

To review the emergency temporary housing policy which impacts our communities.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 21 Tachwedd 2022
Petitions Committee | 21 November 2022

Reference: SR22/3945-1

Petition Number: P-06-1304

Petition title: To review the emergency temporary housing policy which impacts our communities.

Text of petition: The community of Thomastown in Tonyrefail have suffered due to a B&B in the heart of their community being used by the local authority as emergency temporary accommodation. Although the local authority has maintained that the persons placed here are risk assessed, the community has suffered from anti social behaviour, threats, violence and drug dealing. The community feels let down by the local authority and would like a review of the procedures that are in place to stop this happening again.

The local authority has placed homeless people there who have just been released from prison. The community has fought for many years for the council to stop using the B&B for ex prisoners. Local people have witnessed many incidents of anti social behaviour over the years, which deeply concern the community and impact negatively on their lives.

There is also no appropriate security in place and no support network for the residents.

The community does not want this to happen again and call for a full review on the procedures and policies of placing homeless people into emergency temporary accommodation in communities without the proper support



being put in place to support the residents placed there by the local authority.

1. Background

Since the start of the pandemic, the Welsh Government has taken a 'no-one left out' approach to homelessness. This has been supported by guidance and some additional funding while being delivered by local authorities and their partners. That response continues to be in place, and has resulted in significant numbers of people facing homelessness being provided with temporary accommodation and support services.

Different types of temporary accommodation are used and may include hotels, refuges, hostels, bed & breakfasts, social housing and accommodation in the private rented sector.

Guidance issued by the Welsh Government in 2016 details matters that local authorities must take into account when considering whether accommodation is suitable. The guidance states that B&Bs are not generally a suitable form of accommodation, noting that:

The use of B&B should only be used on an exceptional basis and for a limited period of time for any individual or household.

The Welsh Government has previously used its statutory powers to restrict the use of B&B accommodation as temporary accommodation. However, because of the pressures faced by local authorities as a result of the pandemic, and the continuation of the ‘no-one left out’ approach, the Welsh Government has consulted on temporarily allowing the use of B&B accommodation where local authorities are facing pressures because of the pandemic, subject to an end date of 31 March 2023. Legislative changes have not yet been made.

According to Welsh Government figures, the number of people placed in temporary accommodation rose steadily over the course of the pandemic, with a total of 26,400 people placed in such housing at some point between March 2020 and August 2022.

As of 31 August 2022, there were 8,545 individuals (including 2,515 dependent children under 16) still living in temporary accommodation and an estimated 152 people sleeping rough in Wales.

2. Welsh Government action

In October 2019, the Welsh Government launched the Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness. This strategy seeks to ensure that homelessness is ‘rare, brief and unrepeated’.

The Welsh Government published its Ending Homelessness Action Plan in November 2021 which builds on the work and recommendations of the Homelessness Action Group. The plan is split into three key areas of action: ‘Rare’, focusing on prevention; ‘Brief’, addressing rapid rehousing; and ‘Unrepeated’, which concerns long-term housing availability.

In May-June 2022, the Welsh Government ran a consultation on a proposal to update the ‘priority need’ categories to include people who are ‘street homeless’. This would bring the ‘no one left out’ approach into law. The Homelessness (Priority Need and Intentionality) (Wales) Regulations 2022 were passed following a debate in the Senedd on 18 October 2022 and came into effect on 24 October.

On 1 November, the Minister for Climate Change wrote to the Chair of the Petitions Committee regarding this petition. Her letter acknowledges that the continuation of the ‘no-one left out’ approach has increased pressure on local authorities to source temporary accommodation, and has included the use of B&Bs. However, the Minister maintains that the Welsh Government will not

change its existing approach to homelessness, citing the above Regulations as evidence.

The Minister also noted the Welsh Government's commitment to improving the supply of longer-term housing, including plans to build new low-carbon social homes and the recent allocation of £65m to the Transitional Capital Accommodation Programme to help 'increase move-on options' for local authority housing services.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into homelessness in Wales. As of 12 October, the agreed terms of reference for this inquiry are:

- The supply, suitability and quality of temporary accommodation currently being used to house people experiencing homelessness and the support services made available to them;
- The impact living in temporary accommodation has on individuals and families;
- The impact of the ongoing demand for temporary accommodation and support services on local authorities, their partners and communities;
- Options to increase the supply of affordable and appropriate housing in the short to medium term to reduce the use of temporary accommodation;
- Progress implementing Ending Homelessness in Wales: A high level action plan 2021-2026, and in particular the move towards a rapid rehousing approach.

The Committee has so far run two consultations with targeted stakeholders – a first in January-February 2022 and a second ongoing consultation due to end on 11 November.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

