

## **Written response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Local Government and Housing Committee – Homelessness**

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I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the Local Government and Housing Committee, and all those who took the time to provide evidence based on their experience and expertise, in order to inform the Committee's work on homelessness.

Welsh Government remains committed to our long term goal of ending homelessness, by making it rare, brief and unrepeatable, and I am grateful for the Committee's work in support of achieving this shared goal. This ambition is reflected in the Programme for Government, which contains a commitment to reform housing law and implement the Homelessness Action Group's recommendation to fundamentally reform homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing.

As set out in my evidence to the Committee, our Ending Homelessness High Level Action plan sets out how we are taking forward this work, and the recommendations of the Committee very much align with this plan. No one tool or action alone will end homelessness. The breadth of the recommendations made by the Committee illustrate the ambitious cross sector and cross public service response required to both prevent homelessness in the first place and to make the transformational shift towards rapid rehousing.

Our plans and our delivery partners have inevitably had to adapt to respond to unanticipated pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis and humanitarian crisis arising from the war in Ukraine. I continue to be grateful for the tremendous efforts of those working in the housing and homelessness sector in responding to these ongoing challenges and pressures. Whilst we continue to work closely with partners to tackle the immediate pressures in the system and ensure we are supporting those in housing need, it is also crucial we plan for the future and consider how we sustain and formalise the exceptional work undertaken by our delivery partners during the pandemic and beyond.

Reform of current housing legislation will be key to this, and I am pleased that work to develop these reforms is well underway. An Expert Review Panel, comprising membership from across the Housing sector is in place, and will deliver recommendations for reform in Summer 2023. A White Paper will follow later this year.

**Detailed Responses to the report's recommendations are set out below:**

### **Recommendation 1**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The purpose of the relationship manager roles should be clarified and the Welsh Government should consider opportunities to enhance the roles to better support local authorities.**

**Response: Accept**

Welsh Government will continue to work closely with local authorities as we seek to strengthen and reform the policy and legislative framework to ensure it best supports local authorities in undertaking their statutory responsibilities in regard to housing and homelessness. We will also continuously assess and review our support and governance structures to ensure effective delivery of this agenda, including the relationship manager role. This role involves supporting the strategic and multi-agency approach required to take forward the transformation agenda, including the strategic planning needed to fully implement a rapid rehousing approach centred on prevention and sustainable long-term housing solutions. As this work develops across Wales, relationship managers will continue to work closely with local authorities, identifying and sharing models of best practice as part of a programme of continuous improvement.

**Financial implications: None**

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should identify and facilitate the sharing of best practice around modular builds for temporary accommodation.**

**Response: Accept**

Welsh Government will look to use the existing and well established networks to facilitate the sharing of best practice around modular builds for temporary accommodation. This includes the Innovative Housing – Community of Practice which meets bi-monthly to share learning and best practice from schemes funded under the Innovative Housing Programme. In addition, we will continue to encourage collaboration and learning via our regular meetings with Housing Leadership Cymru and joint meetings with Social Landlords across Wales.

**Financial implications: None**

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government explores opportunities for further funding for temporary and transitional accommodation, and evaluates the effectiveness of current funding, including the TACP.**

**Response: Accept**

The Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) is a new grant scheme established in the summer 2022 in response to the need to deliver more good quality longer term accommodation at pace, to support people to move on from temporary accommodation. As a new grant scheme, it will be reviewed after the end of the financial year to determine its effectiveness and any improvements that could be made to facilitate the delivery of more good quality accommodation. As TACP was established using existing Housing and Regeneration capital funding, and no specific additional funding for TACP was allocated within the 2023-24 Welsh Government budget, we will be considering how capital funding is used to continue to support the delivery of more homes, including transitional accommodation.

Within the package of funding to prevent homelessness, Welsh Government is making £15m available to local authorities in 2023-24 to support the provision of temporary accommodation. This funding has been allocated to local authorities on a formula basis to ensure a fair distribution which reflects where demand on temporary accommodation is the greatest. We will continue to monitor local authorities' claims for this funding during the year to inform whether allocated funding can be redistributed to where it is most needed, or whether there is demand for additional funding. Monitoring of funding will also include consideration of the types of temporary accommodation being funded and how this funding profile is changing over time to support move-on into more settled accommodation.

**Financial implications: None**

### **Recommendation 4**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should review how local authorities ensure people staying in temporary accommodation are kept informed of their ongoing housing status, including how long their stay is likely to be, and identify best practice in communicating this information. The Welsh Government should update the Committee on its findings urgently.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

We know that extended periods in temporary accommodation are likely to have a corrosive impact on those who are unable to swiftly move into settled accommodation and it is this fundamental concern which is the cornerstone to our ambition to transition to a rapid rehousing approach in Wales.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was developed with the fundamental principle that, where possible, 'reasonable steps' are to be taken in partnership with the applicant

themselves. This means that where possible, some of the potential actions associated with finding suitable long-term accommodation may be undertaken by the applicant, but this should take into account the capacity of the applicant. Therefore, it is important that both the applicant and the key support worker maintain regular contact in order to ensure the Personal Housing Plan is kept up to date.

Welsh Government is aware that some local authority officers have higher than average caseloads and maintaining regular contact will continue to be challenging in some parts of Wales. Ideally, contact should take place as part of the Personal Housing Plan process where both parties partake in proactive discussions.

Increasing the pace of move on from temporary accommodation has been a priority in Wales for some time and was a catalyst for the introduction of the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) which is intended to bring accommodation into use quickly.

Welsh Government is developing a document aimed at disseminating good practice examples surrounding support and move on out of temporary accommodation which will highlight the importance of encouraging applicants to take a proactive approach to their own case with support from local authorities, as well as maintaining regular contact.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 5**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should improve the data and statistics on the people living in temporary accommodation with the aim of informing prevention work.**

**Response: Accept**

The Welsh Government currently collects and publishes data on households in temporary accommodation within the annual [Homelessness Statutory Data](#) collection and data on individuals placed in temporary accommodation within the monthly [Homelessness Accommodation provision and Rough Sleeping](#) management information.

Table 6 of the statutory data breaks down placements in temporary accommodation by household type, and length of time spent in temporary accommodation. Household type captures households that are couples with dependent children, and single parent and single person households (by gender of the main applicant). Within the management information, we currently collect information on type of temporary accommodation, previous status of individuals and certain age breakdowns. However, this information is not currently published due to quality assurance limitations.

The Welsh Government is currently engaging with local authorities about improving the quality of the management information in order for it to be published at a more-detailed level. We are also considering incorporating further breakdowns within this data collection to inform prevention activity, such as breakdowns in age, and more

insight into young persons' demographics. Engagement with local authorities on these planned improvements commenced in March 2023.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 6**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should urgently explore what can be done to monitor and improve standards in temporary accommodation and report back to the Committee. As part of this work, the Welsh Government should consider whether there is an opportunity to update the existing statutory guidance in a way that recognises the challenges currently faced by local authorities.**

**Response: Accept**

The Welsh Government is aware of the rising number of homeless presentations, and the increasing reliance on temporary accommodation in the absence of suitable long-term accommodation to meet this demand. In response to this growing demand, and the increasing number of people housed in temporary accommodation, we are currently exploring the options available to ease the situation including changes to legislation where necessary.

Local authorities must take certain matters into account when determining suitability, and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2015, prescribes the circumstances in which accommodation is or is not regarded as suitable for a person. Welsh Government is considering the existing statutory guidance on this issue which includes a review of advice for local authorities delivering their duties in this challenging environment. Any proposed policy or legislative changes will also be captured in this statutory guidance.

Welsh Government is also considering other potential policy options to help reduce the reliance on temporary accommodation, including working with local authorities and Shelter Cymru to formalise the concept of 'Homelessness at Home' as an option when an individual presents as homeless. This could offer potential benefits for certain individuals who find themselves homeless, however it must be developed with care to ensure the policy supports both individuals in need and local authorities.

We are also working with local authorities to support the continued development of rapid rehousing plans, which requires a strategic assessment of housing need and should assist authorities in understanding and developing short, medium and long term plans to address some of these issues.

As these policy developments progress, the Welsh Government will provide the Senedd and the Committee with updates in due course.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 7**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should consider the opportunity to establish a homelessness regulator as part of its reform of homelessness legislation.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

Welsh Government fully recognises the need to increase the level of consistency of homelessness services across Wales. We strongly believe that working in partnership with local authorities and their representatives to understand and ameliorate the pressures that they face is the key to improving services.

Whilst we will consider mechanisms to promote consistency and improve service provision, including the role of regulation, it is also important to recognise the potential risks. Establishing an additional homelessness regulatory function would risk increasing the complexity of governance as well as administration costs and would not necessarily improve housing supply, or the causal factors of homelessness which are at the heart of the current crisis. Any such proposal would therefore need to be carefully assessed and we will give further consideration to this and other ways to promote consistency and best practice as we develop our policy and legislative proposals.

This consideration will also be informed by the work of the Expert Review Panel, who are considering regulation and enforcement as part of its work and will make recommendations to the Welsh Government in the Summer of 2023.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 8**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should outline what steps it is taking to prevent owner-occupiers becoming homeless. In particular, the Welsh Government should update the Committee on progress in developing mortgage rescue schemes as a matter of urgency.**

**Response: Accept**

Welsh Government is actively working with stakeholders and delivery partners to carefully consider the options available to support people who are struggling with financial pressures to stay in their homes. Financial Transactions Capital funding has been allocated over the next two financial years to help owner-occupiers remain in their homes. Further information on support will be provided in due course.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 9**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should take every opportunity, including through an updated Ending Homelessness Action Plan, to ensure all public services are working in partnership to prevent homelessness.**

**Response: Accept**

Welsh Government recognises that if we are to end homelessness, preventing it in the first place and making it a rarity is critical. As set out in the Ending Homelessness Action Plan, prevention is not simply about housing; it is about ensuring other services intervene to support people at an earlier stage in order to prevent them ever facing homelessness.

The forthcoming legislative reform will explore how wider public service responses to homelessness can be strengthened to better identify and prevent the risk of homelessness. This is key to delivering the transformational shift to prevention and rapid rehousing, and an integral part of the person centred approach local authorities aim to deliver.

As outlined in evidence to the Committee, Welsh Government will be updating the actions in our Ending Homelessness Action Plan this year. We anticipate a refreshed Action Plan to be published, with updated and new actions to be included at this point.

**Financial implications: None**

## **Recommendation 10**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government must increase the allocation for the Housing Support Grant at the earliest opportunity, taking into account the high level of inflation and the demand on homelessness services.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

Welsh Government recognises the budgetary pressures across a range of public services, including homelessness and housing support services. The 2023-24 budget was a budget delivered in a perfect storm of financial pressures, with our budget worth up to £1billion less next year than when it was originally announced, and we have done everything we can to maximise the impact of all our available resources and to prioritise those most in need. We will continue to take this approach if additional resources become available.

We recognise the significant pressures facing frontline housing support services and the importance of the work they provide in supporting people to live independently and to prevent homelessness. Despite the extraordinary budgetary pressures we face, we have maintained the £40m increase to the Housing Support Grant budget awarded in 2021-22 so that it remains at £166.763m.

In recognition of the wider pressures on homelessness services, the Homelessness Prevention Budget will increase by £15m in 2023-24, an additional £10m more than

previously planned. This takes our investment in homelessness and housing support services to over £210m next year.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 11**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should review its Housing Support Grant guidance to ensure funding is supporting the delivery of effective homelessness prevention services that are robustly monitored and evaluated.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

The Housing Support Grant (HSG) guidance sets out the legislative framework and the general principles in which local authorities must operate in the commissioning of services. It is regularly reviewed to ensure it sets out robust contract monitoring requirements which aims to facilitate the effective monitoring and evaluation of services. It also highlights the need for authorities to consider a preventative and prudent approach to commissioning, fair work practices and use of different contract forms and longer contract lengths (where appropriate) to create a flexible, sustainable, and stable environment to recruit and retain staff and to give certainty and consistency to people who use services. We will consider whether there are any elements that could be strengthened within the practice guidance related to the commissioning of services as part of our regular review process.

The issues highlighted by the Committee regarding staff pay and staff well-being in the commissioning of services have already been identified in the [Ending Homelessness in Wales Action Plan](#) and work is being taken forward by the Ending Homelessness National Advisory Board's Workforce Task and Finish group. The overarching aim of the work is to ensure that the workforce is valued and supported. Five key areas have been identified around pay, skills and qualifications, support systems for staff, best practice in recruitment and commissioning. On completion of this work, where relevant, the HSG guidance will be reviewed to consider where good practice principles can be further enhanced to help facilitate this.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 12**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should provide an update to the Committee on the results of its campaign to recruit staff to work in the homelessness sector.**

**This should include an assessment of the effectiveness of the work, The Welsh Government should also explore how retention of staff can be improved and consider this when taking forward its Action Plan commitment to develop a resilient and valued workforce recognised for their expertise.**

**Response: Accept**



The Welsh Government homelessness and housing support recruitment campaign ended at the end of March 2023. Campaign materials remain available for use by local authorities and providers to signpost to job vacancies advertised on the Cymorth Cymru jobs site. An evaluation report will be produced by May 2023 to review the success of the campaign. This work aligns with that of the workforce task and finish group (mentioned in recommendation 11) and includes consideration of best practice models for the recruitment and retention of staff and how staff can be fully supported to develop a career in the sector.

**Financial implications:** None

### **Recommendation 13**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should take action to improve data on the private rented sector. This should include setting out what data could be collected, how the data could be collected and an update on plans previously discussed to take forward a business case for a Welsh Housing Survey.**

**Response: Accept**

Welsh Government is committed to strengthening the availability of data associated with the private rented sector (PRS). We have asked Rent Smart Wales to develop a dashboard for publication on their website which will show data on the PRS. Although still under development, it is expected that data will include the number of properties registered by month, by local authority area, and whether this is increasing or decreasing. Data will also be provided on the number of landlords registering with Rent Smart Wales each month, and of these, how many are new landlords and how many are renewals. Where Rent Smart Wales has been informed of landlords leaving the sector then this data can also be shown.

We propose to use the Green Paper on Fair Rents and a Right to Adequate Housing as a call for evidence on what data sources and questions should be captured in a Welsh Housing Survey as part of developing a business case. The Green Paper is due to be published in the Spring. The Committee will also wish to note that the National Survey for Wales will also include housing specific questions.

**Financial implications:** None. Any additional costs in developing the business case will be met from existing budgets.

### **Recommendation 14**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should ensure that Rent Smart Wales collects data on the number of private landlords leaving the sector and their reasons for doing so. This data should be published regularly.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

A condition of a landlord's licence is that they will report to Rent Smart Wales if they have chosen to leave the sector. However, in many instances landlords fail to do this at the time, allow their licence to lapse and do not renew it at the 5 year expiry date.

Rent Smart Wales is collecting data on those landlords who have not sought to renew their licence and also those landlords who have complied with licence conditions and informed Rent Smart Wales that they are no longer an active landlord in Wales. As highlighted above (in response to Recommendation 13) where this data is known, it will be published in due course as part of the wider suite of data on the private rented sector in Wales.

**Financial implications:** None.

## **Recommendation 15**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should set out how it is working with the private rented sector to improve the supply of quality, affordable homes. This should include what actions it has explored to incentivise landlords to stay in the private rented sector.**

**Response: Accept**

As part of a commitment to improve the supply of quality affordable homes, Welsh Government launched Leasing Scheme Wales in January 2022. Since then local authorities have been successful, through the ability to provide capital grants for property improvements, to secure empty properties which in turn is helping to increase the supply and quality of affordable homes as these are being leased at Local Housing Allowance rates. Over the next 5 years the objective is to secure over 1,500 properties through this initiative.

Data from Rent Smart Wales shows that new landlords are registering and rental properties have increased overall across Wales from 208,089 in August 2022 to 209,101 in January 2023, which indicates the majority of landlords are remaining in the sector.

We recognise, however, that there is less turnover in the sector as fewer people move either between properties or exit the PRS sector. This has resulted in fewer properties being available to rent, whilst demand to rent is still high. We will consider how we could further increase the supply of private rented property within the Green Paper on Fair Rents later in the Spring.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 16**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should set out what steps it is taking to influence the UK Government to increase the Local Housing Allowance rate to at least the 30th percentile of local market rents.**

**Response: Accept**

The Welsh Government fully recognises that private sector rents are rising at their fastest rate for over 13 years, causing a gap to widen between actual rents and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. This disparity is leaving many people with little option but to find the additional rent from the money they have remaining, placing considerable pressure on people at a time when the cost of living is so high. A change to the LHA rate would make a significant impact on the current pressure in the private rented sector which is why we have repeatedly called upon the UK Government to uplift the LHA rates and asked that benefits are based on the current rent levels. We have also requested that LHA rates be payable at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, as was the case when LHAs were first introduced. Welsh Government will continue to highlight why the current policy needs to be re-evaluated and press for changes to the LHA rate that reflect the current environment.

We also note the Committee's support in urging the UK Government to make changes on this matter, especially in light of the increasing challenges around the cost of living.

**Financial implications:** None

**Recommendation 17**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should explore a role for Rent Smart Wales in improving the data on private rented sector rents and report its findings to the Committee.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

Consideration of mechanisms for improving rental data in Wales will be included within the Green Paper, and subsequent White Paper on Fair Rents, as part of developing the evidence base and understanding of the potential implications of various policy interventions.

**Financial implications:** None

**Recommendation 18**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should explore how it can review and amend Leasing Scheme Wales to make it more attractive to landlords. It should also set out how it will raise awareness of the scheme, in particular with letting and estate agents.**

**Response: Accept**

A number of enhancements have been made to LSW since its introduction, reflecting learning from early adopters and market changes. Most recently, through the Optimised Retrofit programme, Welsh Government has included the ability to secure an additional £5,000 grant to improve the energy performance of a property towards

meeting EPC C standards. This means that a total grant of £30,000 could be available to a landlord who signs up to Leasing Scheme Wales for 20 years.

From April we will also be extending the scheme to allow Houses in Multiple Occupation, that meet certain standards, to also be eligible to come onto Leasing Scheme Wales and benefit from grant funding for improvements. This will provide an opportunity to increase quality accommodation for single people, including young people who have struggled to secure suitable accommodation and are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Welsh Government will continue to engage with Propertymark and National Registered Landlords Association to promote Leasing Scheme Wales through these professional representative bodies. In addition, local authorities who are signed up to Leasing Scheme Wales have been engaging with their local landlord forums to promote sign-up and awareness of the scheme. We are also planning further communications later in the year, via Rent Smart Wales, to all landlords and agents signed up to the Rent Smart Wales Newsletter.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 19**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should explore all possible options for increasing the availability of one-bedroom accommodation, including options for ensuring the planning system actively encourages the delivery of more one-bedroom accommodation in the appropriate locations.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

It is the responsibility of local authorities to undertake periodic reviews of housing need, discharged through the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) process. This assessment in turn informs local authorities' Local Development Plans (LDPs) which include targets for the number of affordable homes the authority aims to deliver over the plan period. LDPs must also set out how and where the authority intends to provide the affordable homes to meet the target they have established.

A new approach to undertaking LMHAs was published on 31 March 2022. This new approach provides more consistency in how LHMA's are undertaken by providing a pre-populated tool and introduces a requirement for Welsh Government to review and sign-off LHMA's. All local authorities are required to rewrite or refresh their LHMA's by March 2024.

The new LHMA process calculates housing need on the basis of the household projections, and it includes the facility for local authorities to add in the existing unmet need for homes of each bedroom size. Once completed, the LHMA will estimate the number of social homes required of each bedroom size (including one bedrooms) in each housing market area within a local authority over a 15-year period. In turn, through their LDP, each local authority will be required to set out how they will deliver these homes.

Work has been undertaken to align the Social Housing Grant (SHG) funding process more closely with evidence of local housing need. Local authorities are required to produce a “prospectus” which outlines their strategic housing priorities for SHG, this information is also used to inform local authority rapid rehousing plans. Local authorities will also be encouraged to utilise evidence from their LHMA’s to inform their funding prospectus.

Local Authorities are responsible for allocating SHG to development schemes which meet their need and strategic priorities. Welsh Government will review local authority plans to ensure schemes funded meet the need identified in their prospectus. Where the schemes funded do not meet that need this will be challenged.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 20**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should set out how it is working with local authorities, housing associations and support services to increase the availability of high quality shared accommodation. This should include raising awareness of shared accommodation options and sharing good practice.**

**Response: Accept**

Welsh Government fully recognises the need to increase the availability of high quality shared accommodation. From April, we will extend Leasing Scheme Wales to allow Houses in Multiple Occupation that meet certain standards to be eligible to come onto the scheme, and benefit from grant funding for improvements. This will provide an opportunity to make available quality accommodation for single people, including young individuals who have struggled to secure suitable accommodation and are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Through the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TCAP) we are also funding shared accommodation, provided it meets the minimum standards set out in the TACP standards framework which is intended to ensure a flexible and responsive approach to bringing forward more good quality accommodation at pace.

Our regular Housing Leadership Cymru meetings and joint meetings with Social Landlords in Wales provide a forum through which we can discuss learning and identify good practice in the delivery and use of high quality shared accommodation.

**Financial implications:** None

## **Recommendation 21**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should work with social landlords to ensure that they fully utilise schemes to enable them to buy properties from private landlords, including tenanted properties. This should include awareness of what support**

**is available to bring those properties up to the relevant standards within an agreed timeframe.**

**Response: Accept**

The Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TCAP) was established in the summer 2022 in response to wider housing pressures and the need to prioritise move on from temporary accommodation. In the autumn, in view of cost-of-living pressures, the parameters of this scheme were expanded to include the purchase of properties, including tenanted properties, to prevent homelessness and improve the quality of housing. TACP funding can be used both to purchase properties and to undertake improvement works.

**Financial implications: None**

## **Recommendation 22**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should set out what data it collects on social housing vacancies, including the time taken to re-let properties when they become vacant, reasons why properties remain vacant and how it supports social landlords to ensure properties are available for letting.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

Welsh Government currently collect and publish a range of data in relation to social housing vacancies, which can be found at the following link: [Social housing vacancies \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/social-housing-vacancies). This publication includes whether a property has been vacant for more or less than 6 months, whether the property is currently available to let, location of the vacant properties and owner of the vacant properties.

The collection of real time social housing data is a matter under consideration, including the potential resource implications of such a collection.

**Financial implications: None**

## **Recommendation 23**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**We ask that the Welsh Government reports its findings on this matter to the Committee and ensures that all social landlord allocation policies are routinely published so they are open to public scrutiny.**

**Response: Accept in principle**

Welsh Government recognises that social housing allocations are a vital part of our toolkit to end homelessness across Wales. They play a key role in providing access to affordable accommodation, and it is essential those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are able to access social housing, as well as the Private Rented Sector, as routes to sustainable and settled accommodation.

The current legislative framework allows for the operation of different allocation policies across local authorities and Registered Social Landlords in Wales. Individual local authorities do in some instances publish their social housing allocation policies online, but there is no legislative requirement to do so. The legislative and policy framework around social housing allocations, are being examined as part of the wider commitment to reform housing law to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing.

As outlined in my evidence to the Committee, a review of allocations policies across Wales is currently underway. This includes Wales wide research into social housing allocations involving Registered Social Landlords and local authorities, to gain an understanding of the policies that are in place, and how they include and allocate social housing to those most in need, those who are homeless, and people with protected characteristics. This will also look into why those most in need may not be accessing housing. This research will help inform potential policy and legislative reform.

**Financial implications:** None

#### **Recommendation 24**

**The Committee recommends that:**

**The Welsh Government should support local authorities to implement their rapid rehousing transition plans.**

**Response: Accept**

Rapid rehousing is an internationally recognised approach to ending homelessness which is why it is vital that every local authority develops a cogent plan that clarifies how rapid rehousing will be implemented. Welsh Government will continue to work with all local authorities, and their wider partners, to support the development and implementation of rapid rehousing transition plans. Successful implementation of rapid rehousing requires a whole systems approach where homelessness becomes everyone's responsibility. To support this, we have provided funding for a strategic co-ordination function in each local authority area, to support corporate ownership within an authority, as well as with multi-agency partners.

**Financial implications:** None