

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Cyllid](#) ar [Cyllideb Ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2024-25](#).

This response was submitted to the [Finance Committee](#) consultation on the [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#).

WGDB\_24-25 28: Ymateb gan: Care and Repair Cymru (Saesneg yn unig) | Response from: Care and Repair Cymru (English Only)

---



## Welsh Budget 2024-25

Care & Repair are Wales' older people's housing champions. We help our clients to live independently in warm, safe, accessible homes by delivering housing adaptations and home improvements. We offer a holistic casework service including a whole house assessment taken from a national framework, including a falls risk assessment, welfare benefits check and home safety information and advice. In 2022-23 we delivered the following:

- 62,607 older people helped to stay independent at home.
- Completed 20,438 Rapid Response Adaptations to prevent accidents at home.
- Completed 65,127 jobs in the home to a value of £18.3 million.
- Helped clients claim £9.5 million in unclaimed benefits.

### Consultation questions

#### **1. What, in your opinion, has been the impact of the Welsh Government's 2023-2024 Budget, including funding related to the recovery of the pandemic? Have Welsh Government business support policies been effective, given the economic outlook for 2024-25?**

As a third sector organisation, we will be focusing on the first question in our response. Care & Repair Agencies were awarded a 13% revenue increase and 83% capital uplift in Welsh Government's 2022/23 budget. The additional revenue was welcome and stabilised our operational costs. This was maintained in 2023/24. The additional capital increased our Rapid Response Adaptations programme by some £1.3m. Initially, this put us in a better position to deal with the substantial increase in demand for RRAP and our core casework services, partly caused by post Covid backlogs working through systems, and has helped support our increased work on hospital discharges and preventing admissions. However, the increased capital has been offset by large increases in contractor and materials costs caused by inflation, soaring energy prices, increased transport and supplies costs.

Unfortunately, due to cost of living and other large cost increases, the additional capital has not enabled us to expand services. We are also working in the context of an increasingly older and more frail population. We are also receiving more and more very complex clients referred to us from statutory partners to plug the gaps in their services, often which are inappropriate referrals where clients need Occupational Therapy support. A survey amongst our 13 Care & Repair Agencies shows that collectively they would need an additional £859,000 to meet current demand for this year. Agencies are constantly evolving to improve their organisational resilience to diversify their income to try to meet this additional demand including through local funding partners and social enterprise routes. One Agency had already committed 100% of their RRAP

monies on 1<sup>st</sup> October, and by the 25<sup>th</sup> of October had already had to turn away 347 clients. At the time, another Agency had 600 referrals to process due to referrals being received quicker than their resources can process them. Across all Agencies, 73% of RRAP had been spent in the first two quarters of the year, even with supplementing from other sources such as Enable and the Housing with Care Fund.

Since then, we have been able to source an additional £500,000 for this year and next, however this still leaves us with a shortfall of 350,000 – which is likely to be more next year as demand for our services has been increasing year on year. Part of this increase comes from the success of our specialist hospital discharge service, Hospital to a Healthier Home. Since April 2019 when the service was rolled out across Wales, the service has helped over 16,500 older patients leave hospital more safely and quickly into homes that have been adapted and improved to meet their changing needs by delivering over 27,500 home improvements. The service has saved the Welsh NHS over 100,000 bed days.

The service has seen year on year increase in demand. For example, this financial year the service has helped 2,141 patients leave hospital between April-September, whereas in 2022/23, it helped 1,563. This is a 39% increase in patients helped in the first two quarters of this financial year. The service is revenue funded by Local Health Boards (stagnant this year, despite the higher volume of referrals). Although this is recognition of its value in improving patient flow and the value NHS staff place on the service and its reliability to get work done and problem solve issues preventing hospital discharge for clinically optimised patients, its high volume of referrals means this is putting significant strain on our capital budgets.

## **2. How should/could the Welsh Government support the economy and business following the pandemic, Brexit and inflationary and other economic pressures? – How financially prepared is your organisation for the 2024-25 financial year, how will inflation impact on your ability to deliver planned objectives, and how robust is your ability to plan for future years?**

Over recent years we have worked hard to improve our organisational resilience diversifying our income streams, with several agencies developing their own social enterprises to supplement Welsh Government funding which is unable to cope with increasing demands on our services, as well as diversifying income through local funding. There is significant reputational risk at having to turn away clients, especially from statutory partners.

Inflation continues to hit our services hard thanks to the increase in costs of materials. In our report *The State of Older People's Housing in Wales* released earlier this year, we highlighted the impact that supply chain issues and cost increases are having on our ability to complete works:



*“I’ve got contractors now that are providing quotes and saying that they are valid for seven days, whereas I used to have contractors saying they are valid for six months, because the contractors just can’t hold the prices. And that creates all sorts of problems.”*

Senior Technical Officer, North Wales

*“I mean, three or four years ago a sheet of plaster board was probably about £6 or £7, it’s now about £18 or £19 a sheet, and I know 12 months ago we couldn’t get hold of plaster board at all.”* Senior Technical Officer, North Wales

### **3. What action should the Welsh Government take to help households cope with inflation and cost of living issues? – How should the Budget address the needs of people living in urban, post-industrial, and rural communities and in supporting economies within those communities?**

On Fuel Poverty Awareness, Day Care & Repair released new research showing that the average Care & Repair client coming to our services for energy support and advice is spending 19% of their income on their utility bills this year, even with remaining government support. 96% of clients who accessed this service were living in fuel poverty, with the level of spend on utilities ranging from 8% to 62%.

Although we understand that some powers which would help households bring down the cost-of-living are not in the Welsh Government’s hand, we encourage the Welsh Government to push the UK Government and Ofgem to introduce a social tariff for energy bills, and reform standing charges. Standing charges on energy bills have increased by 64% since the price cap was introduced, and disproportionately affect low-income households and those on pre-payment meters, as they consume less energy so standing charges form a larger part of their bill. For example, costs of failed suppliers were put onto the standing charge for electricity – with the justification from Ofgem that there are some high-usage, low-income households who have disabilities who would be unfairly hit by putting this charge onto the unit rate– however we believe it makes more sense to have targeted support for these households rather than upping the standing charge and thereby affecting all low-income households.

Long-term solutions are needed to reduce energy bills in Wales. Wales has the least thermally efficient homes in the UK, which are contributing to the numbers of households living in fuel poverty. In 2022/23, Care & Repair completed 65,127 jobs in the home to improve housing accessibility and condition, totalling £18.3 million. Despite this, every day we come across unfit homes and serious disrepair where the needs of vulnerable older people cannot be met due to a lack of resource. Left unresolved, over time small repairs become large works and increasingly complex to resolve, especially in the current economic climate where multiple organisations are competing for dwindling benevolent funding. To support older people to live

safely and independently at home and prevent avoidable hospital admissions because of accidents at home, Care & Repair are calling for a safety net grant to rectify hazardous disrepair present in Welsh homes that result in draughty, leaky homes. It is vital that we think of the Welsh housing stock as a national asset which should be protected and retrofitted for future generations to come.

**4. Are Welsh Government plans to build a greener economy clear and sufficiently ambitious? Do you think there is enough investment being targeted at tackling the climate change and nature emergency? Are there any potential skill gaps that need to be addressed to achieve these plans?**

Building and construction industries offer a fantastic opportunity equip Wales with the housing stock it needs to achieve its net-zero targets, improve housing conditions, and upskill the workforce at the same time. The Optimised Retrofit Programme currently only applies to social housing stock. Care & Repair would like to work with partners, including Welsh Government, to pilot whole-house retrofitting in the owner-occupied sector to build learning and understanding of the challenges different property types and human behaviour may bring to building a green economy.

**7. The Committee would like to focus on a number of other specific areas in the scrutiny of the Budget. Do you have any specific comments on any of the areas identified below?**

**a) Is enough being done to tackle the rising costs of living and support those people living in relative income poverty?**

Outlined in our response to question three, we are calling for a safety grant for instances of disrepair hazardous to health and improve thermal efficiency of older people's homes in Wales. Improving the housing condition stock in Wales provides a long-term solution to reducing energy bills. The cheapest energy is that which we do not use.

**b) Is the Welsh Government's approach to preventative spending represented in resource allocations (Preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early).**

From our perspective the Welsh Government has delivered a strong commitment to the preventative work Care & Repair undertake by funding the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme and increasing capital funding to offset some of the additional demand. Agencies also received three-year funding in 2022/23 for the first time in Care & Repair history.

**c) How should the Welsh Government prioritise its resources to tackle NHS waiting lists for planned and non-urgent NHS treatments. Do you think the Welsh Government has a robust plan to address this issue?**

Improving patient flow is crucial to tackling NHS waiting lists. Care & Repair have a track record of preventing hospital admissions and helping patients to leave hospital more quickly, both improving patient flow, with a strong evidence base to back this up. However, increasing demand for our services is leaving us with a serious capital shortfall which is impacting our ability to support clients, and by consequence, our public services.

We undertook longitudinal research with Swansea University to link anonymised data from our national database (Care & Repair Information System) with data helped by the SAIL Databank (Secure Anonymised Information Linkage) to understand the impact of community-based home modifications on presentation at hospital for fall injuries. The dataset contained over 650,000 people in Wales aged 60-95, of which 123,000 were Care & Repair clients. The research analysed data from 2009-2017. The research found that:

- At the point of referral, C&R clients had an overall higher risk of falling compared to the general, non-C&R population. This means, on average, C&R clients were more predisposed to falling due to health conditions and circumstances. The service is therefore well-targeted, reaching vulnerable people in need of support.
- There was a 17% annual increased likelihood of a fall related hospital admission for the general group analysed (i.e., those who did **not** receive a C&R intervention).
- Post intervention, the C&R client cohort did not see fall risk increase annually as it did for the group that had not received a C&R intervention.
- **There was a 13% reduction in risk of someone having a fall one year following a C&R intervention**, compared to citizens that had not had an intervention (therefore reducing hospitalisation and unscheduled care admissions).
- There was a reduced risk of care home admission for people with a moderate or severe level of frailty who received a C&R intervention over 1-, 3- and 5-year time periods.

Similarly, we worked with Welsh NHS staff and NICE guidelines to work out a bed day saving for our Hospital to a Healthier Home service. On average, a **Care & Repair intervention reduces the length of patient stay by six days**. We also undertook research with Local Health Boards to track readmission rates following a referral to the Hospital to a Healthier Home service. This shows that patients who has had a H2HH intervention had a readmission rate of 5.5% compared to a 12.5% health board average.

As explained in our answer to question one, the increase in demand for our services is placing huge pressure on our Agencies and their ability to deliver capital works essential to ensuring older people can live safely and independently at home. Our intervention targets older people,

often with high levels of frailty and complex needs, who are more likely to need unscheduled care. Our work also helps support goals 1 and 6 of the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care. We estimate through our core service, every £1 spent on adaptations saves health and social care £7.50, raising to £8.60 for every £1 spent via H2HH. With additional capital to provide home adaptations, we will be able to better meet increasing demand and prevent further admissions to hospital amongst older people through community prevention and help the Welsh NHS tackle waiting lists. Home adaptations are a proven, cost-effective prevention intervention, and investment in them is more vital than ever in the context of ageing population in Wales.

For more information or any questions on the topics raised in this response, please contact:

Faye Patton, Policy Manager  
[REDACTED]