

HD 02

Rôl awdurdodau lleol o ran cefnogi'r broses o ryddhau cleifion o'r Ysbyty

The role of local authorities in supporting hospital discharges

Ymateb gan: Tai Pawb

Response from: Tai Pawb



promoting equality in housing  
hybu cydraddoldeb ym maes tai

# Tai Pawb

## Response to:

**The role of local authorities in supporting hospital discharges**

**Local Government and Housing Committee**

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## Who we are

Tai Pawb (housing for all) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Our vision is a “Wales where everyone has the right to a good home.” We operate a membership system which is open to local authorities, registered social landlords, third (voluntary) sector organisations, other housing interests and individuals.

## What we do

Tai Pawb works closely with the Welsh Government and other key partners on national housing strategies and key working groups, to ensure that equality is an inherent consideration in national strategic development and implementation. The organisation also provides practical advice and assistance to its members on a range of equality and diversity issues in housing and related services, including QED – the equality and diversity accreditation for the housing sector. We are also part of a coalition called “[Back the Bill](#)”, which seeks to establish the legal right to adequate housing for **all citizens** in Wales.

For further information visit: [www.taipawb.org](http://www.taipawb.org)

Charity registration no. 1110078

Company No. 5282554

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In recent years, [hospital discharge](#) has been openly discussed in the media. Problems deriving from ‘bed blocking’ have a profound effect – not just in terms of the impact on the individual but also the wider health system. Prolonged discharges are costly to the NHS but also impact the treatment of other patients.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government’s [White Paper](#) on ending homelessness, published in 2023 highlighted proposals relating to discharge in order to prevent homelessness. Given the expected publication of these proposals later this year, this Committee inquiry is timely as we look for answers to help solve interconnected problems.
- 1.3 We recognise the focus of the inquiry on local authorities. Therefore, this response will seek to add value by focusing on specific areas of Tai Pawb’s expertise, our work on accessible housing registers and homelessness. We conclude by highlighting the need for systems change through the full incorporation of the right to adequate housing in Wales.

## 2. Accessible Housing Registers

- 2.1 In 2021, Tai Pawb undertook research into [Accessible Social Housing in Gwent](#), reviewing allocation systems. This report looked at allocations for accessible housing in the broadest sense, including in relation to hospital discharges. The report highlights how the investment of time and resources into the effective allocation, operational and strategic processes for accessible housing can have a substantial impact on people’s long-term health and well-being, the prevention of hospital admissions, and can enable better and more timely discharge of people from hospital. Such investment has the added benefit of large cost savings.

- 2.2 The report identified many examples of good practice of joint working between housing, health, and social care staff. However, there were some concerns regarding the effectiveness of communication, referrals between partners and an integrated approach to meeting disabled people’s housing needs. Health and housing staff identified a need to improve joint operational working for hospital discharge. There was support for improved strategic consideration of accessible housing need and allocation, and the impact of gaps on disabled people and services. A regional framework on accessible housing allocation could help strategic planning and enable better joint working to address gaps. Health, housing, and social care staff identified a need for more step-down accessible accommodation to enable safe and timely discharge from hospital. There was significant support for more and better coordinated ‘hospital to home’ discharge services to support patients to apply for accessible housing, meet patients’ housing needs and to link with social landlords. There were strong arguments for earlier referrals to housing from health staff and a more holistic consideration of patients housing accessibility and other housing needs.
- 2.3 The specific recommendations relating to [discharge](#) were as follows:
- Review and investment in a variety of step down and temporary accessible housing facilities
  - Commission a housing focused hospital discharge service (align and address gaps in existing housing and social care discharge and admission prevention services)
  - Develop clear hospital discharge pathways including increased focus on early referrals to and communication with housing
- 2.4 We would urge the Committee and local authorities to consider this report and its findings when making recommendations.

### 3. Discharge and Hidden Homelessness

3.1 In 2023, Tai Pawb undertook [research](#) on people with protected characteristics experiences of homelessness. We spoke to thirty-six people across different equalities groups, including some with more than one protected characteristic. One participant's experience is outlined as a case study below:

“Anna (not her real name) has brittle bones and experiences chronic pain. She lives with her long-term partner, but while recuperating from a leg break in hospital, he decided to separate and sell the family home. On hospital discharge, **no help was offered** and there was no option other than to move in with her daughter. Anna spent the next 18 months sleeping on a sofa. During this period, while the council staff were understanding of her problem, they were unable to help. Anna ‘bid’ for plenty of social lets but was unsuccessful. No suitable properties were available on the private rental market leading to Air BnB being considered as a last resort. When Anna’s original family home sold, rather than improve her situation, it made it worse as the money she received was considered to be “significant,” lowering the banding at which Anna was placed at in the social housing waiting list. Aged seventy, with a sole income of benefits, Anna was unable to get a mortgage or afford to buy a suitable property. Rather than her impairment, the funds from the sale were considered more important to her housing situation which Anna felt was like “indirect discrimination.” Eventually, with the support of a local charity and intervention of a Head of Housing, Anna moved into a social let. Reflecting on her experiences, Anna felt “if someone had listened and looked at the bigger picture, perhaps a better understanding would have resulted in a quicker process.”

3.2 This case study highlights that lack of appropriate mechanisms in place at discharge – doesn’t just lead to bed blocking and prolonged stays in hospital. They can also lead to ‘hidden homelessness,’ further health problems and cost to the individual as well as the NHS. When reviewing discharges from hospitals, research by Care & Repair Cymru [identified](#) that investing £1 in the Rapid Response Adaptation Programme, which facilitates home adaptations to

enable hospital patients to return home safely, can generate £7.50 savings in health and social care budgets. Investment in more accessible homes and adaptations are therefore essential in preventing further accidents, which can prove costly to individuals and the NHS. Hospital discharge is a key moment to ensure someone has the safe and suitable home they need.

3.3 The upcoming Welsh Government proposals to reform homelessness legislation have the potential to impact discharges, including an expected duty to refer people at risk of homelessness to support within the Local Authority. To succeed, these will require cultural and process changes amongst hospital staff. We await the upcoming legislative proposals with anticipation and are happy to work with the Local Government and Housing Committee to help scrutinise and add value to these.

#### 4. The right to adequate housing – a case for systems change

4.1 In Autumn 2024, the new First Minister identified [‘A Healthier Wales’](#) as one of the key priorities of Government, including cutting NHS waiting times. Wales is an [increasingly ageing nation](#) – with expected higher rates of disability in the future. To achieve a healthier nation in a long-term and sustainable way, will require system change.

4.2 Housing currently averages since 2006, [only 2.2% of Welsh Government budgets](#). This is despite the fact that evidence highlights how [poor housing costs the NHS](#), and conversely investment in housing improves lives and [saves the NHS money](#). The demographic changes to the population of Wales over the short-medium term further highlights the need for change. If we don’t - public spending in Wales will continue to be dominated by the NHS and hospitals.

4.3 Tai Pawb are part of the [Back the Bill](#) campaign, which seeks to incorporate a right to adequate housing in Wales. This would make a good home a right – boosting supply of homes needed, increasing investment, and returning housing to a fundamental mission of government. In relation to hospital discharges, a right to adequate housing could:

- Prevent accidents in the first place through more funding for adaptations in the home.
- Increase the supply of accessible homes.
- Ensure ‘upstream policy changes’ by highlighting the importance of a good home to people’s health and lives.
- Change work processes and cultural practices around multi-agency working, highlighting the importance of housing as partners to the NHS, including around discharges.
- Increase the role of disabled people’s voice in developing appropriate housing.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Improving the hospital discharge process can help improve lives and cut costs for the NHS. This response highlights considerations, as well as potential solutions for achieving this.
- 5.2 Upcoming legislative changes are an opportunity to improve practice, with greater partnership working between the NHS and local authorities. To succeed, this will need to be accompanied by investment, resources, and changes in culture and practices from all stakeholders.
- 5.3 Given the changes to Wales population likely to happen over the next decade or so, we believe this inquiry highlights the need for a systems change in health and housing in Wales. We believe this is best delivered through incorporation of a right to adequate housing.