr Cymru	University of Wales Trinity St David
EYST Wales	Velindre University NHS Trust
Flintshire County Council	WCVA - Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Good Things Foundation	Women Connect First
Hafod Housing	Youth Cymru

This list was correct at time of publication. For an up to date list, please visit <https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/diaw-network/>

If you or your organisation would like to find out more about us and join the digital inclusion movement in Wales, please get in touch via diaw@cwmpas.coop

DIAW is grateful for the support given by Digital Communities Wales and Cwmpas in the preparation and production of this paper.



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Cite as: From Inclusion to Resilience. Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales.
2nd Edition, March 2023

www.cwmpas.coop/.....

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We welcome correspondence in English or Welsh and aim to provide an equal standard of service in both languages.

cwmpas

Cymunedau
Digidol
Cymru
Hyder Digidol,
Iechyd a Lles

Digital
Communities
Wales
Pack Page 52
Digital Confidence
Health and Well-being

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Senedd Cymru

16 March 2023

Dear Jenny,

Housing Ukrainian refugees

You'll be aware that the Local Government and Housing Committee has been scrutinising the support provided to Ukrainian refugees arriving in Wales, with a focus on housing. We've held several evidence sessions with stakeholders and the Minister for Social Justice and a report of our work, which includes conclusions and recommendations, will be published today. I enclose a copy for your information.

Given the relevance to your Committee's remit, you may wish to pursue some of the issues we have highlighted further.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Housing Ukrainian refugees

March 2023

Background

1. On 11 May 2022, we held an evidence session with Housing Justice Cymru on the work it is doing to provide homes for Ukrainian refugees in Wales. Following that session, we agreed to undertake further work on this, including holding evidence gathering sessions with relevant stakeholders. We wrote to the Minister for Social Justice (“the Minister”) on 26 May 2022 to outline our immediate concerns. We received a response on 14 June 2022.
2. On 22 June 2022, we gathered evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association (“WLGA”), the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, Oasis, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (“WCVA”) and Cytûn – Churches together in Wales. Following the session, we wrote to the Minister again on 13 July 2022. We received a response on 3 August 2022.
3. On 27 October 2022, we held an evidence session with the Minister. The Minister wrote to us on 18 November 2022 to provide further information following the evidence session.

Thank you payments

4. The UK Government make monthly payments of £350 to sponsors of refugees under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, but not for those who have arrived in the UK via the Ukraine Family Scheme. Although the payments are welcome, we heard concerns that £350 per month is insufficient to cover increased food and energy costs, particularly in light of rising living costs. In some cases, insufficient funding could lead to tensions or even breakdowns in the relationships between refugees and their sponsors.



5. The Minister shared these concerns and re-assured us that the Welsh Government had and would continue to make representations to the UK Government that the monthly payment should be increased to £500.

6. The Minister's paper notes that no funding is available from the UK Government for the Ukraine Family Scheme and that any support given must be absorbed within local authority existing services. The Minister confirmed on 6 July 2022 that the Welsh Government will fund a £350 monthly payment to support Ukraine Family Scheme arrivals where they can no longer live with their family sponsors and have had to be re-matched with an unrelated host.

7. The UK Government confirmed on 14 December 2022 that:

"the £350 'thank you' payments, will be extended from 12 months to a maximum duration of two years. The Government will also increase the minimum 'thank you' payments for hosts from £350 per month to £500 per month, once a guest has been here in the UK for 12 months. This applies to all families hosting anywhere in the UK."

8. The Welsh and Scottish Governments issued a joint response to the announcement, which noted:

"Whilst we welcome the additional payments to volunteer hosts, they are needed now – not after 12 months of hosting. Many hosts have told us that without additional financial support, the cost of living crisis means they will not be able to continue to provide this exceptional service."

9. In a statement to Plenary on 24 January 2023, the Minister for Social Justice stated:

"We were pleased to see confirmation that host 'thank you' payments will be extended for a second year – this is very important because where hosting placements work well this can relieve housing demand and create a support network. The decision to uplift the thank you payments to £500 per month is also welcome, though we regret that this will not happen until after 12 months of arrival for the hosted person."

Conclusion 1. We welcome the monthly payments from the UK Government to sponsors and that the payments have been extended to a duration of two years, however we believe that £350 is insufficient, in light of rising food and energy costs. We are pleased that the payment will rise to £500, and we recognise that hosts who welcomed guests soon after the invasion in March 2022 will receive this increased payment soon. However, we believe that the payment

should be increased to £500 for all hosts, not just those who have been hosting for more than a year. The Welsh Government should continue its efforts to persuade the UK Government to provide such an increase for all hosts.

Conclusion 2. Should the Welsh Government be unable to persuade the UK Government to increase the monthly payments, we believe it should consider funding bridging payments for hosts in Wales to ensure all receive a monthly payment of £500. We are concerned that hosts may be unable to continue to provide accommodation in light of increasing cost pressures and believe that bridging payments could be more cost effective than sourcing alternative accommodation should placements break down.

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government should continue its efforts to persuade the UK Government to increase the monthly payment to all hosts to £500 or, if this is not possible, consider funding bridging payments for hosts in Wales to ensure all receive a monthly payment of £500.

Conclusion 3. We welcome the financial support the Welsh Government has given those who have arrived in Wales via the Ukraine Family Scheme.

Allocation of move-on accommodation

10. On 22 November 2022, the Minister told the Senedd that 3,000 Ukrainians had been welcomed to Wales through the Welsh Government's super sponsor scheme, and that a further 1,600 have been granted visas but had not arrived in Wales. A Welsh Government official told us that, potentially, a further 1,000 people could possibly arrive in Wales by sometime during 2023. The Minister told us that the Welsh Government is committed to providing appropriate support to those who arrive and she was confident that there is capacity to accommodate the numbers arriving. The UK Government publishes weekly figures on the number of visa applications, the number of visas issued and the number of arrivals in the UK; these include a breakdown of the figures for Wales.

11. In a statement on 14 February 2023, the Minister provided the latest figures:

"Wales has now welcomed just over 6,400 Ukrainians under Homes for Ukraine. Almost 3,400 have been sponsored by Welsh households, with just over 3,000 sponsored by the Welsh Government by 7 February. Over 1,300 of those Welsh Government has sponsored have now moved into longer term accommodation. There have been additional arrivals under the Ukraine Family Scheme but we are not given that data by the UK Government."

The total number of granted visas has not grown very much in 2023 so far. Around 8,750 visas have now been granted to those with sponsors in Wales. There remain around 1,500 individuals with visas who are yet to travel and we remain mindful that events in Ukraine can have a direct impact on the number of Ukrainians who may arrive in Wales."

12. The Minister told us that people have moved on from the welcome centres, with some moving to live with hosts and others to the private rented sector. However, the Minister acknowledged that there is "a real challenge" around securing longer term accommodation in the private rented sector. The Minister's paper referred to the lack of affordable private rental properties and concerns and reluctance of people to move out of initial accommodation. The paper notes that, to support this:

"national communications in relation to move on have been developed, supported by detailed FAQs, a code of conduct and behavioural policies are also being established to set expectations around expected behaviour and a policy to respond where people turn down multiple suitable offers of move on accommodation is being developed. It seeks to align policies for Ukrainian households more closely with that of other cohorts in housing need."

13. In an oral statement on 22 November 2022, the Minister told the Senedd that:

"the wider pressures on housing across Wales mean that we cannot support people into longer term accommodation as quickly as we would like. We will therefore, continue to urge potential hosts to come forward and register an interest."

14. The Minister confirmed in her letter of 18 November 2022 that the latest figures from the Ukraine Data Platform show that 698 Ukrainians allocated to initial accommodation are recorded as 'moved on'. Of these 508 have moved on within Wales, with a further 104 in other parts of the UK and 86 outside of the UK.

15. In a statement on 24 January 2023, the Minister stated that:

"more than 1,200 super sponsor arrivals have moved on, over 800 of whom have settled into longer term accommodation in Wales such as host arrangements or the private rental sector."

16. It has been reported in the media that the Welsh Government will begin closing its welcome centres, although an official statement has not been issued by the Welsh Government.

In response to oral questions on [1 March 2023](#), the Minister told the Senedd that “no-one has been moved out of a welcome centre, no-one is going to be made homeless from that initial temporary accommodation”.¹

17. It has also been reported that new modular accommodation will be used to provide homes for people from Ukraine, including a **development of around 90 units** at a site in Llantwit Major, Vale of Glamorgan. Wales Online [reported](#) that the Minister has said that new accommodation including modular homes will soon become “very quickly available”. Information published by the [Vale of Glamorgan Council](#) states:

“The development is expected to be completed before the end of the year, but part of it may be operating by the summer, although this is dependent on the phasing of the development.”

Conclusion 4. We are concerned by reports that the Welsh Government will begin closing its welcome centres. We are surprised by such a step, given the positive feedback from the Welsh Government and stakeholders on the role of the centres. We would like the Welsh Government to outline its rationale, should it be beginning to close centres, and how it intends to ensure those currently in the centres are moved to suitable accommodation. We believe the Minister should provide an update to the Senedd as a matter of urgency to clarify the Welsh Government’s position on welcome centres.

Recommendation 2. The Welsh Government should provide an update to the Senedd as a matter of urgency to clarify its position on welcome centres.

Conclusion 5. We are particularly concerned as to whether there is sufficient accommodation available for Ukrainians to move into given the reported closure of welcome centres, and are conscious that more people could still travel from Ukraine. We are aware, through our ongoing work into homelessness, of the high number of people currently placed in temporary accommodation and the challenges faced by local authorities in securing permanent homes either through social housing or the private rented sector. We believe that it is crucial that independent hosts receive all necessary support from the Welsh and UK Governments to enable them to continue to host people from Ukraine for as long as is needed and they are able to do so.

Conclusion 6. We noted in our recent report on homelessness the potential for using modular builds as temporary accommodation that could be constructed relatively quickly where there is

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suitable land available, and recognised that some authorities use modular builds for temporary accommodation effectively. We acknowledge reports of plans by the Welsh Government and local authorities to build modular accommodation to provide homes for people from Ukraine, however the Welsh Government should provide clarity on its intention around the use of this type of accommodation and how it will address their needs. We believe that further information is needed on the timescale for developing modular homes, whether more local authorities will be expected to provide such accommodation and the funding available to local authorities.

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should provide an update to the Senedd on its intentions around the use of modular accommodation to provide homes for people from Ukraine. This should include detail of the Welsh Government's expectations on local authorities to develop such accommodation, the funding available to them and the longer term intentions for its use.

Conclusion 7. Given the volume of Ukrainian refugees who still require move on accommodation, we believe that the Welsh Government should develop a long-term plan to ensure there is sufficient suitable accommodation available to house those in need.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should develop a long-term plan to ensure sufficient provision of suitable move-on accommodation for people from Ukraine.

Conclusion 8. We welcome the Welsh Government's approach of aligning the policies for Ukrainian households more closely with that of other cohorts in housing need. It will be important to ensure that offers of move-on accommodation are appropriate for individual families' needs in terms of size and location, so that people are not penalised for turning down accommodation that would be unsuitable for their needs.

Funding for local authorities

18. We are aware that, for those who arrived before 1 January 2023, the UK Government provides an integration tariff of £10,500 to local authorities for each refugee during the first year of their arrival. The UK Government also provides an education tariff to local authorities determined by the age of the child (ranging from £3,000 to £8,755 for a full year) and the arrival date in the UK. This is for the first year only and pro rata by arrival date.

19. The UK Government confirmed on 14 December 2022:

"The Government will reduce the tariff for each local authority. We recognise that this is a difficult decision. Councils will continue to receive the existing year 1 tariff to support those Ukrainians that have already arrived, as

previously set out, but from 1 January 2023, councils will receive funding of £5,900 for each new arrival to support guests and their sponsors (in addition to the 'thank you' paid to sponsors)."

20. The UK Government confirmed that the education tariffs remain unchanged.

21. The UK Government also announced:

"£150 million of new UK-wide funding in the 2023/24 financial year to local authorities and devolved governments to help support Ukrainian guests move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness."

22. The joint response from the Welsh and Scottish Governments noted:

"The changes announced amount to a reduction in funding available to help people fleeing Putin's illegal war in Ukraine settle into a new home. In the face of continued and acute need, it is counter-productive and short-sighted to cut vital funding available to deliver public services to the most vulnerable. It will place local authorities under extreme and unacceptable pressure during an unprecedented cost of living crisis.

Those arriving from Ukraine deserve the same care and support which we provide to those arriving from Afghanistan or through the UK Resettlement Scheme. The approach and funding model used under those schemes is internationally recognised as good practice and supported by each of our Governments. The decision to undermine the success of this safe and legal route to the UK is at odds with recent UK Government claims about a generous approach."

23. On 24 January 2023, the Minister for Social Justice said:

"We are very disappointed with the decision to almost halve the Integration Tariff to £5,900 for new arrivals from 1 January, as well as the decision not to provide a Year 2 Integration Tariff. These decisions are out of step with other resettlement schemes and reduce vital funding to local authorities at a time of immense budgetary pressure. Under other resettlement schemes, local authorities have generally received around £20,000 per person over a 3 to 5 year period. For Ukrainian arrivals from 1 January 2023, this will be just under £6,000 instead."

24. Referring to the £150 million, on 14 February 2023, the Minister for Social Justice said:

"we're still working with the UK Government to ascertain what proportion of the new £150 million fund for Ukrainian housing support during 2023-24 will come to Wales. We've put forward a proposal and we've been clear that clarity is needed urgently to enable local authorities to plan sufficiently."

Conclusion 9. We believe it is crucial that the UK Government continues to provide funding to local authorities to support the refugees in their areas. We are disappointed by UK Government's decision to reduce the integration tariff for people who arrive after 1 January 2023 and are concerned by the impact this could have on the integration of Ukrainian refugees.. We are also concerned that there will be no specific integration tariff once refugees have been in the UK for more than a year, particularly as many will now be reaching that milestone. We believe the Welsh Government should consider whether some of the £40 million it has allocated in its budget for 2023-24 to help local authorities to continue delivering services to those fleeing the war in Ukraine, could be used to make up the difference in the funding tariff.

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should consider whether some of the £40 million it has allocated in its budget for 2023-24 to help local authorities to continue delivering services to those fleeing the war in Ukraine, could be used to make up the difference in the integration tariff.

Conclusion 10. We support the Welsh Government's efforts to obtain clarity as to how much of the new £150 million funding for 2023-24 will be made available to Wales. We would be grateful for an update from the Welsh Government, including details of how it will allocate funding as a consequence.

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government should provide an update to the Senedd on its discussions with the UK Government on obtaining clarity as to how much of the new £150 million funding for 2023-24 will be made available to Wales. The update should include details of how the funding will be allocated.

Data

25. The Minister told us that the Welsh Government has recently established a data platform for local authorities to capture data relating to Ukrainian refugees, including how many have moved on from their initial accommodation, numbers of placements that have broken down, and where people change their location.

26. Following our evidence session with local authorities in June 2022, we wrote to the Minister to raise our concern at the lack of information provided to local authorities by the UK Government on the placement of people through the Ukraine Family Scheme. We were told that local authorities are unable to undertake the same checks for those arriving under that scheme as they do not receive the necessary information from the UK Government. The Minister told us that the Welsh Government would continue to push for the same supply of data in respect of those who have arrived in Wales under the family scheme. The Minister noted that this has not been forthcoming.

Conclusion 11. We welcome the establishment of the data platform by the Welsh Government. It is crucial to have definitive figures for the number of people and where they are located in order to understand what support is needed and to plan for that support.

Conclusion 12. We are deeply concerned that no data is available on those who have arrived in Wales under the Family Visa Scheme. We believe that this is vital information which is crucial to local authorities as they plan and provide support for those people. We support the Welsh Government's attempts to obtain this data. We will also write to the UK Government to request an explanation as to why this data is not provided.

Funding for supporting Ukrainians in Wales

27. The Minister's paper notes:

"The cost of supporting Ukrainians in Wales under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is met from a combination of funding from the UK Government, Welsh Government and local authorities' existing programme budgets in 2022-23."

28. The Minister's paper states that in the first supplementary budget for 2022-23, £20m was allocated to provide support for Ukrainian arrivals. A further £51m has subsequently been allocated taking the total allocated to £71m in 2022-23. The Minister also noted in her paper that:

"it is expected that costs associated with our support through the Super Sponsor scheme will exceed these amounts by the year end."

29. The Welsh Government's draft budget for 2023-24 includes an allocation of £40m in 2023-24 and a further £20m for 2024-25 to provide support to people from Ukraine.

Conclusion 13. We welcome the money that has already been allocated by the UK Government, Welsh Government and local authorities to provide support for people from Ukraine and we acknowledge that the uncertainties around the situation in Ukraine make it difficult to make definitive assumptions as to the level of funding required in subsequent years. We note the allocations included in the Welsh Government's budget for 2023-24. In our report on the draft budget, we welcomed the budget allocation and commented that significant additional responsibilities are being placed upon local authorities at a time when finances are already under pressure, therefore it is vital that the Welsh Government ensures that the funding made available to local government for these purposes is sufficient. We also requested a detailed breakdown from the Welsh Government of the funding allocations. We re-iterate that request, in light of the publication of the Welsh Government's final budget for 2023-24 on 28 February 2023. This recommendation has been accepted and we await the update from the Minister.

Encouraging refugees to make financial contributions

30. In a statement on 25 October 2022, the Minister told the Senedd that the Welsh Government had been "considering the offer that we make to Ukrainians who we support in our accommodation under the super sponsor route." The Minister said that, in order to "enhance personal independence and support people to move on to the next stage of their lives", the Welsh Government would be revisiting its wraparound support offer in order to "encourage guests to contribute to costs via earnings or universal credit wherever possible, after an initial short period."

31. The Minister told us that the Welsh Government would be working with the Ukrainians to make the changes to the wraparound support, saying:

"They're starting to earn money and also access benefits, and they're saying themselves, 'Can we contribute?' [] They are Ukrainian guests with us through the supersponsor route, and they want to play their part."

32. The Welsh Government has confirmed that changes will be implemented from 9 January 2023, with pilots in some areas from 1 December, where people who have been in temporary accommodation for five weeks will be asked to contribute towards the cost of some meals and laundry costs. People who turn down two offers to move on to permanent accommodation will also face a weekly service charge.

Conclusion 14. We welcome the step taken by the Welsh Government to change the support it provides to people from Ukraine in asking for financial contributions for certain services. We

understand that people will want to contribute financially and doing so should help them to integrate into the community.

Dear Committee Chair,

I am writing to you to propose that the Equality and Social Justice Committee carry out an inquiry into the relationship between poverty and children's social care involvement in Wales. Research has shown that poverty and inequality affect how the child protection system responds to families who are struggling; An inquiry should:

- Look at the levers Welsh Government has to poverty proof the child protection system.
- Consider to what extent families who experience poverty are supported.
- Consider how the system can recognise when it is the context of poverty itself which is causing harm to the family, rather than intentional neglect.
- Consider the role of the forthcoming child poverty strategy in poverty proofing the child protection system.
- Look at cross-departmental policies, training, regulation and data collection and how they can be truly anti-poverty.

While we welcome the work Welsh Government has undertaken so far to tackle child poverty, NSPCC Cymru is concerned about the increased risk to children as families come under increasing pressure from the cost-of-living crisis. This is against a backdrop of austerity and the pandemic.

Recent research from Paul Bywaters¹ and colleagues highlights a 'contributory causal relationship between the economic circumstances of families and child abuse and neglect'. The authors of the research suggest we should not view poverty necessarily as another factor of abuse, but something that is 'intrinsic to' other factors such as domestic abuse and substance misuse. Poverty has been described as 'the wallpaper of the social care system', in that it is too big to tackle and too familiar to notice. Paul Bywater says supporting families to exit poverty must be core business for children's social care.

NSPCC considers poverty to be a preventable, structural harm which negatively impacts children and can put them at increased risk. A lack of resources can prevent families from being able to provide adequately for their children, and the stress of financial insecurity can overload families, affecting relationships. Living in poverty means parents are not having their needs met, in turn, this can impact their capacity to care for their child.

Within this context, NSPCC Cymru is urging the Committee to undertake an inquiry into the relationship between poverty and children's social care involvement. In these times of financial hardship, creating a social safety net around our most vulnerable families has never been more important.

Yours faithfully,

Elinor Puzey,
Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer, NSPCC Cymru

¹https://research.hud.ac.uk/media/assets/document/hhs/RelationshipBetweenPovertyChildAbuseandNeglect_Report.pdf

Agenda Item 8

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

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